



CHILDREN'S LIVES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

'This book, with its focus on four Southern European countries, is an important addition to research literature on childhood. The authors' aim to come to terms with the inevitable impact on childhood of economic recession, poverty, migration and other shared structures is very enlightening. The display of an array of methodological approaches is of great interest and the way it makes sense of a macro-orientation without losing sight of children's agency is highly instructive. The book is most welcome and vastly recommended.'

Jens Qvortrup, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

'Children's Lives in Southern Europe is an insightful, well-written, and timely volume focusing on a neglected but radically changing region of Europe. The diverse chapters provide comprehensive discussion of children's lives and agency at the macro and micro level with important insights for social policy. A ground-breaking work in childhood studies.'

William A. Corsaro, Author of *The Sociology of Childhood* and *We're Friends, Right?: Inside Kids' Culture*

'This book offers an essential contribution to understanding the challenges faced by children in Southern Europe through the years of "austerity" and the "refugee crisis". The four editors combine a deep understanding of their own countries with a powerful theoretical orientation to taking children seriously as social actors and as citizens. The combination of detailed contextual information with vivid case studies is a real strength. For anyone with an interest in the reality of childhood, and the prospects for children's lives, in Southern Europe, this will be an invaluable source of information and ideas.'

Nigel Patrick Thomas, University of Central Lancashire, UK

'This book presents a rich and stimulating collection of contributions on a neglected focus in the English-speaking world. The chapters provide a fresh and rewarding exploration of children's lives in Southern Europe; especially children's well-being, experiences of migration and poverty. The book draws on theory, primary and secondary data and will be an invaluable resource for students wishing to understand childhood in the Mediterranean arena.'

Tom Cockburn, Edge Hill University, UK

This interdisciplinary book provides a sociological view of the contemporary experiences of children in Southern Europe. Focusing on regions deeply affected by the 2008 economic crisis, it offers a detailed investigation into the impact of economic downturn and austerity on the lives of children.

This informative book is essential reading for academics and higher-level students of childhood studies. Policy makers and practitioners in education, law, health, social services and children's rights organizations in need of strong, empirical research into childhood experiences will appreciate the thorough case studies analysed in the book.

Lourdes Gaitán is a Founding Member of the Sociology of Childhood and Adolescence Group (GSIA), Secretary of the Committee of Sociology of Childhood (FES) and Co-director for the *Sociedad e Infancias* Journal, Spain, **Yannis Pechtelidis** is Associate Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Thessaly, Greece, **Catarina Tomás** is Assistant Professor at the Lisbon Polytechnic Institute and Researcher at the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.NOVA), Portugal and **Natália Fernandes** is Assistant Professor at the University of Minho and Researcher at the Research Centre on Child Studies (CIEC), Portugal.

CHILDREN'S LIVES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

Lourdes Gaitán, Yannis Pechtelidis, Catarina Tomás and Natália Fernandes

EDITED BY
Lourdes Gaitán, Yannis Pechtelidis
Catarina Tomás and Natália Fernandes
CHILDREN'S LIVES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE
Contemporary Challenges and Risks

Edward Elgar
PUBLISHING

The Lypiatts, 15 Lansdown Road, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 2JA, UK
Tel: + 44 (0) 1242 226934 Fax: + 44 (0) 1242 262111 Email: info@e-elgar.co.uk

William Pratt House, 9 Dewey Court, Northampton, MA 01060, USA
Tel: +1 413 584 5551 Fax: +1 413 584 9933 Email: elgarinfo@e-elgar.com

www.e-elgar.com www.elgaronline.com

ISBN 978-1-78990-123-8



9 781789 901238



SOUTHERN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

10. Child poverty in Portugal: the crisis from children's perspectives

Manuel Jacinto Sarmiento and Gabriela de Pina Trevisan

As several countries went through hardship following the 2008 economic crisis, different reports have suggested that specific generational groups – such as children and adolescents – have been hit the hardest (Sarmiento, Fernández and Trevisan, 2015; UNICEF, 2012, 2014a, 2016). Amongst these concerns, different indicators have strengthened the idea that children are the most visible face of poverty and of decreasing global well-being indicators. For example, in 2012, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece were placed at the centre of a table of global well-being indicators or at the bottom of 29 OECD countries (UNICEF, 2012). The five indicators included material well-being, health and safety, education, risky behaviour and risk exposure, and housing and environment. With respect to material well-being, for instance, all four countries are at the bottom of the table. Alongside these indicators, this chapter will also explore family income and child protection services data on Southern European countries. Finally, a case study on child poverty in Portugal and on the crisis from children's perspectives will be discussed.

10.1 MAIN TRENDS

Childhood poverty increased in Southern European countries from the beginning of the financial and economic crisis of 2007/08 that caused a regression of decades of childhood inclusion policies and rights. A significant reduction in social transfers was observed – family allowance, unemployment allowance and social income – followed by a rise in parental unemployment rates and wage cuts. Simultaneously, the promotion of children's rights became secondary, since priority was given to the financial bailout of banks and repaying public debt to periphery countries, despite popular movements of civic resistance. In Portugal, this situation is well characterized by a deterioration in the situation of the child as a subject of rights (Sarmiento et al., 2015). At the same time, the tragedy of refugee children in the Mediterranean Sea has put into focus and disseminated the massive horror of childhood, with real and

symbolic effects on children's lives and in social representations of childhood (Sarmento, 2011). As Bastos and Nunes (2009) argue, children are particularly vulnerable to poverty, although poorly represented in the poor population overall, limiting our 'real' knowledge of child poverty figures, but also of the consequences of being children living in poverty.

10.1.1 Policies and Debates

During the crisis, the European Commission (2013) recommendation, *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*, stated that: 'The current financial and economic crisis is having a serious impact on children and families, with a rise in the proportion of those living in poverty and social exclusion in a number of countries' (pp. 2–3). It also argued that, at that time, efforts to consolidate public budgets presented 'significant challenges to ensure that social policies remain adequate and effective in the short as well as the long run' (ibid.). In the same recommendation, children are recognized as more at risk of poverty or social exclusion than the overall population in a large majority of EU countries and that those growing up in poverty or social exclusion are less likely, when compared to their better-off peers, to do well in school, enjoy good health and realize their full potential later in life. It is clear, then, that children's poverty affects very different dimensions of living and well-being, especially school, health and basic provision and protection rights. As argued by the European Commission (2013, p. 3) in its recommendation:

Tackling disadvantage in early years is an important means of stepping up efforts to address poverty and social exclusion in general. Prevention is most effectively achieved through integrated strategies that combine support to parents to access the labour market with adequate income support and access to services that are essential to children's outcomes, such as quality (pre-school) education, health, housing and social services, as well as opportunities to participate and use their rights, which help children live up to their full potential and contribute to their resilience.

This recommendation would have been more effective if the EU had worked on a contracyclical plan against public policies for childhood to promote prevention and protection against crisis through the reinforcement of the budget for the system of children's care and education. Unfortunately, the opposite happened, as was very clear in the Portuguese case. In 2009, in the OECD report on child well-being across 30 countries, Portugal stood in a difficult position in the overall ranking (Table 10.1), in spite of a better score with regard to the risky behaviour indicator.

Table 10.1 Comparative policy-focused child well-being in 30 OECD countries

	Material Well-being	Housing and Environment	Educational Well-being	Health and Safety	Risky Behaviour	Quality of School Life
Australia	15	2	6	14	17	n/a
Austria	5	9	18	27	27	11
Belgium	11	11	20	25	13	19
Canada	14	n/a	3	23	10	16
Czech Republic	18	24	19	6	23	17
Denmark	2	6	7	4	21	8
Finland	4	7	1	7	26	18
France	10	10	23	20	12	22
Germany	16	18	15	9	18	9
Greece	26	19	27	22	7	24
Hungary	20	21	12	11	25	7
Iceland	8	4	14	1	8	1
Ireland	17	5	5	24	19	10
Italy	19	23	28	16	11	20
Japan	22	16	11	13	2	n/a
Korea	13	n/a	2	10	2	n/a
Luxembourg	3	8	17	5	14	23
Mexico	29	26	29	28	30	n/a
Netherlands	9	17	4	8	9	3
New Zealand	21	14	13	29	24	n/a
Norway	1	1	16	17	4	2
Poland	28	22	8	15	20	15
Portugal	25	20	26	18	6	21
Slovak Republic	27	25	24	2	22	25
Spain	24	13	21	12	16	6
Sweden	6	3	9	3	1	5
Switzerland	7	n/a	10	19	5	13
Turkey	30	n/a	30	30	29	12
United Kingdom	12	15	22	21	28	4
United States	23	12	25	26	15	14

Note: The best-performing country ranks as 1. Using standardized figures, each country with half a standard deviation higher than the OECD average is shown in bold on that dimension, while countries shown in italics are at least a half standard deviation lower.

Source: OECD (2009, p. 23).

10.1.2 Child Poverty Rates in Southern European Countries

Between 2009 and 2015, the situation worsened. As we have argued in previous studies (Sarmiento et al., 2015), the effects of austerity policies on children's living conditions and well-being have been clear. Alongside those mentioned above, different reports (UNICEF, 2014b; Wall, Leitão and Atalaia, 2014) showed a significant reduction in the state's economic support to families, especially in access to social benefits that depend on family income, the latter being more restricted both in terms of the number of beneficiary families and the amounts allocated; and worsening of the situations of the families by wage cuts and by the generalized increase in taxes, among others.

This situation was the same in several European countries. In the annual report by the European Union's Social Protection Committee (2016), specific European trends are observed: (1) a general continued deterioration in the relative poverty situation, its depth and persistence; and (2) increases in the share of the population living in quasi-jobless households, together with rises in the at-risk-of-poverty rates for people residing in such households. In fact, the rise in unemployment alongside general cuts in specific social benefits help explain this increase in the number of poor children during the crisis in countries such as Portugal.

The implementation of austerity plans has direct and indirect effects on children's lives and well-being. Since they are highly dependent on adults' living conditions, children find themselves being affected differently by the crisis depending on a variety of factors:

Hence, if it is certain that children's poverty is associated with their families' poverty, the specific social and biological features that make childhood a unique age group also play a role in turning childhood poverty into a specific object and problem. Children and young people have needs of their own, distinct from adults, whose analysis and comprehension are badly provided for by the general concept of poverty. (Diogo, 2018, p. 75; authors' own translation)

A strong and important indicator is the unemployment rate, which has increased in Portugal over the two decades (especially during the bailout period of 2011–14) (Table 10.2).

From 2008 to 2013, for example, the unemployment rate rose from 7.2 per cent to 15.5 per cent in the 25–54 age group; from 6.6 per cent to 13.7 per cent in the 55–64 age group; and finally, youth unemployment has the highest increase – from 16.7 per cent in 2008 to 38.1 per cent (Pordata, 2018; Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2019). Also, the rise in unemployment of both parents in the same household threw families into a highly dependent relationship with much reduced public policies and social benefits. At the same time, emigration figures, notably of highly qualified youth, kept growing due to the lack of jobs

Table 10.2 Unemployment rates by age group and year, Portugal (%)

Year	Age Groups			
	Total	< 25	25–54	55–64
2004	6.6	15.4	6.0	5.5
2005	7.6	16.2	7.2	6.1
2006	7.6	16.5	7.3	6.3
2007	8.0	16.7	7.8	6.5
2008	7.6	16.7	7.2	6.6
2009	9.4	20.3	9.2	7.6
2010	10.8	22.8	10.7	8.9
2011	↓12.7	↓30.2	↓11.9	↓10.8
2012	15.5	37.9	14.7	12.7
2013	16.2	38.1	15.5	13.7
2014	13.9	34.8	12.7	13.5
2015	12.4	32.0	11.2	12.4
2016	11.1	28.0	10.0	11.0
2017	8.9	23.9	7.9	8.6

Note: ↓ indicates a series break.

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE) (2019).

in Portugal. In 2008, 20 357 Portuguese emigrated, while in 2012, the figure was 51 958 (Pordata, 2018). After 2014, the figures began to fall (Table 10.3).

This situation has particularly serious consequences for Portuguese children's well-being. As argued by Sarmiento et al. (2015, p. 88):

since the beginning of the crisis, all the indicators of the worsening of children's exposure to situations of risk, in direct relation to their social situation, have been accentuated: children with exposure to deviant behaviour (for example, violent family and addictive behaviours) and school dropout and absenteeism; children in the first age subgroups, especially from 0 to 5 years of age, increased significantly, mainly as a result of 'negligence'; the number of institutionalized children (for example, those requiring a higher degree of protection in view of the danger of their family situation) has also increased.

The situation is well documented by the indicators of material poverty and its evolution throughout the years. As we see in Table 10.4 from Eurostat (2019), there is an increase in child poverty during the years of the crisis and austerity policies, and a reduction after 2015.

But, as significant as the indicators of child poverty are, important information about deprived children is also delivered in the reports from the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of Children and

Table 10.3 Emigrants by type, 2004–17

Year	Emigrants by Type		
	Total	Permanent	Temporary
2004	–	6 757	–
2005	–	6 360	–
2006	–	5 600	–
2007	–	7 890	–
2008	⊥	⊥20 357	⊥
2009	–	16 899	–
2010	–	23 760	–
2011	100 978	43 998	56 980
2012	121 418	51 958	69 460
2013	128 108	53 786	74 322
2014	134 624	49 572	85 052
2015	101 203	40 377	60 826
2016	97 151	38 273	58 878
2017	81 051	31 753	49 298

Note: ⊥ indicates a series break. Where there are no figures, data was unavailable.

Source: Pordata (2018).

Table 10.4 Material deprivation rate by age group (Portugal)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
23.9	24.8	25.2	27.5	25.2	24.4	29.2	27.4	22.3	19.6	17.8

Note: The indicator is defined as the percentage of population with an enforced lack of at least three out of nine material deprivation items in the 'economic strain and durables' dimension.

Source: Eurostat (2019).

Youth (e.g., CNPDPCJ, 2018) that analyse, yearly, children and young people's pattern of well-being and the number of cases submitted to the office. In 2012, a change of pattern in detected cases of child protection was observed. Alongside a higher number of reported cases, and of younger and older children, a great number of them were exposed to deviant behaviours of adult family members, and there was a higher number of domestic violence cases and an increase in school dropout rates, amongst other data (Sarmiento et al., 2015). This situation did not change significantly after the bailout period of 2011–14.

10.1.3 Summary

In summary, during the five-year period there was a significant increase in diagnosis of risky behaviour and dangers to childhood and youth (4 per cent) and in domestic violence (around 3 per cent), whereas the highest category or risky behaviour tended to drop and the right to education has stabilized since 2015. Regarding the reality in Portugal, which together with Greece, Spain and Ireland was particularly affected by the austerity management of the economic and financial crisis, the following summary can be made:

- As a result of the economic and financial crisis, the relative situation of child poverty has worsened in all its indicators: an increase in the poverty rate of children, the risk of poverty, and the relative position of children compared to other generational groups; children are the group with the highest poverty rate, with one in four Portuguese children living in poverty.
- At the same time, in the years of austerity management of the crisis (2010–15), there was a significant reduction in the state's economic support to families. As of 2010, access to social benefits that depend on family income – for example, family allowance, school social action, social parenting allowances, social integration income and social unemployment allowance – became more restricted, not only in terms of number of beneficiary families but also of the amounts allocated.
- The situation is exacerbated by wage cuts, higher taxes and worsening unemployment rates.
- The absence of family and childhood policies aggravates the problem, since children are not given priority when their situation is more urgent than ever, and because of the effects of austerity policies on the most vulnerable populations.
- As a result, the situation of Portuguese children can be characterized by these alarming figures: since 2008, children have been the most at risk of poverty; in 2015, one in four children lived in material deprivation and one in ten children in severe material deprivation; the risk of poverty is higher in large families (41 per cent), single-parent families (31 per cent) and unemployed people (38 per cent); single-parent families with an unemployed parent have an almost absolute risk of poverty (90 per cent); 30 per cent of children lost entitlement to family allowance in three years (2009–12); the public policies directed at the families are manifestly insufficient, sector-based only, or inadequate to the seriousness of the situation (Sarmiento and Trevisan, 2017; UNICEF, 2014b).

Other studies have sought to understand the different perspectives and experiences of children in relation to the crisis period. From the different

investigations (see Sarmiento and Trevisan, 2017; Trevisan, 2014) it is possible to identify the following: children understand and experience the crisis, from contexts such as family and the school, listening to conversations and news, formulating from there their own unique vision; some children identify specific situations lived in their homes and motivate changes in their daily lives; and they are able to distinguish their effects on different generational groups, identifying, for example, children as a more vulnerable group, among others. Finally, they identify different strategies where they, themselves, as a specific social and generational group, can participate to reduce these effects (Sarmiento et al., 2015).

10.2 CASE STUDY

As we argued, analysis of child poverty and its impacts has been made in a series of national and international reports, from those by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to academic studies. However, few have devoted attention to how children's representations of the crisis are interpreted and how these are expressed in daily life (Sarmiento and Trevisan, 2017). Children can observe the ways in which the crisis affects their own generational group as well as the adults closest to them. In the same way, they make economic interpretations of the phenomena, whether 'naive' or more complex. This case study focuses on the representations of children about the social and economic crisis in Portugal. Graphical narratives and focus group discussions with children from working-class families, aged between 6 and 10 years old, are discussed as part of a wider action-research project.

10.2.1 Children's Knowledge of Poverty and Social Exclusion

As different authors have argued in the last decades (Christensen, 2003; Cockburn, 2013; Fernández, 2009; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Prout, 2005; Sarmiento, 2004; Tomás, 2011, amongst others) children's competencies to interpret the surrounding environment, even in complex situations, are well observed in their everyday lives, both through actions and discourses. In fact, as we have argued elsewhere (Sarmiento, Marchi and Trevisan, 2018), even in matters such as poverty and social exclusion, children recognize their impacts and effects as well as changes in households and in their living communities. As we have researched with children and young people in specific projects, such as the Children and Young People Citizenship Chart (in Northern Portugal), when questioned about their rights they can identify several related to well-being and participation in different arenas of life, in the future, and so on.

As mentioned in different investigations, children are social actors capable of identifying, interpreting and questioning the ways in which crisis situations affect them in different domains of public and private life. Some reports on poverty (Martorano et al., 2013) emphasized that children understand micro and macro effects of economic crises on the lives of families; formulate different explanations and solutions to the crisis; replicate and recreate adult interpretations on their own terms; and understand that their participation is legitimate and appropriate. It is against this background that the idea of studying children and their interpretations of the crisis is relevant for the unique interpretations they can produce. Children's voices in scientific research are then understood as a revelation of their perceptions, of social representations and of social reality itself: children project in their interpretations images and conceptual forms that are important for knowledge of the social world. That is, children's interpretations of social reality constitute part of the institutional reflexivity of modernity and, in this sense, extend the available interpretive field. In the studies we have conducted, the importance of creating strategies capable of capturing these unique ways of understanding complex situations was recognized, particularly by mobilizing children's multiple languages and drawings, and through group activities such as focus group interviews. Far from referring exclusively to their family and private settings, children were also able to analyse these impacts on their friends' lives and on their communities.

These voices, as we have argued (Sarmiento and Trevisan, 2017), express themselves in multiple ways, from verbal language to sign language, through the images, drawings and records that children make. To capture this polyvocality, we have developed appropriate methodologies for its interpretation (Sarmiento, 2011, 2014; Trevisan, 2014), particularly in the context of the analysis of children's drawings, where we propose to interpret them as 'graphic narratives', that is, as contents structured in a temporal sequence that span the different interpretations constructed by the children. The analysis of children's drawings, through the concept of 'creative narrative' or 'graphic narrative' (Faulkner and Coates, 2011) has gained weight and relevance, not only because it informs us that children's drawings tell a story – not being driven by any impetus of realistic representation, as is sometimes mistakenly believed, but, on the contrary, they result from the transfiguring imagination of the real that the child puts into practice through the lines or colours that he or she selects and inscribes on paper – but also because it induces us to interpret drawings as a specific language, which is creative and always an updated version of their ways of communication and expression. In the field of childhood studies, visual methodologies are believed to be particularly important in capturing the complexity of their voices and interpretations. Hence, the concept of graphic narrative is an important resource, since it favours the hermeneutics of the

cultural forms of constitution of the children as subjects of their own culture and as competent social actors, in their mediation relationships with adults.

Often, these graphic narratives are accompanied by processes of verbalization. The careful process of listening to what children have to say when engaged in creative activities allows us access to the sources of and influences on their graphic forms and the meanings they attribute to them (Coates and Coates, 2011), but it is not always possible. The children's graphic language does not depend on verbal expression and the interpretation of children's drawings, once the subjective and objective conditions of their production are defined, can be made with strong control over the risks of ambiguity, in the presupposition that any communicative act is polysemic and, thus, susceptible to several simultaneous interpretations.

These graphic narratives consist of both a realistic appeal and an imaginary projection through which children, through the effect of their symbolic imagination, account for facts, emotions, feelings, aspirations and desires. However, our interpretation of their graphic narratives should not only consider the social context, explicit meanings, formal elements and their grammars (colour codes, figures, traits of identity, etc.), but also what is only suggested. There is, of course, an inherent ambiguity, proper to plastic language, that has evocative elements and is not reducible to the mimetic transposition of forms of reality by children. The search for allusive and suggestive elements is based on a logic of intersubjective construction of knowledge through the presentation of verisimilar and coherent hypotheses for the plastic elements constructed by children. The impossibility of a 'truth discourse' on children's drawings does not inhibit the explanatory possibilities, which must be articulated continuously with other research data, from a triangulation perspective. With these concerns in mind, the graphic narratives presented were always accompanied by an analysis on children's discourses, namely, by verbally explaining their meanings.

As we mentioned in the introduction, the statements made by the children about the crisis and their drawings are part of the data collection constituted within the framework of the Children and Young People Citizenship Chart, which is being developed in a municipality in the north of Portugal. The main objective of the project is to create, at the municipal level, a governance instrument capable of ensuring the construction of integrated policies for children and youth. In its development, it involves directly, in the different phases and stages, the citizen participation of children and young people. The project intends to identify one of the main problems found in policies for children and youth: their fragmentation and compartmentalization, along with their distance from the construction of public policies. The project involves hundreds of children and young people, gathered in focus groups and a specifically constituted assembly (Council of Citizenship), where the thematic debate on the state

of implementation of the rights at the municipal context and perspectives of future development is promoted.

To respect the complexity of research projects conducted with children, multiple methodologies for collecting children's positions were used, from direct participation in focus groups to intervention in participatory bodies, to individual interviews and drawings. The focus is the representation of the social reality of children's lives in the municipality, in all domains (social rights, living conditions, education, territory, mobility, environment, health, access to culture and leisure, social and family relations, participation politics). For this case study, a specific focus is given to some of the drawings made by children under the theme 'the crisis'. The concrete context of production of the drawings was an After-School Activities Centre in July 2015 with children aged 6–12 years. We will also provide a short analysis of one of the focus groups where children from middle school discussed their 'right to the future' and the impacts of the crisis at the time.

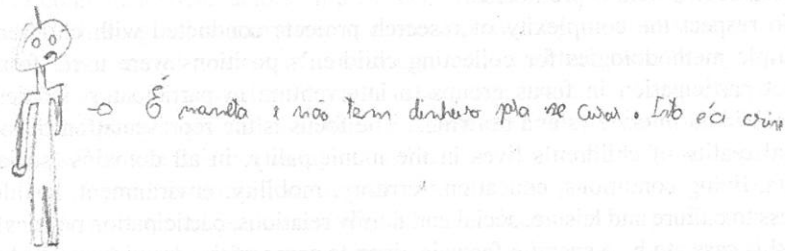
10.2.2 The Analysis of Children's Graphic Narratives

For the proposed research activity, children were invited to draw on a blank paper sheet with a black pencil. The austerity of the means of production was intentional – to strictly centre the illustrations on the essentials. For the content analysis we mobilized for different axes of interpretation: (1) impacts of the crisis; (2) rich and poor; (3) political representation; (4) solutions to the crisis.

For Axis 1, impacts can be understood as direct or indirect, and related to private and public spheres of children's lives. During the crisis periods, children often had access to TV news, conversations in a family setting where adults referred directly to its effects, and in their own households' specific adjustments were observed (for instance, buying fewer products in the supermarket, changing vacation habits, unemployment of a parent, etc.). As we could observe in different contexts, children were very aware that 'the crisis' was the main theme for several months, whether in private settings or more public ones (Trevisan, 2014).

In Figure 10.1 (José, 12 years old), the idea that the crisis has immediate and visible impacts on the well-being of the populations and the types of healthcare they can access is represented. The drawing accompanies the explanation that the lack of money does not allow healing and that this premise is the representation of the crisis.

As we have argued (Sarmiento and Trevisan, 2017) private and domestic contexts are often the most vivid and intimate for children, reflecting different effects and constraints for adaptation to situations of economic crisis. In this sense, children find in these settings events that may be adaptive or disruptive



Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.1 'He is one-handed and has no money to heal. This is the crisis'

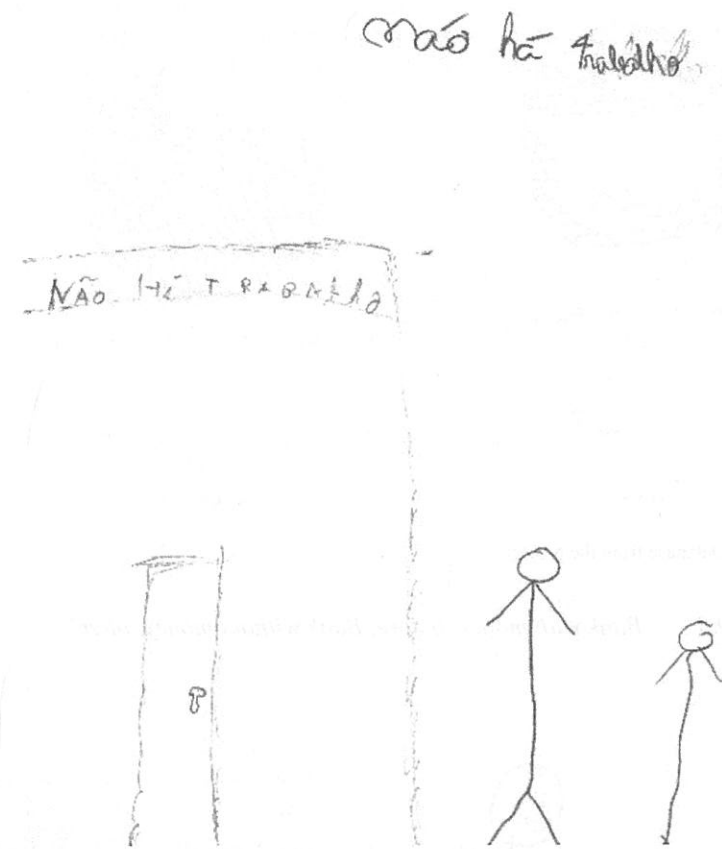
when, for example, unemployment situations such as the ones depicted in Figure 10.2 occur, by Beatriz, nine years old.

Again, it is important to remember that as we have presented earlier in this chapter, unemployment and emigration figures were widely discussed on TV news accessed by children in their family environments.

Axis 2 presents children's capability to acknowledge social distinctions, such as the classification of rich and poor people. These distinctions were also present in different discourses that children produced during focus group discussion – for instance, when referring to school daily life, where poorer children were often excluded from joining extra-curricular activities.

Hence, their graphic representations also contemplate the identification of the structural condition of poverty and its living by its actors, the 'poor people'. Children represent money graphically (Figure 10.3, drawing by Sofia, aged 12). The bank, as a place of safekeeping of money, is represented before the crisis as being 'full'. On the right-hand side, the same bank, without money and with cobwebs representing almost an 'abandonment', refers to the bank with no money.

More than just recognizing the macro perspective on poverty, children are also able to move to a micro level, represented by the specific actors. As the next drawing shows (Paulo, aged eight, Figure 10.4), the concretization of this crisis in the person, the poor, is represented as having no clothes and being for that very reason poor. The poor are also, according to this representation, those who do not have the necessary resources for the purchase of essential goods and become easily identifiable as such. An interesting link between these drawings and the focus groups can again be established. When referring to their peers in school contexts, as stated in the drawing, children were also able

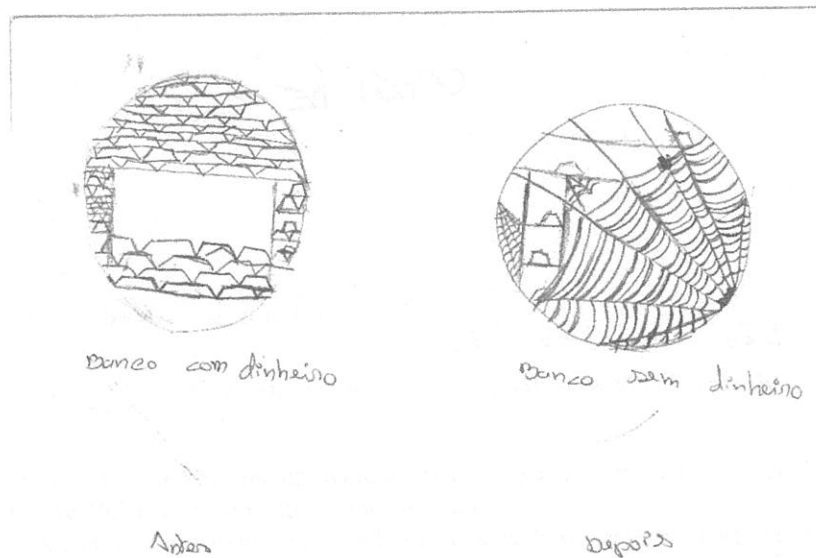


Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.2 'There is no work'

to identify others with less resources by observing the brands they wear, or the conditions of the clothes and school materials brought to school.

Even though poverty and social exclusion are not limited to the idea of material deprivation, especially from financial resources, as we have stated, children's graphic narratives not only bring understanding to the phenomenon of poverty and its experience for the poor, children are also capable of representing situations of social inequality by comparing extremes: the rich and



Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.3 'Bank with money, before. Bank without money, after'



Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.4 'No money. No clothes. He is poor'

the poor. Here again, money is represented as one of the most distinctive and striking factors of situations of social inequality, and from it these situations become more visible.

But children's representation of the narratives also connects with specific people that occupy government and are often publicly presented as 'responsible' for the crisis at that time. Axis 3 looked for different political representations children might have on this matter.



Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.5 'Passos Coelho, thief. Victim'

As Figure 10.5 (Constantino, ten years old) shows, along with the representation of direct and observable effects on their lives and those of others, children, through daily exposure from different means, can identify different actors in the political decision-making scenarios, namely the prime minister at the time, Pedro Passos Coelho. As the prime minister, he will appear as the face of responsibility in the crisis situation, and is represented, figuratively, as a hybrid form – human and rabbit (Coelho means rabbit in Portuguese) – taking money from an adult.

But children were also capable of defining different solutions to the crisis, whether by drawing them or by speaking about them (Axis 4). They not only seek to explain/identify and enumerate the effects and those possibly respon-

sible for the situations they describe, they also seek to identify solutions, and design future situations that could help to solve the situations of adversity hitherto experienced. As Inês, nine years old pictured (Figure 10.6), such solutions appear: the return to nature and agriculture, symbolized by the fruit tree that allows us to spend less money and ensure essential food. It is in the domestic and personal space that 'solutions' are sought after by children.



Source: Database from the project.

Figure 10.6 Inês, nine years old, 'The house'

Alongside these visual narratives, during one of the focus group discussions, 'the right to a future', students were concerned about the impacts that the crisis could have on their own life trajectories in years to come. For them, the economic crisis affects the right to the future: we will be studying, spending money and having no work. They also recognize that some people who study have no future, since they do not work on what they want. In their perspective, the crisis causes the lack of work and leads people to lose hope about the future. Some families do not have the resources to support the costs of raising

their children (books, meals) and buying clothes, and so on. The choice of 9th grade is important; at this age we do not know very well what we want. They also believed that at that time there was no trust in work and that the future leads people to emigration. These ideas also led people to think that it is not worth studying because they do not see the possibility of having a good future. In the end, children also stated that they wanted to be in their home towns, next to their families and friends when they got older.

10.3 CONCLUSIONS

As we argued, children's graphic narratives are a powerful tool to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives, alongside different verbal explanations they can offer. In this research project, the drawings seek to illustrate what they think about a particular personal, natural or social reality. When they were asked to draw the economic and social crisis, they conceived graphic forms of 'telling the story' of the crisis, whether it was expressed in the increase of poverty and in accentuating the inequalities between rich and poor, whether it was political leaders and their direct action, or proposals and solutions to manage the crisis, it was almost always from an adaptive and individual perspective, in view of its effects. In doing so, children construct their own representations that express their perceptions, but, more than that, they emanate from their childhood cultures, since they imaginatively transform the real to present it in the traits that they most emphasize. In order to do so, children use, in addition to the graphic resources (in the case of this research, they were deliberately sparse), symbolic resources that structure the contents of the communicated messages, that is, they are not adjacent to but rather substantive of the semantic elements.

Through his or her forms of expression, namely the graphic narratives they summon, the child, individually and collectively represented, constructs his or her voice on things, using multiple codes. This is inherent to their human condition, but it is a central element of children's cultures and their analysis as a distinctive social and generational group. The child is confronted with the harshness of the reality of the crisis through interpretive processes in which the imaginary transfiguration of the real is fundamental to assigning meaning and to confronting with adjustment attitudes and behaviours. The expression of the ways of interpretation by the mobilization of the imaginary is especially visible in the drawings of the children, which is why they constitute an indispensable methodological resource to capture the polyvocality previously mentioned. No interpretation, however, is free of subjectivities, so it is important to accompany this methodological device with others, namely, the discursive analysis that helps to provide more rigorous interpretations of children's intentions. Some of the examples provided by the focus group results aim at exactly this.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the economic and social crisis had important consequences on the lives of children and affected them in a specific way: child poverty, intrafamily effects, reduction of social expectations and aspirations, cuts in public policies, exposure to violence, reduction of opportunities for social participation. The vision of the crisis, transfigured by the children's imagination, not only reveals children's 'coping strategies', but also increases the possibility of understanding the forms of perception and collective perspectives and representations in the face of the effects of the crisis. The children's imagination thus presents itself as functional and expressive, in the face of social reality. But it also helps to expand and amplify their collective perceptions and representations about the crisis. Beyond the observations of the most negative effects, from their contexts of life, such as home and school, children and young people claim their 'right to the future', that is, do not limit their reflection to the present lived, but extend it to an uncertain future, where their place is not clear.

REFERENCES

- Bastos, Amélia and Francisco Nunes (2009), 'Child poverty in Portugal – dimensions and dynamics', *Childhood*, 16(1), 67–87.
- Christensen, Pia (2003), 'Place, space and knowledge: children in the village and the city', in Pia Christensen and Michael O'Brien (eds), *Children in the City: Home, Neighbourhood and Community*, London: Routledge, pp. 13–28.
- Coates, Emily and Andrew Coates (2011), 'The subjects and meanings of young children's drawings', in Dorothy Faulkner and Emily Coates (eds), *Exploring Children's Creative Narratives*, London: Routledge, pp. 86–110.
- Cockburn, Tom (2013), *Rethinking Children's Citizenship*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Comissão Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos e Proteção das Crianças e Jovens (CNPDPJ) (2018), *Relatório de avaliação da atividade das Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens 2017* [Child and Youth Protection Committee Activity Assessment Report], Lisbon: CNPDPCJ, accessed 24 March 2019 at <https://www.cnpdpj.gov.pt/cpcj/relatorios-de-avaliacao-da-atividade-estatistica.aspx>.
- Diogo, Fernando (2018), 'A pobreza infantil e o rendimento social de inserção em Portugal: o mesmo problema, tendências distintas' [Childhood poverty and social integration income: the same problem, different trends], *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, No. 87, 71–86.
- European Commission (2013), *Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013: Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage (2013/112/EU)*.
- Eurostat (2019), 'Material deprivation rate by age group (Portugal) – EU-SILC survey' [table], accessed 24 March 2019 at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tessi082>.
- Faulkner, Dorothy and Emily Coates (2011) (eds), *Exploring Children's Creative Narratives*, London: Routledge.
- Fernandes, Natália (2009), *Infância, direitos e participação: representações, práticas e poderes* [Childhood, Rights and Participation: Representations, Practices and Powers], Porto: Afrontamento.
- Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE) (2019), 'Unemployment rates', accessed 16 October 2019 at https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=ine_main&xpid=INE.
- James, Allison, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout (1998), *Theorizing Childhood*, 1st edition, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Martorano, Bruno, Luisa Natali, Chris De Neubourg and Jonathan Bradshaw (2013), 'Child well-being in advanced economies in the late 2000s', *Office of Research Working Paper 2013-01*, UNICEF.
- OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*, Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Pordata (2018), 'Emigrants by type, various years' [in Portuguese], accessed 7 May 2019 at <https://www.pordata.pt/Homepage.aspx>.
- Prout, Alan (2005), *The Future of Childhood*, London: Routledge.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto (2004), 'Reinvenção do ofício de aluno' [The reinvention of the student profession], in Rui Canário, Filomena Matos and Rui Trindade (eds), *Escola da ponte, defender a escola pública* [Defending public school], Porto: Profedições, pp. 69–87.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto (2011), 'Conhecer a infância: os desenhos das crianças como produções simbólicas' [Knowing childhood: children's drawings as symbolic production], in Altino José Martins Filho and Patrícia Dias Prado (eds), *Das pesquisas com crianças à complexidade da infância* [From children's research to the complexity of childhood], Campinas: Autores Associados, pp. 27–60.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto (2014), 'Metodologias visuais em ciências sociais' [Visual methodologies in social sciences], in Leonor Lima Torres and José Augusto Palhares (eds), *Metodologia de investigação em ciências sociais da educação* [Research methodology in social sciences of education], Vila Nova Famalicão: Edições Húmus, pp. 197–218.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto, Natália Fernandes and Gabriela Trevisan (2015), 'A redefinição das condições estruturais da infância e a crise económica em Portugal' [A redefinition of structural conditions of childhood and the economic crisis in Portugal], in Fernando Diogo, Alexandra Castro and Pedro Perista (eds), *Pobreza e exclusão social em Portugal: contextos, transformações e estudos* [Poverty and social exclusion in Portugal: Contexts, transformations and studies], Vila Nova de Famalicão: Edições Húmus, pp. 81–101.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto, Rita Marchi and Gabriela de Pina Trevisan (2018), 'Beyond the "modern" norm of childhood: children at the margins as a challenge for the sociology of childhood', in Claudio Baraldi and Tom Cockburn (eds), *Theorising Childhood: Citizenship, Rights and Participation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 135–57.
- Sarmento, Manuel Jacinto and Gabriela de Pina Trevisan (2017), 'A crise social desenhada pelas crianças: imaginação e conhecimento social' [The social crisis drawn by children: imagination and social knowledge], *Educar em Revista*, Special Issue No. 2, pp. 17–34.
- Social Protection Committee (2016), *Annual Report 2016: Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor and Developments in Social Protection Policy*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Tomás, C. (2011), 'Há muitos mundos no mundo': *cosmopolitismo, participação e direitos da criança* ['There Are Many Worlds in the World': Cosmopolitanism, Participation and Children's Rights], Porto: Afrontamento.

- Trevisan, Gabriela de Pina (2014), "Somos as pessoas que temos de escolher, não são as outras pessoas que escolhem por nós". Infância e cenários de participação pública: uma análise sociológica dos modos de codecisão das crianças na escola e na cidade' ['We are the ones who have to choose, not other people for us'. Childhood and political participation scenarios of public participation: a sociological analysis of codecision processes of children in the school and the city], doctoral thesis, Universidade do Minho.
- UNICEF (2012), Measuring child poverty. New league tables of child poverty in the world's rich countries, Innocenti Report Card n° 10, Florence: UNICEF.
- UNICEF (2014a), *El estado mundial de la infancia de 2014 en cifras: revelando las disparidades para impulsar los derechos de la niñez: todos los niños y niñas cuentan* [The State of the World's Children 2014 in Numbers: Every Child Counts], New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF (2014b), *As crianças e a crise em Portugal: vozes de crianças, políticas públicas e indicadores sociais 2013* [Children and the Crisis in Portugal: Children's Voices, Public Policies and Social Indicators 2013], Lisbon: UNICEF.
- UNICEF (2016), *Children of the Recession: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Child Well-Being in Rich Countries*, New York: UNICEF.
- Wall, Karin, Mafalda Leitão and Susana Atalaia (2014), *Principais desenvolvimentos das políticas de família em 2013* [Main Developments of Family Policies in 2013], Lisbon: Observatório das Famílias e das Políticas de Família Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa.