

Portugal in Transition to the Network Society. A Generational Divide through the Lenses of the Internet

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Abstract

This paper analyses the Portuguese society in its transition to the network society. Through the use of the Internet and its main drives (education and age) we discuss the inevitability, or not, of a generational gap in the Portuguese society, visible through strong differentiations in the social structure and practice. It is here suggested that the transition for the network society in Portugal may, eventually, be measured according to five individualised dimensions and the role played by Internet use in them: individual improvement, individual *empowerment*, individual consumption, network selectiveness and identity construction. These five dimensions are here discussed through empirical analysis of data gathered in a country wide survey representative of the Portuguese population involving 2450 individuals' in 2003.

Keywords: informational society; social change; internet; transition to the Network society; Portugal.

The Portuguese society that we try to portrait here is, as the Catalan society (Castells et al, 2004), a transitional society in almost every dimension. From education do the productive sphere, from cultural to social and political dimension.

However, the causes of such transition are differentiated because of the context in which each society evolves and where this evolution comes from. If transition in Catalan society (Castells et al, 2003) owes much to obtaining the autonomy statute of Catalonia since 1980, in Portugal the date from which a line can be drawn and its reasons are clearly different.

Both societies have in common a recent history of dictatorial regimes, in Portugal with Salazar's and Marcelo Caetano, "Estado Novo", and in Spain with Franquism. In Portugal the 25th of April of 1974 marks a political revolution, from a dictatorial regime to a democracy, but also an economical revolution from a closed market corporatist model (settled on the close relationship between Portugal and its African colonies) to a regional (European Union) and global market economy. Along with this political and economical revolution there are also radical changes on the cultural and social dimensions, and in the educational sphere (Rosas, 1999; Viegas e Costa, 1998). The years from 1974 to 1976 set a trend of rupture and can be looked at as transition years to a model, at all levels, different from the former (Rosas, 1999).

Although public consultation over the educational reform will only take place in 1980 and the approval of the Education Act will only occur in 1986, the years between the 1974 Revolution and 1980 were years of deep changes in the primary education level.

The school was given a fundamental role element in the building of a new society, wished as democratic, something expressed in the concerns of political personnel in charge of the educational field can be immediately systematised in the First Democratic appointed portuguese Government programme: "to democratise school, but in such a way that it will function efficiently, guaranteeing the quality of education, teaching, scientific research and cultural creation". For the first time since the 1st Portuguese Republic (1910-1928) new programs were elaborated for primary school (Mónica, 1978; Capelo n.d.). School itself changes in its basic conception shifting its pedagogical focus (Capelo n.d.), combining the main function of transmitting organised knowledge with helping the student to become critical, developing its creativity and abilities to work in group.

Also in the *media* domain the 25th of April 1974 sets a radical change in context and practices in media communication (Oliveira, 1992). During the 20th century we can individualise a set of marking events to the media in Portugal, from the institution of the Republic in 1910 to the European integration in 1986. Two of those events occur in the period between 1974 and 1976, the 25th of April 1974 Revolution and the Revolutionary Period, commonly known as PREC (Oliveira, 1992).

In the period between 1974 and 1979 we can identify three defining moments for the *media* system we know today in Portugal: the liberation that happens right after the 25th of April, with the end of censorship and a total freedom of expression prevailing, the statisation occurring during 1975 (affecting particularly the press and television) and the 1979 legislative acts, which will define in many ways the juridical-legal frame of social communication.

The years between 74 and 79 were years of pulverisation of the landscape of free radios (known as pirate radios) and also of innovation in the written press with the appearance of new daily newspapers consequence of commercial projects, such as *Correio da Manhã*, private weekly newspapers, and the blooming of sports press (Oliveira, 1992). On television, 1978 sets the innovation of the Portuguese Public Service Television (RTP) at all levels, from training to facilities, and in 1979 the beginning of colour broadcasts.

The school socialisation processes and the socialisation transmitted by the *media* have accompanied those which, born after 1967, arrived to primary school (today 1st schooling cycle) in the school year of 1974/1975 and lived their childhood and adolescence with a democratic model of information, culture and entertainment diffusion.

The 25th of April having determined in an indelible way the Portuguese society, by having brought a new imprint of differentiation in almost every indicator in values, attitudes, social and cultural practices amongst those born until 1967 and those born afterwards, is used here as a social event in this comparative generational analysis about the transition dynamics of the network society in the portuguese case. This is what we will be focusing in the next few pages by analysing the role of the Internet in this transition to a informational society in Portugal.

A desinformed society in the informational context

Portuguese society was, before 1974, mainly a desinformed society, in the sense that most of its population did not have more than the 4th level of school.

Although the new generations, along these last 30 years, have introduced fundamental changes in this frame, portuguese society is still far from being characterised as possessing the necessary requirements for a generalised handling of information by a majority of its members (not mentioning the 7% of those born until 1967 that are illiterate).

If in terms of acquired skills the situation has changed for the post-1974 25th of April generations, to the older ones little or nothing has changed, consequence of a poor investment in schooling qualifications for elderly.

Therefore, if for those born after 1967 more than 70% have nine or more years of concluded schooling, the opposite happens amongst elderly (around 70% have six or less years of school).

Citizens with university education concluded in Portugal represent nowadays around 10,3%, to which we might add soon those presently attending university (representing 3% of the population). In a logic of population training increment amongst those that have initiated school in 1974, the ones that have concluded their superior education represent 12,5%, while amongst those born until 1967 this rate is 8,7%. However, these values are still not sufficient to change its characterisation as a desinformed population, since if we consider some international comparisons, with 1999 data, we will see that although in terms of population percentage that has not finished its studies or did not go beyond the 9th grade (74,6%) we are close to Spanish values (64,1%), we are still very far from the 21,5% of the United States of America or the 24,1% of France (Castells et al, 2003).

Table 1 International comparison of Internet use rate by age groups (%)

	UK	Portugal	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Japan	Korea	Spain	US
16 to 24	80,1	58,8	59,6	45,1	66,4	80,6	95,1	70,2	90,8
35 to 44	72,8	30,4	55,6	13,7	37,4	63,0	49,5	31,7	74,5
55 to 64	38,7	5,4		4,3	9,0	22,2	11,5	11,7	67,3

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras, for Portugal, all the remaining countries WIP (World Internet Project).

Concerning complete studies in university, Portugal's position is slightly less favourable with the probability to reach around 12% of the population with university education in 3 to 5 years. Therefore, with its present 10% to 11%, it is closer to Catalonia (12%) or Spain as a whole (13,1%), but still far from France's 18% or the United States of America 28% (Castells et al, 2003).

Tables 1 and 2 also show the connection established with the Internet use according to age and level of education.

Table 2 International comparison of Internet use rate amongst the population with secondary and superior education (%)

	Secondary	University
United Kingdom	64,4	88,1
Portugal	64,8	75,1
Germany	66,0	62,6
Hungary	14,6	45,5
Italy	53,5	77,3
Japan	45,7	70,1
Korea	44,9	77,7
Macau	49,5	76,7
Singapore	66,3	92,2
Spain	47,6	80,5
Sweden	76,4	83,8
Taiwan	18,2	54,9
EUA	61,0	87,1

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras, for Portugal, all the remaining countries WIP (World Internet Project).

Within the age intervals until the 30 years old, Portugal has always more than 50% of the population of this age group as Internet users, with a sustained and abrupt recess close to the 50 years old. This is not a

situation common to all analysed countries, but is similar to the situation in Italy, Spain and Catalonia, countries and nations with whom Portugal shares similar conditions in the education field, namely with the precocious school dropout level and relatively low basic educational skills structure (UNDP, 2003; Castells et al, 2003).

The hypothesis of greater mastery of formal competences linked to a greater number of Internet users seems provable¹. Regardless of the societies where the analysis is realised, the higher the number of persons with higher schooling, the higher the number of Internet users. In fact, all international analysis (Castells et al, 2003) establish a very strong correlation between the formal education level and Internet use. A correlation also detectable in the analysis depicted here with the Portuguese population.

In the Portuguese case this relation between schooling and Internet use has the contours of a generational gap. Not because Internet is a technology of the younger² (they may be the initial adopters, but there are no exclusivity use generation contours to begin with) but because higher educational abilities are concentrated in the younger population.

Those that have initiated their school life after the 25th of April are the ones that better control digital technologies, whether being DVD (22,3% vs. 68,3%) or console and PC games (6,7% vs. 40,6%).

Portuguese society at the dawn of network society seems therefore to be a society where, in educational terms, if we considered only all of those born after 1967 (table 3), we would find it better prepared for the challenges of the information era and better positioned when compared with the two poles of development in which Portugal, fruit of its network alliance logic and political-economical-military belonging is anchored: Europe and the United States (Cardoso et al, 2005; Castells and Cardoso, 2006).

Table 3 Educational level, according to generation (%)

Educational level (concluded)	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Until 2nd cycle of basic school (6 years)	73,8	32,2	55,7
3rd cycle of basic school (9 years)	9,8	30,7	18,9
Secondary school (12 years)	7,7	24,6	15,1
University	8,7	12,5	10,3

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

¹ Obviously the financial dimension should not be forgotten, since it can, for example, explain the low values associated to Internet use in Hungary, which is a country with an elevated literacy level and an educational coverage index similar to Italy (UNDP 2003). It seems therefore that the income dimension may arise as a necessary but not sufficient condition to justify the use of Internet.

² Although use rates are always higher amongst them, the tendency shows, in the different countries analysed in WIP, an approach to the population structure in the named countries, as shown in the cases of USA, United Kingdom and Germany.

The generational difference is also apparent when communication practices are compared. This is especially notorious, not in what concerns the most common activities (watching TV and meeting with relatives and friends), but at the level of different *media* appropriation and cultural, sports and religious cults practices. Therefore, all practices using *mass media* (except TV) are more frequent amongst those born after 1967. They listen to more radio (80,3% *vs.* 93,7%) and music (64,1% *vs.* 95,8%), read more newspapers and magazines (68,7% *vs.* 88,8%), go out to the cinema much more (16,7% *vs.* 66,7%) and read much more books (33,2% *vs.* 59,0%).

Table 4 Activities developed in the sphere of communication and technological mediation, according to generation (%)

Which activities do you perform regularly or occasionally?	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Watching TV	99,0	99,6	99,3
Watching a DVD	22,3	68,3	42,3
Walking	81,8	93,9	87,1
Listening to the radio	80,4	93,7	86,2
Listening to music	64,1	95,8	77,9
Reading newspapers or magazines	68,7	88,8	77,5
Reading books	33,2	59,0	44,4
Doing nothing	36,1	42,5	38,9
Going to bars, discos, restaurants and discos	44,7	80,0	60,1
Going to the cinema	16,7	66,2	38,4
Going to the theatre, opera and concerts	8,7	22,9	14,9
Going to museums, exhibits and conferences	11,8	23,2	16,8
Meeting with family and friends	90,9	97,6	93,8
Playing with computer or console	6,7	40,6	21,5
Talking with people at home, playing with the children, etc.	78,7	90,9	84,0
Attending shows or sports competitions	24,7	50,6	36,0
Practicing a sport or physical activity	9,7	39,2	22,5
Attending demonstrations, union, political parties or associations rallies	4,6	5,6	5,0
Going to church or a place of religious cult	57,7	36,6	48,5
Attending folk events, parties or fairs	49,9	60,2	54,4
Practicing a <i>hobby</i>	10,9	17,3	13,7

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Also in cultural and identity collective practices we must register two differentiated trends. On one hand a decrease of those going to church or other places of religious cult (57,7% *vs.* 36,6%) and on the other hand an exponential growth in folk events, parties or fairs participation (49,2% *vs.* 69,2%), attending

shows or sports competitions (24,7% vs. 50,6%), going to pubs, restaurants and discos (44,7% vs. 80,0%), and to theatre, opera and concerts (8,7% vs. 22,9%) or going to museums, exhibits or conferences (11,8% vs. 23,2%).

Hence, this is a population where youngsters look much more for cultural activities and collective meeting spaces than elderly. This trend is greatly emphasised, with differences oscillating more than 20%, which makes us suggest that, beyond the usual inter-generational contrasts in daily time spending, there is the possibility that a different concept of what is the relation between the collective and the individual may exist amongst those that were born after 1967.

There seems to exist, amongst the younger generations, a greater demand for socialisation and ways of life that public meeting activities allow, followed by a greater control of mediation technologies.

In social citizenship practices there is apparently the maintenance of a low level of participation in demonstrations and union, political parties and association rallies (4,6% vs. 5,6%).

People that lived the school and *media* socialisation period after the 25th of April seem to have, not only, as mentioned before, different attitudes of relating the individual and the collective, but are also characterised in their practices for, along with sharing a high television viewing with the elderly, having a greater balance between communication and information technologies mediated communication and the one of face to face meeting.

Beyond what was mentioned, their practices show a greater domain of the different communication languages and cultural protocols existing in society, as shown by their levels of music hearing, reading, film viewing and other performance arts. So, it is not surprising that this mastery of communicational codes and symbols is observed also in what concerns professional training, in their interest for education in general and cultural development.

If we consider the same form of denomination present in the research realised by the researchers of the Catalan IN3 (Castells et al, 2003) where two age groups are identified and differentiated between young³ and adults (in the portuguese study persons over 15 years old born after 1967 on one hand, and persons born until 1967 on the other), we can observe that young show, almost every time, percentages with double the value (and sometimes more) when compared with older persons.

Book reading, specialised magazines or profession linked documentation is almost three times superior amongst young, while participation in symposiums or having courses and training actions is double.

Young show also a greater learning capacity and knowledge introduction to the service of their professional activity. Hence, 58,6% of young state that comparing the work they did 2 years ago with the one they

³ The denomination 'young' is presented here in the broader sense than the one characterising a certain age group and with the purpose of facilitating data analysis and reading.

presently realise, they use more technical skills, when only 47,1% of older persons claim being in the same position.

The following table confirms this learning capability and relating the education dimension and Internet use and appropriation, as an information and communication technology, whether in general, whether in the professional world.

Table 5 Professional activity Internet use, according to generation (%)

	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Have you visited <i>Web</i> pages (in the Internet) connected to your profession or studies?	7,2	25,2	15,1
Is there Internet connection in your work place?	35,6	40,8	38,3
Do you already use Internet and <i>e-mail</i> at work	34,4	40,7	37,8
Internet users (spontaneous declaration)	12,6	50,3	29,0

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Young are also the ones visiting more Internet pages linked to their profession, partly because it is also in their work place that there is a larger number of available connections, but also because amongst young more than 50% use the Internet (amongst the 29% of Internet users, 70% was born after 1967). However, has seen before, age does not justify for itself the Internet use.

A society open to global and to network sociability's

If we refer to data obtained in the survey of the network society in Portugal, different positions can also be detected in terms of individual opening to global amongst those that have initiated their civic and educational formation after the 25th of April 1974 and the ones that did it before.

Taking as a starting point for this analysis the cultural trends around identity formation, the following table presents other possible readings about the Portuguese society opening to global, but also about the dimension of collective identity sharing (represented here by the religious reference or historical events with a wide social content) and, on the other hand, about the individual dimension of identity creation.

Table 6 Most significant historical date, according to generation (%)

Which is for you the most significant historical date?	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Religious dates	13,9	12,0	13,1
Portuguese historical dates	54,7	44,7	50,5
25 th of April of 1974	45,5	35,8	41,2
Personal dates	10,3	16,3	12,8
World historical dates	5,5	8,9	6,9
Other dates	1,2	1,6	1,3
None	1,5	3,8	2,4
N/A	13,0	12,7	12,8

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Therefore, younger generations are the ones that most share between themselves the reference to global events (like September 11th or the War in Iraq), and are also the ones that give more importance to purely individual dates.

On another hand, the moderately important role of religion is confirmed in identity formation, keeping consistency in its values between generations, in the order of around 12% to 14%. Anyway, Portuguese society is one that shares at large its foundational identity events, as exemplified by the two dates most referred to in the two generation groups: the 25th of April 1974 and Christmas.

The following table also shows that there are other regularities at the identity level. Since, in spite of the existing variations between generations, the Portuguese society is still greatly locally rooted.

Table 7 Place with which you identify yourself the most, according to generation (%)

Place with which you identify yourself the most?	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Place where you were born	42,9	39,1	41,3
Place where you live presently	22,7	23,2	22,9
With Portugal	25,4	24,4	25,0
With Europe	1,9	3,2	2,5
With the world	3,4	5,2	4,1
None of these places	2,3	3,9	3,0
N/A	1,4	1,0	1,2

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

This root is clearly present in the geographical proximity towards family and friends. At least 90,7% of portuguese refer having at least one family member living in the same district. In average they have 15,5 relatives living in the same circumscription, and amongst these they relate with approximately 13 people. These results coexist also with the wide range of Portuguese family networks. They have, in average, 10 relatives residing in another circumscription of the same district, 11 in another district and 9 abroad. In average the number of friends indicated is slightly lower than the number mentioned for relatives, but its density and amplitude is still noticeable.

Each portuguese mentions having, in average, a total of almost twenty friends (18,2). In their residence circumscription are 10,4; 7,7 in another circumscription of the same district, 7,3 in another district and 5,9 abroad. Besides, these values are very close to the ones indicated for the number of relatives, whether in another district, whether abroad.

Introducing again the question about the level of overture of Portuguese society in an informational context, our analysis was centred on the component of network sociability organisation enabled by the Internet.

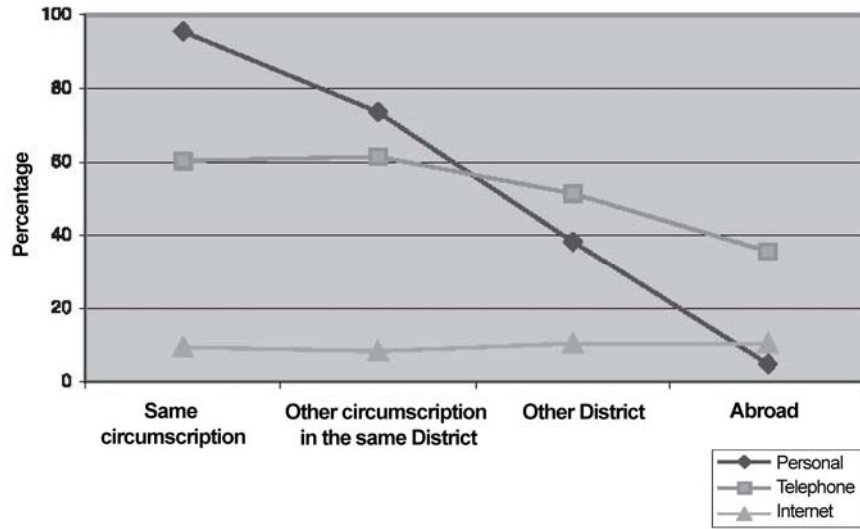
There is an attempt to understand in what level we find differences between Internet users and non users (which, as we have seen before, correspond to populations tending to be younger and older) concerning their family and friendship sociability networks, and the relation established between the use of cell phone and Internet.

Regarding the contacts made with relatives and friends at least once a year, they happen in a majority through personal contact, followed by the telephone and the Internet.

On phone contacts we detect the establishment of a relation conversely proportional between the distance and the frequency of contacts. The further away, less frequent are the contacts.

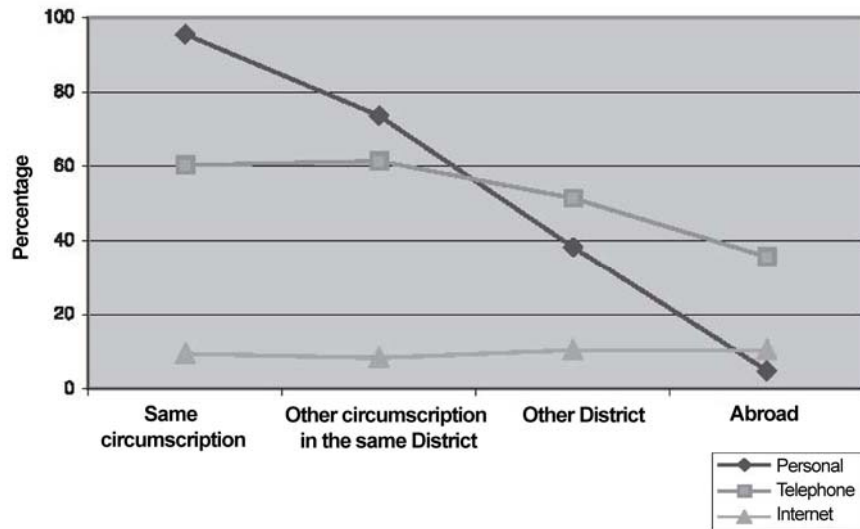
If concerning the telephone use to contact friends the use rates decrease from the moment the contact abroad is established, with family the decrease of use happens from the moment the residence of the relative is out of the district where they live.

Figure 1 Family with whom you contact at least once a month (...)



Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Figure 2 Friends with whom you contact at least once a month (...)



Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

The higher contact rates through Internet are in relationship networks with friends. The frequency of this form of contact is intensified as the distance increases, contrary to what happens in personal relations or by telephone.

However, differences occur also at the level of contacts with family and friends. Hence, the use of Internet to contact family is practically constant.

Concerning friends, the use of Internet increases from the moment the district limit is crossed (from 39,1% to 41,8%) having its higher value in contacts with friends abroad (44,0%).

But the analysis of the use of information technologies as elements for social opening, through its appropriation in social relations networks, shows another dimension, the outlining of combined telephone and Internet use strategies.

The use pattern seems to indicate that while Internet non users may only choose between spending or not spending money in telephone calls to friends and family, Internet users may choose the means combining best the efficiency of their communication goals and its associated cost.

Therefore, for Internet users, as the cost of calls, associated to distance, increases, increases also the use of Internet (which has a fix cost regardless of the distance of communication).

Summarising, the Portuguese society is characterised by a rich sociability, based on family and friends relationships. Its matrix is based on the residence proximity in the same district. At the same time, it is perceptible a greater intensity in friendship and family sociability networks amongst those that have access to the Internet. Informational society, based on networks given by information technologies seems to be more favourable to opening to global, represented by the increase of contact intensity with family and friends abroad.

If at the identity formation level there are some generational differences, the same cannot be said for the sociability dimension.

Although there is more youth using the Internet, the differences at the sociability level are not as visible in the frequency of contacts, but rather in the network dimension and their flexibility, which on their turn are essentially a product of technological literacy allowing different management strategies in the sociability networks.

Portuguese civil society in the network society

When we analyse the association belonging and civil participation according to the generation, beyond the obvious differences regarding associations with a generational dimension, we must record also some other significant differences.

The younger generation participates almost more than 50% than the older generation in consumers associations, ecologist associations and animal protection associations. On the other hand, it has almost 50% lower participations in religious associations, human or civil rights defence, anti-racist or similar (anti-globalisation movements, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, SOS Racism, etc.) and solidarity NGO's (ex: AMI, Doctors without Frontiers, Food Bank, etc).

A second fundamental factor in this analysis of civic participation in the network society is the credibility relationship established in the triangle "citizens-*media*-elected officials" and also the modalities and access logics practiced by citizens through the diverse information technologies available.

Table 8 Association belonging, according to generation (%)

Belongs at least to one...	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Association/sports club	35,4	60,7	46,2
Cultural and recreational association	19,0	17,8	18,5
Religious and parochial association	10,6	4,1	7,8
School Parents Association	2,0	1,4	1,8
Youth Association	0,7	4,1	2,1
Third age association	6,5	0,0	3,7
Neighbours association	5,1	1,8	3,7
Professional association	12,6	7,7	10,5
Union	13,3	8,6	11,3
Consumers association	0,7	2,2	1,4
Ecologist association	0,7	1,4	1,0
Political party	6,5	4,1	5,5
Animal Protection association	1,4	2,3	1,8
Denunciation association and human and civil rights claiming, anti-racists or similar	3,1	1,4	2,3
Solidarity NGO or association	3,8	0,9	2,5

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

As referred by Villaverde Cabral, either the demand for information as the disposition to intervene in the public space and discuss political issues are "potentiating demonstrations of citizenship exercise", meaning,

"(...) the public space, including the *mass media* is still a privileged place for political mobilisation, but (...) it is still necessary that citizens get into that public space for politisation to take place and this, often, does not happen." (Cabral, 1997:96).

However, it is important to remind that, to break a vicious circle of distrust it is not enough that communication between both is established, it is fundamental for a mutual motivation to exist.

This is a situation even more concerning if we consider the Cabral vision (2000) according to which, the quality of democracy will increasingly go through not only its democratic proceedings, but also through its citizens material and immaterial benefits, putting a even greater amount of pressure in the relation between citizens and elected officials.

Political conditions, as well as organisation, of *media* and political system relationship are intertwined with a credibility crisis over the political system in the majority of western societies, meaning, with a persisting sense of disillusion and distrust towards politicians and politics in general from the part of citizens, demonstrated in a visible manner by the high rate of electoral abstention, the low levels of confidence and the fractional participation rates in traditional associations of civil society (Castells, 2004).

Nevertheless, Citizens did not abandon the political scenery, and may be characterised as being more "critical" with their high expectations in democracy as an ideal, and their negative ratings of the present activity of representative institutions (Norris, 2000, Castells, 2004).

The answers to the questions made in this study, regarding citizens' trust in the institutions, show results very similar to other countries (Castells et al, 2003). Hence, 74% agree with the idea that "in the world there are a few people in charge and the common citizen cannot do much to control them", and around 77,8% agree that "it is difficult to people to control what the members of the government do" (a value translating an enormous disbelief in politicians when compared with the 59,5% when the same question was applied in Catalonia).

Still, most Portuguese believes in their chances of acting to fight against the problems of the world from his/hers own mobilisation. Therefore, 58,2% think that "persons can influence world events with political and social mobilisation", but a superior rate (67,3%) states that "when I think on political decisions I realise that it is impossible to influence them". Also at political participation level Portuguese society is a transitional society.

Those that have entered school after the 25th of April 1974 are more optimistic, believing in their capacity to influence the course of events locally and globally.

They are, also, more individualist, worrying most with their own problems than with solving the world's problems. The apparent contradiction may be read in another way, meaning, the problems of the world (such as hunger, war and diseases) are not won through the participation in institutionalised movements,

but through daily practice and the small contributions that each one might give. Something that is also possible to infer from the high level of disbelief in political power.

As a consequence, there is a significant minority, more than 15% of the Portuguese population, that has already supported or participated in campaigns over themes such as the defence of human rights, the conservation of nature, the fight against poverty, the equality of women, children defence or other identical, usually or occasionally (the percentage of young being around 6% higher in this last case).

Citizens may have lost their trust in political participation, rejecting the traditional way of "doing politics" by belonging to a party, but they still believe, for the majority, in the democratic processes, since they tend presently to get involved in "symbolic politics", mostly in local level issues, ecology, human rights, family and sexual freedom, to which they consider that orthodox politicians do not present any interest, answers or solutions.

It is a participation that may be proven with the levels of real participation in the case of protest actions or solidarity with the people of Timor in September 1999 (Cardoso, 2004), where 12,7% of older persons and 16,6% of younger were involved.

Also at this level of civil participation the construction of a network society may be inferred. Amongst those participating in campaigns about themes as human rights defence, the conservation of nature, the fight against poverty, the equality of women, children defence et al identical, the use of Internet is referred in 20% of the cases.

Also interesting is the fact that, in spite of knowing that amongst young the use of Internet is much more diffused, both generations have similar use levels in this type of campaigns.

This observation, combined with the fact that Internet users participate more frequently in this kind of campaigns, may denote that Internet use in the sphere of participation enables a greater intervention with the communication ease offered to those wanting to intervene and also those who want to get informed about such themes.

Media and the network society

Media in Portuguese society are quite consolidated concerning freedom of the press (Oliveira, 1992). However, concerning those enjoying information and those producing it, there is a clear transition in course. On one hand, as referred in the beginning of this paper, there are some obvious differences in the relation with *media* on the part of the generation that grew up in a free regime and those who could not do it. On the other hand, because, as suggested by Umberto Eco (1999), each new *media* forces to a functioning

reorganisation of the previous, as well as to the enjoyment times that we spend with it, transition is to be witnesses currently.

Therefore there are some visible changes in course, detectable by the way those using Internet relate to *media* in general, facing those that do not have access to this technology.

Table 9 Home equipments and subscribed services, according to generation (%)

Home equipments and subscribed services	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Telephone	67,6	53,9	61,6
Cell phone for personal use	56,7	91,7	71,9
Television	99,3	99,6	99,5
Cable Television	30,7	44,0	36,5
Unpaid satellite television	4,6	8,3	6,2
Paid satellite television	2,5	3,2	2,8
Interactive television	0,4	0,7	0,5
Computer	26,8	46,3	35,3
Internet connection	15,5	28,5	21,2
PS2, Dreamcast, Xbox, Sega	7,3	14,6	10,5

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Portuguese youth use increasingly less the telephone and substitute it with the cell phone. At the same time, although owning a television is still a constant, cable television is much more present in day to day life of young than of older persons.

Obviously we must consider the cost relation associated to a good and the income of both populations, but even so there is the perception amongst youth of the benefits to access more channels, that older people do not share with the same intensity.

All digital technologies are more present, almost always with the double of the percentage, in the homes of young, revealing again the association that we had previously established between a higher degree of schooling in the younger population and the use of Internet, a phenomenon extensible to computer and even to consoles.

The freedom of the communication media has in the degrees of confidence of its receivers a clear measure. But the degree of confidence also mirrors the level to which users of a given *media* possess the abilities to decode the messages and establish the hierarchy between each type of media.

The most interesting standing out in the analysis of the level of confidence in the information is that on all levels the generation born after 1967 has always higher trust levels. And although there is a complete

agreement in both generations over the fact that the information obtained through the television is the most reliable and the one from the newspaper the less, there are also differences in the hierarchy between generations.

Table 10 Degree of confidence in the information of different means of communication, according to generation (%)

To what extent do you trust the information received through...	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
the television	74,0 (1)	78,0 (1)	75,8 (1)
the newspapers	59,1 (4)	72,2 (4)	64,8 (4)
the radio	66,6 (3)	77,3 (2)	71,3 (3)
the Internet*	71,1 (2)	74,2 (3)	73,4 (2)

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras. Note: The value between brackets indicates the trust hierarchy in column.

* Trust in the Internet refers only to the Internet user population.

So, for the younger generation the radio takes a more central role while for older persons using the Internet this is the second most reliable source in their mental hierarchy between the diverse types of *media*, this inside their *media* matrix (Meyrovitz, 1995).

If we use the connection that listeners and viewers establish with radio and television through the use of different technologies (such as letter, telephone, cell phone and email) to measure the type of established interactivity, we find different realities between both populations also.

Concerning the most traditional of all technologies, sending letters, there is no difference to register between both generations; this cannot be said concerning the use of the remaining technologies chosen by each generation group.

Table 11 Means of contact with television or radio programs, according to generation (%)

Have you ever contacted a television or radio program through...	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
letter	0,7	0,7	0,7
telephone	1,4	2,7	2,0
cell phone	0,7	2,0	1,2
SMS	1,3	4,4	2,7
email	1,7	3,2	2,8

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

The differences are apparent when we separate the voice dimension (given by the telephone and cell phone) from the text dimension (associated to SMS and email).

The use of these last ones is two to three times higher amongst the younger generation when compared with the older one. It can be suggested that at the interactivity level the younger generation is characterised by connection of voice and text, being therefore much more fluent in multimedia than the preceding generation.

The analysis allows, perhaps, to visualise the existence of different "media profiles" (Colombo, 2003) between generations. Meaning, a different set of expectations, tastes, preferences, familiarity with genres and texts, interpretative models and functions attributed in the course of *media* consumption by each generation group.

Table 12 Activities considered more interesting (%)

Which activity do you consider most interesting (1 st choice)?	Born until 1967	Born after 1967	Total
Playing video games (consoles)	0,3 (7)	3,8 (7)	1,8
Talking on the cell phone	1,5 (6)	5,5 (6)	3,3
Listening to CD music	2,9 (4)	12,8 (3)	7,2
Listening to the radio	7,9 (3)	9,4 (4)	8,6
Watching TV	74,9 (1)	46,7 (1)	62,6
Reading newspapers	9,2 (2)	6,3 (5)	7,9
Using the Internet	2,7 (5)	15,2 (2)	8,1
N/A	0,5	0,2	0,4

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras. Note: The value between brackets indicates the trust hierarchy in column

A differentiation also susceptible of confirmation is the level of evaluation representations concerning the different technologies of communication and information as those present in table 12.

Although watching television is consensually considered the most interesting activity in terms of *media* hierarchy, amongst those born after 1967 Internet appears in a prominent second place (15,2%) followed by listening to music. For older persons options are diverse, newspapers appearing in second place (9,2%) and listening to the radio in third (7,9%).

The only constant between both groups is, then, television, which apparently continues to hold its label of central element of the information meta-system and, until a certain point, at least in Portugal, of the

entertainment meta-system, originating an organisation of the network *media* system. This organisation occurs in different levels, from the technological relation, to economic organisation and social appropriation. How does this network link structure itself? A hypothesis to be proven is that the *media* system is increasingly articulated around two main networks, which in turn communicate with each other through different communication and information technologies (Cardoso, 2008).

These networks are constituted, respectively, around television and the Internet, establishing ties with different communication and information technologies, like the telephone, the radio and press, etc.

The existence of two main networks is, linked to the interactivity dimensions made possible by each one of the technologies and the way those interactive dimensions are socially and temporally valued – more deepen with the Internet and less deepen with television.

As it can be verified the greater discrepancies in the interest level given to information and communication technologies appear around the Internet: it is the last preference of the older generations (2,7%) and the second amongst the younger ones (15,2%).

The different interest positions given to the Internet by each one of the populations have obviously something to do with the degree of penetration of its use amongst each one of them.

Regardless of the reasons we might seek for this differentiation of interests, what stands out is the fact that populations with Internet access and which consider themselves as Internet users, meaning with a regular frequency enabling them to hierarchise Internet as an element within its media matrix, are also, in their media profile, different from non users.

In average Internet users watch less 40 minutes of television daily, less 8 minutes of radio and talk almost more than 30 minutes on the telephone than non users. The only activity which does not present any changes is newspaper reading, around 30 minutes daily.

Table 13 Average daily spending in different activities, according to Internet use (in minutes)

In average, how much time do you spend daily...	Internet users	Internet non users
Watching television	135,3	175, 7
Listening to the radio	147,5	155,4
Reading newspapers	34,5	33,1
Talking on the cell phone	36,3	19,7
Talking on the telephone	29,9	17,6

Source: Cardoso, Gustavo, António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Conceição and Carmo Gomes (2005), *A sociedade em rede em Portugal*, Porto, Campo das Letras.

Regarding the reasons linked to each one of the behaviours, the explanations have to be differentiated according to the different *media*.

Telephone use is always higher amongst young. Those born after 1967 talking daily more than 30 minutes on their cell phone are 20,2%, while amongst older persons only 10,3% spends the same time talking on cell phone daily.

The same tendency, although less pronounced, appears also with the telephone, where 48,2% of younger persons speak daily more than 30 minutes, while only 40,1% of elderly do it. The reasons for such may go from the economy of scale linked to the sociability network, meaning, the more people use a network technology the greater the gain to adhere to that network, to the fact that the employment structure induces the necessity of a greater use of the telephone, or, finally, the cell phone combined with the Internet is necessary to fully participate in a social structure increasingly organised in network.

Concerning Internet users, the phenomenon of decreasing television viewing and radio listening minutes seems closely linked to a substitution phenomenon. When questioned about the change on their daily activities from the moment they started using the Internet, data show a negative variation of television viewing time in 16,7% of the respondents. A phenomenon that is extendable to all television complementary activities, such as DVD or video watching.

There are also other *media*, as for example reading books, which apparently contribute for time given to Internet use with an effect of time cession.

There are however, other activities where technological mediation intervenes and that are not affected apparently, as it is the case of computer or console games, perhaps because *offline* games are partly substituted for their *online* interaction or because pure and simply these two activities are not comparable with each other.

Hence it is possible to detect a transition in course in the *media* field in Portugal in the way generations that grew with democratic *media* differ from the previous ones in the hierarchy conferred to the *media* but also in their media profiles built through differentiated *media* diets.

It is also a transition in the way Internet users and non users interact with different *media* and participate in a *media* system increasingly characterised by its network structure in technological relations, economical organisation and social appropriation formulas.

Portugal in transition to a network society

Reading this extended data group organised in different dimensions, puts us before a transition dimension, where structural weaknesses and acquired potentialities live together simultaneously.

The characterisation of the Portuguese society that we tried to do reflects the transition of a population with scarce education levels to a society where younger generations attained already deepen educational skills.

This analysis reflects also a socio-political transition, first from a dictatorship to an institutional democratic politisation and then to a routine democracy. This is accompanied by a process combining a growing scepticism towards the parties and government institutions with an accentuated civil participation in autonomous forms and sometimes expressions individualised from the civil society.

In the beginning of this paper a question over the existence or non existence of a generational divide in the Portuguese society was made. Data analysed confirm this divide. But it is not an optional divide, rather a cleavage resulting from a society where the necessary knowledge resources are distributed unevenly between generations. Only then we can explain that amongst those born until 1967 we find a part of social actors close to young, in some practical dimensions and sometimes representations. This proximity is visible in the fact that those possessing similar educational abilities are close, for example, in Internet use or their perspective of professional appreciation.

The society in which we live in is not driven by a complete social gap. But in the network society and the informational development models there are cognitive skills more valued than others, namely higher educational level, formal and informal technological literacy. All of them are acquired and therefore this does not give place to an inevitable social gap. There is rather a transition process where the protagonists are those dominating these skills easily.

At the same time it faces these multiple transition processes, the Portuguese society maintains a strong social cohesion over a dense social and territorial relationship network. It is a society which "changes and maintains cohesion at the same time. It evolves in its global dimension, but keeps local and personal control over what gives meaning to life" (Castells, 2004).

It is in such context that a fundamental transition happens: the technological transition expressed through Internet diffusion and the rise of network society in the social structure and practice.

How to detect these changes in the social structure and practice? A suggestion is that possible changes in terms of social practice, linked to the spreading of the network society, may eventually be measured according to five individualised dimensions: the individual improvement, individual *empowerment*, individual consumption, network selectiveness and identity construction (Castells, 2004).

Individual improvement is understood as Internet use to acquire knowledge (beginning with information but being able to transform it into knowledge), as in education and self-learning. But it also includes Internet use as a way of improving the work achievement, as well in the work place as in the up to date of professional skills.

The second analysis dimension deals with individual *empowerment*. This is, to what extent does Internet use serve to increase each persons' ability to act upon information owners and over societies decision processes? For example: the ability to obtain information and communicate horizontally, in an autonomous way.⁴

The third analysis dimension in the research considers the *individual consumer* in a society where consuming is an essential data of each persons' involvement in the social whole. Hence, Internet may offer possibilities of extension in the consumption field (ex: multimedia games, *online* movies).

The next to last analysis dimension is built around *network selectiveness*. It is about the reshaping of sociability through the use of Internet potential. This includes strengthening strong ties, keeping this distance relationship; diversifying and increasing weak ties; constructing new sociability networks, considering the different choice possibilities. This appropriation is fundamental in the frame of sociability reshaping in a face to face hybrid process and electronic mediation, from which new patterns of family, friendship, acquaintances and "soul mates" meeting may appear.

Last, the *identity construction* dimension. A fundamental distinction here is between the identity based upon Internet groups using Internet to consolidate-expand their communal connections and the identity construction by individuals and groups through the announcement on the Internet of values/projects, finding the most favourable connections for those messages and using the Internet afterwards as an organizational tool to help maintaining the identity.

Each one of the previous five dimensions enunciated of Internet users characterises the social practices of those in Portugal with higher educational levels, with jobs where the use of skills is higher, that have a greater use of *media*, possess an uneven income structure and deepened social networks with family and friends.

These are also the ones that, as a majority, share between them the fact of having grown in a non authoritarian school, with free *media* and in a democracy. However, the protagonists of this social transition are not only these. They are also the ones amongst the older generation that had higher education levels, joined the use of new information and communication technologies and positioned themselves in a global space.

What remains to be discussed is how such a transition to the network society will occur in Portugal, because such processes are product of choices made both by us, citizens and voters, and by the ones that represent us, politicians and elected decision makers. In 2013 a new assessment might shed again some

⁴ Example: patients obtaining information, therefore putting themselves in a better position regarding the medical system; people getting informed about their lives and the world, not depending only on *mass media*; consumers able to compare prices and products and make their decisions; people able to organise themselves and debate issues, meaning social movements or other causes; citizens searching for new ways of participating and monitoring the political process, etc.

light in answering the question: where is the Portuguese society heading to and what is the role of the Internet in that path?

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