Youth, family change and welfare arrangements: Is the South still so different?*

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Introduction

A paramount mechanism for prompting social change is the succession of generations with different views about the world (Mannheim, 1928). This basic tenet of social sciences establishes that social change becomes a possibility when members of new cohorts come into “fresh contact” with the accumulated cultural heritage. Young people have an “elasticity of mind” that older people have lost. Largely static and slow changing institutions may experience rapid and dramatic transformation as a result of the “collective impulses” of a new generation predisposed to new modes of thought.

In this paper, we examine the extent to which some of the features that cluster South European countries into a unique and distinctive welfare regime are blurring, prompted by changes in the interface between new attitudes, expectations and practices. Welfare arrangements in South European countries --Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain-- has traditionally been characterised by the central role played by the family and its interpenetration in all areas of welfare production and distribution, particularly as regards income support and care services. The mode of interaction by the family with the state and public bodies, on one hand, and the institutions of the civil society, on the other, has often compelled the functioning of the Mediterranean welfare in a distinctive manner. A strong household micro-solidarity has provided high levels of self-perceived well-being. Within families the role of women has been pivotal, as they have often cared for children or older relatives at the expense of erratic careers or full withdrawal from the labour market.

Since recent times, the Mediterranean welfare regime, and in particular its capacity to perform as a social “shock absorber” and a generous supplier of welfare activities in the informal domain, is facing challenges generated by new lifestyles and emerging social needs of young generations. In this new scenario, the various South European countries are caught in the quandary of either maintaining deep-seated cultural arrangements or promoting welfare structuring to accommodate new demands and aspirations. We contend that the pace and scope of social transformations differs across countries, thus increasing the degree of internal variation within the Mediterranean regime and, quite significantly, intra-variation within each state. In some countries and sub-national territories, political actors have found new windows of opportunity to adapt public welfare structures to the new realities of the family.

* According to Esping-Andersen’s ironic reference to the Four Laws of Sociology (1993), “Everything is different in the South”. The other laws are: (1) Some do, some don’t, (3) Nothing ever works in India, and (4) There are no laws in Sociology.

The next section sets out the main characteristics and welfare rationale of the Mediterranean typology. Background examination of the Mediterranean arrangements serve the purpose of setting points of reference for subsequent analyses carried out in the following sections. Formal familism, female employment and care are singled out as three representative areas which can longitudinally provide data on the dynamics of continuity and change in the Southern European countries under examination. Concerning Mediterranean axiological convictions towards family life, analyses of the available empirical evidence are carried out to trace changes over time and across generations. Data is mostly related to family social values and preferences for alternative welfare arrangements. Particular attention is paid to the increasing female participation in the labour market, which is analyzed in the subsequent section. It is to be noted that, as an epiphenomenon, Mediterranean 'superwomen' are gradually disappearing in parallel with a higher female participation in the formal labour market. This process of female labour activation is already having a great impact in all activities concerned with the type of care traditionally carried out within Mediterranean households. Concluding remarks stress the need to pay attention in future research to ongoing societal changes which are bound to have knock-on consequences for Southern European welfare as we have known it until now.

Characteristics and rationale of Mediterranean welfare

The distinctiveness of the Mediterranean Welfare Model with respect to other macro-areas of Europe has often been highlighted in rich historical and sociological accounts (Sarasa and Moreno 1995; Ferrera 1996, Petmesidou, 1996). For a long time, the Mediterranean has been identified as an area where family and family ties were strong when compared to family systems in other parts of Europe. Such differences have deep historical roots, which according to some accounts can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Despite local variations, South Europeans have tended to follow distinctive practices during their life-cycle, such as late emancipation from parental home, frequent co-residence with parents after marriage, or spatial proximity between the homes of the elderly and their offspring. These practices have kept family loyalties strong and have sustained inter-generational micro-solidarities. A child receives support and protection until he or she leaves home for good, normally for marriage, even when providing such support involves the self-sacrifice of parents (especially of mothers, from whom material and sentimental care is generously expected). Grown-up children are also supported at different stages. They can rely on parents for financial support to engage in costly investments (e.g. purchasing a house or setting a business venture), or for assistance in childcare (Jurado Guerrero 2001; Iglesias de Ussel *et al.* 2010). Families in the Mediterranean European societies also protect their younger members from economic and employment downturns, absorbing part of the effect of high unemployment.

Somewhat in return, when parents face transition to old age, children are expected to help. It is usual to see grown-up children monitor the health of the parents and paying regular weekly or daily visits to them. When prolonging residential independence is no longer feasible for the elderly, living with their children is the solution that is taken for granted within the kin group and the broader community. In Spain it has always been said that the only truly poor person is one who has no family. The intergenerational

solidarity is a strong social norm which seldom breaks down. It is shared by the society as a whole and learned at very young ages (Reher 1998).

The cultural and societal relevance of such practices and beliefs has no parallel in Central and Northern Europe, where family ties tend to be much weaker and the capacity of the family to function as a “shock absorber” is limited. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, some authors have noted that, despite rapid economic and demographic transformations, historical gaps between family systems largely persists (Jurado and Naldini 1996, Naldini 2003, Gal 2010). For some other observers, the dividing line between strong and weak family systems is reinforced by the religious cleavage between the more “individualistic” Protestant ethics and the more “communalistic” Catholic and Orthodox ones (Greeley 1989). In South European societies, churches have exerted their influence on the structuring and functioning of social life, particularly as regards family matters. Both the doctrines of the Catholic and Orthodox churches have traditionally placed heavy emphasis in the importance of marriage, family ties and family responsibilities for the well-being of individuals and the cohesion of social order. The cultural hegemony and influence exercised by both Catholic and Orthodox Churches were mainly responsible for delays in law reforms undertaken in other countries several decades before, such as the recognition of civil marriage, the rights of out-of-wedlock children, divorce laws, or abortion. Religious traditions have also favoured particular gendered models of care provision, where women take on full responsibility for the domestic realm.

Until recently, the strong institutionalisation of marriage in the Mediterranean world accounted for lower divorce and cohabitation rates than those found elsewhere in Europe. In Italy the divorce law was not introduced until 1970, in Portugal until 1975 and in Spain until 1981. In all these countries, ‘no fault’ divorce was only implemented a few years ago. In this context, women who decided to get divorced (and their children) often faced stigmatization and economic hardships, which discouraged many others to follow their path. This has had a big impact in the maintenance of the proportion of single parent households at very low levels. In such conditions, single parenthood was usually brought about by the death of one parent (and seldom by divorce or out-of-wedlock birth). When it occurred, extended family networks often intervened to assist “broken” families whenever needed.

Within households, the role of women has traditionally been pivotal. Women have often cared for children or older relatives at the expense of erratic careers, or full withdrawal from the labour market, especially after the birth of the first child. Even the fewer women participating in the formal labour market were expected to take on alone—or with the help of their mother or other female relatives—domestic and care-giving responsibilities. The male assumption of the ‘breadwinner’ rhetoric, together with the inclination of many women to maintain full control over the domestic domain, has too often discouraged males to get involved in domestic and care-giving activities. In these circumstances, working mothers have often been driven to hyperactivity. Such “superwomen” could only undertake demanding professional activities in the labour market if they were prepared to combine them with full unpaid caring work in households (Moreno 2004).

The existence of strong family support networks and the acceptance of care responsibilities by women has significant implications for the manners social risks and

needs are dealt with and, hence, upon the structuring and functioning of welfare states. The centrality of the family enables governments to rely on the family to meet the caring needs of their members and to guarantee their basic economic security, thus keeping political demand for public assistance rather low. Solidaristic expectations and resource pooling within the household have also deactivated demands for the de-segmentation of labour markets, where women and young people have traditionally operated as “outsiders” occupying less desirable jobs than male breadwinners, either in the informal economy, or under short-term contractual arrangements (Andreotti *et al.* 2001, Karamessini, 2008).

As a result of all these practices, beliefs and institutional arrangements, South European welfare has traditionally been shaped in a differential manner from other regimes. Mediterranean countries have generally been characterised by relatively low levels of social expenditure, weak state support for families, and overall limited success in alleviating poverty and overcoming social and economic disparities. Some authors argue that the fundamental joint characteristics of the Mediterranean regime still remain in place (Naldini 2003, Gal 2010). The empirical evidence gathered in this paper cast some doubts upon such a claim. Some of the distinctive features of the Mediterranean model may be changing, prompted by the rapid transformations of the family (at the level of institutions, beliefs and practices) that traditionally upheld the model of welfare arrangements. Crucial for this development is the emergence of new lifestyles and risks embodied in younger cohorts, and policy innovations to deal with them. The combination of risks and policy responses adopted across countries --and also within them-- has increased the inner variability in the Mediterranean welfare regime. In the next section, significant changes in family ties, practices and attitudes are examined with relation to female labour participation and the delivery of services and care within households. After sketching the contours of new welfare arrangements at the family micro-level of family, avenues of future social policy development in the Mediterranean are subsequently analysed.

Family transitions and societal change

Three areas of observation can be singled out as providing relevant evidence on the dynamics of continuity and change in Western Europe and EU-15: (1) formal familism, (2) female employment, and (3) care. In what follows, analyses of the available data are carried out not only as concerns transformations occurring on marriage, divorce, cohabitation or out-of-wedlock births, but also on those Mediterranean axiological convictions towards family life expressed by South Europeans.

(1) *Formal familism*

Family institutions change slowly, but when they do they are likely to prompt broader societal transformations with implications for other domains --cultural, economic, political--, particularly in the familistic Mediterranean regime. We pay attention to the structural alteration of the family as an institution and the social attitudes toward new family arrangements. New types of households (such as single parent, cohabiting couples and same-sex partners) are increasingly present in Southern Europe countries, although they were illegal or stigmatized only a few decades ago.

Southern families are smaller than they used to be. This is the result of the growing numbers of solo households, those with couples and no children (or with only one child) and the decreasing number of households where three or more generations live together. Marriage has been exposed to great change in Southern Europe. Crude marriage rates have declined all over the OECD countries, but this decline has been especially acute in Southern Europe.¹ Italy, Portugal and Spain show rates under 4 per 1.000, far below the OECD average of 5. This is noticeable in countries where crude marriage rates had traditionally stood above this average. The exception is Greece where this indicator still stands at 5.12, next to the OECD average. South Europeans marry much less, and a decreasing number of them rely on religious ceremonies to consecrate marriage.

Table 1. Marriage rates

	Marriage per 1000		Change 1998-2009
	1998	2009	
Greece	5.12	5.25	0.13
Italy	4.92	4.01	-0.91
Spain	5.21	3.76	-1.45
Portugal	6.57	3.8	-2.77
Belgium	4.35	4.01	-0.34
Germany	5.09	4.62	-0.47
France	4.64	3.9	-0.74
Austria	4.91	4.24	-0.67
Netherlands	5.54	4.36	-1.18
UK	5.21	4.4	-0.81
Ireland	5.52	5.17	-0.35
Sweden	3.57	5.08	1.51
Finland	4.66	5.59	0.93
Denmark	6.55	5.96	-0.59
Norway	5.27	5.03	-0.24

Source: OECD Family Database 2011

Practices such as divorce and cohabitation, that were very uncommon in South European countries, have proliferated lately, especially among younger cohorts. The progress of divorce can be clearly illustrated by the Spanish and Portuguese examples. The increase in crude divorce rates in both countries is unparalleled across Europe. In 2008, divorce rates in both countries already stood out among the highest in Europe, well above the other South European countries, where traditional patterns show limited change.

¹ The crude marriage rate is the number of marriages formed each year as a ratio to 1.000 people. This measure disregards other formal cohabitation contracts and informal partnerships.

Table 2. Crude divorce rates

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	Var. 1985-2008
Greece	0.8	0.6	1,0	1,0	1.2	1.2	0.4
Italy	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.6
Spain	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.4	1.9
Portugal	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.9	2.2	2.5	1.6
Belgium	1.9	2,0	3.5	2.6	2.9	3.3	1.4
Germany	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.3	0.2
France	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.5	2.1	0.2
Austria							
Netherlands	2.3	1.9	2.2	2.2	2,0	2,0	-0.3
UK	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.5	-0.3
Ireland				0.7	0.8		
Sweden	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.3	-0.1
Finland	1.8	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	0.7
Denmark	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.7	-0.1
Norway	2,0	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.1	0.1

Source: OECD Family Database 2011

Cohabiting couples are significantly fewer in South European countries when compared with the prevalence of such an arrangement in other EU countries. In Greece only 1.7% of people 20 years or older were cohabiting in 2011. In Italy, 2% were in such a cohabitating situation, 3.3%, in Spain, and 4.1% in Portugal. In all four countries figures were well below the OECD average (6.8%). But cohabitation has become more frequent among newly formed couples in all four Mediterranean countries. Considering the proportion of partnered young people who lived with their partner before marriage, differences between the young and older groups are remarkable. Cohabitation is becoming the marker for entry into first union for many Greek, Spanish and Portuguese young couples (convergence in Italy is significantly slower). This does not exclude subsequent marriage if partners decide to consolidate they relationship and to have children.

Table 3. Proportion of people who lived with a partner before marriage

	18-34	35-64	65 and over
Greece	49,3	21,8	5,0
Italy	24,2	14,7	4,7
Spain	45,2	26,9	2,7
Portugal	34,3	18,4	4,9
Belgium	71,1	36,7	14,9
Germany	49,7	46,8	18,5
France	85,4	59,6	18,7
Austria	75	68,8	32,7
Netherlands	69,7	56,9	16,3
UK	69,9	54,9	11,2
Ireland	75,4	36,6	10,2
Sweden	80,2	88,3	48,8
Finland	94	78,3	32,8
Denmark	89,6	90,9	42
Norway	64,5	70,5	25,6

Source: EVS 2008

Alongside with the rise in cohabitation, there has been a significant increase in non marital childbearing, two developments that are closely related. Looking at table 4 it appears clear that there have been considerable increases in the proportions of births occurring outside marriage across Europe. Mediterranean countries show different developments. While Spain has converged with Central and North European countries, Greece --and to a lesser extent-- Italy stand clearly behind. Portugal, which traditionally had a high number of births out-of-wedlock, still shows figures that place the country above the rest of South European countries.

Table 4. Births out of wedlock (1990, 1997, and 2008)

	1990	1997	2008	Var. 1990-2008
Greece	3.7	3.5	5.9	2.2
Italy	4.3	7	20.7	16.4
Spain	3.9	13.1	31.7	27.8
Portugal	9.2	19.6	36.1	26.9
Belgium		21	43.2	
Germany	11.9	18	32.1	20.2
France	11.4		51.6	40.2
Austria		28.8	38.8	
Netherlands	4.1	19.2	41.2	37.1
UK	11.5	36.7	45.4	33.9
Ireland	5	26.8	32.8	27.8
Sweden	39.7	54.1	54.7	15
Finland	13.1	36.5	40.7	27.6
Denmark	33.2	45.1	46.2	13

Source: OECD Family Database

A complementary manner of assessing the strength of the institutional dimension of family life is to examine the development of new values and attitudes regarding family institutions. Certainly, when asked how important family in their lives is, a large majority of South Europeans invariably consider family relationships very important. Most of them also hold favourable views of marriage, but in this particular case, some noteworthy differences emerge. According to European Value Survey data, in Spain and Portugal the proportion of people who think “marriage is an outdated institution” comes close to proportions found in Central European countries. In Italy and Greece, negative attitudes toward marriage are less common. Young people are more likely to express negative views of marriage: 41.5% of Spaniards under 35 think marriage is an outdated institution, in contrast to 14.5% of people aged 65 or older. A smaller but still significant gap between generations is also found in Portugal.

Table 5. Marriage is an outdated institution (percentage that agrees)

	1990	2008		
	Total	Total	18-34	65 and over
Greece		20.9	27.5	10.6
Italy	13.5	18.7	21.7	12.7
Spain	15.1	32.4	41.5	14.5
Portugal	23.2	30.8	33.5	14.3
Belgium	22.5	33.9	32.8	29.9
Germany	30	29.2	40.4	11.9
France	29.1	35.2	27.4	35.4
Austria		30.2	39.4	19.3
Netherlands	21.2	27.5	26.7	23
UK	17.6	23.1	27.3	16.1
Ireland	9.9	22.6	23.5	16.5
USA	8			
Australia		17.5		
Sweden	14.1	20.7	24.2	14.8
Finland	12.5	14.9	22	3.5
Denmark	18	13.4	16.8	8.1
Norway	10.1	19.4	22.8	16

Source: EVS 2008.

Attitudes toward divorce and cohabitation have also changed significantly. Most South Europeans justify divorce or find cohabitation as perfectly “normal”. Table 6 shows the percentage of people within the two extreme cohorts (the young and the elderly) that justify divorce in a broad array of circumstances², the proportion who agree that people can live together without getting married (either agree or strongly agree), and the proportion of people who disagree with the statement, “long-term relationships are necessary to be happy”. Spain stands out as the country in the Mediterranean cluster where the percentage of people who find divorce and cohabitation acceptable, and of those who do not think long-term relationships are necessary to be happy, is higher. Young cohorts in Spain have clearly developed attitudes that are more similar to those found in Central and Northern European countries than to those found in other Mediterranean countries (especially Italy and Greece). This is clearly seen regarding attitudes towards divorce. As much as 58% of Spaniards under 35 years of age express high levels of tolerance towards divorce, a percentage which is only higher in three Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland and Denmark).

² Respondents are asked if they justify divorce in a scale, where 1 means never and 10 always. We draw out responses from 8 to 10.

Table 6. Attitudes toward divorce, cohabitation and long-term relationships, 2008

	Divorce		Cohabitation		Long-term relationships	
	18-34	65 and over	18-34	65 and over	18-34	65 and over
Greece	41.3	19.5	82.6	46.4	2.0	1.4
Italy	23.9	9.8	65.2	33.8	17.5	8
Spain	58.3	27.4	91.2	64.6	35	16
Portugal	34.3	26.7	87.5	67.2	20.6	7.8
Belgium	27.3	13.7	93.8	74.9	41.2	17.3
Germany	46.5	25.7	89.6	61.2	23	11.5
France	46.9	26.2	96.4	83.4	27.9	14.3
Austria	43.2	15.3	81.7	78	26.4	17
Netherlands	43.2	22.4	85.7	82.8	73.3	54.4
UK	30.0	20.4	86.7	64.9	42.1	29.2
Ireland	32.7	13.4	86.8	47.6	39.0	30.6
Sweden	72.4	72.0	93.4	94.1	42.7	38.5
Finland	62	40.9	93.4	66.2	60.9	33.1
Denmark	61.7	50.0	97.3	92.0	56.5	34
Norway	48.7	35.4	92.2	77.0	38.5	25.5

* Divorce: respondents are asked if they justify divorce. 1 Means never, 10 always. We represent people who give values from 8-10.

**Cohabitation: percentage of people who agree with the statement "It's all right to live together without being married".

***Long-term relationships: percentage of people who disagree with the statement "long term relationships are necessary to be happy".

Source: EVS 2008.

Favourable views of cohabitation are found among most young people across the Mediterranean cluster: 91% of Spaniards under 35 agree that “it is all right to live together without getting married” (68% strongly agree with the statement). In the opposite end, only 25.2% of people aged 65 and older in Spain strongly agree. In other South European countries, gaps between generations are found as well, but are less profound. In the same vein, the gap between generations in the percentage of people who disagree with the statement “long-term relationships are necessary to be happy” is higher in Spain than in other South European countries. Altogether, South European countries display a significant degree of variation in attitudes toward marriage and practices related to the management of couple relationships, with Spaniards clearly standing out as an “outlier” within the Mediterranean world. Portugal situates somewhere in between the Spanish case and the Italian and Greek cases. Likewise, Spain’s young cohorts express least disapproval attitudes towards single motherhood across Europe).

Table 7. Percentage of respondents who disapprove single motherhood

	1981	1990	1999	2008		
	Total			Total	18-34	65 and over
Greece			42.2	45.6	38.4	63.4
Italy		43.2	40.4	54.8	46.6	68.7
Spain	38.1	23.4	17.9	14	11	29.4
Portugal		39.5	50.2	45.4	32.5	61.9
Belgium	32.3	34.8	36.5	31	62.4	36.7
Germany		36.3	31.4	36.4	29.6	19.9
France	21.4	26.3	27.5	32.7	30	42.5
Austria		27.6	25.7	33.4	29.9	38.5
Netherlands	42.3	45.5	29	34.1	38.5	42.9
UK		47.8	38.3	38.7	26.1	59.3
Ireland		60.8	35.8	28.2	21.1	46.8
USA	57.8		44.4			
Australia						
Sweden	28.5	46.8	39.9	48.1	45.7	45.6
Finland		20.1	26.4	15.3	11.7	21.2
Denmark		20	36.5	22.7	21.7	30.2
Norway	34.1	47.4	52.8	31.1	23.8	41.2

Source: EVS 2008

A second institutional dimension related to family life which has undergone dramatic changes is childrearing. Children are increasingly scarce in developed industrial societies, often in the same countries with high fertility rates some decades ago. The decline in fertility rates reflects constraints for families who intend to have children, such as uncertain job prospects or difficulties in combining work and family life. But beyond such considerations, having children is no longer seen as a duty or as a cultural imperative to be fulfilled in Southern Europe. The percentage of older Italians (65 years and older) who agree with the statement “It is duty toward society to have children “ is 2.8 times higher than among young people (18 to 34 years old), 2.3 times higher in Spain, and 2.2 times in Greece. Similarly, the percentage of people agreeing with the statement “women need children in order to be fulfilled” varies across age groups: it is 1.95 times higher among older Spaniards than among young ones and 1.8 times higher in Portugal. Young South European families have entered a new scenario, where having children has become more a decision to be taken by the partners involved, than being the result of compelling social norms and cultural expectations.

Table 8. Attitudes toward childrearing

	It is a duty to have children		Women need children to be fulfilled	
	18-34	65 and over	18-34	65 and over
Greece	32.2	69.3	71.7	89
Italy	14.7	38.5	50.5	68.5
Spain	23.6	55	35.4	61.9
Portugal	36.3	57.1	42.4	76.2
Belgium	9.5	31.6	25.8	42.3
Germany	22.9	73.2	41.5	65.2
France	10	43.4	52.6	76
Austria	21.9	34.3	32.8	45.9
Netherlands	1.7	8.3	4.4	12.4
UK	13.4	10.5	15.3	22.5
Ireland	19.5	28.6	15.5	29.4
Sweden	6	6.1	6.8	7.6
Finland	9.7	14.3	6	
Denmark	12	22	72.3	84.6
Norway	13.7	16.2	17.3	14.3

Source: EVS 2008

(2) Female employment

A major change in the Mediterranean regimen relates to increasing women's participation in the formal labour market (except for Portugal, where female enrolment rates had traditionally been high) (see Figure). This is having important implications for both care and support that families are able to provide to their dependent members, and creates new pressures for balancing work and family responsibilities.

A closer look at labour participation patterns across life-cycles in Table 9 reveals that female employment rates in Spain are similar to those found in Continental Europe and Britain and Ireland for those under 30 years (pre-maternal years for most of them). Such rates are significantly lower for women on their 30s and early 40s (in parallel with child rearing commitments), and they are notably lower in older ages. The underdevelopment of social services that can help families to balance work and family responsibilities ought to be regarded as a crucial factor accounting for the low enrolment rates in older ages.

Dual-earner families have proliferated in all Mediterranean countries. Percentages for all four countries were close to OECD-21 average in 2008 (around 57%) with that of Portugal significantly higher (63%) (EU LFS, 2008). A singular feature of many of these new families is that both partners work full time, posing thus severe difficulties for balancing work and care responsibilities in these families (Moreno 2006). Such difficulties are especially notorious for dual-earner couples with children. Approximately, 90% of children in dual-earner couples in Portugal and Greece live in households where both parents work full time. In Spain and Italy, this type of arrangements based in full-time work is significantly lower (around 60%), but still much higher than the proportions found in northern European countries, where part-time work is common in couples with children (especially among women).

Table 9. Female employment rates at different ages

	25-29	35-39	55-59	Maternal gap
Greece	63	65.4	33	-12.1
Italy	55.1	63	33.8	-11.1
Spain	72	66.7	38.1	-11.1
Portugal	72.3	79.4	52.5	-9.3
Belgium	75	74.1	38.8	-12.2
France	72.8	76.6	52.4	-12.7
Germany	68.9	74.3	58.9	-13.7
Austria	73.9	79.9	42.6	-12.7
Netherlands	82.1	78.7	54.7	-6.7
UK	72.9	73.6	63.9	-13.8
Ireland	78.7	67.4	47.2	-15
Sweden	75.8	84.4	77.7	2.8
Finland	73.6	79	70.1	-12.2
Denmark	79.4	84	73.8	-2.9
Norway	79.1	84.5	73.9	

* Maternal gap: difference between the employment rate of women 25-49 years old and the employment rate of mothers with children under 15.

Source: OECD Employment Database

In countries where young residential emancipation has traditionally been postponed until “finding” a suitable partner, the availability of two sources of income has become a requirement *sine qua non* for the couple to stand on their own two feet. Dual-earner families have proved to be the best strategy to purchase housing and a good deterrent against poverty in the early stages of the family cycle (Pavolini and Ranci 2008, Iglesias de Ussel *et al.* 2010). As in most of Southern European countries part-time job opportunities are comparatively scarce and often both partners strive to work full time.

Support for the dual earner model is well established in Mediterranean Europe. A large majority of Southern Europeans think that both partners should contribute to household income. More than 90% of the people across Southern Europe either “agree” or “strongly agree” with such a statement, a percentage that has not changed significantly since the early 90s. Favourable attitudes have always been strong in Portugal, where, as mentioned above, women employment rates have traditionally been high (Guerreiro *et al.*, 2009). In other Mediterranean countries commitment to the dual earner model is stronger today than twenty years ago: the percentage of people that strongly agree with the statement used in the European Value Survey has increased substantially when comparing responses in the 2008 wave with those given in the 1990 survey.

Table 10. Strong support for the dual-earner model

	1990	2008		
		Total	18-34	65 and over
Greece		38	38	41.2
Italy	23.8	28.1	28.8	32.8
Spain	28.4	43.9	47.9	31.4
Portugal	32.6	34.6	40.2	33.3
Belgium	28.6	45.6	42.9	42.3
Germany	12.9	38.4	45.1	30.6
France	37.5	58.3	57.1	62.6
Austria	30.3	34.2	36.1	29
Netherlands	8.1	8.7	8.1	11.6
UK	16.3	68.4	27	16.2
Ireland	14.9	30.8	29	24.8
Sweden	60.5	44.9		
Finland	28.4	23.4	30.7	15.5
Denmark	29.8	33.7	33.6	34.2
Norway		65.6	60.8	77

* Percentage who agree strongly with the statement: Husband and wife should contribute both to household income

Source: WVS 1990, EVS 2008

Although the percentage of Spanish women who just “agreed” with the statement “having a job was the best way for them to be independent” was already over 80% % in the 90s, in 2008 almost half of them showed “strong” agreement, bringing the proportion next to the top scores in Europe. In Greece this proportion is also quite high. In Italy, despite that many women agree with the statement (84.2%), less than a third “strongly agree”. In Portugal, somewhat oddly, the proportion has decreased (but it was already very high in 1990).

Table 11. Orientation towards employment, women

	1990	2008		
		Total	18-34	65 and over
Greece		43.2		
Italy	26.8	23.7	21.7	25.9
Spain	31.9	40.9	44.4	28.6
Portugal	51.5	28.3	29.7	16.4
Belgium	30.8	39.5	30.2	41.1
Germany		48.6		
France	41.6	55.5		
Austria	33.5	39.2	38.6	40.3
Netherlands	17.4	15.8	8.8	20.7
UK		11.6	15.2	10.7
Ireland	12.7	17.3	17.2	14.3
Sweden	40.4	27	19.5	31.1
Finland	21.9	10.5	11.7	5.1
Denmark	37.6	43.9	35.6	50
Norway		45.7	32	57.7

* Percentage of women who strongly agree with the statement: A job is the best way for women to be independent.

Source: WVS 1990, EVS 2008

About half of Mediterranean women find housewifery as fulfilling as having a paid job. The percentages in Southern Europe are not much different from those in other European countries (with the exception of Britain and Ireland or Finland, where the role is very well regarded). Women in younger cohorts attach low value to housewifery. The gap in attitudes between young and old women is around thirty point in Italy and Spain, and somewhat lower in Greece and Portugal.

Table 12. Attitudes toward the role of the housewife

	1990	2008		
		Total	18-34	65 and over
Greece		55.6	49.3	62.6
Italy	51.8	51.9	38.4	68.2
Spain	58.2	47.9	40.2	70.5
Portugal	45.2	46.6	44.6	53.3
Belgium	63.9	64.7	62.3	73.6
Germany		37.8	31.9	44.4
France	57.3	52	50.2	57.3
Austria	63.4	58	50.9	70.9
Netherlands	57.2	57.2	55.6	65.9
UK		68.5	67.8	78.8
Ireland	70.8	73.1	69.1	86.3
Sweden	62.5	46.6	37.5	57.4
Finland	55.4	78.4	72.6	85.9
Denmark	53.7	46.1	40.2	49.8
Norway	59	45.3	46.8	58.7

* Percentage who agree with the statement: Being a housewife is as fulfilling as having a paid job.

Source: EVS 1999 and 2008.

Unlike their mothers, a large amount of women in the younger cohorts have attained high education credentials, which feed professional aspirations that are incompatible with taking on the lion's share of domestic and caring responsibilities. Even those who have low education levels have increased their priorities towards a professional career. These labour-oriented women are reluctant to accept "superwomen" roles, in which they strive to manage "impossible situations" (Nicole-Drancourt 1989), where they are the main providers of household services for the family while they simultaneously carry on with their professional activities. As a result, care practices have changed substantially.

Not long before, many young couples transferred caring responsibilities to grandparents and older relatives, reinforcing thus the cultural bases of the model of "family and kin solidarity" in Southern Europe (Naldini 2003). But this strategy has its limits for a number of reasons. First, older *mater familias* available to take on caring roles are decreasing, as they are more prone to stay within the labour market and, thus, have less manoeuvrability to carry out demanding unpaid tasks for their daughters. Second, traditional arrangements display many sub-optimal features that leave family needs and expectations unfulfilled. The most obvious example is the growing gap between real and desired fertility. On average, women in their thirties in Spain, Italy or Greece have given birth to half the number of children that they ideally would like to have. Many will end up having fewer children than they would have wished (Marí-Klose and Marí-Klose 2006). Third, there is growing evidence showing that new "care deficits" in South European households are being met by new strategies of *commodification* of care work, although still within the limits of the household. Thus, recent studies have gathered evidence indicating that care is moving from the traditional realm of unpaid family

support to a grey area of poorly paid work performed mostly by female immigrant workers (Moreno-Fuentes and Bruquetas 2011).

(3) *Personal social services and family care*

The transition of Mediterranean societies to a new scenario where women have reduced their commitment to unpaid tasks in the household, poses challenges for the provision of services and care within the family. A first question that is frequently raised is to what extent men are devoting their time to activities in the domestic sphere, contributing in this manner to meet some of needs left unfulfilled by the decline of housewives' work. The available data concerning men's sharing of household work are fragmentary and do not validate definite answers. There is a lack of reliable time series about the uses of time within households across European countries. Table 13 reproduces data on the portion of time that women say their partners spend carrying out housework. Figures indicate the percentage of male partners who perform more than 25% of the total time devoted to such activities within the couple (drawn from the European Social Survey, Round 2). In other words, we estimate the proportion of male partners who cooperate significantly in domestic chores, despite that many of them may spend between 1/4 and half of the time (and therefore do less than their female partners). Two age groups are distinguished so that an assessment on the increase in the proportion of cooperative males can be established.

Table 13. Men who cooperate with their female partners, by age group

	18-44	45 and over
Greece	9.5	4.9
Italy		
Spain	29.9	14.9
Portugal	17	8.8
Belgium	32.2	32
Germany	26.6	31.6
France	33.2	24.8
Austria	22.7	29.9
Netherlands	29.7	29.8
UK	27.8	33.7
Ireland	20	17.8
Sweden	61.1	45
Finland	51.9	51.9
Denmark	47.2	47.5
Norway	43.5	43.9

* Female responses

** Men who take on more than 1/4 of the total housework time

Source: ESS 2004.

According to figures in Table 13, young Mediterranean males tend to be more "cooperative" than their older counterparts. The highest proportion of cooperative male

partners in Southern Europe is found in Spain. Close to one out of three young males in Spain cooperate with their female partners, as happens in Central Europe. Aggregate data across Europe seem to confirm findings of other studies conducted at the individual level. Likewise, the behaviour of men appear to be affected by the extent to which women are economically independent and hold non-traditional gender expectations (Davis and Greenstein 2004; Geist 2005). Countries where women have consolidated their “bargaining” capacity, as a result of their higher educational levels and better economic resources, tend to score higher in gender equality within the family sphere.

Individual factors do not necessarily account fully for the variance found across countries.³ As broader normative environments, national contexts matter may contribute to shape the propensity of men to cooperate. Pressures for women to do and men to avoid housework are likely to be stronger when views supporting a strict division of housework are widespread, as it may be the cases of Greece, Italy and Portugal. In contrast, it may be expected that men will feel more compelled to devote more time and effort to housework in response to widely held attitudes legitimising such behaviours. According to Table 14, normative orientations are found in Spain to a much larger extent than in other Southern European countries, especially among younger cohorts (NB. Similar strong support for male involvement reaches levels only found in France and some Nordic countries). Not surprisingly, the gap between younger and older generations in Spain is the largest.

Table 14. Attitudes towards male responsibility for home and children, by age groups 2008

	18-34	35-64	65 and over
Greece	29.4	31.2	31.1
Italy	36.3	34.8	31.4
Spain	60.7	58.9	39.9
Portugal	30.8	25.6	25
Belgium	50.2	52.4	46
Germany	70.3	63.1	62.8
France	49.9	44.5	42.9
Austria	42.5	38	65.6
Netherlands	18.2	25.2	21.7
UK	39.3	27.2	23.2
Ireland	43.7	37.6	36.4
Sweden	69.9	59.5	58.1
Finland	53	49.4	47.2
Denmark	62.2	63.8	58.9
Norway	80	79.7	77

* Strong agreement with the statement: Men should take the same responsibility for home and children.

Source: ESV 2008.

³ For instance, variation between male cooperation in Portugal, where the level of female labour participation is higher but the proportion of cooperative men is significantly lower.

A second question regarding housework is whether caring responsibilities have been transferred from young working mothers to grandparents--generally women, or “granny-mothers”-- and other relatives. Evidence is far from conclusive, due to limited data available. According to data of the European Social Survey 2004 (Table 15), the hypothesis that South European parents and grandparents are providing services to their grown ups children and grandchildren (living in a different household) to a much larger extent than their counterparts in Central and North European countries is somewhat inconsistent.

Table 15. Provision of housework and care support for grown up children and grandchildren

	None	Some support	A lot
Greece	59.8	29.9	9.4
Italy			
Spain	72.7	23	3.7
Portugal	56.3	37.8	5.4
Belgium	57.7	33.4	7.5
France	63.5	30	6.4
Germany	58.2	31.4	7.9
Austria	46.3	41.5	9.6
Netherlands	76.3	19.3	3.1
UK	70.3	21	6.7
Ireland	67.4	25	7.1
Sweden	64	30	4.4
Finland	62.5	32.5	2.5
Denmark	67.7	26.1	3
Norway	63.6	29.6	4.4

* people aged 40 and over with grown up children or grandchildren

Souce: ESS 2004.

Childcare responsibilities have increasingly been externalised to formal services, relieving grandparents and other relatives from the need to provide broad support. At this point in time, enrolment rates of children aged 3 to 5 years in pre-school is nearly universal. Enrolment rates for children under 3 years have increased dramatically in the last decade. According to OECD data, in Spain the proportion of children of 0-3 years in childcare centres (both public and private) has increased from 5% in 2000 to 37.5% in 2008 (OECD 2001, OECD Family database 2011). Recent survey data (February 2010) show that the figures are even higher: 43.6% (Marí-Klose *et al.* 2010). In Portugal, the progress is comparable: from 12% in 2000 to 47.4% in 2008. Greece clearly lags behind with just 15.7% of children in formal care under 3 years, and 46.6% for those of 3.5 years (see Table 16).

Table 16. Enrolment in formal care for the under 3s and pre-school from 3 to 5 years, 2008

	Under 3 years	3 to 5
Greece	15.7	46.6
Italy	29.2	97.4
Spain	37.5	98.5
Portugal	47.4	79.2
Belgium	48.4	99.4
France	42	99.4
Germany	17.8	92.7
Austria	12.1	77.6
Netherlands	55.9	67.1
UK	40.8	92.7
Ireland	30.8	56.4
Sweden	46.7	91.1
Finland	28.6	74.2
Denmark	65.7	91.5
Norway	51.3	94.5

Source: OECD family database.

A growing number of Mediterranean women have lost the reluctance to enrol their children under 6 years of age in formal childcare. Social pressures requiring them to devote themselves full time to the care of young children has weakened, although differences in the Mediterranean area are noteworthy. Except Spaniards, a majority of South Europeans think that the situation of working mothers with children under 3 years of age is detrimental for the latter. Figures of Italy, Greece and Portugal provide a regime picture (Mediterranean) which is still different from all other welfare clusters (Anglo-Saxon, Continental and Nordic).

Table 17. Attitudes to mother's work when she has a pre-school child

	1990	1999	2008
Greece	78.2		72.5
Italy	77.8	81.4	75.8
Spain	66.2	45.8	47.7
Portugal	84.2	72.2	65.5
Belgium	60.8		37.4
France	65.4	56.2	38.6
Germany	84.3	73.2	50.2
Austria	82.9		64.6
Netherlands	63.2	45.7	39
UK	54.6	46.2	36.3
Ireland	52.8		33.8
Sweden	73.5	37.8	19.4
Finland	52.4		21.8
Denmark	32	18	8.6
Norway	45.6		19.4

*percentage of people agreeing with the statement:Pre-school child suffers with working mother

Source: EVS 2008.

On examining attitudes towards care for the elderly, familistic orientations in Southern Europe remain vigorous, despite that needs for care and practices of delivery have dramatically changed. The needs for care that emerge as people get older and frail are covered informally inside the household by a family member, usually a women that does not receive any regular financial compensation for her work (Arriba and Moreno-Fuentes 2009).Mediterranean families show a strong commitment to assist frail elders, whatever it takes. Around 90% of South Europeans agree with the statement “it’s the duty of a child to care for an ill parent”. No significant differences are observed across generations and such figures stand in sharp contrast with those found in Northern Europe. In general, in Catholic countries (including Belgium and France, and to a lesser extent, Germany, Austria and Ireland), attitudes favouring family involvement in caring activities for the elderly are widespread and intense.

Table 18. Duty of care towards an ill parent, 2008

	Just agree	Agree strongly	Total agreement
Greece	43.2	50.8	94
Italy	44.7	44.6	89.3
Spain	3.2	60.3	90.5
Portugal	54.2	29.1	83.3
Belgium	41.9	41	82.9
France	30.6	57.6	87.6
Germany	44.3	21.6	65.9
Austria	37.3	20	57.3
Netherlands	36.9	8.6	45.4
UK	31.3	10.6	41.9
Ireland	40.2	12.7	52.7
Sweden	22.2	5.3	27.5
Finland	15.8	4.6	20.4
Denmark	19.3	5.7	25
Norway	29.2	11.8	41

* It is child's duty to care of an ill parent.

Source: EVS 2008.

It remains to be seen whether attitudes change as families increasingly externalise care to informal paid workers and the coverage of public services increases. The growing use of informal paid work in Southern Europe is a recent phenomenon, made possible by the massive influx of international female workers into countries that had traditionally had low levels of immigration. The new arrangements may not contradict previous orientations and expectations, since the informal work of immigrants is most often still monitored (and often directly paid) by family members. Care is generally considered as a female gendered area within the household, where the employer (usually a women) establishes a personal relationship with the employee and sets the terms under which caring tasks are performed (Lutz 2007). On the other hand, the development of new long term care policies does not necessarily contribute to the institutionalization of a new professional sector that “defamilizes” care, as found in Northern Europe (Pavolini and Ranci 2008). A good example is provided by the new Spanish Dependency Law. Despite initial intentions to prioritise the creation of facilities for dependents that would take the place of families (at least partially), the largest part of benefits have become subsidies for family care giving within the household. These moneys often end up being transferred to non-professional external carers (immigrants, in many cases). As a result, attitudes and expectations about care responsibilities may not change as significantly as one would expect under conditions of externalization of care, or ‘defamilization’ a term that other observers prefer to prescribe.

Concluding remarks

It has been argued that the core institutional traits of a welfare regime are extremely unyielding to reform, no matter how pending or necessary such reform may be. This argument may have been overstated. In this paper we have identified “collective impulses” that may lead traditional welfare arrangements in directions that were not

easy to envisage some years ago. These impulses are related to societal changes, particularly as regards lifestyles and needs of young generations now increasingly clashing with expectations, practices and arrangements characteristic of Mediterranean welfare. The dynamics of continuity and change differ across Southern EU countries. A certain degree of ambivalence remains concerning the “defamilization” of care arrangements, as shown in the widening gulf between two distinct sub-groupings: Italy-Greece and Spain-Portugal. With regard to the latter sub-group, Spain appears to stand out as an ‘outlier’ country which is leaving behind some of the features and rationales that have characterized the South European regime. The available evidence seems to validate the interpretation that a “Nordic path” had already been taken by the Spanish welfare state (Moreno 2008). However, impacts of the economic crisis raise serious doubts on whether such a path can be followed.

Indeed, South European countries are undergoing financial difficulties that are adding new challenges to the re-structuring of welfare arrangements. With high rates of unemployment, young people are facing the brunt of the downturn. The decline of formal familism has weakened the model of family and kin solidarity that has traditionally provided well-being for the most vulnerable members of the household, and very especially for the young. Changes in young female lives have also fostered new individual aspirations that clash with expectations of care widely held by older generations. In a context of serious budget constraints, it is unlikely that governments will have the capacity to expand social protection and to comply with the needs of younger generations in the foreseeable future. If worst comes to worst, young people may be additionally harmed by cuts in a welfare domain already unfriendly towards the youth in areas such as housing, education, family and active labour market policies. Signs of discontent with current arrangements have already been voiced loudly in the streets and major squares of many South European cities. The *indignados* movement is a manifestation of such discontent.

Future research should be devoted to further analyse the ongoing transformations in Mediterranean societies, many of which are already producing knock-on effects in their familistic welfare arrangements. In particular, three areas can be singled out for future research endeavours: (a) Family changes, new institutional settings of public provision, and the role of corporate social responsibility in the welfare mix; (b) Welfare policy innovation in EU’s multilevel governance; and (c) Inter-generational and inter-functional re-allocation of public policies and goods (e.g. old-age, youth, working mothers and the excluded).

All things considered, the evolution of the Mediterranean welfare regime as a whole can be regarded as one of general convergence with developments in other European systems of social protection. The tables reproduced in this paper present longitudinal evidence which validates such an interpretation. As concerns the long-standing claim that the family remains the Alpha and Omega institution shaping all prospective scenarios for Southern European welfare, the situation may be changing according to the evidence above examined. If so, the ingrained conviction of inertia attributed to Mediterranean familism may be not only challenged but regarded as taking a new direction: *Eppur si muove?*

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