The Long Path from Periphery to Core: Social Mobility in Southern European Countries

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Abstract

This article analyzes absolute and relative social mobility patterns in Southern European Countries (Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal) through three cohorts of men and women who reached occupational maturity from 1969 to 2004, a period of profound economic, political and cultural transformations. Previous research literature on these countries has been scarce. The main objective of this study is to test the two most common hypotheses applied in research on social mobility by using constrained and unconstrained log-linear models: First, the Invariance hypothesis (H1), which postulates that relative social mobility rates undergo no or only insignificant change; secondly, the Industrialism hypothesis (H2), which posits that relative social mobility rates have experienced a profound or moderate but significant change towards a more open society. The results show a small but significant intergenerational improvement in social fluidity, confirming what we have called the Weak Improvement hypothesis (H3). This improvement has been more acute in women than in men, and differences can be found among selected countries, with Italy being the country where social mobility rates have improved the most.

Keywords: Intergenerational social mobility, Log-linear models, Modernization, Invariance, Southern European countries, Social class

Introduction

Until the crisis of 2008, the countries of Southern Europe were successful models of the arduous path that leads from underdevelopment to modernization. It was thought that Greece, Italy, Portugal, and, particularly, Spain could serve as examples to nations of Latin America and Eastern Europe in the challenging process of democratic transition and economic liberalization (Espina, 2007; Thomadakis, 2006). During the last third of the twentieth century, these countries had overcome adversities linked to long periods of dictatorship and belonging to the economic periphery. Thus, at the beginning of the 1990s, the debate about European convergence reached its zenith. We must bear in mind that convergence, integration, and even Europeanization, have been synonyms of modernization. Ortega y Gasset, the famous Spanish philosopher, summarized this idea superbly when he said, "If Spain is the problem, Europe is the solution". During this decade, the debate over the uniqueness of Southern European Countries (SEC from now on) was especially important. In The Three Worlds of Capitalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990), Esping-Andersen included Italy as a corporative welfare regime. In response,

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Received: 4 February 2024 Revised: 20 June 2024 Accepted: 23 June 2024

many scholars pointed out the need to create a new model to describe the welfare regimes of SEC (Abrahamson, 1995; Castles and Obinger, 2008; Ferrera, 1993; Jones, 1993; Lessenich, 1996; Rhodes, 1996; Saint-Arnaud and Bernard, 2003; Sotiropoulos, 2004).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the intergenerational social class mobility in SEC from the late 1960s to the early 2000s. Two hypotheses will be explored. The first hypothesis is the Constant Social Fluidity, which suggests that the equality of class attainment opportunity, or relative social mobility, remains almost unchanged. The second is the Industrialism hypothesis, which proposes that societies undergo notable or moderate changes towards a more open society. It is important to note that, apart from research on Italy, previous studies have been limited and have focused on more descriptive studies instead of analyzing the real chances between classes over time.

The paper is structured as follows: The next section provides a brief introduction to the concept of intergenerational social class mobility and its importance.

The second section justifies the study's focus on Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. It will also examine the literature's results regarding social mobility in Southern European countries and explain the main resulting hypotheses.

The third section introduces the data and the applied methodology, while in the fourth section, we will discuss the absolute and relative social mobility rates. Finally, there is a section of conclusions and questions for further research.

Theoretical Overview

Intergenerational Social Class Mobility, commonly referred to as Social Mobility, has been an extensively studied phenomenon in many Western countries. It refers to the movement between social classes across generations, whether upward, downward, or remaining the same (social immobility) in the social hierarchy. Social Mobility is closely related to the concept of Social Inequality, but it offers a different perspective. It is a critical concept for assessing the quality of a society as it measures how open or closed a society is over time in terms of equality of opportunities.

The concept of social mobility suffers from a multiplicity of meanings that further complicate its public debate. In the first place, we find its homonym in human geography, which is used to study population movements and migratory phenomena. This concept logically, we will discard from this entry. Secondly, social mobility -whether of educational levels, income, or social classes- can be approached from the perspective of individual trajectories -intragenerational social mobility- thus observing people's capacity to improve throughout their lives, or by looking at family trajectories -intergenerational social mobility-. Intergenerational social mobility refers to the movement of people within the scale of societal positions. Sociological analysis on the subject is based primarily on survey data - where people are asked what their father's and mother's profession was when they were 14 or 16 years old - but not only. There are cases, especially in northern Europe, where censuses and birth and death certificates have been used, thus creating an account of social mobility that takes us back to the 18th century.

As if that were not enough, this concept of intergenerational social mobility suffers from another double aspect with extraordinarily 'original' adjectives: absolute and relative social mobility. Both are closely related but measure very different aspects of a society. Absolute social mobility looks

at how many people move from one class to another, generation after generation. It is primarily descriptive and is the most easily discernible at the individual level. For example, in 50 years, the class structure of our country has changed radically, and the perception of an increase in upward social mobility, by virtue of our own experience and that of our relatives, has had its historical foundation. Ultimately, any significant economic change will have an impact on the class structure of a society. Thus, social mobility, particularly relative social mobility, is a faithful indicator of how equal opportunity has improved over time.

However, there is a question of considerable political, and not only economic, implications. We refer to relative social mobility. Relative addresses not so much the absolute change in class structure but the probability of a street food vendor's daughter becoming a doctor relative to the probability of a doctor's daughter becoming a doctor. In this way, sociology can observe, generation after generation, whether the probabilities become equal, become more distant, or remain the same. Let us explain this with an example. Imagine a given society where 50 years ago there were five white-collar professional positions (doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.). Of these, only two of those five people were daughters of unskilled workers (day laborers, waiters, construction workers, etc.). In contrast, the other three positions were occupied by descendants of doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Logical, in part the class position is "inherited". This is a classic effect. Today we know that there has been a change in the social structure of that society, and it already enjoys not five, but ten such jobs. Progress and modernization have arrived. However, of those ten jobs, only four are held by daughters of unskilled workers and six are still held by daughters of white-collar professionals. The proportions have not changed. There has been no improvement in social mobility in relative terms. Even so, there remains a latent substratum in the collective imagination that there has been an improvement in mobility and equality of opportunity because we see more daughters and sons of peasants getting good jobs at the city.

Understanding these concepts allows for a nuanced analysis of how social class dynamics evolve and affect individuals across generations.

Now some brief context of the Southern Europe Countries (SEC) and its context. Let’s start with Italy. To date, social mobility research in Italy has yielded mixed results. In the mid-1980s, Cobalti and Schizzerotto (1994) highlighted significant social mobility disparities across classes, showing consistent societal openness throughout the 20th century. Comparisons with later surveys confirmed modest increases in relative mobility (Pisatti & Schizzerotto, 1999, 2004), driven by educational equality and regional economic successes (Ballarino et al., 2008). Conversely, labor market rigidity limited mobility (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009).

In SEC labor markets are highly segmented (Bentolila, Dolado & Padilla, 1994). "Partial de-regulation policies" created dual labor segments: protected, stable jobs and volatile, precarious employment (Adam & Canziani, 1998). Strong familial ties in Italy and Spain impact mobility, with high intergenerational support affecting women's employment (Jurado & Naldini, 1996). Late industrialization slowed economic modernization and welfare state development, influencing mobility (Tortella, 1994). Studies show modest relative mobility in Spain, with stable rates despite improved educational outcomes (Marqués-Perales & Herrera-Usagre, 2010). In Greece, case studies suggest limited mobility due to small sample sizes and methodological constraints (Petmisidou, 1991; Themelis, 2013). Portuguese studies reveal moderate openness and upward mobility, particularly towards managerial and technical roles (Estanque & Mendes, 1999; Fonseca & Guimarães, 2009).

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the SEC has experienced a significant improvement in its relative social mobility rates. In other words, it aims to determine whether the SEC societies have become more inclusive and offer more equal opportunities until the crisis of 2008.

Hypotheses

Our aim is focused on the verification of the most common hypotheses applied to the social mobility field with new data.

H1. In Southern European Countries, social fluidity experienced a profound or moderate but significant change towards a more open society in the period from 1960 to 2005. Referred to as the Industrialism Hypothesis

It postulates that, as a particular society moves from a pre-industrial to an industrial period, its structure of opportunities becomes more open (Lipset and Zetterberg, 1959). The assumption is that, given the intense use of industry and machinery, firms must make more intense use of education in the interest of remaining competitive. If industry is replaced by service and education by human capital this thesis may be re-named the Postindustrial Hypothesis. Here, the key issue is the consideration that social positions are the product of achieved status rather than ascribed status. In its harder version, the Industrialism Hypothesis shapes history. In recent decades, this hypothesis has been questioned by a number of scholars (Grusky, 1982; Jonsson and Mills, 1993; Luijkx and Ganzeboom, 1986).

According to Breen and Luijkx, social mobility has experienced an increase in France, the Netherlands, Hungary, Sweden and Poland (Breen and Luijkx, 2004). Given that such a hypothesis reduces the scope and the depth of the changes, suggests that we refer to it as the Weak Improvement hypothesis (H3, which is a variation of H1). Regarding Southern countries, it might be expected that social mobility has achieved a vast degree of social fluidity or that the temporal trend has been small but significant. In fact, from 1970 to 2005, the Southern European countries' social scenario was dramatically transformed. Paramount political and economic changes occurred. Three of these countries underwent a transition from dictatorship to democracy and then joined the European Union. Their GDP underwent an unparalleled increase, reducing the distance from the rest of Europe; educational enrollment increased; income inequality was reduced, and social spending increased.

H2. In Southern European Countries, relative social mobility rates do not undergo any or insignificant change in the period from 1960 to 2005

The second hypothesis, in contrast, suggests that social mobility has not experienced any change over time (Hauser, Dickinson, Travis, and Koffel, 1975). The Invariance Hypothesis posits that, once marginal distributions are controlled for, relative mobility patterns are stable over time. This means that mobility changes are due to macro-structural changes that are exogenous to mobility (Wong and Hauser, 1992). This theoretical supposition may be relaxed, if specific changes may occur, but they are not in a direction toward a greater degree of openness or closedness in a given society. This argument is derived from the Trendless Fluctuation Hypothesis originally established by Sorokin. For instance, it may be considered that social mobility declined and later recovered due to the Europeanization process after the intense impact suffered by SEC from the petrol shocks in the 1970s. Conversely, it can be thought that social mobility rates suffered a decline due to the end of industrialization. Either way, the fundamental idea is that “if there is an increase (or decrease) in social fluidity openness, it should be interpreted as a sporadic and short-term phenomenon rather than an intrinsic part of comprehensive

developmental tendency" (Sorokin, 1998, p. 152). Regarding Southern European countries, the most substantial evidence to support this hypothesis is that in the early 1970s, the industrial age was coming to an end. Some researchers have pointed out that since the first period of industrialization ended, social fluidity rates have remained constant or have not undergone significant alterations. Table 1 outlines the hypotheses regarding social fluidity.

Table 1 Hypotheses regarding social fluidity

Hypothesis	Hard version	Weak versions
Temporal change	*Industrialism/post-industrialism*	*Weak Improvement hypothesis*
No Temporal Change	*Invariance hypothesis*	*Trendless Fluctuation*

Materials and methods

Data and measurement

The survey covers three generations that reached working age between the late 1960s and the early 21st century. Although birth cohorts do not perfectly align with historical periods due to mortality events, they are considered reliable indicators of actual mobility processes. Table 2 displays the cohorts to be analyzed, the years in which they reached working age, the collected samples, and some significant historical events. The first cohort, which reached working age during 1969-1979, coincided with the end of dictatorship and the onset of the "third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1991). When the second cohort in Spain, Greece, and Portugal reached working age, social democrat parties came into power. In 1987, Italy surpassed the GDP of the United Kingdom in what was known as "Il sorpaso". The third cohort, born between 1963 and 1974, reached working age during 1993-2004, a period characterized by what economists referred to as "the Great Moderation", during which the world economies reduced the volatility of business-cycle fluctuations.

Table 2 Birth Cohorts, Occupational Maturity Years, Sample size by Countries and Historical Landmarks

Cohorts	**Ocupacional Maturity**	**Sample-size**	**Italy**	**Spain**	**Portugal**	**Greece**	**Landmarks**
1939-1950	1969-1979	Male	3,436	2,062	710	899	Third wave" of democratization
		Female	2,852	1,528	751	644	
		Total	6,288	3,590	1,461	1,543	
1951-1962	1981-1992	Male	4,004	2,717	894	1,109	Socialist parties came to power "Il sorpaso". Greece, Portugal Spain members of European Union.
		Female	3,454	2,513	908	948	
		Total	7,458	5,230	1,802	1,857	
1963-1974	1993-2004	Male	4,475	2,878	828	1,147	The Great Moderation period
		Female	4,068	2,842	819	998	
		Total	8,543	5,730	1,647	2,145	
TOTAL			**22,889**	**14,550**	**4,910**	**5,545**	

Source: (Italy: Income and Living Conditions of Families Survey; Spain: Living Conditions Survey; Portugal: Living Conditions Survey; and Greece: Income and Living Conditions Survey, 2005)

Table 3 The Correspondence between the Original Social Classes and Six Social Classes

Original Social Classes	Definition	Six Social Classes
I	Higher-grade professionals, administrators, and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors	I+II
II	Lower-grade professionals, administrators, and officials, higher-grade technicians; managers in small industrial establishments; supervisors of non-manual employees	
IIIa	Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (administration and commerce)	IIIab
IIIb	Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (sales and services)	
IVa	Small proprietors, artisans, etc., with employees	IVab
IVb	Small proprietors, artisans, etc., without employees	
V	Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers	V+VI
VI	Skilled manual workers	
VIIa	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture)	VIIa
IVc	Farmers and smallholders; other self-employed workers in primary production	IVc+VIIb
VIIb	Agricultural and other workers in primary production	

To attain comparability across cohorts and countries, some of the extended versions of the EGP scheme, which formerly consisted of eleven social classes (Table 3), must be reduced.

A set of four different European Union Surveys of Incomes and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) from 2005 have been used for the analyses (Table 4). The sampling strategy included the following selection criteria:

1) Both men and women from 30 to 65 years of age for different subsets.

2) Last job specified coded using ISCO-88 (two digits); their fathers' job when they were 15 years old coded using ISCO-88 (two digits); country: Spain, Italy, Greece or Portugal. To explore the pattern of association between origin and destination a set of log-linear and log-multiplicative models have been performed for each country and each gender.

Table 4: Country and Collected Surveys

Country	Survey (2005)
Italy	Income and Living Conditions of Families Survey
Spain	Living Conditions Survey
Portugal	Living Conditions Survey
Greece	Income and Living Conditions Survey

Methods

Most studies of social mobility employ log-linear and log-multiplicative models or models of association to analyze relative rates of social mobility. Such models tell us if the intergenerational association between fathers and their children has experienced a higher degree of openness or closeness. Ganzeboom and Luijkx's (2004) research strategy will be implemented.

The model that combines the totality of odds-ratio association in a cross-table is the so-called saturated model, unconstrained association model, or independence model. Another variant of this

model is the quasi-independence model (QI). Both models are widely used by researchers as baseline models. In the QI model, social class transmission is mainly random, apart from the tendency to inherit the parental class. Cell frequencies are a function of marginal and diagonal parameters (Li and Singelmann, 1999).

There are two ways to constrain odds ratios to find a sociologically more meaningful and more robust statistical adjustment. First, we can introduce constraints between tables to test for trends (without using within-table constraints). Second, we can introduce constraints within tables to find a parsimonious and interpretable pattern of social mobility flows (Ganzeboom and Luijkx, 2004). These ways of constraining tables will be explained below.

Unconstrained models

• Independence Model

The first model is called the independence model, and it will be used as a baseline in which there are no interaction effects.

$$\log Fij = \mu + \lambda iO + \lambda jD \qquad (1.1)$$

• Independence Conditional Model

With the second model, we assume 'perfect mobility' in which all odds ratios defining the net association between origins and destinations equal 1:

$$\log Fijk = \mu + \lambda iO + \lambda jD + \lambda kC + \lambda ikOC + \lambda jkDC \qquad (1.2)$$

Where Fijk is the expected frequency in cell ijk, i represents the rows, j the columns and k the periods of a three-way table comprising origin (O), destination (D) and Cohorts (C). On the left-hand side of the equation, μ represents the scale factor, whilst λiO, λjD, λkC represent the main effects of the distribution of class origin, class destination and cohorts, respectively. The last two terms, λikOC and λjkDC, relate to corresponding associations.

• Constant Social Fluidity

The most straightforward constraint between tables is the assumption that similar odds ratios are identical between tables

$$\log Fijk = \mu + \lambda iO + \lambda jD + \lambda kC + \lambda ikOC + \lambda jkDC + \lambda ijOD \qquad (1.3)$$

With this model we add another parameter related to the association between origin and birth period (λijOD) to the independence model. The model is known as Constant Social Fluidity (CnSF) and is widely used to test changes over time without calling for changes within the tables. In other words, this model measures the influence of the cohort plus the influence of origin and destination.

• Unidiff with Linear Trend Model

Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) and Xie (1992) developed a CnSF model to test changes over time called Unidiff (Uniform Difference), or the log-multiplicative layer effect model. The Unidiff model is set in a position between CnSF (same pattern and association strength over time) and an independence model (different pattern and association strength over time), using as constriction that each odds ratio could change from one cohort to another through a multiplicative scaling factor. In

addition, we have added a linear trend parameter, which is to say, these over-time differences follow a linear function:

$$\log Fijk = \mu + \lambda iO + \lambda jD + \lambda kC + \lambda ikOC + \lambda jkDC + \beta kXij + \beta k \quad (1.4)$$

Xij represents the general pattern of the association between origins and destinations, and $\beta k = 1 + \beta C$ where C is the number of cohorts. The test of whether there are significant differences between Constant Fluctuation (CnSF) and Linear Trend (Unidiff) indicates whether there are deviations from a linear trend (Ganzeboom and Luijkx, 2004).

Constrained models

The scaled association model (Goodman, 1979) is a powerful tool for studying within-table constraints. Thus, a developed version of the uniform association model will be implemented. The main advantage of more well-known Row and Column models lies in their capacity to provide information about the pattern of association. It permits us to know if diagonals the people who keep the same class as their parents (immobile), behave in a different way than the rest of the cells, that is, people who have a different class from their parents (mobile). The distances will be estimated posteriori to permit them to be estimated from the data. Odds ratios are constrained to be dependent upon distances among categories. Since 6 x 6 categories form each table, we have 25 odds ratios.

$$\log Fij = \lambda + \lambda i + \lambda j + \varphi (\mu i+1 - \mu i) (\nu j+1 - \nu j) + \delta k \quad (2.1)$$

Where φ is the index of association or scaled parameter, μi and νj are the row and column scores respectively. δk is an additional term that is applied to special regions of the table, in this case, to diagonals. To gain parsimony and to achieve a more sociological interpretation, row and column scores will be scaled equally. This model declares that tendencies to form relationships are ordered by their proximity (product of μiνj) on a single-dimension distance (Goodman, 1984; Marsden, 1988).

$$\mu i = \nu j \quad (2.2)$$

The component φk of the scaled association model is a simple heterogeneous, which gives a log-multiplicative interaction structure for each level of the joint grouping variable (Vermunt, 1996, 1997; Xie, 1992). However, a restriction to shape a linear form will be added.

$$\varphi k = \varphi^*(1+\beta Y) \quad (2.3)$$

In consideration of the δk component two different approaches will be considered. On the one hand, diagonals will be equal to those observed frequencies. On the other hand, diagonals may shape a different form, as the independence model does: Such a model is similar to blocking out some regions of the table.

Adjustment measures

The log-likelihood ratio X2 (L2) will be used as the primary goodness of fit measure. Moreover, the Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) (Raftery, 1995) will be considered. Raftery argues that comparative social mobility studies used to have large sample sizes, making it difficult to find models that adjust data to ordinary probability levels.

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the L2 is sensible to tables with scarce information cells with one or zero cases (Ganzeboom, Luijkx and Treiman, 1988). As Ganzeboom, Luijkx and

Treiman did before (1988), we will restrict our interpretations to the differences between statistical results, not to the absolute values. Our models will be estimated using lEM software (Vermunt, 1997).

Results

Class structure

Two events are prone to occur when a society evolves from an agriculturally based economy to an industrial and, subsequently, to a post-industrial one (Breen and Luijkx, 2004). First, the most common path of change is a sharp decline in the proportion of the population in agricultural classes and growth in manual working classes and, to a lesser extent, white-collar classes. Secondly, once the consolidation of the industrial structure has been completed, a decline within manual working positions takes place through the expansion of non-manual classes and the passage toward a post-industrial economy. However, the Southern European Countries, except Italy, have followed a different trend, in which their social structures have experienced an abrupt transition from a vast agricultural sector to a post-industrial society without an intermediate industrial stage.

Table 5 shows the share of each social class broken down into parents and children (whose respective distributions are shown for both men and women together and men and women separately) over the three cohorts covered by this study within SEC in comparison to the EU-21 figures.

Table 5 Social class structures

1939-1974* in percentages		**EU-21**	**SEC**	**Spain**	**Italy**	**Greece**	**Portugal**
I+II	Fathers	16.59	10.16	10.02	12.21	5.71	6.34
	Children	29.39	19.45	18.27	21.77	18.03	14.08
	Men	28.45	19.18	18.62	21.11	16.25	15.10
	Women	30.33	19.76	17.88	22.52	20.20	13.10
IIIab	Fathers	11.70	11.87	12.28	12.12	10.86	10.70
	Children	29.12	29.59	33.64	27.49	25.18	32.31
	Men	14.35	17.70	17.99	17.88	16.88	16.97
	Women	43.96	42.99	51.14	38.52	35.26	47.31
IVab	Fathers	12.39	16.82	14.68	18.19	21.17	11.34
	Children	11.62	17.86	14.27	20.19	20.19	15.01
	Men	15.25	21.79	17.16	24.34	25.81	18.68
	Women	7.97	13.42	11.05	15.43	13.37	11.43
V+VI	Fathers	20.49	17.95	18.20	19.42	8.95	21.55
	Children	12.37	14.09	14.44	13.53	12.16	17.61
	Men	19.22	18.73	20.69	17.06	15.46	24.66
	Women	5.48	8.87	7.45	9.48	8.15	10.71
VIIa	Fathers	17.23	13.65	15.50	14.64	7.44	10.97
	Children	11.43	11.03	11.84	11.34	8.03	10.52
	Men	16.22	15.10	17.19	14.66	11.58	15.10
	Women	6.61	6.44	5.86	7.54	3.73	6.05
VIIb+IVc	Fathers	21.59	29.54	29.32	23.42	45.87	39.10
	Children	6.08	7.98	7.53	5.68	16.40	10.46
	Men	6.51	7.50	8.35	4.95	14.02	9.50
	Women	5.65	8.52	6.62	6.52	19.29	11.39

*In the appendix each cohort's figures are shown independently.

Three salient elements may be outlined about the class structure of the EU-21 and SEC for fathers compared to their children (both men and women). First, there was a dramatic decline in the farming sector (VIIa+IVc), constant through the origin and destination cohorts. From fathers to their children (1939-1974), the EU-21 agricultural sector was reduced by 16 percentage points (21.6 to 6), whereas the Southern European Countries suffered a more significant reduction of 22 percentage points (29.5 to 7.9). Secondly, non-manual positions (I+II and IIIab) grew by over 25 percent in both EU-21 and SEC countries. Third, blue-collar classes (V+VI and VIIa) fell slightly both in SEC (32 to 25 percent) and EU-21 (37 to 23 percent).

As Table 5 (see appendix for further information) depicts, considering both men and women conjointly over the three cohorts, SEC present significant differences in the shares of three social classes compared to the EU-21. 29 percent of the population in EU-21 countries is in classes I+II, whereas SEC are considerably below that figure at 19 percent. On the other hand, the petty bourgeoisie in the SEC accounts for almost 18 percent, contrasting with the EU-21 figure at 11 percent. Thirdly, agricultural workers make up a moderately higher percentage in the SEC than in the EU-21 countries, especially in Greece (10%) and Portugal (16%).

If we look at the evolution across cohorts, the strongest changes in children's class structures took place between the first and second cohort periods. White collar classes underwent a significant increase in the SEC, whilst in the EU-21 they increased minimally. The percentage of manual workers in the SEC fell slightly, whereas in the EU-21 this percentage remained constant. Finally, the proportion of petty bourgeoisie in most EU-21 and SEC countries remained stable, except for Greece, where they experienced a dramatic rise. There are enormous differences by sex in the share of specific social classes. Both women of the EU-21 and SEC countries were massively placed in class IIIab, approximately 43 percent (they entered this class primarily during the second cohort), whilst between 14 and 18 percent of men were in this class. Nevertheless, women are under-represented in manual worker and small owner positions, representing around half the proportion as men in SEC and EU-21 countries.

Table 6 Origin-destination dissimilarity indices

1939-1974*	**EU-21**	**SEC**	**Spain**	**Italy**	**Greece**	**Portugal**
Fathers-children	30.21	28.05	29.62	26.93	30.45	29.77
Men	17.36	22.05	20.97	20.83	31.81	29.61
Women	46.00	40.72	46.72	36.71	38.89	43.47

*In the appendix each cohort's figures are shown independently.

As can be seen in table 6 (see appendix for further information), between the second and third destination cohorts, the diminishing of the origin-destination dissimilarity indices in most countries, considering men and women together, should be noted. This trend suggests a sort of stabilization in structural class change. EU-21 and SEC women experienced the most important structural changes, displaying a dissimilarity index at over 40 percent across the three cohorts and fluctuating across them, whereas the changes for men were between 17 (EU-21) and 22 (SEC) percent, following a marked downward path. Likely, the main reason why the women's indices are at such a high level is the steady expansion of women's participation in the labor force since the late 1970s across most European countries, as well as the fact that most of them entered non-manual classes (the vast majority into class IIIab), thus contrasting substantially with their fathers' positions.

Table 7 Between-country dissimilarity indices

1939-1974*		ITALY	PORTUGAL	GREECE	SEC	EU-21
SPAIN	Fathers	6.92	15.68	23.04	2.51	10.6
	Children	9.42	13.96	14.8	5.22	11.11
	Men	9.67	6.64	14.32	5.19	9.83
	Women	12.73	8.61	18.01	8.15	13.2
ITALY	Fathers		22.44	25.43	6.13	8.05
	Children		21.13	10.73	4.96	9.74
	Men		12.59	10.54	4.66	12.62
	Women		14.9	12.78	6.48	13.26
PORTUGAL	Fathers			16.77	17.3	21.67
	Children			16.03	17.04	19.02
	Men			12.81	7.93	14.48
	Women			16.94	9.04	17.79
GREECE	Fathers				20.68	33.06
	Children				10.76	18.9
	Men				10.54	20.6
	Women				11.21	21.71
SEC	Fathers					12.55
	Children					10.34
	Men					10.88
	Women					11.71

*In appendix each cohort's figures are shown independent.

Table 7 compares the dissimilarity scores of each pair of countries over the three cohorts for the EU-21 and SEC for fathers and children. As the table shows, a pattern of convergence can be found in the SEC's class structures in comparison to the EU-21 figures, fluctuating from 12.55 in fathers to 10.34 percent in their children across the three cohorts. Nonetheless, if we look at individual countries, there are specific trends. Italy and Spain are the two countries most like the EU-21, whereas Portugal and Greece are the countries with the most significant differences, which is not surprising given that both countries retained considerable agricultural sectors.

In general terms, it could be said that there is a convergence process within the SEC towards the EU-21 class structure over the three cohorts. The second and third cohorts of women certainly played the leading role in this process. However, taking everything into account, the data suggest that the class structure of each Southern European country is more similar to the overall SEC class structure than it is to the EU-21 benchmark.

Absolute mobility

Table 8 shows the components into which absolute mobility can be broken down. It includes total mobility rates (which are made of upward, downward, and horizontal rates), immobility or inheritance rates, and vertical mobility rates, which are the result of adding up both upward and downward rates.

Table 8 Absolute mobility rates through the cohorts

Country*		ES	IT	PT	GR	SEC	EU 21	ES	IT	PT	GR	SEC	EU 21	ES	IT	PT	GR	SEC	EU 21
Absolute Mobility	Cohort	Men and Women						Men						Women					
Inmobility	1939-50	26.9	24.7	28.6	36.4	27.2	26.4	28.5	24.4	29.4	31.3	27.0	28.3	24.7	25.0	27.7	43.6	27.4	24.5
	1951-62	26.2	23.4	25.3	26.3	24.9	26.3	29.7	25.8	28.0	26.6	27.3	29.8	22.5	20.7	22.7	26.1	22.2	22.9
	1963-74	26.4	27.1	26.4	28.0	26.9	28.7	31.6	30.2	31.4	31.1	30.8	32.2	21.2	23.6	21.2	24.5	22.7	25.3
	1939-74	26.5	25.1	26.7	30.3	26.3	27.1	29.9	26.8	29.6	29.6	28.4	30.1	22.8	23.1	23.9	31.4	24.1	24.2
Total Mobility	1939-50	73.1	75.3	71.5	63.6	72.9	73.6	71.5	75.5	70.6	68.7	73.0	71.6	75.3	75.0	72.3	56.4	72.6	75.5
	1951-62	73.8	76.6	74.7	73.7	75.1	73.7	70.3	74.3	72.0	73.4	72.7	70.2	77.5	79.3	77.3	74.0	77.9	77.1
	1963-74	73.6	73.0	73.7	72.0	73.1	71.3	68.4	69.8	68.6	69.0	69.2	67.8	78.8	76.4	78.8	75.4	77.3	74.7
	1939-74	73.5	74.9	73.3	69.7	73.7	72.9	70.1	73.2	70.4	70.3	71.6	69.9	77.2	76.9	76.1	68.6	75.9	75.8
Upward	1939-50	41.7	43.3	42.7	40.8	42.5	42.9	38.7	43.2	41.5	46.7	42.1	41.4	45.8	43.4	43.8	32.6	42.9	44.4
	1951-62	41.8	41.0	43.6	46.5	42.2	41.5	39.2	39.3	41.5	45.8	40.3	38.2	44.5	43.1	45.7	47.3	44.4	44.8
	1963-74	37.8	34.8	39.4	40.8	36.9	37.2	33.5	32.1	34.4	35.9	33.2	33.6	42.1	37.7	44.5	46.3	40.7	40.6
	1939-74	40.4	39.7	41.9	42.7	40.5	40.5	37.1	38.2	39.2	42.8	38.6	37.7	44.1	41.4	44.7	42.1	42.7	43.3
Downward	1939-50	10.2	11.0	8.2	6.9	10.0	12.2	10.3	11.3	7.0	5.4	9.8	12.8	10.2	10.6	9.2	8.9	10.1	11.5
	1951-62	9.8	13.3	8.5	7.1	10.9	13.4	11.0	14.2	9.2	7.3	11.8	15.1	8.5	12.3	7.9	6.9	9.9	11.7
	1963-74	12.4	16.9	10.3	10.5	14.1	15.6	14.5	18.5	11.5	12.2	15.9	17.8	10.4	15.1	9.0	8.6	12.3	13.4
	1939-74	10.8	13.7	9.0	8.2	11.7	13.7	11.9	14.6	9.2	8.3	12.5	15.2	9.7	12.6	8.7	8.1	10.8	12.2
Vertical	1939-50	51.9	54.2	50.9	47.7	52.5	55.0	48.9	54.4	48.6	52.2	52.0	54.1	56.0	54.0	53.0	41.5	53.0	55.9
	1951-62	51.5	54.3	52.2	53.6	53.1	54.9	50.2	53.5	50.7	53.1	52.1	53.2	53.0	55.3	53.6	54.1	54.2	56.5
	1963-74	50.2	51.6	49.7	51.3	51.0	52.7	48.0	50.6	45.9	48.1	49.1	51.4	52.5	52.8	53.5	54.9	53.0	54.0
	1939-74	51.2	53.4	50.9	50.9	52.2	54.2	49.0	52.8	48.4	51.1	51.1	52.9	53.8	54.0	53.4	50.2	53.4	55.5
Horizontal	1939-50	21.2	21.1	20.6	15.9	20.4	18.6	22.6	21.1	22.0	16.6	21.1	17.5	19.3	21.0	19.3	14.9	19.6	19.6
	1951-62	22.2	22.3	22.5	20.1	22.0	18.8	20.1	20.8	21.4	20.3	20.6	17.0	24.5	24.0	23.7	19.8	23.6	20.6
	1963-74	23.4	21.3	24.0	20.7	22.1	18.6	20.4	19.2	22.7	20.9	20.1	16.4	26.3	23.6	25.3	20.5	24.3	20.7
	1939-74	22.3	21.5	22.4	18.9	21.5	18.7	21.0	20.4	22.0	19.2	20.6	17.0	23.4	22.9	22.8	18.4	22.5	20.3

*Notes: ES=Spain; IT=Italy; PT=Portugal; GR=Greece; SEC=Southern European Countries.

Men's total mobility rates across all the countries covered by the data fluctuated between steadiness from the first to the second cohort and a minimal reduction between the second and the third cohort. Since immobility rates are the inverse reflection of total mobility rates, it is not surprising that they followed the opposite trend, that is, no significant change between the first and second cohorts and a slight climb from the second cohort to the third.

Regarding vertical mobility, upward mobility rates declined gradually across the three cohorts while downward mobility increased steadily. Last, horizontal rates remained almost stable except for Greece, where figures increased significantly from the first to the second cohort to finally level out in the third.

Women's total mobility rates followed an upward trend across the first and second cohorts and then stabilized or decreased minimally among the third cohort. Consequently, immobility rates went down from the older to the middle-aged cohort to finally level out at the youngest.

Despite the significant growth in women's total mobility rates, it was not due to a boom in upward mobility but to a considerable increase in horizontal mobility rates within the second cohort and a smaller rise in the third. Upward mobility remained constant over the first and second cohorts to decline in the third. In contrast, downward mobility rates went down minimally in the second cohort

and slightly increased in the youngest cohort. However, the oldest cohort of Greek women experienced a completely different pattern in comparison with their counterparts in other Southern European countries. For the first cohort, the immobility rates reached a strikingly high 45% percent. However, from the second to the third cohort, there was a dramatic boom in terms of upward and horizontal mobility rates, reaching a higher level than the other Southern European countries, and it finally stabilized among the youngest cohort.

Relative Social Mobility through the Cohorts

Table 9 shows the results of relative social mobility obtained for men and women through the analyzed cohorts. The contrasts for the association models of the previous section are introduced. The models have been split into two sections. In the first one, unconstrained models are exhibited, and in the second one, constrained models. The following statistics are presented: BIC, L2, X2 and a dissimilarity index. The tables display the degree of freedom as well. Given their more desirable comparison properties, the focus will mainly be on BIC statistics. Before continuing, it should be noted that Raftery estimates that 10 points may be considered strong evidence in favor of the model with the more negative BIC value (Raftery, 1995) and less than 5 points must be regarded as indeterminate (Wong, 1994).

The first model is the Independence Model (Equation 1.1), whose parameters will be taken as a baseline. It is not surprising to observe that such a model does not fit for either men or women. The second model is the Conditional Independence Model (Equation 1.2). Here, origins and destinations are statistically independent, but the marginal distributions of mobility tables are allowed to change. As expected, this model provides a better fit than the Independence Model; however, it does not acquire proper statistical significance.

The Constant Social Fluidity model (Equation 1.3) keeps an invariant structure of origin-destinations through cohorts. Based on the BIC parameter, the Constant Social Fluidity model does not provide an acceptable fit in any country for either men or women. This deficiency results in a rejection of the Invariance Hypothesis.

If we change the association between origin and destination by cohorts, we obtain the Unidiff parameters (Equation 1.3). Except for Italian and Spanish women, these parameters reveal little difference between cohorts. Consequently, the impact of cohorts on the strength of association between parents and children has largely remained constant over time. On the other hand, when linear restriction is added, the distance between both models is reduced. In the case of Italy, the five points required to reject the model are overcome.

To know whether there are changes not only between tables but within tables, scaled association models are introduced. A Heterogeneous Simple Model with Homogeneous Diagonals (Equation 2.1) has a more satisfactory fit than the Constant Social Fluidity and Unidiff models. As noted above, such a model consists of a log-multiplicative interaction structure, a multiplicative scaling factor for each cohort. Because the heterogeneous model has obtained a poorer fit than the equal model it is not necessary to deal with the diagonal frequencies in a different way than the off-diagonal frequencies or, put in another way, the temporal change between tables is going to be articulated in a single parameter in a simple heterogeneous way. At the same time, it permits social classes to differ in immobility and scaling that remains constant over time.

Despite the decrease in the intrinsic association index in all countries across cohorts, women have experienced a more profound change than men. Portuguese and Italian women experienced a monotonic weakening in intergenerational mobility rates. In Spain, women experienced an increase when the first cohort was compared with the second one, with the third cohort achieving a remarkable improvement. The result for Greece yields a decline in the association between origins and destination only for the women who reached occupational maturity in the 1970s and 1980s and not in the 1990s. The case of Portuguese women is particularly noteworthy since the intrinsic association index reveals a strong link between the social positions of fathers and daughters. It should be noted that the strength of association is powerful for the first cohort in Portugal and Greece and notably weaker for Spain and, particularly, Italy. In addition, men undergo a decline; however, the evolution is not as marked as for women in the case of Portugal it is minimal.

The last model, Equal with a Linear Constriction (Equation 2.3), best fits all SEC for both women and men. This means that the strength of the origin-destination association has declined over the years. This improvement leads us to think that the Weak Improvement hypothesis is more accurate than the Trendless Fluctuation hypothesis. Notwithstanding, it should be said that while the Linear model improves significantly on the Equal model for Italy, reaching around ten points (both men and women); in Portugal the difference is reduced to five points (both men and women). It is worth emphasizing the fact that association indexes do not provide a large reduction. That means that the Industrialism hypothesis is inferior to the Weak Improvement hypothesis in explaining the temporal trend for Southern European Countries.

All in all, two different conclusions can be drawn, one regarding women and one regarding men. Concerning the relative rates of female mobility, it should be stressed that it increased in all analyzed countries. The decline in the association is noteworthy in Italy and Portugal (and to a lesser extent in Spain). It must be noted that the intensity of the link between origins and destinations for the first cohort of Italian women is very weak compared to Portuguese women. Concerning men, one can conclude that Italy, Spain and Greece have experienced a limited decline in mobility rates.

Table 9 Models of Relative Social Mobility

Models	**MEN**						**WOMEN**					
	BIC	L^2	X^2	Δ	df	p-value	BIC	L^2	X^2	Δ	df	p-value
SPAIN												
Panel A: Unsconstrained Association Models												
Independence	1359.43	2209.05	2454.23	0.1978	95	0.000	619.76	1459.25	1688.24	0.1708	95	0.000
Conditional Independence	1183.58	1854.34	2031.81	0.1807	75	0.000	315.82	978.59	1052.40	0.1244	75	0.000
Constant	-387.13	60.03	58.98	0.0309	50	0.156	-384.99	56.84	56.26	0.0304	50	0.235
Unidiff	-369.92	59.36	58.25	0.0305	48	0.1260	-372.18	51.97	51.74	0.0288	48	0.322
Unidiff Parameters	1.0000	0.9846	1.0343				1.0000	1.1254	0.9404			
Linear Restriction	-378.51	59.71	58.74	0.0307	49	0.140	-376.95	56.04	55.39	0.0305	49	0.227
Panel B: Constrained Association Models												
Equal Diagonals	-461.03	93.45	91.80	0.0368	62	0.006	-469.03	78.84	78.31	0.0334	62	0.073
Free Diagonals	-372.86	74.30	71.44	0.0297	50	0.014	-371.09	70.74	70.54	0.0280	50	0.028
Linear and Equal	-469.72	93.71	92.30	0.0368	63	0.007	-473.63	83.08	82.37	0.0358	63	0.046
Intrinsic Association Index	2.5458	2.399	2.2585				2.8064	2.6222	2.446			
ITALY												
Panel A: Unsconstrained Association Models												
Independence	1431.74	2323.36	2623.55	0.1642	95	0.000	1073.3	1951.50	2422.91	0.1595	95	0.000
Conditional Independence	999.69	1703.60	1906.70	0.1419	75	0.000	432.83	1126.36	1223.4	0.1147	75	0.000
Constant	-422.31	46.96	46.68	0.0227	50	0.596	-393.39	68.95	67.59	0.0283	50	0.039
Unidiff	-406.82	43.68	43.32	0.0216	48	0.650	-378.69	64.26	65.16	0.0272	48	0.050
Unidiff Parameters	1.0000	0.9436	1.0529				1.0000	0.8669	0.8803			
Linear Restriction	-413.85	46.04	45.79	0.0224	49	0.594	-386.63	66.47	65.37	0.0276	49	0.049

Panel B: Constrained Association Models												
Equal Diagonals	-442.86	139.03	140.61	0.0379	62	0.000	-451.73	121.58	124.64	0.0371	62	0.000
Free Diagonals	-346.66	122.60	124.05	0.0322	50	0.000	-357.49	104.85	107.70	0.0312	50	0.000
Linear and Equal	-451.17	140.11	141.87	0.0387	63	0.000	-460.93	121.62	124.58	0.0372	63	0.000
Intrinsic Association Index	1.984	1.8443	1.7107				2.1749	1.870	1.5783			
GREECE												
Panel A: Unsconstrained Association Models												
Independence	111.95	877.34	900.69	0.2054	95	0.000	229.83	976.47	1167.37	0.2334	95	0.000
Conditional Independence	28.63	632.89	649.57	0.1656	75	0.000	-110.93	478.51	477.72	0.1587	75	0.000
Constant	-333.52	69.31	67.86	0.0509	50	0.036	-338.68	54.28	54.10	0.0413	50	0.314
Unidiff	-318.75	67.96	66.86	0.0494	48	0.030	-322.99	54.25	51.01	0.0416	48	0.248
Unidiff Parameters	1.0000	1.0228	1.1347				1.0000	0.9758	0.9836			
Linear Restriction	-326.63	68.14	67.14	0.049	49	0.036	-330.84	54.27	51.07	0.0415	49	0.280
Panel B: Constrained Association Models												
Equal Diagonals	-408.44	91.07	90.84	0.0575	62	0.009	-415.46	71.81	67.49	0.0501	62	0.184
Free Diagonals	-341.26	61.56	61.09	0.0383	50	0.126	-331.91	61.06	57.65	0.0384	50	0.136
Linear and Equal	-416.41	91.15	90.99	0.0578	63	0.012	-422.45	72.69	67.77	0.0504	63	0.189
Intrinsic Association Index	2.3644	2.2134	2.0688				1.9778	1.9138	1.8525			
PORTUGAL												
Panel A: Unsconstrained Association Models												
Independence	128.34	869.01	985.77	0.2128	95	0.000	14.88	757.33	856.88	0.1893	95	0.000
Conditional Independence	53.67	638.41	689.37	0.1849	75	0.000	-103.96	482.17	505.13	0.1358	75	0.000
Constant	-340.03	49.79	46.08	0.0442	50	0.482	-342.88	47.87	42.18	0.0378	50	0.559
Unidiff	-324.63	49.59	45.84	0.0443	48	0.409	-327.82	47.30	42.08	0.0374	48	0.501
Unidiff Parameters	1.0000	0.9503	0.9842				1.0000	1.1075	1.0743			
Linear Restriction	-332.24	49.78	46.09	0.0442	49	0.442	-335.31	47.63	41.91	0.0375	49	0.528
Panel B: Constrained Association Models												
Equal Diagonals	-401.55	81.82	79.89	0.0544	62	0.046	-396.20	88.34	81.12	0.0574	62	0.016
Free Diagonals	-317.80	72.01	68.03	0.0439	50	0.022	-310.73	80.02	74.96	0.0500	50	0.004
Linear and Equal	-409.14	82.03	80.05	0.0541	63	0.054	-403.66	88.68	82.19	0.0575	63	0.018
Intrinsic Association Index	2.6754	2.6713	2.6674				5.3334	5.0794	4.8364			

Conclusions

During this period, Southern European Countries (SEC) slightly reduced the strength of association between origins and destination. The structures of opportunities in the SEC underwent a slight linear change between 1970 and 2005. These results have confirmed what we have called the Weak Improvement hypothesis. In other words, there has been a small but significant intergenerational improvement in social fluidity, despite specific differences among selected countries.

Compared with previous research, our findings reveal certain dissimilarities regarding the weight of social inheritance. Our confirmed hypothesis for Italy validates the results reached by Schiezzerotto and Marzadro (2008) and Meraviglia and Ganzeboom (2006) for Italy, while it refutes those reached by Marqués and Herrera-Usagre (2010) and Carabaña (1999) for Spain, as they concluded that no change had occurred. Two main differences may explain these different findings for Spain. First, these researchers have used a different class scheme. Secondly, they did not apply constrained association models, which have demonstrated a more powerful fit than unconstrained models, such as the Constant Social Fluidity and Unidiff models. In the case of Portugal and Greece, ours are the first results devoted to the subject as far as we know.

Considering all the above, the trend in intergenerational social mobility has been more acute for women than men, but this does not apply to all women because Greek women exhibit similar rates to Greek men. The period after entering the European Union does not modify the strength of the association. The last cohort (1993-2004) continued changing following a slight decline in the association.

It should be noted that regarding the overall European context, several studies have shown that Italy exhibits lower mobility rates than its European neighbors. However, within the Southern European countries, Italy is where social mobility rates have improved the most despite the rapid industrialization process there having been consolidated sooner, leaving less room for improvement.

This research has examined how various economic, social, and political factors can impact intergenerational social mobility. It suggests that further research in other regions, such as ASEAN countries, is needed to understand how different economic growth patterns and democratic developments can influence opportunities for current and future generations. Any country that aspires to a better, more inclusive, and equal society should prioritize social protection and promote a model of educational system that ensures equal access regardless of people's social origin (Khemaphat, 2022).

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