

Cristina Marques Nogueira

## Knowledge and the Experience of Women Living Underground During the Portuguese Dictatorship

**“A course of instruction will be the more successful the more its individual phases assume the character of experience”**

**Hugo Von Hofmannsthal**  
*Buch der Freunde*

This paper assumes that formative processes are not limited to the school context or model but that other life contexts and experiences, even if not intentionally, have educational effects. These informal formative contexts and experiences can play a key role individual's development, resulting not only in superficial changes, but also in deep changes in terms of subjectivity and identity. Our research involves clandestine militants of the Portuguese Communist Party during the dictatorship, and explores the type of knowledge acquired during their hiding experience (1940-1974) that allowed them to resist and survive over long periods. As our focus is the experience of women, based on narrative discourses of women (or about them) we will consider the role and status of women in hiding. The discourses were collected through several published autobiographical narratives and mainly interviews where we tried to identify the learning processes, the people seen as significant for knowledge acquisition, and also how knowing, knowing how to do and knowing how to be were constructed during living in hiding.

### **Keywords:**

Memory, experimental formation, resistance

### **1 Introduction**

This article uses the biographical method as a way to hear people's voices, to bring their knowledge and their experience, their lives – often condemned to silence or at best confined to the ghetto of profane knowledge – into the space of erudite knowledge. Our topic was not accessible in documents or archives. We wanted to hear the very people who have lived underground talk about their training processes and their experiences, in short, about their life in hiding. Inherent to this option was also our concern to understand the meanings attributed to living in hiding, from the point of view of their own education/training. However, the research process involved, besides interviews, content analysis of documents that the interviewees mentioned or shared with us.

In this regard, the perspective of Ferrarotti (1983) is of particular interest by bringing both the researcher's and participants' subjectivity to the ground of scientific research. Ferrarotti seeks to avoid a social fragmentation and an exclusion of the meanings attributed by individuals to social life. His broad vision of History as "historical life" (Ferrarotti, 1983, p. 183), not restricted to the traditional view of the elite of history conceived as political history, but "including the full dimensions – economic, social, socio- and psycho-anthropological – that through complex intertwining give rise to a relational dialectic that is not predictable or

ascertainable based on a purely theoretical calculation" (ibid); this also implies a "rupture" in so far as it involves a critical commitment towards those who have been "marginalized in history." It is a history in which the "subject re-enters" through his/her life stories and that generates an understanding of the "lived" world different from classical historiographical perspectives. A similar view is assumed by Paula Godinho when she states that

looking at individuals as beings with the capacity to change the course of history, seeing them as social agents that can take ownership of situations and alter them according to their own interests is to recognize that inventiveness is a weapon in relation to hegemonic incorporation. (2004, p. 91)

Michelle Perrot (1998) states that "current developments of the so-called 'oral history' are, in a way, a women's revenge" (p. 17), as women became more visible with biographical methods – the traditional historiographic narrative leaves little room for women by favoring the public sphere (politics, war) where women are generally absent. Therefore, our approach also seemed important to uncover the lives of the most clandestine of the underground militants: women. Given the relative absence of women in the existing research, this is an exploratory research that involved interviews with underground women and the analysis of diverse documents.

Our knowledge of a former clandestine women was the basis for a of snowball sampling as each interviewee shared additional contacts. The only feature that we considered essential was the existence of a broad period of life in hiding. Whenever possible, other features were heterogeneous – the specific historical period in hiding, gender, and whether they assumed management or executive tasks – in order to grasp, as much as possible, unique point of views points of view. As already mentioned some documents provided by the interviewees

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were also included. Some of the documents, were published autobiographical writings that were read before the interviews as a way to prepare the interviews and further our knowledge of a reality that was far in both chronological and anthropological terms. The transcripts of the interviews and the documents were the object of content analysis to identify the main themes/categories.

On the whole, we interviewed nine people that added up 164 years in hiding and 63 years, 7 months and 20 days in prison during the fascist regime in Portugal. Periods in hiding ranged from 7 and 34 years, and in prison from 0 (as some were never in prison) to 17 years. They were born in different historical periods, from 1914 to 1946, from diverse social backgrounds. They dived underground – an expression they themselves use to talk about starting to live in hiding – in the 1940s or 1950s even if some had already some political activity or were in prison for their political beliefs.

## 2 Women and the underground

The Portuguese fascist regime was established on 28 May 1926 by a military coup. From 1933, with the approval of a new Constitution, the dictatorship adopts the name of "Estado Novo" (New State); it was the longest lasting in Europe, having come to an end only 48 years later on 25 April 1974. For almost five decades, this system managed to withstand several threats, including the impact of the Spanish Civil War, the end of World War II with the subsequent defeat of fascist regimes in Europe, the removal of Salazar<sup>i</sup>, who for decades was the face and spirit of the regime, a long colonial war (1961-1974) that has wasted a significant part of the country's human and financial wealth, and also the resistance across the country, either through several coup attempts or through social movements that over the years had taken various forms led by diverse layers of the population.

For 48 years, Portuguese people suffered repression, censorship, lack of freedom, illiteracy, child labour, and an economic system that fostered poverty and hunger. In 1941, a survey conducted in rural areas by FNAT (National Federation for Happiness at Work), a government agency, on infant nourishing concluded that:

Infant nourishing is poorest and neglected. Even by the early few months, infants are already given food used by adults. As the little children do not have teeth to grind food, mothers, or even strangers, often first chew the food, then take it out of their mouths by hand, and very often dirty, introduce it into the children's mouth. In such a way, they provide children with bread, sardines, etc., often mixed with wine. (cit. in Rosas, 1998, p. 57)

It is in this context that many men and women decide to fight against the regime, as the existing repression did not prevent the opposition and resistance from taking on various forms, sometimes latent, but also active forms of resistance, defiance and even open confrontation with the regime.

It is now widely accepted that for much of the time of "Estado Novo", the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)

did play a key role in the resistance to the regime. Most often, existing social struggles were triggered, coordinated and led by the PCP, and the movements of the "democratic opposition" counted upon its influence and the mobilizing work of its members. Hermínio Martins believes that:

The 'resistance' is by far the opposition strategy that has higher costs under an authoritarian regime. Repression against this opposition mode is so severe and inevitable, and rewards so uncertain and remote, that there are few organizational structures daring to adopt it. With the exception of the Communist Party, only the 'national liberation' movements successfully have developed such a strategy. (2006, p. 60)

The underground referred to in this text is the clandestine political activity during "Estado Novo", more precisely the unlawfulness that communists were forced to carry out their political activity. The clandestine organization of the PCP included a network of clandestine safe houses; the number of houses is undefined and difficult to estimate due to the constant mobility of underground members. However, it was probably variable over time, depending on the greater or lesser strength of the organization.<sup>ii</sup>

Clandestine life demanded a mimetic stance according to the environment where people would temporarily settle in. For this camouflage to become effective, underground members played out a role in accordance to local customs and moral values of the "hosting" communities. Therefore, it was common procedure for the "clandestine settlement" to consist of a heterosexual couple, where the male element would assume a credible and plausible work activity for the hours and absences he was required to do, while usually the woman would take on the role of a "housewife". Daily life in hiding depended on a strict discipline of the organization, materialized into "conspiracy rules" that generated a normativity underlying all life situations in underground. Even the simplest of aspects, such as clothes or personal appearance, had to comply with these rules. Men should always be well shaven and combed, wear a suit, tie and hat, according to the social status and style of the time.

Clandestine houses were generally on locations that would allow for good outward visibility, so that surveillance would be possible, as well as allowing for a possible escape if necessary, and they were equipped with the bare minimum, in order to allow a speedy "dismantling of the installation". However, there was a special care in decorating the home entrance hall as it had to portray an coherent image with the profession and status outwardly pretended. Later, from the 1960's, it was common for house rentals to include furniture and, as mentioned by Sofia Ferreira, underground conditions improved gradually, keeping with the evolution taking place in society even for the sake of defending the organization:

Now, lately ... in the early days, it was rather more difficult because we had no TV set, some had a radio set, but lately our Party, our Party improved the organization, improved the economic conditions, and even for the Party's protection there was a need for us,

particularly in large towns, to have some means. Someone would go into a house pretending to be a teacher ... and not having a television or a radio set, or a fridge, well... the Party protection conditions imposed better conditions for its employees. Telephone, we would usually rent, the house usually would be under a furnished rental and had a phone. The last houses I rented here in Lisbon, were all fully furnished (... ") (Sofia Ferreira)

Going underground could be something done by a couple, when one member decided to become a clandestine militant and the other would join him/her, as mentioned by António Dias Lourenço on reporting his own going underground experience:

Then, one day, he goes to my home in Vila Franca and asks me, and I had a wife and two daughters, and then he came and said "look, if the Party needs you full-time, would you be willing...", "mate, the Party is my life; whenever the Party wants", "then, and when could you?", "whenever you want," "why, you could be available tomorrow?" "Yes, yes, it can be tomorrow" and so it was. [My wife and my daughters] came with me underground but I did have to find an acceptable explanation to give at the factory (...). (Dias Lourenço)

It happened, however, that single men and women would go underground on their own. In such cases, in general, a couple of clandestine members would be set up together so as to enable a picture of a "standard" household. The objective was to become fully inserted within the surrounding social environment in which they lived be it a working-class neighbourhood, a middle class or a rural area; the professional activity, the life story and even the appearance and clothing would vary accordingly. As moving was frequent, given the organization's needs as well as for avoiding detection by the police, underground people's stories and identities were being frequently changed. Behind every person in hiding there was a false identity, a name that was not her/his own name and a whole fictional story that successively changed and should be kept consistent at all costs, serving as a camouflage and mimicking the surrounding environment. Maria Luisa Costa Dias, referring to life in hiding, describes it as "a game that demands a lot of self-control, sharpness, a strong psychological sense and the capacity of perspective-taking, looking at facts and people through the eyes of both their reality and ... ours" (1982, p. 61). Margarida Tengarrinha considers that:

We almost ran the psychological risk of a split personality or losing individuality by burying our own true identity for so many years and so deeply, and credibly assuming the name, origin, social background and even the physical appearance that corresponded to the story we told to rent the house and get acquainted with the neighbours. Neighbours were a big issue. To be nice but not too much. To inspire trust but not trust them. To say enough but be careful not to contradict oneself. (2004, p. 62)

It should be considered that while living in hiding the group identity outweighed the individual identity. Indeed, "to belong to a culture, a nation, a group, implies being acknowledged as similar to others on key features seen as essential but rarely explained" (Kastersztein 1997, p. 32). In hiding, the *resistant identity* would have to override all other dimensions of identity, and the belonging and integration into the group would force the setting of objectives and the use of strategies that would

demonstrate this belonging and loyalty to the group. This identity was forged on strong and deep beliefs.

Sometimes it happened that the couple would be joined by another clandestine element, publicly introduced as a cousin, an uncle, a mother or a brother; however, the most common would be for the safe house to be composed by a couple, fictitious or not. The political endogamy was reinforced by day-to-day experiences, often resulting (but not always) in the fictional couple becoming a *de facto* couple:

I started dating ... it was not a dating, it was a ... how shall I say it? It was an affection that we began to feel and then, after about a year or even less ... the comrades also noticed our affection, our way of working with each other. One day, nearly a year later, "look there, what about if we become partners...and," and there it was, I had a bit of ... I was used just to be with my mother, I had never been with a man, and I was a bit stunned ... But I liked him. I liked him so much that ... I had never liked another young man so much. Well, then we got together and started to be a couple (...). (Teodósia Gregório)

When there were children, at certain age (usually at 6 or 7 year old but sometimes earlier) they were to be separated from their parents, because it would become dangerous to live with a child who begins asking indiscreet questions or making undue comments to third parties. There were two alternatives: either the children were sent to the USSR to the International School of Ivanovo (Interdom), where they were educated together with other children from the most diverse parts of the world, or they were handed over to a family relative, often their grandparents. This separation from the children would last for many years and, in many cases, sometimes children were left ignorant of their real parents' identity, as stated in Sofia Ferreira's account of this episode:

Some women were many years without seeing their children, there is a case that I remember a lot, one of our comrades, the wife of António Gervásio, Maria Cabecinha, who was arrested for many years, and had also remained many years working underground. She had left her son with her mother when he was small and did not see the child for many years, and then the Party organised a contact with the child and when she met him, the child, the child came to her and said "oh! I have a new mother". Because he lived with his grandmother, and grew up, he was little boy, he now saw his mother and was very happy "oh, I have a new mother." This is an example, but there were more cases. (Sofia Ferreira)

Until the mid-1950s, early 1960s, the tasks of women clandestine were of a quite different nature from those of men. Men should establish the liaison between the party cells (grassroots bodies) and the party hierarchy as well as with activists that were in charge for developing and organizing mass actions such as strikes, protests, demonstrations. Women would essentially be in charge of in-house tasks, such housekeeping and management of the available budget, and "house protection" tasks, primarily focused on the surveillance of the area outside the house, with a particular care to any suspicious person or movement. Women should also assure the contact with neighbours to build trust, but never to confide, to promote proximity within certain limits, to gather knowledge about their lives without sharing. Women ensured

the survival and the objective conditions that made the on-going resistance possible.

The "house protection" was, therefore, essential as the safe house represented the maximum security space. José Dias Coelho remembers that "each time the clandestine leaves home it might mean a separation for many years from his/her partner and comrades. Danger might lie in waiting around a corner, in a street, wherever ..." (1974, p. 40). So, one of the essential "house protection" tasks was to indicate to the other member of the household (the man), if he was absent for more than one day, that the house was free of danger, not surveyed or visited by the police, and that he could return safely. This was done through the use of specific signs such as drawings or stones in the surrounding areas; afterwards, when telephones became numerous, a telephone call could be made. It was also the task of the women to destroy incriminating documents in case the police invaded the house; documents should be placed next to a box of matches and other inflammable material, so that a quick destruction would become possible.

If the man did not return on schedule, there were also rules to be followed: leaving of the house, as this could mean it was identified by the political police; and go to a prearranged location, contacting or awaiting contact from the party organization that would give new instructions. Waiting involved great anxiety, as there was no knowledge of what had happened to the partner:

I knew [that my partner had been arrested], because he went to a meeting at nine-thirty in the morning and by late evening he had not returned, he was supposed to come back in the afternoon, so I immediately deduced, and I was not wrong, that he had been arrested.

I left [home]. What I had to do was to leave; I went to the home of some comrades, for a while, waiting to see if someone from the Party would make contact with me to tell me what had happened to him. Because he could be arrested, but he could also have been run over, could be in a hospital, you know, several things could have happened. (Teodósia Gregório)

When a companion was arrested<sup>iii</sup>, the woman would frequently set up a new Party safe house with another man, once again assuming the role of a "normal" couple, as recalled by one of the interviewees:

[After my partner was arrested] I lived in a room with my son; that was in August, and then, in December, I set up another safe house with another comrade." (Teodósia Gregório)

Sometimes, in addition to household chores and "house protection", other tasks were also performed like typing and printing, but also renting houses or disassembling "facilities". Sometimes women took on tasks in the party "technical apparatus", working in clandestine typographies:

The first task I did for the Party when I went underground was joining a clandestine typography. It was located in the municipality of Figueira da Foz, at Lavos, in a small house in a farm, it was an typography where we printed "O Militante", a tiny newspaper, flyers and manifestos and so on. So, I was in these printers with two comrades until 1948. (Sofia Ferreira)

Nonetheless, as working outside was not the most frequent situation, the "female comrade of the house" had to struggle against monotony, isolation and routine since, like any clandestine, she had no contacts with her family. These were mediated by the party organization, and sometimes months or even years passed without getting news:

Then I would write on small sheets of tobacco rolling paper. I would write a small note "mother, rest assured, all is well." And it was my father who read these tiny rolling paper notes that comrades delivered (Teodósia Gregório)

Underground party members had to be, above all, disciplined actors, able to represent their role without making a "faux pas" (Goffman, 1999), with high levels of self-control not to betray the acting constantly demanded by living in hiding.

The number of women progressively declined as the party hierarchy increased revealing a clear gender gap. This could be related with the lower levels political and ideological commitment given that many of these women were peasants or workers who never went to school. Others were only living in hiding to be with their husband and not for a political reason. But the asymmetry of roles in gender relationships was also favoured by the underground situation as the couples did everything to mimic their surrounding environment which had a clear and unequal "labour division" between men and women Sofia Ferreira who went underground in 1946, assumed organisational tasks in 1955 and integrated the Central Committee, therefore taking on leadership tasks, in 1957, emphasizes the difficulty of the organizational work of women, without raising suspicions about the organization:

Women did not go [into organizational tasks], because it was very difficult at the time, in the 1940s, it was very difficult for a woman, specially in the countryside, a woman walking on the street at night to have a meeting with a man, because we would go alone, we had a meeting in a street, we could not go to a coffee shop, it was the so-called street meeting, and that would draw attention and was dangerous for women. (...) Also, in those days, for economic reasons, locations and distances, Party comrades used the bike a lot ... therefore the work of women was very difficult in the organization during these times. Later, by the years of the late 1950's, 60's and 70's, there were already more women in the party organization (...) (Sofia Ferreira)

Aware of this inequality, the PCP leadership found it necessary to raise the militants' awareness of their potentially discriminatory attitudes. Thus, the resolutions from the II Illegal Congress, held in 1946, considered the weak participation of women as due to:

the still dominant view among our comrades that women are inferior to men. It's hard to say that this concept exists in the head of communists, in the ranks of our Party. But so it is, comrades, and this should not surprise us or shock us. This is a burden of tradition and education on our people aimed at removing woman from the social and political life and at condemning her to children, pans and the Church. (cit in Gorjão, 2002, p. 133)

This concern with women's involvement in organizational tasks continued for many decades; in October 1972, a newsletter from the Secretariat of the Central Committee, addressed to the "female comrades of the Party houses", it can be read:

Dear Comrade:

Your life in a party house, your work and vigilance that make possible its existence and its protection, are among the difficult, dangerous and stressful tasks that our members perform. You rightly do deserve appreciation and recognition from the Party.

Experience shows however that:

- a) Often, no other tasks are given to comrades in these conditions, in addition to household chores and daily surveillance;
- b) Comrades are not regularly asked to help in other tasks, or encouraged to take use their free time to study "(Letter of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PCP, addressed *At female comrades of the Party Houses*, dated October 1972).

According to Pacheco Pereira (1993), the 1960s student protests led to changes in the social composition of underground women with a higher recruitment of students and women with higher education. These two factors changed the role of communist underground women since the 1970s. The fact that this is a recurring theme in documents from the PCP leadership over several decades indicates that the party leadership was concerned with the situation. Similarly, social changes in women's roles and attitudes towards women favoured a greater involvement in organizing and leadership tasks.

Underground press included, from January 1946 to 1956, the newsletter *3 Páginas* ("3 Pages") directed to and written by "illegal women friends"; it was replaced by "A Voz das Camaradas das casas do Partido" (The Voice of Party Houses Women Comrades) published until 1970, totalling 50 issues. These newsletters intended to value the political training of women militants, by encouraging them to study and preparing them for the possibility of performing other tasks beyond the household chores and "house protection". Like other clandestine publications, newsletters had training objectives, providing useful information on how certain tasks should be performed, with special attention to "conspiratorial precautions". The text, written in a style that today sounds patronising, also intended to value the tasks performed by the underground women, as well as fighting their isolation by providing each one with the notion that she was not alone but rather was very much a part of a collective body. Through texts and articles written by the women themselves, the exchange of experiences was encouraged. Studying was strongly encouraged and valued as a way of preparing for action on future tasks. In the first issue of the bulletin *3 Páginas* we can read:

We feel, dear friend, that in your militant life there is something missing that sometimes makes you feel sad and doubtful. This doubt about being or not helpful to the Party, this ill feeling, results from you being disconnected from the general problems of our Party and of not applying yourself to studying. Although in a Party house (and being there shows that you are doing a lot for the Party) you, dear friend, have not followed, by reading our press or in conversations with home friends, the workers' struggles led by our Party (...) By publishing *3 Páginas* we seek to assist you in your preparation as a militant so that you can develop any aspect of our Party's activity, be

it the task that you now perform, or other future tasks. The task you are currently performing is important and you must feel proud of it. Through this task you not only make it possible for the other comrades in the house to work for the Party, but you also ensure their safety against fascism, against the Police. But tomorrow there will be other tasks for which you must be prepared (...) So, friend, since at the present moment you cannot develop yourself by delivering other practical organizational tasks, you have to take advantage of your time by studying. You need to know 'those things' that your companion or friends of the house know. And you can achieve this effortlessly and quickly. (*3 Páginas*, nº1, January 1946).

The discussion over the role and status of underground women must take into account the policy framework regarding women in the "Estado Novo" that involved both public and private spaces in an attempt to shape "the mentality of the Portuguese" (Salazar cit. Ferro in 2003: 90). According to the ideological principles of "Estado Novo", the concept of citizen is replaced by "natural groups necessary for individual life and that constitute the political society" (Salazar cit. in Belo et al, 1987: 264). The family is at the basis of society, and the head of the family (i.e., the man) holds political rights, including the right to vote, because he is the one "who is responsible for a home, and usually knows best what suits him than the literate who does not know life" (Salazar cit. in Ferro 2003, p. 93). Thus, women existed socially not as "an intervening element in public affairs, but rather as just a family member", in the context of a political order that "used gender difference as class difference" (Belo et al, 1987, p. 272). The social space was hierarchically divided according to the authoritarian principles of the regime and the woman should be reduced to maternal functions and home care. In an interview with António Ferro, in 1932, Salazar was asked about the role reserved for women in the renewal of mentalities he was intending with "Estado Novo";:

To the single woman who lives without a family or having to support the family, I think should be given all legal facilities to provide for her livelihood and the livelihood of her dependents. But the married woman, like the married man, is the family foundation, a fundamental basis for the work of moral renewal. Inside the home, of course, the woman is not a slave. She must be nurtured, loved and respected because her function as a mother, as the educator of the children, is not inferior to that of men. In countries or in places where the married woman competes with the work of man - in factories, workshops, offices, independent professions - the family institution, that we consider the cornerstone of a well-organised society, threatens ruin... (Ferro, 2003, p. 90)

In 1933, Salazar defends the same viewpoint arguing that "the work of married women and even of single woman, integrated in a family but with no responsibility for it, should not be promoted: there was never a good housewife who had not a lot to do" (cit. in Matos, 2004, p. 194) and also "let therefore the man struggle with life outside, on the streets ... and the woman defend it, bring it up in her arms, inside the house ... I do not know which of the two has the most beautiful, the highest and most useful role" (cit. in Almeida, 1999, p. 125).

Yet reality contradicted this idea: if many women were housewives, working women were a reality as shown in the work of Maria Lamas, "The Women of My Country", published in 1948. The existing poverty did not allow

women to remain at home raising children, and side by side with men they were working as factory workers, farmers, fish sellers, boat-rowers, gorse carriers, charcoal sellers, dressmakers, typists, telephone operators, pharmacists, analysts, house servants, etc., doing hard and heavy duties. The labour market structure required the extensive use of female and child labour in some sectors like for example the textile industry, based on low wages. Ana Barradas (2004), in her work "The Clandestine Women", indicates that the 1940 census referred 2,039,151 active women and 2,276,859 active men. Of those, 129 759 women worked in mechanical, manual or industrial occupations; 25 040 in trade and services; 29 559 in education, arts and science, and 1 219 000 in agriculture and livestock. Yet, Salazar had never ceased to understand women's paid work as an inevitability that should be resisted to. The regime's ideological project included a much-flaunted model for the private space founded on the family based on legitimate marriage with legitimate children, with the woman playing her most noble mission: to be a wife and a mother.

It could be expected that an organization that fought against the regime, its action and ideological principles, should have a clear distance and rejection regarding the "Estado Novo". Thus, it may seem paradoxical that, once in hiding, the role of women would be rather reserved to the domestic sphere. However, as mentioned earlier, the protection of the organization meant that the underground roles should follow the practices advocated by the regime and "naturalized" in society, according to the existing hegemony. And the dominant ideology looked at the woman as a member of the family rather than as a citizen with full rights. On the other hand, we cannot but consider that underground militants were not immune to the existing social values and practices, and therefore many of these values were implicitly present in their gender relationships, a situation acknowledged in the resolutions of the 1946 Congress. Therefore, we can conclude that the traditional gender culture that reduced women to a minor role, inferior to men, surpassed the egalitarian position advocated by the Party. It is also important to note that, in the interviewees' statements, the "Party" is viewed as an entity in itself that is larger than the individuals that compose it – and the protection of the Party seems to justify, in the discourses of the women themselves, the gender inequalities of life in hiding.

### 3 Underground formative processes

To become clandestine, there was a need for acquiring certain knowledge that could be acquired by multiple and varied processes. Our analysis of living in hiding as a knowledge development process, rests on several assumptions. The first assumption is that training and learning are central and ongoing across life and result both from formal, non-formal and informal experiences in various relational and material contexts. These experiences can generate profound changes in one's identity and subjectivity. Learning in underground contexts is,

therefore, diversified and involve several types of knowledge: knowing, involving a more conceptual dimension, knowing how to do, the know-how related to a particular activity, and the knowing how to be, that includes the relational domain and also attitudes and values. We follow here Nóvoa's perspective that "training is always a process of individual transformation in the threefold dimension of knowing (knowledge), knowing how to do (skills) and knowing how to be (attitudes)" (1988, p. 128). Nevertheless, this typology of different kinds of knowledge, even if of interest from the point of view of the researcher, appears obviously mixed, merged and intertwined in the discourses of underground women.

Our second assumption is that knowledge, as Bernard Charlot (2000) puts it, should not be conceived as an object that exists outside the individual, but rather refers the activity of the subject him/herself and the relationship s/he develops with him/herself, with the world and with others. There is no knowledge but within a relationship, since "there is no knowledge if not for a subject, there is no knowledge if not organized according to internal relationships, there is no knowledge if not produced within an 'interpersonal confrontation'" (2000, p. 61).

Our third and final assumption is that knowledge is constructed with and through experience, involving multiple, diverse and complex relationships, that do not generate a division between theoretical and practical knowledge. L. Toupin (cit. In Courtois, 1995, p. 41) considers that experiential knowledge is a "pragmatic knowledge, shared within a community of belonging" and Pineau (1991) speaks of a local knowledge created through action. Experiential knowledge is built in the context of a relation with the world and involves transformation in action, cognition and relationships. Therefore, experiential training includes not only cognitive and instrumental learning, but also existential dimensions and identity, that is, it can provide transformations at three levels: in what one thinks, in what one does and in what one is.

Learning in the underground occurred in a complex manner through a diverse set of experiences that enabled the internalization of knowledge, without the conscientization of the processes involved. In addition to non-formal learning processes, such as literacy, reading or studying, informal education processes and experience were central in the development of certain behaviours, attitudes, and ways of being and living distinctive of the underground context. In this respect, the formative process resembled a "socialising process" (Dominicé, 1988, p. 60) in which, learning occurred through direct contact with other male and female underground comrades, observation and performance of specific tasks, as when Sofia Ferreira describes how she learn to work in a typography "I did as they did". Other comrades were, in fact, quite significant in knowledge development: Teodósia Gregório mentions the importance of having lived in the first clandestine house with a woman who shared her expertise "she started telling me, look,

we have to do this for the house, we have to defend the house (...) then she started telling me that I should learn how to read, she would give me a half hour lesson or so." Her female comrade assumed the role of a true "teacher" of how to live in hiding. And her male partner is also referred to as important for her learning: "he also helped me, even to learn how to read, every day we took a little bit of time aside for him to give me a reading lesson, to make a copy, to do a dictation, to do maths."

Margarida Tengarrinha, in a published autobiographical work, reports in detail some of the learning she had to do when going underground, and she stresses the importance of some male comrades in the process:

When in early 1955 'we dived in', as the party jargon called going into hiding, I was full of revolutionary ideas but knew very little about domestic chores which practically I had never done. Learning the ways of protection and the rules of clandestine work went hand in hand with the most basic learning of housewife tasks and cooking, of which I had very rudimentary notions, like all students and girls of the bourgeoisie at that time. (...) Jorge Pires, a man with a very practical sense, became aware of our difficulties (...) Then, our classes started on how to manage a salary, by putting in an envelope the monthly fixed expenses and then dividing the remaining for each week. Which products were cheapest and the best way to cook them and make them last a few days, as there were no fridges (...) I learnt from him how to do a 'lye' with grated soap and sodium borax in a pot of boiling water that we would empty onto bed sheets and other white linen (...) at the same time, he taught us important protection rules, the necessary mindfulness to maintain with neighbours and in street meetings, the different ways to allow entry to comrades by signalling that the house was not being watched over and many other fundamental recommendations so as to evade the repressive network set up by PIDE against clandestine militants (...) Vilarigues knew very well all kinds of meat and knew how to give good advice on good but cheaper types of meat (...) (2004, p. 37, 38, 39)

Those who lived underground developed very diverse skills and knowledge necessary for survival, some prosaic and very far from the romantic idea of great revolutionary tasks, but nonetheless essential for organization's survival and the on-going struggle. For instance, it was vital that women would learn how to manage the available budget, which was quite scarce; these problems were harder at certain periods (particularly during World War II, as the underground militants had no ration coupons), or as a result of the geographical mobility:

Over those two months I had to adapt myself in addition to doing the shopping, the housework that was totally different, and I also had to manage the money, the little money we had. We had very little money and I had to manage it (...) (Teodósia Gregório)

However, some women took on tasks on the "technical apparatus" and had to learn new skills – in some cases also favouring their political training because of the nature of the task, such as typography – beyond house chores and "house protection" tasks:

I had to do the typographic composition, those little letters, the writing, the copying of the text onto the press, and I also did this work, copying from the text and then writing, and then just like them [the men], printing. That was that, in addition to the home duties, the shopping and the things for the house (...)" (Sofia Ferreira)

The learning of conspiracy rules and "house protection" was extremely important so that the house would not fall

into the hands of the police and consisted of monitoring the surroundings, contacting neighbours and the consistently maintaining the whole fabricated story:

I learned to do the house protection, I had to pay close attention, you could see a person and we had to know what that person came to do, what that person was doing, I mean, that sort of things we had to be very attentive to. (Teodósia Gregório)

In addition to the "house protection" there were numerous precautions to be taken when going out, particularly doing "cuts" to mislead the police in the case they were being followed, meaning to take several transports to different locations until reaching the right destination:

When I was going out, I also disguised myself with scarves, make-up and all that (...) Then, I had to do several 'cuts'. (Teodósia Gregório)

The organizational tasks implied contacting with and relating to different people from varied social and cultural backgrounds thus promoting different kinds of knowledge:

In the organizational tasks we are no longer at home, we no longer have the task of the house, we do have the task that we call the street task, which is the task of linking up with the organizations, the comrades, establishing communication from the Party, to the comrades and the cells. At that time, here in Lisbon, I had the building industry, I had the railways workers, I had clusters of women organizations, the MDM. (...) [When I was given organizing tasks, I controlled a lot of] different people, generally nucleus or a comrade of a sector, or it was another comrade from another sector. I, for example, was once in contact with a nucleus of comrades from the press which José Saramago belonged to (...). (Sofia Ferreira)

The underground, not allowing for a "normal" life with the possibility of establishing contacts with different people and situations, did not prevent those with organization tasks from paradoxically having the possibility to contact with people and groups with different material and cultural capital, something seen by clandestine men and women as very enriching.

As regards the more theoretical and conceptual knowledge, it is noteworthy that the very party organization encouraged the study and acquiring of such knowledge. Many women went underground without being literate and it was in the context of hiding or the prison that they became literate through companions with higher academic qualifications. One of the interviewees stated that it was on her first clandestine house that she began learning how to read:

Aida at the time started telling me to learn how to read, she would give me a half-hour lesson, so to speak, writing, beginning to write, beginning to contact with books and so on. She got to teach me reading and writing and she was practically the one giving me explanations and then I would remain a bit more time copying, doing as she had done. (Teodósia Gregório)

The importance given by the party organization to studying can be understood as a way of allowing individuals, who did not have a high level of formal education, to acquire, by studying and reading, a cultural

capital that would allow them to reach an equal footing with representatives of dominant social groups, holders of a higher formal education. Furthermore, literacy was necessary for the fulfillment of some party tasks, including for typographic work and for studying Party documents, seen as necessary to acquire political awareness:

How could party cadres, party members be trained underground, with the kind of life they had? It was by studying our materials. How did I train myself and how did I gain political and ideological consciousness? It was in the Party, in my practical activity, and studying. If we do not study, if we do not address the problems, they do not leave your mind (...) And so, in the past it was like that, it was by studying the Party materials, we studied the Party materials, "O Militante"<sup>iv</sup>, the clandestine "O Avante!"<sup>v</sup>, the reports of the Central Committee meetings, brochures, all that was at the basis. We also had theoretical books by Marx, Lenin, that we also read and studied, but we read fundamentally the Party materials that were targeted at our concerns. And, then, with other materials, so as to complete our theory and our ideology, to confirm, so to speak. (Sofia Ferreira)

It should be stressed that when going underground, political consciousness was sometimes very limited and it was in the context of their own clandestine life that raised their consciousness, in particular by reading and studying, which was always encouraged by the organization:

I was told exactly what it was like. The Party counted a lot on the honesty and authenticity of people, their backgrounds; at that time, I had little political awareness, hardly any. I had the minimum (...) that it is a party that is illegal, that is persecuted by the government, by the regime and in danger. (Sofia Ferreira)

Teodósia Gregório and Sofia Ferreira were recruited for the clandestine cadres through their families. Both had already taken part in some political actions, in one case through the father, in another through the sisters, but they still remember how big their ignorance was of clandestine life. However, their choice to go underground resulted from their earlier experiences in rural areas, the work from sunrise to sunset and the awareness of the extreme poverty and social injustice prevailing in the country.

The discourse of women in hiding shows that the development of knowledge regarding relationships, attitudes and values was fundamental to remain in a clandestine situation. The ability to overcome fear, loneliness, longing and isolation; the ability to induce trust in others without ever trusting them; the ability to exert self-control and autonomy on decision-making in difficult situations; solidarity and loyalty to the organization, well in evidence in the speech of one of the interviewees, who referring to someone who denounced others in prison says "he was denounced by a guy who betrayed him, was arrested and betrayed miserably", were attitudes fostered by underground life. It is worth stressing that one of the main tasks of a clandestine was not to talk while in prison. Talking meant denouncing others and so it was synonymous for treason. With betrayal came the exclusion from the collective, clearly indicated by the interviewee through using the adjective "miserably", but it was mostly him(herself that s/he who

betrayed had to be accountable to – the accountability of those who saw their resistance identity breaking up like a house of cards, while losing their references. Teodósia Gregório recalls her need to overcome fear in some situations:

That's it, I could do it. In fact, [of] all the houses, that one was the worst for me. Besides other things, we were feeling something about those guys going around, and we knew it was them. So much more so as two or three comrades had been arrested right there, very close to the house, so for sure they were the guys and I knew, I had the clear awareness it was the. But, well, I managed to get things around, they did not arrest me nor did they arrest any comrade, no, fortunately it did not happen. And then, it was with this whole thing that, come on, as we sometimes say, how is it possible to do certain things, how is it possible to have had cold blood to make such a whole series of things (...) but there were so many things; but the one when I have had a deeper feeling that I was about to be arrested were these two and I felt fear. (Teodósia Gregório)

Sofia Ferreira, on the other hand, mentions interpersonal relationships as being fundamental to form her political consciousness and to the feeling of unity that existed between militants:

That's it, and that is the way we have been shaped into, and then, I mean, the Party's own life and the comrades and the Party's conduct, our relationships, our fraternity, our solidarity have helped to form these cadres who maintain still today a bond of awareness, connection, fraternity, solidarity, love, love of our struggle and our cause, because those difficult conditions have united us, united us a lot, and there are things that it is hard, very hard to erase, isn't it? (emotionally). (Sofia Ferreira)

#### **4 Knowing how to be – the necessary pillar for staying underground**

Living in hiding implied taking on a life project, since the overthrow of the dictatorship appeared uncertain and distant. It demanded the learning and acquisition of knowledge in the cognitive, physical and relational domains, related to the interconnected and complementary domains of knowing, knowing how to do and knowing how to be. Knowing was strongly encouraged by the organization in its appeal for study and reading. Through clandestine documents and newspapers, the markedly political works such as those of Marx and Lenin and literature too, where Soviet realism had a central role, particularly through Maxim Gorky, and the Neo-Realism, with Soeiro Pereira Gomes and Alves Redol, a shared imagery was created that serves as a distinctive feature that aggregates and personifies group members. It should be noted, however, that this "culture" of reading and study was not exclusive for those who were underground, and did extend to all the opposition to the dictatorship. Knowing how to do is especially mentioned in what regards "conspiratorial precautions", the rules women had to meet in order not to fall into jeopardy. It is noteworthy that the discipline that prevailed in the organization did require these rules to be strictly enforced. The clandestine theatre, the play to which they were constantly committed, the "make-believe game" that led them to play different characters is the aspect that is most highlighted in these statements. Knowing how to be appears as the most valued aspect: indeed, the terms "responsibility", "understanding", "dedication",



"love to the struggle", "confidence", "sacrifice", "brotherhood", "solidarity", "discipline", "risk", "loyalty" and "fear" turn up repeatedly in the discourse of underground women. It is in the realm of being, of values and attitudes that knowing how to be an underground is really about. Being a resistant and being underground meant taking on a life project that involved "having an ideal", "love to the struggle and the cause" and "wanting to contribute to change and build a new society." This required "to have a high degree of discipline", spirit of "sacrifice", "confidence in the Party," "responsibility" and "dedication". The context of the underground was one of permanent "tension", "risk", demanding "cold blood" and ability to overcome "fear" but, at the same time, it was both a "fraternal" and "solidarity" context. These characteristics and values could already be present before, but they were consolidated and reinforced by living in hiding and even more central than other types of knowledge. It was through daily practice, the performed tasks, the precautions to be taken, the theatre to be represented, the solidarity to be demonstrated that these women have slowly become resistant, clandestine women within their own country.

## 5 Conclusion

Educational research should consider non-formal and informal modes of education and experiential training to uncover ignored and forgotten training modes and to understand how each person lives their training, because "more important than thinking about forming adults is to trigger a reflection on how each adult forms him/herself, that is, how each one appropriates her/his experiential heritage through a dynamic of 'retrospective understanding'" (Nóvoa 1988, p. 14). In a broad perspective, history of education can also include the story of processes and training contexts that occurred at certain times in specific social and historical contexts.

This paper deals with the stories of women in hiding – and gender is a significant category in historical analysis because it assumes "the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on sex" (Scott, 1986, p. 1054), recognizes the importance of personal and subjective experiences in history, and implies "a commitment to a history that included stories of the oppressed" (p. 1054). Gender inequalities are obvious in the testimonies not only because underground women had to accommodate to traditional gender roles to protect the clandestine organization of the Communist Party, but also because they seem to have assumed even less visible roles than those of men, mainly in the private sphere, such as house protection and domestic tasks. In some cases, this might have implied a challenging redefinition of their identity as women and resistant –clearly, an undercover resistant in an already clandestine situation. The need to become separated from their children and the emotionality and pain that still today these memories involve is also revealing of the extreme personal costs often undergone by these women and the identity conflicts they went through. This paper gives a very preliminary contribution

to this discussion, but shows how important it is to uncover the role of women in clandestine resistance.

Our research and the collection of testimonies of women in hiding during the Portuguese dictatorship becomes relevant also because these memories are fading as time goes by. Their lives are part of our history that, although chronologically so close, is a distant anthropological reference, since historical, cultural, political and ideological references have changed significantly. Therefore it is important to give visibility to "anonymous" people as actors of history, since today's education for democracy and citizenship depends on knowing the past so that we can envision the future.

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### Endnotes:

<sup>i</sup> In September 1968, Oliveira Salazar had an accident (falling off a broken chair) and had to leave his governing role. He was exonerated from office in on 27 September of the same year and replaced by Marcelo Caetano as President of the Council.

<sup>ii</sup> A headcount of "party houses" mentioned in "*60 Anos de Luta ao Serviço do Povo e da Pátria*", published by the PCP, shows the existence of 295 "party houses" between 1936 and 1974 and 80 clandestine printers between 1935 and 1974. However, this number might be lower than the reality.

<sup>iii</sup> It's important to note that that prison visits were not possible as they were in a clandestine situation; even when family members were not in hiding visits were not necessarily allowed, either because the marriage had not taken place or a child was not legally recognised.

<sup>iv</sup> "The Militant" was a theoretical character bulletin intended for Communist militants.

<sup>v</sup> "Avante!" was the central organ of the PCP. Avante! issued 464 editions between 1941 and 1974, unlike other underground newspapers issued irregularly.

