

Mafalda Frias

University of Coimbra, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0002-7052-0701

Luís Alcoforado

University of Coimbra, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0003-4425-7011

António Cordeiro

University of Coimbra, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0002-8648-3204

Young NEETs: A Portrait of a ‘Holding Pattern’ Daily Activities and Perceptions of the Current Moment in Life

The gap that is gradually surfacing in young people’s representations and expectations of education and employment is increasingly clear as they experience highly tangled pathways and, consequently, deferred entry onto the job market, a conjuncture manifested in complex phenomena, such as the rise of the NEET group (people not in employment, education or training), compounded by an alarming disruption in various aspects of young people’s personal and work emancipation. Recognising the importance of locally specific approaches, this work presents two stages of a broader case study that aimed to understand and describe the NEET phenomenon in the municipality of Sintra (Portugal). This purpose was deemed best achievable by combining two data collection techniques: online questionnaire and autobiographical accounts, focused on the ways these young people managed the ‘holding pattern’ in which they found themselves in terms of how they used space/time, reasons why the continuation of their studies was not an option to be considered at that stage and what they thought of the current moment of their lives.

Keywords: young NEETs, transition to adulthood, education, job, leisure time, public policies.

Introduction

The profound transformations that have occurred in the many areas of modern societies are reflected in how young people live and experience their pathways,

especially as regards the transition from the education system to the job market, and how they think on future life projects. This transition is accompanied by an important identity reconstruction process and encompasses a number of changes that influence young people's various life contexts. Therefore, any study of their trajectories, experiences and ways of adapting to opportunities in family, education and employment should involve the recognition of the 'social and political representation of roles and characteristics' ascribed to young adults and to reflection 'on the ability to construct a sense of future that necessarily entails micro factors (individual and family) and social, political and economic macro dynamics' (Albuquerque, 2014, p. 319).

In addition to the challenges arising from new societal arrangements, the social status of the modern youth is ambiguous and belittled; it is also associated with unpredictable and precarious transitions, as 'the linear and predetermined order of the different stages which, a few decades ago, was a reliable basis of reference' (Fonseca, 2014, 133)—a sequence of completing one's studies, entering the job market, getting married, moving to one's own home and starting a family—turns into highly individual and prolonged trajectories. Young people are under constant pressure and oscillate between linear patterns (longing for a job that gives them fulfilment, stability, financial security and the ability to start their own family) and complex and heterogeneous patterns (retaining their freedom, discovering and experimenting with different types of relations and delaying family projects) (Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2007).

The considerable changes in the transition to adulthood and the difficulty in ensuring that it is linked to decent work have considerably contributed to the emergence of worrying phenomena in the young population, such as the increasing number of young people *not in employment, education or training*, briefly: NEETs. Although such young people face common risks and vulnerabilities (e.g. low educational achievement, less privileged socioeconomic contexts, medical conditions, immigration, family job insecurity, parents' low education and place of residence), the NEET phenomenon is far from being homogeneous or well-defined, but it is known to be a dynamic and comprehensive situation that decisively influences the life paths of young people (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Eurofound, 2012; Reiko, 2006; Schoon, 2014; Zuccotti & O'Reilly, 2019;).

Besides discouraged young people immersed in early school-leaving trajectories, there are also high-skilled young people who nonetheless face serious difficulties in finding a job (Alcoforado, Frias, Cordeiro, Fonseca, & Oliveira, 2018; Frias, Alcoforado, & Cordeiro, 2020). Obstacles in access to the job market even for those with higher qualification levels remain a great concern among and cause social suffering to young people, not only due to the scarcity and inconsistency of (personal and educational) resources compatible with the new market requirements and young people's aspiration, but also due to the inconsistency or lack of (social, institutional and axiological) reference frameworks essential to reshaping

the transition to adulthood (Furlong & Cartmel, 2004; Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2004; Smith, Christoffersen, Davidson, & Herzog, 2011).

The period of precariousness, uncertainty and insecurity experienced by young people in the transition to the job market exposes this important population segment to a number of 'temporary job experiences, underemployment and unemployment, which results in profoundly uncertain and unpredictable trajectories' (Guerreiro, Abrantes & Pereira, 2007, 255). Through this lens, we can see that while young people are pressured to develop strategies for adapting to the new market conditions and are urged to be 'flexible, creative, show initiative, undertake lifelong learning, and be ready to change,' the deregulation and flexibility of the job market ultimately produce a world of possibilities and opportunities densely interwoven with worrying risks and vulnerabilities (Guerreiro et al., 2007, 255; Mauritti, 2002; Pais, 2001).

As the study reported in this paper addressed different stages and approaches, it was carried out at different moments in a timeframe marked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic: first, in the pre-pandemic period (December, 2019) and, then, in the middle of the pandemic (March, 2021). Hence, a brief account of the impact of the pandemic on the life paths of young people is in order.

In general, at the end of 2019, even though worrying structural imbalances persisted, there were positive social and economic developments for young people in Europe as a result of the economic recovery and a decline in the youth unemployment rate. In fact, the economic situation of young people was better than at any other time before the Great Recession, even if some groups, notably the NEETs and others in unstable and precarious jobs, were in a more vulnerable situation (OECD, 2021). However, early in 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic substantially reversed all the social and economic progress achieved up to that point, triggering tougher economic conditions, marked by massive job losses and poor recovery prospects, in most countries (Eurofound, 2021). Difficult enough under normal conditions, the transition from education to work becomes even more challenging in troubled economic periods, where, besides unemployment, many young people may embark on perturbing inactivity scenarios (OECD, 2021).

According to the International Labour Organisation, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic hit young people particularly hard as they either had to interrupt their educational/training programmes and lost their jobs and income, or found it extremely difficult to enter the job market, which was reflected in a significant increase of the unemployment rate from February 2020 on,¹ especially for women (ILO, 2020a). It is believed that this climate of insecurity, precariousness and instability caused by the pandemic may have lasting consequences for the career development, prospects and future life projects of young people (ILO, 2020a;

¹ More than one in six young people have been out of work since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas those who have retained their jobs have seen their working hours reduced by 23% (ILO, 2020a).

ILO, 2020b). A study carried out by Eurofound (2021)² found that, between February and March 2021, more than half of the young people in the sample lived at home with their parents (61%). Although students (75%) and unemployed or inactive young individuals (59%) accounted for the largest proportion of young people living with their parents, a significant share was made up by employed young people (42%).

The deprivation of autonomy caused by the loss of employment and/or educational opportunities, dependence on the parents and the restrictive measures that reduced social interaction and postponed future projects may have contributed to the decline in young people's mental well-being (Eurofound, 2021). It should also be noted that social isolation caused by constraints on mobility and physical activity and the cancellation of social events bred emotional difficulties in coping with lockdowns, in addition to other problems, such as monotonous routines, stress and the compulsive use of smartphones, reported by research (Alberich, Fabra, Sala, & Serracant, 2020).

In Portugal, the effect of the pandemic crisis on unemployment was four times as severe young people as for the general population, with the number of inactive young people rocketing. Over the first year of the pandemic (from the first quarter of 2020 to the first quarter of 2021), the youth unemployment rate increased by 22.3% in the group of 24-year-olds and by 24.7% in the group of 34-year-olds, while the total unemployment rate picked up by 5.9%. Today, there are 100,000 fewer young people in employment than at the start of the pandemic, and the number of those who are inactive stands at 261,000 (Eurofound, 2021).

All these indicators and observations speak to the importance of constructing solid knowledge resources that help understand the processes of transition to adulthood in-depth, above all regarding how young people experience all the challenges, constraints and changes imposed on them. Based on this awareness, we felt it was important to analyse how young NEETs use a new space and time, given the 'holding pattern' and their random current trajectories. We will, therefore, briefly outline the background of young people and their free/leisure time.

Today, recognising the importance of leisure time is key to human development and to a better understanding of people and the contexts in which they interact. This is all the more significant when we talk about young people, given the vital contribution of leisure and free time to the construction of their cultural norms and expressions, practices, representations and ways of life (Brenner, Dayrrel, & Carrano, 2008). The concept of leisure is indicative of the development of activities in a specific time—free time—where one can experience pleasant emotions and disengage from the systems and standards entrenched in society. In other words, free time is understood as available time that may or may not be used for leisure, but

² The *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* aimed to investigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic in Europe and was open to the entire population aged 18 and over in the EU27 (Eurofound, 2021).

which is necessarily linked to a sense of freedom for those who enjoy it (Munné & Codina, 2002; Elias & Dunning, 1992).

The cultural patterns of leisure in today's society differ in terms of gender or social class, highlighting a more perceptible connection between leisure and having or not having a job. In and of itself, free time does not necessarily imply leisure, especially if we think about the significant number of young people who find themselves living in harsh times marked by fragile socioeconomic resources, the lack of opportunities, discouragement and anxiety about the future, as their present is shrouded in insecurity and unpredictability, which predominantly mitigates their belief in organising and achieving their personal and work aspirations.

The gap between education/training and employment triggers potential marginalisation; so much so, that young people in this situation may find their access to leisure lifestyles enjoyed by the majority of today's youth hindered, especially when it comes to consumer culture, which is central to the shaping of young people's identities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Looked at it in this way, precariousness pervades all times and spaces in life, its backlash being twofold: while the unemployed see their relations disrupted and deregulated, those integrated into the job market sense a potential outcome of unemployment even under apparent stability (Bourdieu, 1998).

The technological transformations typical of our times are associated with a potential of greater independence, autonomy and choice for individuals. However, the distance in relation to other socialisation agents is a matter of some concern in that information is just a click/screen away, with the Internet and television the privileged means of mass communication with an immense impact on the youth (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Technological leisure involving television, mobile phones, social networks and the Internet in general has amassed power and appeal, becoming the main leisure pastime in modern societies (Munné & Codina, 2002; OberCom, 2014). Regarding the uses of time and space among young people, relevant gender differences are identified which should be highlighted; in particular, there is a pronounced predisposition of young males to visit spaces and engage in activities outside the home (for example sports), which entails socialising with other people, while women conversely tend to take up more home-based pursuits (Sousa & Fonseca, 2014; Brenner et al., 2008; Franch, 2002).

Following Sue's observations (1999), a new dominant social time—free time—can be considered to be emerging, and even though this new time is associated with the loosening of work time, we see at the same time a fractioned social time unequally distributed among individuals. While some individuals tend to be in a passive state of mind because their routines are based on an empty, isolated and unoccupied time, the dynamics of others encourage them to learn, depending on the resources they have. As working time is declining, there is a concomitant potential free time, bound up with the perceived imbalance of society, which finds

itself unable to uphold the new order. This is the challenging scenario faced by our society in our fragmented social times devoid of any structuring time (Sue, 1999).

The deep crisis in employment resulting from the globalisation of thought, the economy and politics has weakened political interventions for full employment. Consequently, the work socialisation of young people has been marred by exacerbating difficulties, compounded by persistent doubts about the expected return on investment in education. In fact, it is urgent to rethink the impact of interventions devised to guarantee economic interests and promote competitiveness instead of furthering effective social cohesion.

We should explain that our study on how these young people used space and time did not aim to map their cultural, leisure or entertainment practices, since their complex situation could naturally interfere with and distort the concept of 'leisure/free time' and the organisation of their routines and choices, which reflected a number of internal and external influences. The study was only focused only on the perception of the uses of space and time by young NEETs from the municipality of Sintra, in the wake of changes to their arrangement as the young people were withdrawn from important social subsystems—education/ training and employment—and subject to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which at some point during the study influenced some of the results obtained.

Methodology

Prioritising a contextualised approach to the NEET phenomenon, focused on Sintra (Portugal), the results presented in this paper come from two sequential research stages, which were part of a broader, time-extended broader case study involving young people who were out of employment, education and training. The study combined two data collection techniques, namely, an online questionnaire and two autobiographical accounts. Both stages received support from the Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional de Sintra (IEFP, IP), a public employment service that acted as a liaison between the research team and the participants through its institutional database.

The first stage of the study focused on a detailed description of young people from the municipality of Sintra who were in the NEET situation. It was carried out in the pre-pandemic period by means of an online questionnaire completed by 121 voluntary participants who were NEETs aged between 17 and 29 years old. The description especially focused on how the young people perceived and coped with the 'holding pattern,' how they used space/time, and how they justified their withdrawal from/refusal to use available educational/training pathways or experiences at the time of the research.

Subsequently, the second stage of the study, which was conducted in the middle of the pandemic period, proved to be essential for understanding some of the

meanings given by the young people to their life circumstances at that time, based on the new configuration of time and space management in their daily lives, as they withdrew from the basic social subsystems of education/training and employment. This part of the study was based on two autobiographical accounts³ given by two young people who found themselves in the NEET situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The leading themes were defined based on the flexibility and freedom of narrative, with as little interference from the researchers as possible, in order to learn and understand how the young women dealt with the events they were experiencing, that is, how they viewed such events in relation to their beliefs (Amado & Ferreira, 2014; Passeron, 1990; Peneff, 1990).

Recognising the importance of listening to the young people to capturing and understanding the dynamics they experience experienced, the autobiographical accounts were deemed a relevant and useful choice, since 'the autobiographical subject transforms their experience into self-knowledge in a narrative that promotes action in and interaction with the world, others and oneself' (Passeggi, 2021, 257). Therefore, the autobiographical approach, by the logic of complementarity, facilitated the generation of new knowledge and consolidated the lines of research, seeking to a deeper understanding of some of the questions raised by the previously applied questionnaires. Notably, both autobiographical accounts were recorded (with the participants' consent), guided and fully transcribed, and their content was subsequently analysed in order to systematise the data obtained.

Participants

The global analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the 121 young NEETs who completed the online questionnaire (Table 1) rendered the average respondent age of 25.2 (ranging between 17 and 29 years of age) and revealed a clear predominance of young women (63.6%) over young men (36.4%) in the sample. As other relevant features, the sample included a significant proportion of single people (82.6%), people without children (77.7%) and individuals still living at their parental homes (47.1%). The majority of the participants (83.5%) came from the urban area, with only 16.5% living in the rural area.

In terms of education, about half of the young people completed secondary education (50.4%), a significant percentage completed university education (38%), and a smaller proportion completed the 2nd and 3rd basic education cycles. Regarding the employment situation of the respondents at the time of research, a higher percentage of the unemployed youth (81.8%) is of note as compared to those looking for their first job (18.2%).

³ Due to the adversities and constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the accounts were collected online via *Zoom*, with attention paid to the arrangement of an enabling environment and gaining the trust of the young women who agreed to take part in this crucial stage of the study.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics.

Gender	Marital status	Children	Household	Area of residence	Education	Current employment situation
Male 44 (36.4%)	Single 100 (82.6%)	No 94 (77.7%)	Alone 16 (13.2%)	Rural area 20 (16.5%)	2nd basic ed. cycle 3 (2.5%)	Unemployed 99 (81.8%)
	Non-marital partnership 10 (8.3%)		Parents 57 (47.1%)		3rd basic ed. cycle 11 (9.1%)	
Female 77 (63.6%)	Married 11 (9.1%)	Yes 27 (22.3%)	Spouse 37 (30.6%)	Urban area 101 (83.5%)	Secondary education 61 (50.4%)	Looking for their first job 22 (18.2%)
			Other 11 (9.1%)		University education 46 (38%)	

The two participants who volunteered for the study by providing two autobiographical accounts⁴ were two young females, who had a number of characteristics and determinants in common. Specifically, both were 24 years old, had been unemployed for about a year (and were registered as job seekers with the Employment Centre), were single and lived with their parents. One of these young women, who will be referred as (A) below, had completed a dual-certificate course at a vocational school (12th grade; reception technician), which enabled her to work in her area of training, but became unemployed due to the pandemic and suffered subsequent instability. The other young woman, who will be called (B) below, had taken evening classes to complete the 12th grade and got a job as a salesperson. However, like (A), she was also dismissed due to the pandemic and, moreover, had an unplanned pregnancy.

Results

Young People and the Uses of Time/Space

The analysis of the young people's daily activities shows that accessing the Internet, socialising with friends and watching television took up most of their time, followed by, in the decreasing order of relevance and typicality, reading, playing sports, sociocultural activities and, finally, voluntary work (Table 2). The mean comparison test has shown significant gender differences regarding sports ($p=0.025$) and socialising with friends ($p=0.022$), with men reporting a higher frequency of these practices than women. The magnitude of the effect (h^2) is also indicated, noting that this is negligible.

⁴ Besides the distancing from education/training, when we contacted the young women, Portugal and the world were in the midst of the pandemic and related constraints (lockdowns, restrictions on the freedom of movement, socioeconomic disruptions, etc.).

Table 2. The frequency of activities carried out by young people (global mean and gender comparison).

Activities	Global mean (standard deviation)	Gender			
		Male	Female	p	h ²
Voluntary work	2 (1.125)	1.86 (0.979)	2.08 (1.201)	0.316	0.008
Sociocultural activities	2.35 (1.188)	2.14 (1.091)	2.47 (1.231)	0.141	0.018
Socialising with friends	3.81 (0.943)	4.25 (0.716)	3.72 (0.960)	0.022*	0.044
Sports	2.88 (1.192)	3.20 (1.268)	2.70 (1.113)	0.025*	0.042
Television	3.31 (1.162)	3.05 (1.293)	3.47 (1.059)	0.070	0.031
Reading	3.17 (1.083)	3.23 (1.198)	3.13 (1.018)	0.636	0.002
Internet	4.51 (0.647)	4.59 (0.497)	4.47 (0.718)	0.269	0.008

* Statistically significant t-test value (p< 0.05).

Note: The scale used ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

The most typical venues visited by the young people in their town were shopping centres, cinemas/theatres, cafés/bars/clubs and sports facilities (Table 3). The mean comparison test between the two education-based groups in the sample (respectively, level 0–4 and level 5–7 of the European Qualifications Framework) has only shown a significant difference in visits to libraries, as the group with the upper educational level went to libraries more often than those with the lower educational level (p=0.026). Regarding the area of residence, significant differences have been found in going to cafés/bars/clubs, with the young residents of rural areas being more likely to visit these venues than those living in the urban area (p=0.005). Considering the variables under analysis, the magnitude of the effect (h²) was again quite small.

Table 3. Venues visited by young people in their city (global mean and comparison between education levels and areas of residence)

Spaces visited	Global mean (standard deviation)	Education level				Area of residence			
		Level 0–4	Level 5–7	p	h ²	Rural	Urban	p	h ²
Shopping centres	3.05 (0.902)	3.01 (0.878)	3.11 (0.948)	0.575	0.003	3.10 (0.912)	3.04 (0.905)	0.786	0.001
Indoor or outdoor sports facilities	2.54 (1.041)	2.60 (1)	2.43 (1.109)	0.399	0.006	2.35 (1.226)	2.57 (1.003)	0.381	0.006
Cafés/bars/clubs	2.66 (0.945)	2.53 (0.977)	2.87 (0.859)	0.057	0.030	3.20 (0.894)	2.55 (0.922)	0.005*	0.065
Libraries	2.03 (0.983)	1.87 (0.844)	2.30 (1.133)	0.026*	0.047	1.90 (0.968)	2.06 (0.988)	0.510	0.004
Museums	2.19 (0.960)	2.07 (0.963)	2.39 (0.930)	0.071	0.027	1.85 (0.875)	2.26 (0.966)	0.083	0.025
Cinema/theatre	2.78 (0.970)	2.68 (0.947)	2.93 (0.998)	0.162	0.016	2.65 (0.671)	2.80 (1.020)	0.407	0.003
Cultural/recreational associations	2.05 (1.007)	1.92 (0.941)	2.26 (1.084)	0.071	0.027	1.90 (0.968)	2.08 (1.017)	0.469	0.004

* Statistically significant t-test value ($p < 0.05$).

Note: The scale used ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

When asked about the use and frequency of Internet access in the categories listed (Table 4), the respondents most frequently reported that they used websites to search for various information, social media and job search websites, with professional networks, newspapers/magazines and online games being the least typical choice.

The comparison between the gender groups has revealed statistically significant differences in the social media category as those were more accessed by women than by men. In contrast to the social media results, men tended to play online games more, a finding consistent with a pattern found in other studies, which have shown males' greater propensity for engaging in entertainment activities on the Internet (OberCom, 2010; OberCom, 2014).

The comparison between the age groups has also revealed statistically significant differences regarding social media, which were largely preferred by younger individuals, and online newspapers/magazines, which were more frequently used by the older age bracket. Similarly to the previous analyses, the magnitude of the effect (h^2) was irrelevant.

Table 4. The use of the Internet by young people (global mean and comparison between gender and age groups).

Internet use	Global mean (standard deviation))	Gender				Age			
		Male	Female	p	h ²	17–24 years	25–29 years	p	h ²
Social networks	3.96 (1.128)	3.64 (1.278)	4.14 (0.996)	0.026*	0.047	4.20 (0.926)	3.79 (1.230)	0.048*	0.032
Professional networks	2.98 (1.313)	2.75 (1.222)	3.10 (1.353)	0.155	0.017	2.86 (1.229)	3.06 (1.372)	0.42	0.005
Entertainment/ online games	2.12 (1.212)	2.61 (1.280)	1.83 (1.081)	0.001*	0.097	2.36 (1.425)	1.94 (1.013)	0.08	0.029
Online newspapers or magazines	2.83 (1.152)	3 (1.100)	2.73 (1.177)	0.212	0.013	2.56 (1.053)	3.01 (1.189)	0.032*	0.038
Job search websites	3.75 (1.035)	3.52 (0.976)	3.88 (1.051)	0.065	0.028	3.64 (1.120)	3.83 (0.971)	0.32	0.008
Retrieving miscellaneous information	4.02 (0.961)	3.95 (0.914)	4.06 (0.991)	0.546	0.003	4 (1.069)	4.04 (0.885)	0.813	0.000

* Statistically significant t-test value (p < 0.05).

Note: The scale used ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Reasons for Not Engaging with Education/Training

Besides exploring the trends in the young people’s uses of time and space, we considered it relevant to establish their predisposition to resume education or training by including one open-ended question in the questionnaire.

Although quite a significant proportion of young people stated their intention to resume their studies (84.3%), it is important to understand why others (15.7%) emphatically stated that they did not wish to engage in any type of education/training. The main reasons they cited were a lack of interest and/or disbelief in qualifications, family responsibilities and/or financial reasons, career orientation and, finally, health-related issues (Table 5).

Table 5. Reasons why young people refused to engage in education/training.

Categories	Records	Evidence (transcripts)
Lack of interest and/or disbelief in qualifications	7	‘I have met my personal expectations with my school level. I believe that, in Portugal, at the moment, it’s not worthwhile to get a lot of schooling because the country doesn’t recognise it; let’s face it, the salary is not that different for someone with mandatory schooling and someone with a university degree.’ ‘In the near future, I don’t see myself going back to school as I have a degree and it’s been a year and a half since I was able to get a job in my field of choice.’ ‘I am not interested. At the moment, I feel that the training I have is enough.’
Family responsibilities and/or financial reasons	6	‘I want to start a family.’ ‘Because of my age and family responsibilities, such as expenses.’ ‘School won’t put a roof over my head or give me money to support myself, but I’d love to complete the 12th grade.’ ‘I don’t have the financial means to take another MA degree course.’
Career orientation	4	‘I’ve had my share of studies; from now on, I want to progress professionally.’ ‘I’m focused on finding a job.’
Health reasons	2	‘Cognitive restraints (I cannot build more skills).’ ‘Health reasons make it impossible for me right now.’

The impression from the participants’ replies is that they had no interest in, nor acknowledged the value of, diplomas, since they either felt that they already possessed the desired and sufficient qualifications or saw no point in pursuing new formative paths, especially as such an investment was likely to be poorly recognised and bring barely any return in terms of pay. Besides the feeling that the level of qualification they had at the moment was enough and sufficient in their desired occupational field on the job market, the respondents were also frustrated at being unable to find a job in the area in which they had had invested so much or at finding that the pay was not what they had expected it to be for university degree holders.

The respondents’ family responsibilities and financial difficulties were obstacles that determined their withdrawal from education/training, because despite their interest in improving their qualifications, young people regarded themselves as unable to prioritise education over entering the job market, since the latter guaranteed them decent living conditions and, consequently, promoted the pursuit of their desired projects, for example, starting a family.

As far as career orientation was concerned, since the young people felt that they had already spent too much time studying, they planned on dedicating themselves exclusively to developing their work careers and hoped to join the job market as soon as possible.

Although health issues were one of the least mentioned obstacle categories in this sample, they also accounted for withdrawing from the education/training pathway, with cognitive challenges cited besides more general, unspecified issues.

Managing the 'Holding Pattern' and Perceptions of Current Life

The questionnaire results were supplemented with the perceptions elicited from two young women during the autobiographical accounts in order to achieve a better understanding of the NEET situation and its aspects, especially in the pandemic period, consistently with the research design and both drawing on and complementing the data obtained in the previous stage.

Regarding how the two young women spent their time, and irrespective of the current pandemic scenario, there was a certain predisposition for more passive pastimes in both cases, especially for television (films and series), the Internet and social media. This seems to have been consistent with some of the results in the study's quantitative stage, with television and the Internet standing out as the most frequent activities among the young people, and specifically for the Internet, a greater tendency among females to use social media.

In this period of uncertainty and insecurity, one of the young women adopted the role of an informal caregiver in her family context, a situation that deserves particular attention as it is a factor that should be borne closely in mind when considering young female NEETs.

I've been occupying myself on the Internet, watching Netflix series, I've been doing that a lot. (A)

Between watching series, being on Facebook, taking care of the house ... and I try to go out, because being stuck inside four walls is bad for your head, at least take hygienic walks, which is good enough, with a mask on and all that ... and I've been focusing a little bit on my pregnancy. (B)

At the beginning, two of my aunts fell ill, and I helped them at home. They eventually passed away. It was a difficult time. I also helped my boyfriend's grandmother. But there wasn't much else to do. (A)

The accounts provided by these young women imply a limited job seeking effort, which was frustrated not only because of the pandemic and the country's weak socioeconomic context, but also because of the lack of offers that matched their expectations and interests, in addition to one of them becoming pregnant.

I looked for some jobs and there was only one company... it was a Call Centre in Lisbon, but it wasn't really the area I liked, it was for canvassing clients, and I don't see myself doing that, so I said I wasn't interested. (...) as a receptionist and being unemployed, I was there for one year until March last year, but as soon

as they heard about the pandemic they let everyone go (...) they immediately said they weren't going to renew [the contracts], even though I had already signed my contract, saying that I accepted the renewal of the contract; I had already accepted it, I had it in black and white on paper ... they said that it was worth nothing and sent me away, me and everyone else there. (A)

Being unemployed is very difficult for me, because I really like working, I always like to be busy with something. Obviously, now it's a little bit different because I'm pregnant, but in general it's very complicated for a person to be at home doing nothing, not knowing what's going to happen, what to expect in terms of money and all that. (B).

Regarding their intention to become involved in new education/training activities, the participants shared uncertain, vague and even hesitant opinions. While one of the young female respondents said she liked her field of training and saw no point in investing in a new training experience (possibly university education), the other respondent said that this was not something in which she was interested at the moment mainly because she was pregnant, although she did admit that training could be an added value in her future.

I happened to find out that my school was organising a Luxury Tourism course, and I was interested in enrolling, but they didn't post any further information. Maybe if they gave more information, what it consisted of, I might sign up for the course. In the meantime, if this improves, I'm thinking about university, but I don't know ... because it won't be much different from the course I took. I took a Level 5 course, and the university's is Level 6 and recognises almost all the first-year subjects and half of those of the second year. I don't know; I'm still thinking about it. I like this field, and I don't see any other field that I'd be interested in, I really like this one. (A)

I don't know, I'd perhaps have said yes a few years ago, but at the moment, maybe it's not in my plans to take a degree course or something like that. I believe that it is very useful and ... it helps a lot in the future, but personally I don't see myself pursuing it in the future. (B)

The account given by (A) about her current moment in life indicates a certain crystallisation and even accommodation to this 'holding pattern,' clearly exacerbated by the overall pandemic context. Despite a rather passive attitude, we clearly note a desire for freedom and independence that would enable her to leave her parents' home and follow her own path, as well as an awareness that the current pandemic situation and unemployment are strong barriers to achieving her life projects.

The account given by (B) further underlines the feeling of stagnation, however adding a very particular circumstance: the fact that she had an unplanned pregnancy. The cumulative effect of becoming unemployed and finding out she was

pregnant increased the difficulties and constraints, delaying the achievement of her life projects.

As the pandemic progressed, because I'm living with my parents I sort of stopped looking for a job ... I let it go. Fortunately, I'm lucky in that I don't need to search for a job ... I can go on like this, I'm lucky (...). The worst thing would be to be with a company, wanting to move forward, climb the career ladder and now being stuck ... have more autonomy to be able to, for example, leave my parents' house and move in with my boyfriend. This is obviously impossible to do now, because he's also studying. I'm now unemployed, so we won't be able to move on in this respect. I want to move on, make changes and the fact that I'm unemployed obviously doesn't help. (A)

I was looking for a job, but then I found out that I was pregnant, and then I put job seeking on hold (...) it was like a snowball effect because I found out I was pregnant and it was not something we had planned ... it didn't help achieve other plans either. And the fact that I had to wait, and that during the pandemic it was hard to find a job, I think it was very complicated for a person to try to find out what they were going to do later ... The idea would be that at this point you would have something, and I and my boyfriend had to choose to stay here at my parents' house because it's always easier. We had to put off some projects that were meant to be done, and that's it ... we can't do them now. (B)

Discussion

Consistently with the results of the questionnaire, the thoughts and beliefs expressed by each of the two young women prompted an analysis of their current moment in life in order to understand how they felt about the NEET experience over one year and how it was related to their life projects. This analysis is of considerable relevance to fathoming the problem of young people who neither study nor work, especially as it concerns the perceptions and meanings of those who experience this challenging situation first-hand.

The predictable prevalence of female young NEETs reflects a trend shown in the literature, which shows a greater propensity among women than men to be involved in the NEET situation. Indeed, in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 16.5% of women (aged 18–24 years old) are NEETs today, this figure dropping to 14% for men in the same age group (OECD, 2021). Notably, the reasons behind the NEET situation also differ between men and women, as in almost all OECD countries most women are NEET-inactive and most men are NEET-unemployed. On average, in 2020 almost 70% of NEET women were inactive compared to 50% of NEET men (OECD, 2021). In terms of inactivity, whereas the NEET situation of women is widely explained by

family responsibilities, that of men is mainly justified by health and other factors (OECD, 2016).

The gender differences that our research revealed are related to trends found in other studies, and as such they cannot be ignored. The perceptions of the young women in the autobiographical accounts echo the conclusions of some authors who have found women to be more predisposed to 'home-based' activities (Brenner et al., 2008; Franch, 2002; Sousa & Fonseca, 2014). In fact, as compared with women, men exhibit a more active and even sociable attitude by practising more sports and socialising more with friends. This indicator reinforces a greater withdrawal of women, who seem to prefer activities in the comfort of their home, possibly because of the tasks they perform (such as family responsibilities).

The NEET rate, which tends to be higher for women, is associated with family responsibilities and household chores assigned to women. This perpetuates the stereotypical view of some duties as an integral part of the woman's role, which has contributed to consolidating strong asymmetries that result in a barrier to equitable gender identity (OECD, 2016). Although dismissal is at the root of the participants' unemployment, it is urgent to inquire to what extent the acceptance of family responsibilities (such as an informal caregiver role) has affected their attitude to active job-seeking and visibility in the face of employment, in this way consolidating, even if unconsciously, their apparent inactivity and resignation. All these issues deserve an in-depth analysis, and more comprehensive studies are essential to provide such reflection.

The significant percentage of single young people, without children and still living with their parents⁵ exemplifies the sometimes long-lasting situations of dependence experienced by young people, triggering complex challenges and obstacles to financial self-sufficiency and freedom to plan and achieve their life projects, such as starting a family (Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2007; Frias et al., 2020; Reiko, 2006). If we take those to be indicators of adulthood, we have to admit that, in this regard, 'the process of transition to adulthood is far behind schedule compared with a few decades ago' (Sousa & Fonseca, 2014, p. 74). The fact that the young women live with their parents and obtain all the support and back-up from them may foster a certain inactivity and curb active job seeking.

In accepting the forced break, the major alternative option for young females who find themselves without a job or prospects of finding one is to live at their parental homes, as they have no means to ensure their financial independence to support the family, should they want to start one. As a result of the unemployment situation and financial insecurity experienced by young people, their parents' homes became their major sources of security during the pandemic, helping mitigate their sense of social exclusion (Eurofound, 2021).

⁵ Portugal is one of the European countries with the largest number of young people (aged 18 to 34) living with their parents (Xerez et al., 2019).

The considerable number of young people who have secondary school and university credentials only casts into relief the extent of the problem of young people who neither study nor work. Namely, although the NEET situation is as a rule associated with low educational achievement, early school leaving and, consequently, more vulnerability for young people, better education does not automatically translate into employment, and a significant (and growing) number of NEETs are degree holders (Alcoforado et al., 2018; Frias et al., 2020).

Unquestionably, the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the difficulties faced by young people in their transition to the job market. Knowing the occupational sectors in which the two young women had worked in the pre-pandemic period (tourism and commerce), it is easy to establish a link between their immediate dismissal in the wake of the pandemic and the main challenges and ramifications faced by the Portuguese labour market. The most alarming consequences of the pandemic crisis affected young people with intermediate qualifications and precarious work contracts, especially temporary contracts⁶ in tourism and the support services sector, resulting in a strong increase in youth unemployment, compounded by the fact that only half of those affected benefited from unemployment protection measures (Eurofound, 2021). In this respect, we observe that a significant proportion of young people work based on short-term, unstable work placements, often in informal economy settings; such young people are particularly vulnerable as their position on labour market is fragile, their work arrangements prevent access to employment protection measures (such as unemployment benefits), and their medium and long-term individual and family projects are hindered (Albuquerque, 2014).

The study of the transition to adulthood, especially the transition from education to employment, should not be limited to an analysis of dynamics and trajectories between educational/training and the labour market, as other relevant aspects are also involved in the comprehensive development of individuals. Therefore, it is crucial to identify and explore young people's uses of time and space and the relations they establish with the communities in which they live in terms of resources and activities available to them.

Regarding the activities undertaken by young people, even if the time spent with friends is considerable, it is important to reflect on whether the use of time contributes to promoting the desired momentum for proactive and dynamic job-seekers, or whether, on the contrary, it propels discouragement, frustration and even 'escape' from reality, whereby young people choose passive activities, such as watching television or surfing the Internet. In other words, the question is whether the framing of time in this form of schedule, which involves a reduction of other moments/times of quality and of more relevance to the personal development

⁶ According to Eurostat, in 2020, Portugal was the fourth country with the largest proportion of young people with temporary work contracts (43.7%).

of young people, is perhaps a source of their conditioning (or even dependence), blocking their potential to achieve their aspirations (Munné & Codina, 2002).

It also seems important to discuss the choices young people were making in terms of the places they frequented, especially because they did not regularly visit venues essential for their personal, cultural and civic development, such as museums, libraries and cultural or recreational associations, which showed low average visits in the questionnaire. We need to ask some serious questions: Does this tendency hinder access to opportunities and contact networks vital for young people's personal development in view of their current life circumstances? Does this simply result from their lack of interest and motivation? Or is external action perhaps needed to boost these venues so as to respond to the interests, needs and expectations of young people? How can local spaces become more attractive and encourage young people's visits, in what may perhaps be additional support in transition through a concerted local strategy?

All these questions imply the need to redefine these resources to make them conducive to opportunities for development and learning across spaces and throughout life, especially for young people who are not integrated with important social subsystems and are therefore more susceptible to social exclusion. Given this, we underline the importance of establishing a collaborative network dedicated to a common mission: to enhance the construction of a setting truly committed to the success of people's life paths, preferably interdependent ones, achieved by transforming life contexts and increasing personal, social and professional development opportunities for the citizens, given their many diverse life circumstances.

Recent technological changes and the gradual shift to a new digital era have transformed social interactions, both in terms of access to inexhaustible information resources and in terms of communication. New communication technologies and their advancement have a decisive influence on the behaviour of individuals, directly influencing how they interact with others and how they experience and use space and time, guided by information available everywhere and at any time. The intersection between the findings and indicators in other studies is evident, showing certain trends related to gender and age variables, alongside the exponential use of the Internet on the global scale.

Social media have been gaining a foothold in the preferences of individuals, especially the younger ones, and as they grow older they tend to use these platforms less. Similarly, a markedly female profile surfaces from these new social communication structures, since the proportion of female Internet users tends to be exceeded that of male users (OberCom, 2010; OberCom, 2014). Irrespective of the gender trends observed, assuming that the social media are a mere entertainment is a reductive view of their potential in the current dynamics insofar that such platforms, together with purpose-dedicated job search websites, are essential mechanisms for disseminating opportunities at the critical moment of job-seeking, not only because they post job advertisements (of recruitment agencies and companies)

but also because they help construct networks of contacts with a large number of people and organisations (Requena, 1991).

Although we have analysed young people's choices using new time and space, we cannot fail to include the influence of certain external (social, cultural, political and economic) factors in the equation, as they inevitably bring about changes in the perception and experience of this time/space. Therefore, we propose further investigations aimed to produce a deeper understanding of the relationship between young people and the different portions of the area, taking into account the impact of the dynamics of cooperation on their transitions.

The participants' answers to the open question of the questionnaire, concerning the reasons why they rejected the possibility of engaging in education/training, point to the crucial aspect which lies in the upgrading of vocational training so as to eliminate standardised offers, which are all too often mismatched with young people's expectations, talents and interests, and hopefully adapt them to young people's real and the current market needs. At the same time, inconsistencies in the policies in place (especially in terms of social protection) must be pointed out, because although the idea of lifelong learning is acknowledged, the fact is that support for such endeavours exhibits flaws and limitations, translating into a lack of substantive assistance and thus preventing young people from benefiting from opportunities, regardless of their position in the life cycle (Albuquerque, 2014). In their autobiographical accounts, the young women's anxieties were also connected to the climate of insecurity pervading their current lives and to the difficulty in considering new pathways for an unpredictable future, as they were doubtful and uncertain about investing in something that might not significantly improve their employability and/or help them regain their place on the job market, consistent with their occupational and personal aspirations.

This paper shows and emphasises the importance of comprehensive studies on how young people experience such situations (and their relation with other indicators) with a view enhancing reflection on multidisciplinary policies informed by criteria other than unemployment statistics (Albuquerque, 2014). We need to listen to young people and their families in order to assess their difficulties, needs, expectations and interests.

Conclusion

Young people are involved in a prolonged process of constructing and conquering the time and space of trust in which they can participate; in doing so, they are unequivocally susceptible to a wide range of influences. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have corroborated this permeability both by impacting the course of young people's lives and by breeding risks for the social cohesion of the communities in which they live.

The collapse of what was once normal transition, rooted in a traditional, sequential and well-defined path has caused a surge of precariousness and uncertainty that force young people to constantly re(create) themselves, negotiating among the many distinct models of transition to adulthood and constructing highly tangled pathways that oscillate between moments of activity and inactivity throughout their life cycles. Young people exhibit some anxiety about the future as a result of the current insecurity and unpredictable trajectories and, of course, articulate their inability to assert their beliefs in designing and building the foundations for achieving their life projects.

Looking at education and work as pathways to a successful transition to adulthood, one can easily note the devastating effects for young people who find themselves in a 'holding pattern,' given their withdrawal from these fundamental social subsystems. The unpredictability of today's life paths, the breakdown of the boundaries between education and work and the ambiguous alterations of employment, unemployment and training situations throughout people's working lives severely constrain the organisation of individual temporalities. In this sense, lifelong education is of utmost importance as a necessary cornerstone for an uninterrupted re(creation) of knowledge essential to comprehend a permanently evolving society in its different contexts.

Recognising that multiple factors contribute to a NEET situation (and that young people are affected by other problems as well), it is hardly enough to conclude that young people must be motivated, knowledgeable and experienced to pursue illusory employability, not least because this widespread and ingrained word, which means the "individual's ability to find space and be successful on the labour market" (Alcoforado et al., 2018, p. 5), seems to contribute to the neglect of other factors, encompassing opportunities, resources and surrounding circumstances. It is, therefore, crucial to abandon the fractured, fragmented and one-sided views that only call for often conditioned attitudes, values and individual choices of young people; instead, all the structural constraints and limitations of the educational and economic systems must be brought into the equation, affirming the importance of a coordinated approach that ensures strategic actions and effective public policies for the personal and professional development of individuals in a desirable combination of individual empowerment and contextual empowerment (Guerreiro et al., 2007).

Young people's attainment of the much desired freedom and independence clearly entails the construction of objective and targeted opportunity frameworks—integrated and holistic policies—capable of tearing down the structural barriers and ensuring the achievement of realistic and challenging life projects. At the same time, such frameworks/policies should help consolidate the support networks compatible with a fairer and more consistent transition to adulthood (Albuquerque, 2014). In other words, it is important to understand that any self-empowerment policy will always fall short of achieving its objectives if it is not accompanied by

plans for overcoming structural obstacles in order to promote the attainment of individual aspirations and freedom of decision.

The research study, which has been partly reported in this paper, helped us find out and understand how young people experienced challenges and reinvented themselves to reshape and recreate their ways of life, overshadowed by insecurities and uncertainty fuelled by the recurrence of these situations. Hopefully, this contribution will encourage a rethinking of guidance and counselling interventions for the construction of public policies that are truly committed to facilitating young people's life paths. Undeniably, any intervention must place young people at the centre of the construction of their future paths, in close articulation with policies based on the context, enriching life spaces, diversifying their experiences and challenging them culturally.

It is clear that our complex new era and the asynchrony of life cycles and the transition to adulthood call for a multidimensional approach that supports coherence and consistency in adapting to and negotiating employment-promoting policies without overlooking educational, family and social protection systems. In pursuing these aims, we must overcome limitations and commit to reflecting, dialoguing, planning and taking concerted action in various areas—from economy and education to society and culture—for the sake of promoting employment, education and lifelong learning and supporting the achievement of life projects (starting a family, renting a flat, etc.), rather than falling back on piecemeal, remedial and anachronistic measures to deal with the idiosyncrasies of today's society.

Without the rigour and commitment to this work, based on the reliable knowledge of the needs, difficulties and interests of young people in the area, any political intervention on the European, national or local level will be emptied of its potential for building adjusted and effective solutions to the increment of successful transitions. Regarding the area as a learning and development environment, it is essential to bolster the networking dynamics, identify and understand the real needs and barriers faced by young people and mobilise local partners that can respond to these needs and are willing to carry out the mission of opening horizons.

To conclude, we firmly believe that a joint intervention into strategic policies and actions for young people, anchored in a holistic view of life cycles, will unravel the knots that stifle the potential of these individuals. From the point of view of life design, whose practices are intended 'to help people in their construction of the self,' it is essential to ensure respect for the active role of young people in developing realistic and challenging life projects (Guichard, 2018, p. 268). We reaffirm the importance of local policies, granting the state, markets and communities the power to co-create initiatives for consolidating effective connections between the different structures that converge to fulfil a common mission—to transform the life paths of our young people by ensuring favourable conditions for their development and the full integration of rights, duties, opportunities and freedoms.

References

- Alberich, N., Fabra, S., Sala, M. & Serracant, P. (2020). *Youth, COVID-19 and inequalities: Current and prospective situation. Part I: Situation and needs of youth*. Agència Catalana de la Joventut.
- Albuquerque, C. P. (2014). Transição para a adultez: dessincronização do ciclo de vida e (in) adequação das políticas de proteção social. In A.C. Fonseca (Ed.), *Jovens Adultos* (pp. 317–43). Almedina.
- Alcoforado, L., Frias, M., Cordeiro, A. R., Fonseca, A. C., & Oliveira, M. (2018). Educação e (não) Trabalho. Indagações sobre uma relação sempre controversa, a propósito dos jovens que não estudam nem trabalham. *Cadernos de Pesquisa: Pensamento Educacional* 13(34), 38–58.
- Amado, J., & Ferreira, S. (2014). A entrevista na investigação em educação. In J. Amado (Ed.), *Manual de Investigação Qualitativa em Educação* (pp. 207–32). Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Contrafogos: táticas para enfrentar a invasão neoliberal*. Jorge Zahar Editor.
- Brenner, A. K., Dayrrel, J., & Carrano, P. (2008). Juventude brasileira: culturas do lazer e do tempo livre. In N. Teles (Ed.), *Um olhar sobre o jovem no Brasil/Ministério da Saúde, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz* (pp. 29–44). Editora do Ministério da Saúde.
- Bynner, J., & Parsons, S. (2002). Social exclusion and the transition from school to work: The case of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60(2), 289–309. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1868>
- Elias, N., & Dunning, E. (1992). *A busca da excitação*. Difel.
- Eurofound (2012). *NEETs: Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1254en.pdf
- Eurofound (2021). *Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20036en.pdf
- Fonseca, A. C. (2014). Transição para a vida adulta: o papel do autocontrolo. In A.C. Fonseca (Ed.), *Jovens Adultos* (pp. 133–62). Almedina.
- Franch, M. (2002). Nada para fazer? Um estudo sobre atividades no tempo livre entre jovens de periferia no Recife. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População* 19(2), 117–32.
- Frias, M., Alcoforado, L., & Cordeiro, A. R. (2020). O Caso dos Jovens Nem Nem: novas trajetórias, novos desafios. *Práxis Educacional* 16(42), 186–216.
- Furlong, A. & Cartmel, F. (2004). *Vulnerable young men in fragile labour markets: Employment, unemployment and the search of long-term security*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Guerreiro, M. D., & Abrantes, P. (2004). Moving into adulthood in a southern European country: Transitions in Portugal. *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 3(3), 191–209. <https://doi.org/10.1386/pjss.3.3.191/1>

- Guerreiro, M. D., & Abrantes, P. (2007). *Transições incertas. Os jovens perante o trabalho e a família*. Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego.
- Guerreiro, M. D., Abrantes, P., & Pereira, I. (2007). Transições na juventude. Percursos e descontinuidades. In M.D. Guerreiro, A. Torres, & L. Capucha (Eds.), *Portugal no contexto Europeu, Volume III, Quotidiano e qualidade de vida* (pp. 239–62). Celta Editora.
- Guichard, J. (2018). Life design dialogue: A new form of career and life design interventions. *Studia Poradoznawcze/Journal of Counselling*, 7, 267–304. <https://doi.org/10.34862/sp.2018.2>
- ILO (2020a). *Global employment trends for youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*. International Labour Office.
- ILO (2020b). *Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 4th edition. Updated estimates and analysis*. International Labour Organisation.
- Mauritti, R. (2002). Padrões de vida dos estudantes universitários nos processos de transição para a vida adulta. *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 39, 85–116.
- Munné, F., & Codina, N. (2002). Ocio y tiempo libre: Consideraciones desde una perspectiva psicossocial. *Revista Licere* 5(1), 59–72.
- OECD (2016). *Society at a glance 2016: OECD social indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264261488-en>
- OECD (2021). *Education at a glance 2021: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>
- O'Guinn, T., & Shrum, L. (1997). The role of television in the construction of consumer reality. *Journal of Consumer Research* 23(4), 278–94.
- OberCom. Observatório da Comunicação (2010). *A utilização de Internet em Portugal 2010*. Publicações OberCom.
- OberCom. Observatório da Comunicação (2014). *A Internet em Portugal. Sociedade em rede 2014*. Publicações OberCom.
- Pais, J. M. (2001). *Ganchos, tachos e biscates: Jovens, trabalho e futuro*. Âmbar.
- Passeggi, M.C. (2021). Counseling: The dialogical art of awakening the autobiographical subject. *Studia Poradoznawcze / Journal of Counselling* 10, 247–61. <https://doi.org/10.34862/sp.2021.1>
- Passeron, J.-C. (1990). Biographies, flux, itinéraires, trajectoires. *Revue Française de Sociologie* 31(1), 2–22.
- Penef, J. (1990). *La méthode biographique*. Armand Colin.
- Reiko, K. (2006). Youth employment in Japan's economic recovery: 'Freeters' and 'NEETs'. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 4 (5), 1–5. <https://apjif.org/-Kosugi-Reiko/2022/article.pdf>
- Requena F. (1991). *Redes sociales y mercado de trabajo. Elementos para una teoría del capital relacional*. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
- Schoon, I. (2014). Parental worklessness and the experience of NEET among their offspring: Evidence from the longitudinal study of young people in England (LSYPE). *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies* 5(2), 129–50. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14301/llcs.v5i2.279>
- Smith, C., Christoffersen, K., Davidson, H., & Herzog, P. S. (2011). *Lost in transitions: The dark side of emerging adulthood*. Oxford University Press.

- Sousa, B., & Fonseca, A.C. (2014). Tornar-se adulto em Portugal no início do século XXI: elementos para um retrato. In A.C. Fonseca (Ed.), *Jovens adultos* (pp. 65–86). Almedina.
- Sue, R. (1999). Dinâmica dos tempos sociais e processo educativo. In P. Carré & P. Caspar (Eds.), *Tratado das ciências e técnicas da formação* (pp. 103–20). Instituto Piaget.
- Xerez, R., Pereira, E., & Cardoso, F.D. (2019). *Habitação própria em Portugal numa perspetiva intergeracional*. Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Zuccotti, C., & O'Reilly, J. (2019). Ethnicity, gender and household effects on becoming NEET: An intersectional analysis. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(3), 351–73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14301/llcs.v5i2.279>