

**Beyond the unemployment condition:
Creative resilience tactics among the long term unemployed.**

ABSTRACT

Since the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC), the landscape of work has changed across the world, with labour markets now characterized by an increase in long-term unemployment, underemployment and working poverty. And yet, newly formed groups of un(der)employed seem to be responding in creative ways to the vulnerability of employment. To observe this process, we have followed a group of 55 long-term unemployed in Spain for a period of three years, to explore their micro-practices and narratives. Working with 55 in-depth interviews, plus field notes, observations, media articles and policy documents, we explore the implications of the changing landscape of work through the personal experiences of the long-term unemployed and the social contexts they engage with to find alternatives in a world without secure employment. Our analysis illustrates the *creative resilience tactics* used by the unemployed in their everyday to overcome their condition and to develop alternative spaces in which to operate differently. The research illustrates how the meaning of 'work' is being re-shaped by the dynamics transforming employment and societal relations worldwide.

Key words: Unemployment, creativity, resilience, work, employment, global financial crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC), employment conditions have changed across the world, with labour markets now characterized by a decline in attachment to employers (Kalleberg, 2009), an increase in long-term unemployment, underemployment and working poverty (International Labour Organization, 2016), increasing non-standard and contingent work (Standing, 2011), and risk shifting from state and employers to citizens and employees (Bauman, 2013). Furthermore, while unemployment is a persistent problem in highly developed economies, in some peripheral areas, such as Southern Spain, the ongoing lack of stable work is leading to emigration, organizational and social displacement, disruption and division, as well as the hollowing out of communities. And yet, newly formed groups of unemployed seem to be responding in creative ways to the vulnerability of employment, developing new organizing possibilities ranging from alternative personal trajectories, to collective protest movements and political parties (Simsa et al., 2017), to local community arrangements (Fernandez et al., 2017).

The prevailing understanding of unemployment, however, is that of a condition of ‘deprivation’, indicating that the unemployed lack the social and psychological benefits associated with employment. The underlying assumption of the ‘deprivation’ thesis is that unemployment needs to be studied in terms of the lacks it creates: work, meaning, social structure, etc. However, whilst lacking a stable job is generally an experience with negative consequences, in a world without secure jobs, we need research that looks into how the unemployed can navigate and overcome this experience. Therefore, our research aims to complement the ‘deprivation’ approach by looking at the *creative resilience tactics* used by the unemployed to overcome their condition of unemployment and develop alternative spaces in which to operate differently (Mair et al., 2016).

To observe this process, beyond the grand narrative of the GFC (Aalbers, 2009; Konings, 2009; Riaz, 2009), we have followed a group of 55 long-term unemployed (i.e., out of work and actively seeking employment for at least a year [per International Labour Organization, 2016]) in Spain for a period of three years, to explore their micro-practices and narratives. Working with 55 in-depth interviews, plus field notes, observations, media articles and policy documents, we explore the implications of the changing landscape of work through the personal experiences of the long-term unemployed and the social contexts they engage with to find alternatives to their unemployment condition.

Our findings illustrate the individual and collective sources of creative resilience and well-being developed within precarious contexts that lead to alternatives in the face of a world without secure employment. The research shows how the meaning of ‘work’ is being re-shaped by the dynamics transforming employment and societal relations worldwide. In line with conversations about universal basic income (Chakraborty, 2017) and the future of work, which may well be marked by its absence for many (Haldane, 2015), our research calls for us to question the centrality of work in society (Frayne, 2015). Such questioning is not to deny that work has any value; rather, it is to insist “that there are other ways to organise and distribute that activity and to remind us that it is also possible to be creative outside the boundaries of work” (Weeks, 2011, p. 10). Ultimately, our aim is to expand our understanding of the concepts of ‘work’, ‘organization’, and the process of organizing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The unemployment condition.

Being unemployed is not just being out of work. Being unemployed is a social and psychological condition, shaped by the media, the institutions that govern us, and by social, cultural and psychological expectations of what it is to be and behave as an unemployed person (Bolan &

Griffin, 2015).

The prevailing understanding of unemployment is that of a condition of ‘deprivation’ indicating the unemployed lack the social and psychological benefits associated with employment. According to this line of research, through employment, we have not only monetary gains, but also a higher sense of purpose, we have a time routine, we build social and institutional relationships, we develop competencies, as well as activities, and a sense of personal and social identity (Jahoda, 1982, Edgell et al; 2015). Lack of employment, on the other hand, leads to higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower levels of self-esteem and confidence, amongst other negative social and psychological consequences (Warr et al; 1988; Brodtkin & Marsden, 2013; Sharone, 2013). Furthermore, the mental, physical and social health of the long-term unemployed is impaired even after they find a job (Virtanen et al; 2016). Not surprisingly, the lack of employment has become perceived as a deviance, an ‘illness’ that needs to be overcome personally, organizationally and socially (Boyce et al, 2007; Gabriel et al, 2010, Holmquist et al, 2012). The deprivation thesis explains not only the psychological, health and social consequences of unemployment for individuals and communities, but also permeates economic and political thinking. Furthermore, the unemployed are profoundly aware that they are supposed to be wishing for work and actively engaged in searching for it (Cottle, 2003). Thus, unemployment as deprivation is an actively produced social and institutional category that gets internalized by many of the unemployed, creating a ‘condition’ to be overcome.

Indeed, to be unemployed is a negative experience defined by society, institutions and organizations as becoming a certain type of individual, with a particular relationship to the labour market, and requiring a host of interventions to treat the illness (Bolan & Griffin, 2015). For instance, the International Labour Organization (2016) defines the unemployed as those without work, available for work and actively seeking work. Only through registering in the social welfare office can one become defined as unemployed. The institutional representations and definitions of

what is to be unemployed are complemented and extended by the wider environment surrounding the 'unemployed' by the media (Boland, Shearer & Tuite, 2015), the tools required to perform as unemployed, such as unemployment forms (Griffin, 2015), and even the physical spaces (Bolan & Griffin, 2015) required for job seeking, as well as by a myriad of social and community expectations. Established perspectives on unemployment research clearly document the difficulties of the condition of unemployment and the many pressures exerted by society, the diverse institutions dealing with the unemployed, and the resistance the unemployed develop to these pressures (Chabanet & Faniel, 2012; Royall, 2017).

The underlying assumption in these generalized 'deprivation' perspectives is that unemployment needs to be studied in terms of the lacks it creates: work, meaning, social structure etc. So, this approach defines the unemployed in terms of what they are not, and seeks to recover them before they become 'wasted humans' (Bauman, 2004, p 5), thereby neglecting the alternative resources and possibilities that make their lives potentially meaningful. Whilst it is undeniable that being out of a stable job is generally an experience with negative consequences, there is not enough research explaining how the unemployed navigate this negative experience and how they might overcome it in a world without secure jobs.

Thus, our research aims to complement the 'deprivation' approach tradition by looking at the lack of work from the point of view of theories that recognise the centrality of meaning making and collective interaction to social life, particularly in changing and drifting conditions. Our research aims to show that engagement, growth and meaning in regard to work develop even within conditions of unemployment and that they do not depend on individual psychological behaviours but on shared culture and engagement with/in different organisations and institutions. We aim to explore not only how the unemployment condition gets internalized and institutionalised by the unemployed but also how it is navigated and overcome through creative resilience tactics.

Creative resilience: Everyday practices in navigating the unemployment condition.

Our paper focuses less on the problem of unemployment from a socio-economic point of view and more on the question of how meaning and values develop and emerge within the unemployed condition. Inevitably, the evidence base is the same as the approaches outlined before, but the questions are different, recognising the creative possibilities, despite the difficulties, in the condition of unemployment. We focus, therefore, on creative resilience tactics, stressing the everyday practices that enable people to overcome their condition of unemployment and develop alternative spaces in which they can operate differently (Castells & Portes, 1989).

Within the social sciences, the concept of resilience has emerged relatively recently (Davies 2011), but has no universally agreed definition (Pendall, Foster, & Cowell; 2010). The concept of resilience has been applied in a wide range of disciplines from ecology (Cochrane, 2010) to strategic management and entrepreneurship (Williams & Vorley, 2014), focusing on different geographical and organizational contexts, from countries and regions to firms and individuals. Although much literature on resilience has been largely in the environmental area, looking at how people cope with physical disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, the concept is applicable across fields (Berkes & Ross, 2012).

Resilience is generally used to characterise individuals who are able to easily and quickly overcome setbacks related to their life and career aspirations (Zautra, Hall & Murray, 2010) and has been defined as a dynamic process of positive adaptation despite significant adversity (Luthar, 2003; Bonanno, 2004; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Newman, 2005; Luthans et al., 2006). Individuals build resilient abilities through everyday developments that are the product of remarkable or unforeseen life happenings (Sutcliff & Vogus, 2003). Developing such skills comes from having a positive outlook on life, facing reality, and learning to roll with the punches (Coutu, 2002). Resilience is also the capacity or ability to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and emotional functioning despite experiencing trauma or serious loss (Bonanno,

2004, 2005; Eicher et al., 2015; Leipold & Greve, 2009). Beyond the mainly individual psychological focus of its origins, resilience is seen also as a collective process (Drury et al; 2009) of people facing adversity and engaging collectively for social transformation (Davoudi, 2012). As such, resilience has also become a popular lens for illuminating regional and local economic change, representing a highly relevant framework to analyse the causes and effects of uneven development in regional and local economies (Foster 2007; Fingleton et al; 2012). Thus, resilience is multi-faceted, and hence the importance of “unpacking” resilience by exploring its different impact at its individual, social and organizational levels.

A common denominator across all the different approaches to resilience, however, is how the concept seeks to understand different responses to exogenous changes and shocks (Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki 2011; Whiteman et al., 2013). The main exogenous shock at the core of much contemporary research has been the recent economic crisis, which has pushed policy-makers into new ways of thinking about how economic growth may be enabled (Dawley, Pike, & Tomaney 2010). This heightened focus on resilience is particularly pertinent in a Southern European context, following the challenges presented by the financial crisis, economic recession and ensuing government austerity measures. Within this context, individuals, organizations, and collectives have to face, resist, and develop innovative reactions to adverse situations of disruption and emergency (Vogel & Pfefferbaum, 2014). What we are seeing in the wake of the global financial crisis are many emergent practices of commoning, caring, growing and living that propose a radical break with the present and the possibility of the development of new forms to live and work for different futures, such as social movements, informal work, cooperatives, worker occupations, and unemployed workers’ movements.

Seeing resilience as a creative process, as the “nimble taking advantage of opportunities presented by a shock; in other words, adaptability rather than rebound” (Andres & Round, 2015, p. 679), allows us to reframe the concept of resilience away from survival within the present context

of work and economic life towards the development of alternatives (Parson, 2010). Thus, we want to indicate with the concept of *creative resilience* the process of socially developed creative tactics that go beyond mere survival to develop both collective resilience and creative engagement with the contextual problem. We see creative resilience as developing through narratives and practices in a constant effort to adjust to rapid changes, unforeseen events and opportunities presented by the ongoing unemployment crisis (Vigh, 2008). Creative engagements enable people to operate in precarious environments lacking infrastructure support and resources (Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo & Imas, 2017). This is an everyday creativity, necessary for the shifting generation of meaning, that helps individuals to adapt flexibly, improvise and try different options to overcome their unemployment condition. Following Scheper-Hughes (2008), this is the kind of creativity that encourages individuals not to fall into apathy but to engage purposefully with resilience and their collective will to survive and persist in pursuing social transformation.

It was De Certeau (1984) who described how individuals creatively consume dominant organizing forces established by institutions, what he calls strategies, for their own purposes through everyday practices, or tactics. Most communities employ tactics to survive when they are hit hard by economic measures. These tactics (De Certeau, 1988) emerge through the re-creation of alternatives that are initially chaotic, carnivalesque, utopic (Burrell, 1997) and non-linear in the tradition of a well thought out strategic narrative to guide their efforts. According to de Certeau (1984), strategies are generalized policies developed and enforced by elite institutional groups who lack localized knowledge of the lived experience of their use in practice. Tactics, on the other hand, are the 'art of the weak', microscopic acts of resistance that people use to manipulate the strategic forces they experience in their daily lives to accommodate their individual objectives (de Certeau, 1984). Tactics are short-lived and opportunistic because they depend on strategic space, existing only in the cracks in surveillance of institutionalized disciplinary mechanisms (de Certeau, 1984).

Plurality in what is actually practiced arises because in everyday life people are constantly

evolving the tactics they use within the terrain imposed on them by institutions (de Certeau, 1984). As a result, strategies and tactics are constantly influencing one another – existing strategies shape the tactics used in practice and, in turn, what is actually practiced impacts on the dominant organizing forces that shape the next iteration of everyday practice. By employing tactics in daily life, people make use of institutional structures to generate a sense of freedom and autonomy for themselves. In the everyday, people use tactics to escape disciplinary forces imposed on them by institutional structures. According to de Certeau (1984), marginal tactical activities also offer a starting point for people to enact change through their ability to influence organizing institutional forces.

Ingold (2000) further developed these ideas, explaining how life is a process of wayfinding. Ingold (2016) conceptualizes the social world as a meshwork of individual actors' life paths tangled together. Rather than focusing on particular places and things, Ingold (2016) emphasizes their interconnections, the movement of actors in the world, and their development from these experiences. As actors engage in practices of wayfinding over the course of their life, they become knowledgeable (Ingold, 2016). Rather than apply preordained knowledge, actors know as they go through their life experiences (Ingold, 2001; Ingold and Kurttila, 2000). As individual actors cross paths with one another, their journeys intertwine through sharing stories and relating to each other about their experiences (Ingold, 2016). Rather than their movement being dictated by collective constraints imposed on them, wayfinding actors openly respond to their present conditions in localized space and time (Ingold, 2016). By means of this openness, they embrace the potential of their situation and explore multiple possibilities for action. Through their engagement in wayfinding practices, actors undergo continual development and generation along lines of growth (Ingold, 2016). Ingold (2016) asserts that the challenge for wayfinding actors is to improvise a way through their circumstances and to keep going. It is through the use of daily tactics by way of processes of wayfinding that the unemployed develop their creative resilience and overcome their

unemployment condition.

METHODOLOGY

In what follows, we describe the research methods used to gather and analyse interviews, observations, and documents related to how the Spanish long-term unemployed navigate their unemployment condition. To understand the process the Spanish unemployed go through, we focused on the narratives and creative resilience practices developed by the unemployed to overcome their unemployment condition. We have used a qualitative research design to explore, in depth, the micro-dynamics of everyday resilience, including contextual demands, collecting 55 in-depth interviews with long-term unemployed individuals, along with observations of their locations and their different social and institutional engagements. We also collected public narratives (both in printed media and in digital fora) of unemployment in Spain. In addition, we examined publicly available documents, such as Spanish government and international organisation (e.g., International Labour Organization (ILO)) reports, to gain an appreciation for the conditions and cultural understandings of unemployment both generally and particularly in Spain. Our aim is to straddle the micro-macro boundary, looking at the development of unemployment narratives and creative resilience practices within particular social and historical contexts.

Data Collection

Over a period of three years, we followed a group of long-term unemployed in Spain. During data collection, we used both established networks (e.g., UGT Andalusia), as well as personal contacts and networks to generate the interviews and observations. We all spent time in the field, talking and engaging with the long-term unemployed. During the participant observation and in-depth interview process, we asked participants about their daily experiences of unemployment at the institutional, social and personal levels, as well as about their attempts to overcome that condition. We focused on generating personal reflections to understand the social, cultural, and ideological frameworks the unemployed use to make sense of, and cope with, their situation.

We generated a total of 55 in-depth individual or paired interviews collected between 2012 and 2015 across the Spanish north and south regions. Our main criteria for selection was the length of time our interviewees had been unemployed: the time spent unemployed ranges from 14 months to 38 months. We also aimed to have a relatively balanced sample in terms of gender (20 females and 35 males) and age (ranging from 24 years to 60 years).

In addition, 120 out of a total of 800 documents – representing policy documents, public reports, media articles – were selected for relevance and analysed. Approaches that rely on analysing narratives from secondary data sources have been around for some time. Warren and Smith (2015) suggest that such qualitative data offers rich insights into the social world of hard-to-reach actors. In our research, national media narratives on unemployment were selected from different newspapers and digital blogs as well as alternative media. We collected stories in three prominent institutional newspapers with different political leanings in the country (*El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*), along with narratives on unemployment from popular blogs and alternative media -such as YouTube- covering the period between October 2012 and September 2015. The stories were selected for their completeness and relevance (e.g., referred to unemployment in the country, including the social, institutional, or personal challenges the unemployed faced in trying to overcome their unemployment condition).

The publicly available documents selected refer to both Spanish governmental unemployment policy, as well as the ILO reports, from 2011 until 2015, and Eurofound reports for those post-financial crisis years. We also included in the analysis, as supporting evidence, the notes we had taken after our interviews and during our visits to the different Spanish regions. The second author also gained access and participated in the activities of unemployed networks, for instance, a network of unemployed artists (group flo6x8 www.everydayrebellion.com/protagonist/flo6x8/) and a community association of recently evicted unemployed workers (corralautopia.blogspot.co.uk/), and provided general support to the local 15M-Indignados social movement chapter

(sevilla.tomalaplaza.net/tag/15m-sevilla/). Participant observation amongst networks of the unemployed aimed to record not only the difficulties of the situation, but also recognise the importance of the various positive and generative interactions and creative ways of producing value some of the long-term unemployed developed over time. The use of various methods of data collection enabled the inclusion of different viewpoints to refine our understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data Analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic and narrative analysis using the NVivo program and followed inductive and deductive approaches and quality indicators to meet required qualitative research standards (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). We all participated in this codification process and common work was carried out to interpret data. The coding process entailed reading each transcript in NVivo where text units were allocated to relevant code(s) in the initial coding frame. The coding frame went through several versions during the analysis, which were all discussed at length and agreed at regular meetings at every stage. Text units were re-coded based on the revised coding frame(s) as the analysis advanced to achieve a better fit and to integrate all data.

The documents (official and alternative media and policy documents) were also thematically analysed together with the interviews in NVivo to examine the ways in which public narratives present and frame the process of unemployment, shaping institutional and organisational policies and practices that impact the way people respond to the difficulties they face at the symbolic, sociocultural, institutional, and practical levels. A media content analysis was conducted using Nexis in the three main national newspapers in Spain, following the rationale outlined by Canel (1999). In addition, alternative media outlets were also analysed based on online searches and local knowledge or access. The parameter of inclusion applied included searches with the keyword “unemployment” in the headline or opening paragraph. The ILO and Eurofound reports, and the

field and participant observer notes were used as supporting evidence throughout the analysis.

The analysis of the data was accomplished in three different steps. The first step sought to identify how the unemployed live and experience their unemployed condition. We looked for the activities, experiences, and understandings the long-term unemployed reported as going through. This step consisted of multiple readings of the interview transcripts, field notes, and documentation for the identification of everyday activities, experiences, and events. These were initially coded according to the personal historical narratives of the unemployed, and organised following the three levels identified by the unemployed as important: the institutional, social and personal. The analysis of the documents also helped us understand the social, cultural, and institutional constraints and conditions the unemployed faced. This first step in the analysis served to establish the general basis for our data presentation narrative and was accomplished both inductively, from the existing literature on unemployment as 'deprivation', and deductively, by way of the codes emerging from the data.

The second step involved refining the narrative of our interviewees' daily unemployment practices. We looked at the data a second time, organizing the practices and activities into three main areas emerging from the first step in the analysis: our interviewees' engagement with organisations, institutions and networks; their main activities in trying to overcome their unemployed condition in their local context; and the development of their negotiated identity beyond unemployment. Once again, we used the three levels (institutional, social, personal) outlined by the first qualitative analysis to refine the narrative. However, during this second stage of the analysis, it became clear that not all unemployed developed creative resilience tactics. While some of the unemployed seemed to be able to overcome their condition of unemployment and think differently, others did not seem to be able to do so. This led us to take a third step in the analysis of the material.

The third step consisted of a further reading of the data focusing on identifying the creative

practices – institutional (e.g. navigating institutional environments), social (e.g., engaging with the community, getting recognition for a social contribution), personal (e.g., being at ease with an ‘unemployed’ identity), and material (e.g., generating revenue to ‘make a living’) – that our interviewees’ reported as using to overcome their unemployed condition. This enabled us to further explore the transition some unemployed experience as they are on their way towards developing a new personal and social position versus those who remained locked in their unemployed condition. As in our two previous analyses, the final categories emerged as we looked into our interviewees’ narratives and practices about their current situation and future expectations.

The resulting final narrative illustrates how the Spanish unemployed find themselves in what we call the ‘unemployed condition’: the particular ways in which people live, practice and make sense of the lack of ‘work’ they face. The analysis reveals an alternative perspective to most unemployment studies, a different narrative that goes beyond the centrality of ‘work’ and its lack by showing the agentic social practices of creative resilience that people resort to in order to navigate their current, disadvantaged socio-economic position. Finally, the findings also outline personal responses to unemployment, which enable the unemployed to re-engage in their own personal trajectories and consider positive futures.

FINDINGS

The narratives that follow illustrate the context in which the study takes place in terms of the economic impact of unemployment, and the scarcity, poverty and empty job market this generates. Unemployment is very much portrayed institutionally and socially as an ‘illness’, a perspective that is internalised in turn by our respondents. Our analysis moves beyond describing this unemployment condition. Some of the long-term unemployed are able to distance themselves from this overall narrative and become critical of what the unemployed are expected to be. Emergent narratives and practices outline a new meaning of ‘employment’ by de-centring work as the

epicentre of their lives, which in turn facilitates access to alternative pathways of exchange, where institutions take a background stage and sociality and innovation are enabled through social relations and practices developed within more proximal communities. Our research indicates how some of the long-term unemployed do not follow the standard path set up for the unemployed by institutions and society, but, rather, learn to navigate the system using the ‘porosity’ of institutional and social arrangements and are able to live in the liminal spaces (Turner, 1969/1995) they find themselves in by existing in-and-out of the system. This is a psychological, social and institutional process that is intrinsically creative and that exemplifies creative resilience tactics in precarious conditions.

The unemployment condition

In this first section, we illustrate the societal, economic and psychological challenges the unemployed face. Our interviewees talk about the impact of unemployment on their social contexts, as well as on the self, and how they end up internationalising its symptoms (Regier et al., 2013). They stress the scarcity of resources in an overall empty job market that can no longer provide secure employment. The mainstream solutions they talk about to manage and overcome their condition, which are centred on re-training and re-skilling through provision of courses to “keep people busy”, replicate the institutional voices,. The narratives outlining the unemployment condition also describe a society in decline, with unemployment ‘infecting’ both communities and people.

The economic and social impact of unemployment: empty job market, scarcity and poverty

It is clear high levels of unemployment have impacted people’s capacity to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter and warmth. Most people from our sample had the basics covered, but many (including their dependants) are experiencing hunger and poverty, showing a severe decline in their living conditions.

Víctor Manuel Rebollo and his partner, Susana Pliego, put a face to the statistics. They have been demanding a job at the Andalusian Employment Centre for years and they now live from family members help, charity handouts, and the monthly 399 euro from the central government. Of this, 350 euro go towards renting a modest flat in Coria del Rio. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 09-02-2012)

From the 2.1 million Andalusians below the poverty line, about half suffer from severe poverty. In 2013, 47% of the Andalusian population were in this situation. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 13-05-2015)

The media reports and our interviews show how the labour market ‘dried up’ as a consequence of the economic crisis; one job per 1,000 applicants is a common average. As a result, employers demand higher requirements, qualifications and skills.

There is no country in the world able to sustain an unemployment rate of 26 per cent, for youth unemployment is almost reaching 60 per cent. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 01-28-2014)

Indeed, since the crisis started, 3.8 million jobs have been destroyed ... and right now, after so many labour reforms, of the 100 contracts that are signed monthly, 90 are temporary contracts. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 21-05-2013)

The large absence of job opportunities gives rise to the closing down of hope of employment for the future. Some sectors of the population are more affected by this ‘empty’ job market. Media reports, based on statistics, identify young people, women, people above 50 years of age or closer to retirement, and those with lower education and skills to be more likely suffering from chronic unemployment.

Nothing and no one moves here. The overwhelming feeling is that, indeed, we are ‘still’ (*parados/unemployed*). Joblessness (the ‘*paro*’/the ‘*stop*’) is the biggest metaphor for the absence of action, dynamism, mobility. Maybe because we might have invalidated and marginalized those who should be the main promoters of change. Youth, obviously. By dooming them to a life without a future, we have also removed all chances of social renewal. We have excluded them from the spaces they were called to regenerate. Or we might let them come in as cheap labour, without the right to assume responsibilities [...]. Everything points towards a change of cycle, but those who have to lead it are busy enough surviving, they are fighting to build an identity in a world that negates it. Instead of opening up to the future, risk and invention, they are forced to assume a defensive attitude, to just survive. Under those conditions, who is willing to think in terms of big projects, to engage in entrepreneurship and creativity? (Institutional Media, *El País*, 01-02-2014)

Given the empty job market, Spanish job applicants have to expand their search, lower their expectations for a career path, and, instead, find work on transient opportunities to make ends meet. This entails doing short-term jobs without making use of their education, skills or experience, such as professionals doing manual labour, catering or working in the farming industry. Low wages with long hours, little remuneration and a broken psychological contract as a result become common.

Institutional solutions to a social pathology

This theme highlights the institutional expectations for individuals to face the crisis. Lower skill training and courses offered through public funds, stimulating self-employment or entrepreneurship, or partnerships between the state and private institutions are part of the offers the state and the residual labour market is reported to offer.

It is a time when you have to reinvent yourself and adapt to new times. And it seems that, today, the best option, given the economic situation we are in, is to create your own business. The figure of the entrepreneur has changed: It has gone from being a vocation or a family tradition to be the first option to enter the labour market [...] (Institutional Media ABC, 17-11-2012)

Because the more you are prepared, the more possibilities you have to adapt to the job market and the more alternatives to make a choice. The solution of this country is to significantly improve the training of its young people. (Institutional Media ABC, 18-11-2012)

One of the scarce – and foreseeable – positive consequences of the contemporary economic crisis is the increase in training activities... the so-called life learning training is one of the strategic objectives in the European Union to improve competitiveness and deepen the knowledge economy. (Institutional Media, *El País*, 17-12-2014).

Importantly, we observe in our analysis that although the above institutional expectations may be presented as the way out of unemployment, this powerful institutional voice continues to promulgate ‘otherising’ representations and practices (Howarth, 2004). The unemployed are expected to ‘sort themselves out’. Interviewees indicate that they have very limited support available from the state and formal institutions and do not have family or social support systems to fall back on when experiencing chronic deprivation. Our analysis shows that under these

circumstances, ‘social pathologies’ as symptoms of unemployment appear. Emerging unemployment symptoms, such as homelessness, sex work or crime, are construed as social illnesses. These problems stem out of desperation, given that people still need to find ways to make ends meet.

[...] The profile of the homeless in Galicia is, traditionally, a middle age man, around 45 years old – single, without kids and emigrant in 35% of cases. But the new homeless are known as the ‘suit and tie poor’ and are straight victims of the contemporary economic circumstances. They tend to be people that only two years ago had a job and a house and are now in the streets without a way out. That is why they are still reluctant to pick up a food voucher. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 03-02-2014)

More than a year ago, *The New York Times* published on its cover a report about Spain that raised hell. The chronicle was illustrated by a photograph of a person looking for food in a garbage container... Spanish authorities were outraged by the poor image of Spain the newspaper was giving, an image that many considered exaggerated and removed from reality. In August, we could see another unusual image: garbage containers closed with padlocks so no one could rummage around in search of food. It was from Girona and the decision was taken by the town hall to finish with a practice that had clear ‘health risks’ and provoked social alarm. (Institutional Media, *El País*, 21-12-2013).

The crisis, prolonged and deep, has also made a dent in women. Latest surveys show that 66% of the people in situations of serious social exclusion are women, many of them heads of families from single-parent households. The situation is so extreme that some organizations have warned for some time that the number of women between 30 and 35 who decide to prostitute themselves has increased substantially in Galicia. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 03-02-2013)

Furthermore, the metaphor of the pathology was taken to illustrate in media reports how society itself is ill, with a fragile democracy, a corrupted state and institutions that are no longer able to provide for its population.

Democracy is in danger... we have reached a point of unbearable decomposition. The combination of government cuts, unemployment and massive corruption is a terrible combination. (Institutional Media, *ABC*, 26-01-2012)

Internalising the unemployment condition

Unemployment shapes not only the social and economic contexts where the unemployed live, it also shapes how the employed become transformed into ‘unemployed’ through an internalisation of the condition. The process of internalization involves the integration of attitudes, values, standards

and the opinions of others –e.g. institutions, culture, society etc.– into one’s own identity or sense of self. In psychoanalytic theory, internalisation is how we become a product of society (Corsini, 1999). We use the term internalisation to describe how the unemployed in Spain internalise the negative experience of being unemployed as defined by society, institutions and organizations. They see themselves as becoming a certain type of individual, with a particular relationship to the labour market and requiring a host of interventions to treat the illness (Bolan & Griffin, 2015).

I see a lot of marginality, a lot of mental pathology too. You start to enter a tunnel where everything seems normal, but things are not like that either. There are many depressions, many obsessions, a lot of rejection by principle to everything. Everything becomes... one also becomes numb, and ... forgets to pay attention to the most basic life processes. You ‘become’ unemployed. (Limón, Activist, South)

The initial experience that people in our sample discuss is how unemployment ‘closed in’ on them: first, unemployment was something reported on the news; then, acquaintances and friends became affected until it finally ‘closed in’ on them, reaching home (to family members and ultimately themselves). Pragmatically, a first step is to re-adjust expenditure to meet basic needs, creating radical transformations to lifestyle, living arrangements and, in some cases, lack of access to life sustaining resources, such as food, or basic rights, such as accommodation or education.

Obviously, things started to go wrong, and we came here home with my parents... we had lived together for years... it’s like taking a step back... And he is very far from his family and, believe it or not, it is very difficult... (Jenifer, Bollullos, South)

[My daughter] is now going to another school, a public one... what else? Of course, we go now for long walks, before we went to eat out to restaurants, and now we go to a luxury one: we take a sandwich to the beach [...] Yes, of course, we can live out like this, because we do and I think it is normal, but you have to make sacrifices, but ... I have a little girl and I won’t have her go hungry” (Ana & Unai, North, Bilbao)

Our respondents react to the social exclusion suffered by being outside the labour market. Social exclusion also means lack of accessibility to different opportunities (cultural, leisure, social, etc.) people used to enjoy (Raito & Lahelma, 2015). Media reports confirm how young adults are not financially independent and depend on their families or other family members for their sustenance. By 2014, this situation had become standardised across the country.

These days it is normal for a 29 year old person not to be economically independent... The assimilation of young people into the labour market is extraordinarily painful and the current socio-economic circumstances, especially in the south [unemployment rates in Cadiz are the highest in Spain, 41,26%], makes it almost impossible for a young person under 30 years old to find a job that is good enough to support her needs. (Institutional Media, *El País*, 31-10-2014).

There is a constant worry about the influx of scarce financial resources that are required to keep basic needs or a project going. And yet, people report a capacity to endure to cope with a significant reduction in income. Some respondents, particularly in the South of Spain, depend on organisations and charities, such as Caritas, the Red Cross, food banks or foundations, to provide material resources as basic as food.

A friend of mine [...] there are four brothers in the house, none working, without any sort of income, they were only living with her mother's pension but she died... and they are pretty desperate... one works once or twice in a bar, another might be able to apply for social benefits, around €400, sometimes they call him to pick up some food from the town hall... they are really struggling. (Victor, Activist UNEM, South)

Importantly, the social impact is felt as the unemployed condition affects relationships. Some people become socially isolated, as they are no longer able to 'keep up' with friends' expenditure to socialise. In closer family relationships, the psychological stress is felt and, in some cases, it causes strain and difficulties in the relational dynamics, as we already highlighted above.

Well, I would really like to meet my friends... before we used to meet every week for coffee or we might even plan to go to dinner... but now I have dinner at home because it's cheaper and I feel sorry because I am losing that social support, and I don't do it because... I don't want my friends to end up paying. (Maria C, Bilbao, North)

These practical struggles bring about tensions in the unemployed's process of self-definition. On top of deprivation, people have to face the social exclusion that is associated with unemployment, which, when construed as a social category, carries loaded symbolic meaning systems (Augoustinos, 2001) that produce otherising practices (Howarth, 2004) and a loss of social positioning. Becoming unemployed is not only an economic process, but also one that deprives people socially and psychologically and impacts feelings of self-worth. Some people in these cases

experience depression, isolation and general difficulties in coping with adjusting to a life loaded with material, social and psychological losses.

Let's say, having overcome that emotional crisis that gets to you, because the problem of unemployment also, from the psychological point of view, is that you feel like you are shit, right?... I won't say that my divorce was a result of my work problems, but it was certainly related... to the job situation, and, therefore, the economic-social problems did spoil my relation with my core family members. So, yes, one does not live in isolation, things are related, and there is a point when one says 'fuck, not only it's not having a job, everything gets fucked'. (José, Sevilla, South)

The authors found a 'substantial and significant' increase in the proportion of patients with depression (increase of 19.4%), anxiety (more than 8.4%) or other disorders related to alcohol abuse (4.6%) between 2006 and 2011...They estimated that the risk of suffering a depression for a 40-year-old male was almost double if he was unemployed, if there was someone else in the family in the same situation, and if he had problems paying the mortgage. (Institutional Media, *El País*, 20-08-2014)

While people try to cope with unemployment, especially at the beginning of the cycle, through 'keeping busy' sending CVs or accessing networks and pulling every contact they know, as time goes by and unemployment becomes a long-term situation, many respondents regard the situation as "closed", with no avenues open that would enable them to get back into the formal labour market (Solove et al., 2015). This results in a stagnation of life cycles, where people live in the day-to-day, unable to conceive of a better future, and further reduce their social interactions only to increase their social isolation.

And throwing many CVs via internet, because going to the streets... I've already been giving out CVs in the street, and they don't even bother to pick them up. At the temporary job centres they have a mailbox outside, and the mailbox of CVs is full to the brim, and then afterwards the people that work there let you know that it is better if you send it via internet... so going to the streets is even worse [...] Because, at the end of the day, you lose the motivation to keep on searching, which is even worse... (Victor, Activist UNEM, South)

There are stages, at the beginning, when everything starts, there is a phase of negating yourself; it is the depressive stage. Then there is another aggressive stage, and then there is a stage of carelessness, and you try to say to yourself 'this is what it is, so try to come through as best as you can', and there is no yesterday or tomorrow, only day by day. I live day-by-day and (...) struggle as a wretch to put a plate on the table. (Gabriela, Sevilla, South)

For many, the closing down of hope leads to a perception that a 'normal' potential future is no longer possible.

My future? I don't know, I cannot see it. If they close this or sack me, I will have to make ends meet elsewhere. I won't think about that before it happens... We really don't know how things are going to turn out. (Jon, Bilbao, North)

As the quotes above show, the social psychological impact that unemployment has on the self leads to an internalisation of the 'condition' as an illness that closes down any hope for a 'normal' future. However, there are alternatives to go beyond the unemployment condition, with respondents showing and telling of alternatives to live beyond the unemployment condition and the constraints of their current economic and social expectations.

Beyond the unemployment condition: Creative resilience tactics

As the stability and security dissipates after becoming unemployed, respondents regard Spanish society and institutions as having failed them (Harré and Moghaddam, 2015). In our interviews and media analysis, we found a common distrust and disenchantment with the system and the institutions interviewees once regarded as the providers of rights and duties, as well as of material systems of support. Indeed, the 'failure' of the state and the formal system as provider is seen as having impacted Spanish society in drastic ways. People talk about forced economic displacement and the hollowing out of communities that result from this.

Because being without a job, unemployed, it's sort of something against nature... against a person's normal evolution. Because a person studies, does the right thing, and everyone should have the right to, as the UN human rights says, a decent job... but when that pillar fails, dysfunctionality appears, on a big scale and a personal level, too. And then one starts to fight, to keep on studying, training as they tell you... and time passes by. But, that is not the answer. And the only alternative is to fight day by day and fight at every instance with the opportunities that you could achieve. They cannot give you anything. (South Group Natalia).

Alternative views start to emerge, however, with many respondents contesting the stigma of unemployment and initiating a shift in social positionings and meanings of what work and employment can provide (Riach & Loretto, 2009). The possibility of experiencing and imagining different alternatives leads to finding different ways to navigate society and institutions through 'in-

and-out' tactics and creatively using different 'scaffoldings' to gather social and psychological support to better manage the transition.

Contesting social and institutional stigma through shifting positionings

Desperate collective situations create a rupture in people's social positionings that call for self-questioning and reflection. Self-reflection can be understood as a change of perspective within the self that transforms meaning (Vygotsky, 1997). We found that our respondents tend to engage in processes of 'self-questioning' identity (Beech et al., 2016) by changing the meaning that has been associated with the relation between employment, society and individuals. The critical questioning many engage in contests the stigma associated with unemployment (Omori, 1997) and shifts blame from the unemployed themselves onto the state and institutions. This re-positioning of values and attitudes encourages resilience. Interviewees report how, over time, they managed to disassociate their sense of self from the shame and the perceived failure of being categorized as 'state benefits recipients':

And us? We are the best prepared generation, the one with most entrepreneurial spirit, the one able to do whatever we set out to do, the one that travels abroad in search of adventure. The Government, the Spanish confederation of business organization and the media have all trivialized our situation to the point of creating an image that has nothing to do with reality. (Alternative Media, "We don't leave, we are thrown out" – 7th April)

We want to overcome the stigma of unemployed workers: the ones to be shamed are our politicians, over here, in Madrid and in Brussels, as they keep on paying, with our public money, for the crisis generated by the Banks whilst they doomed us to emigrate or die of hunger. (Alternative Media\Statement from the 'Sevilla unemployed assembly')

A negative result of the economic deprivation is the hollowing out of communities, with many emigrating due to the empty job market, thereby increasing the erosion of the local social fabric. Although the process of leaving is not voluntary, as represented by the "no nos vamos, nos hechan" (*we don't leave, we are thrown out*) discourse, belonging to the nation, region or community is, however, questioned, as the state is perceived as no longer able to provide for its citizens (Harré & Moghaddam, 2015). A consequence is the constant 'fuga de cerebros' (*brain drain*) as many young people, professionals and those with higher education are 'forced out'.

There are more people leaving Spain out of necessity every day, because they don't have a job, with a youth unemployment rate of over 55% and a huge level of unemployment for the amount of qualified people we have. The laws they are passing are actually forcing us to be exiled. Because we don't have a job, to sack people is actually cheaper than ever. There are no options to stay, not even to start your own business or start a working life in Spain. (Alternative Media, YouTube, unemployment video)

The land pulls you back, and you try to make it, you try to get ahead, you try to get some sort of job back in your country, but, in the end... in Spain, there are no professionals left because they are all leaving. You ask around and you'll see that we are doing any job, but most of us are graduates, or have higher education in every discipline, because all the Spanish trained sector is actually leaving for other countries, and that's one of the things we will regret in the future. (North Group, London)

In this narrative, there is no attempt to engage with proposed institutional solutions, such as further training or entrepreneurial endeavours, to maintain or continue a previous social position. Rather, this narrative presents a shift in positioning and meaning towards social and political institutions and expectations (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). Thus, in considering alternative social and psychological positions, our unemployed come to experience the world through different perspectives and relations, and, as a result, they are able to move beyond their condition of unemployment.

A first step is the 'de-centring' of paid employment from their daily life. In line with Riach and Loretto's research (2009), for our respondents, traditional binary distinctions between work and non-work become simplistic when it comes to conceptualising activities as either paid or non-paid work. As paid work becomes transient, respondents report having to resort to different, on-going creative tactics to make a living. Thus, it is not paid work that gives them a sense of identity.

We have 25 chickens where we live, and a piece of land, huerta, and that's what has given me life, all that time that I have not been working, that is bad for you, when you have nothing to do, no way... Just going to work the land has given me an extra lease of life. I mean, I do it because you have to stand and move, I don't know, you have to feel useful, don't you, which is important and necessary. [...] Now, for example, I bought an incubator ... Three days ago, it takes three days for the incubator, and now I, with one of those we live, we think that a way to get ahead is to get €100 or €150 or €200 a month selling chickens ... (Aitor & Josu, North)

The quote above illustrates the process of re-positioning the self by “letting go” of particular social and institutional expectations of what an ‘unemployed person’ is expected to do. Importantly, this seems to ‘liberate’ people, opening up alternatives to re-shape narratives and the meaning they attach to them. They regard this process as an outcome in itself.

Well, I think that, at the beginning, needs take you to a different place, right? These last years, I learned that I need a lot less things than I thought I needed, and that I am happier than before by far, despite everything that has happened.., and I am more in charge of my life than before. Before I had to do things because life, society, was sort of marking a pace, you have to work, you have to study, you have to do the two things at once... And now I am able to stop and question things that before were unquestionable... and this thing of getting close to people... in Seville we tend to like showing off, right? When you take away all that, when you don't have to pretend any more because you cannot do it and you don't care, ... it's much easier to find oneself, right? (Marilo, Activist, South)

The psychosocial capacity to be able to de-centre the importance of formal employment and of society as the bestower of social positioning shows a creative resilient process in itself. As Marilo describes above, the freedom from societal structures has meant she has been able to engage in creative processes of re-shaping her identity and behaviours. For others, this has also re-constituted their relational dynamics, empowering them and making them more critical. The disruption enforced by the process of unemployment has been used by some to strengthen their ability to keep going forward.

I did my own process of empowerment, because I came from a relationship where I almost had no voice, and then, all of a sudden, I thought that maybe instead of me staying at my mum's and he here, I thought he could find another flat and I could stay here, happy as pie. (Irma y Elena, Corrala, Activists, South)

Navigating institutions: The ‘in-and-out’ creative resilience tactics

Although our interviewees do not necessarily want to live outside the system, they are forced to look for alternative pathways to make a living by stepping in-and-out of the social and institutional structure. As Ingold (2016) suggests, rather than having their movements dictated by collective constraints imposed on them, our unemployed wayfind their way, openly responding to their current conditions. In this liminal margin (Turner, 1969/1995), the in-and-out porous institutional and

social boundaries enable them to access resources to make a living. Our unemployed not only survive, however, they move fluidly within cultural and social institutions, not only by physically interacting with them, but also engaging psychologically (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). A few (particularly activists) hope that their alternative wayfinding through the system will eventually change the system itself.

I think that..., obviously in this period I have learned a lot. I did not have a lot of experience in the things I've told you about: collectives, self-management, social cooperatives... I kind of learned to see life in a different way, but I don't mean outside the system, because that leads to marginality and some sort of endogamous dynamic, and sectarianism, some sort of sectarianism. I am, naturally, always in the limit, in no man's land, at the border of everything... I think one has to bet on a different way of living, social currencies are a great complementary system, but I have many things that are worthless, and I don't want to own a flat [...] but you are still living inside a system, you can bypass it as much as you can, you can try to fit your ways... to have a happy and dignified life, without needing much, but for that... I like to work, you know? (Limón, Activist, South)

This creative resilient process takes the unemployed outside the patterns they lived while 'inside' the system. The disruption produced by unemployment enabled a shift of social positioning as the unemployed are forced to actively engage in creating alternative spaces and modes of behaviour. In doing so, they challenge and overcome unemployment as an 'illness'. Their innovative behaviours to make ends meet are practiced in informal street selling-buying or exchange of goods, services, knowledge or expertise.

It is impossible to live legally because you lose money and nobody will ever acknowledge it, and you go to any counsellor or lawyer agency and they threaten you with an inspection, and I know cases of people who have had to pay because they have had an inspection and they were caught doing the things the wrong way around, it's like a situation of survival [...] We are in a situation of vulnerability, of absolute risk, and we support ourselves as best as we can. And I have been alone, I had to make ends meet, and I have my support network. I have now gone to Barcelona for a week and for me it is like my medicine. I search for the legal and illegal practitioners, all my professional network with whom I've worked. For me it's my looking for those who are legal, who are illegal, all my network of professionals with whom I have worked, and for me it's soothing. (Inés, North)

The 'scaffoldings' providing social and psychological support

The unemployed re-defining their social positionings and de-centring work to find alternatives for living require support at different levels. The main support they report was in self-other relations

and in the community. Having the intersubjective support of a partner, a family member or the community is reported as central to enable the emergence of creative resilience.

The concept of scaffolding originates in social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and describes how learning occurs in children through the support of an adult, which is likely to be a parent or teacher. In its more recent conceptualisation, scaffoldings are seen to play a central role in supporting people to overcome the hurdles and difficulties associated with challenging social realities (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2013). They are most commonly associated with the family, but are found also in institutions and community relations. As the unemployed engage in practices of wayfinding over the course of their daily lives, they cross paths with other actors and their journeys intertwine through sharing stories and relating to each other about their experiences (Ingold, 2016). As Ingold (2016) asserts, the challenge for wayfinding actors such as our unemployed is to improvise a way through their circumstances and to keep going.

Really, I think that what works, at the end of the day, is the family network. In my case, I am living at peace, I make ends meet, but I mainly feed my soul, you know what I mean? I engage in projects that do not really give me money, but they give me personal development, and I live sustained by my family, by my parents in this case. ... And well, in principle, I am there. I separated. I had to leave the home and went there with them. They were older. Their health is delicate, and, well, we do a little exchange of energy. They support me economically, although I contribute a big chunk, because I don't give anything towards the rent or food, nothing at all. Also, they don't give me money; the money for my stuff comes from my own pocket. The family allowance that I have to give for my kids normally comes from me... (Luís, Seville, South)

Regarding familial support, there is a cultural specificity issue of the family dynamics and practices that must be recognised. In Spain, it is more common for adult children to stay living with their parents until early adulthood (sometimes into their 30s) and this is not culturally regarded as a problem as it may be in other countries, particularly in Northern Europe. Familial support is strong in Spain at all levels, not just financially. Although this is perceived as a vital source of support, a few of the respondents highlight how it can impact independence in adulthood.

Our mothers are crying. They complained when we are at home and they cried the day we left the country. My mother, for example, always said 'come back', but the last two years, as things are getting worse, she is now telling me to stay, and that has really surprised me so

much... because we are so attached to the family, we have a hard time leaving home ...
(North Group, London)

Another scaffoldings is sociality, or the positive aspect of simply enjoying the company of others. Our interviewees report that being close to others who have been by their side in moments of adversity has helped them to deal with hurdles in a positive way. Others narrate how the alternative pathways and spaces they have encountered have produced solidarity and important relations of mutual support.

That's why I believe that creating meeting moments is essential. We must revitalize the bonds between people, especially among women. It's so obvious. And the moments of meeting, sharing, are really key. That's the point. We talk and agree to do things and find out what you are doing, without a fuss, that is it, without great difficulties. (Espe, South)

The empirical findings reported above illustrate the ways in which the unemployed in Spain have responded to the social, cultural and economic impact of the recent economic crisis. After identifying the context and the institutional voice that frames unemployment in Spain, our analysis has identified the grounded narrative that explains the symptoms of unemployment and how they can be internalised as an illness, a condition. Our findings, however, also show how many people are able to overcome that condition and use creative resilience tactics despite facing many challenges. It is through their innovative responses and behaviours that they create alternatives to make ends meet and re-signify the meaning of employment and their position in the social structure.

DISCUSSION

Our research aims to complement the 'deprivation' approach to unemployment by looking at the *creative resilience tactics* used by the Spanish unemployed in overcoming their condition of unemployment. Our findings illustrate the individual and collective sources of creative resilience and well-being developed within precarious contexts that lead to alternatives in the face of a world without secure employment. We have shown in our analysis how the unemployed do so by developing alternative spaces in which to operate differently (Mair et al., 2016).

Resilience has been defined as the coping capacity and strategies developed to overcome harsh realities (Fraser, 2004; Ungar, 2004, 2012). Beyond the mainly individual psychological focus of its origins, we have also seen how resilience emerges as a collective process of people facing adversity and engaging collectively for social transformation (Chan et al., 2017). Following the challenges presented by the GFC and its consequences, resilience is particularly pertinent in a Southern European context, where individuals, organizations, and collectives have to face, resist, and develop innovative responses to adverse situations.

We consider resilience, therefore, a creative process, more adaptability rather than rebound (Andres and Round, 2015). This understanding re-frames the concept of resilience away from survival within the present context of work and economic life towards the development of alternatives (Parson, 2007). Thus, we want to indicate with the concept of *creative resilience* the process of socially developed creative tactics to develop both collective resilience and creative engagement with contextual employment problems. In our analysis, we have seen creative resilience developing through narratives and practices in a constant effort to adjust to rapid changes, unforeseen events, and opportunities presented by the on-going unemployment crisis (Vigh, 2008). Creative engagements enable people to operate in precarious environments lacking infrastructure support and resources (Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo & Imas, 2017). This is an everyday creative resilience, necessary for the shifting generation of meaning, that helps individuals to adapt flexibly, improvise, and try different options. All the creative tactics outlined above enable our respondents to keep exercising what Marsten (2001) calls ‘ordinary magic’ in their everyday efforts to ‘make a living’.

The implications of this research in a world without secure employment can be profound. As Haldane (2015, p. 3, emphasis in original) notes, the fourth industrial revolution, or the new-machine age, precipitated by robotics and artificial intelligence, could have a profound impact in terms of the future of work:

Technology *may* be set to change jobs and wages more fundamentally than in the past. Job displacement and creation *may* come thicker and faster than ever previously. “Hollowing out” *may* become more pervasive. And gaps between those with and without skills, or with and without jobs, *may* widen as never before.

While no one has a crystal ball to precisely foretell the future, Haldane (2015) argues that we could well be looking at a profound shift away from past experience. He notes that the transitions accompanying the first, second and third industrial evolutions were not costless in terms of their impact on employment, with each triggering a significant transformation of the jobs landscape. With each successive industrial evolution disrupting both the number and nature of jobs, Haldane notes a hollowing out in the pattern of employment: data “tell a striking and consistent story of mid-skill jobs being lost, counter-balanced by employment gains at the high-skill and, to lesser extent, low-skill segments of the workforce”, which “has widened and deepened with each new technological wave” (Haldane, 2015, p. 12).

These shifts have tremendous implications for a society so heavily organised around work (Frayne, 2015; Weeks, 2011), with underemployment (under-utilised time and under-utilised skills) rising significantly and already a serious problem at an average 15 per cent across the EU (Haldane, 2015), along with youth un(der)employment also at high levels. With Haldane (2015) suggesting that the fourth industrial evolution has the potential to lead to massive unemployment, with little chance for new job creation at the level of the jobs displaced, the future of work looks very problematic.

Through our work with necessity entrepreneurs (Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo & Imas, 2017; Garcia-Lorenzo, Sell-Trujillo & Donnelly, 2014), we have seen first hand how people attempt to cope with their unemployed condition. Absorbing the negative discourse surrounding their condition (e.g., burden on society, good-for-nothing, lazy, parasite, scrounger), and in the absence of jobs, they actively seek to create employment opportunities for themselves. In this sense, necessity is the mother of invention, but such necessity is not of their making and creates

much unnecessary stress for the individuals concerned and for society. In light of the future of work outlined by Haldane (2015), mass and permanent unemployment could well mark the future. What does this mean for a society so heavily defined by work? With the demand for jobs outstripping the supply, what does it mean for individuals, and their communities, who, through no fault of theirs, will not have the opportunity to earn a living? What are they supposed to do? Perhaps extant work, such as ours, which explores the experiences of people who became unemployed in the wake of the global financial crisis, gives us a glimpse at just such a future.

Facing a possible future of mass and permanent un(der)employment, perhaps the time has come to “challenge the work-centred nature of modern society” (Frayne, 2015, p. 5). Allowing for a future labour market woefully incapable of meeting the need for paid work, and all the benefits accruing therefrom, perhaps the time has come to throw off the ethical superiority afforded work and embrace the opportunity Keynes (1930/1932) saw in technological advancements to give birth to a new ‘leisure class’.

The future of work raises questions as to how society and policy-makers should respond. At one remove, there are trials taking place, for example, in Finland, with universal basic income (Chakraborty, 2017). In the absence of published results, anecdotal evidence suggests that having a guaranteed, unconditional income has the potential to release people to do work they find meaningful, as opposed to current, humiliating welfare systems that condemn the unemployed to the grind of bureaucratic scrutiny (Chakraborty, 2017).

Current welfare systems are premised on forcing people off social welfare and into paid jobs. This has been the experience of the necessity entrepreneurs we have met: society expects them to find work, yet there are insufficient jobs available. This very much reflects the ethical status afforded work. Indeed, “work has crept into and colonised our lives” (Frayne, 2015, p. 3), such that it “represents a highly naturalized and taken-for-granted feature of everyday life” (Frayne, 2015, p. 5). Thus, those who are unemployed are demonised and characterised using such

derogatory terms as lazy or scroungers. Indeed, they are viewed as societal pariahs, when, for many, they are unemployed through no fault of their own and desperately wish to become productive members of society. However, the problem is not the un(der)employed; the problem is society being beholden to the very idea of paid work as a social and political good (Weeks, 2011).

Thus, in line with conversations about universal basic income, the future of work, which may well be marked by the absence of work for many, calls on us to very much question the centrality of work in society and consider “what it means to live a good life” (Frayne, 2015, p. 4). To question the centrality of work is not to deny that work has any value; rather, it is to consider that “the obligation to paid employment so often precludes the possibility of engaging in activities that are genuinely creative, collaborative and useful” (Frayne, 2015, p. 23). As Weeks (2011, p. 10) notes, challenging the centrality of work means insisting

... that there are other ways to organise and distribute that activity and to remind us that it is also possible to be creative outside the boundaries of work. It is to suggest that there might be a variety of ways to experience the pleasure that we may now find in work, as well as other pleasures that we may wish to discover, cultivate, and enjoy.

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