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## Economic crisis highlights differences in social capital use as a means to access employment among young people



Social networks as a basis REDEMAS project developed by the Sociological Research Centre on Everyday Life and Work (QUIT) reveal a new model of professional and academic trajectory, where the economic crisis reinforces origin and social capital as key factors in the success of this life stage.

The Sociological Research Centre on Everyday Life and Work (QUIT) of the Autonomous University of Barcelona has completed the project Social Networks, in its various forms, as a mechanism for job search and placement in employment and social support for young people - REDEMAS, founded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (Ref. CSO2012-36055).

In this project have been addressed, so articulated four main issues:

- 1) The characterization and classification of occupational trajectories of young people contemplating their activities both formal and informal.
- 2) Identification and analysis of the role of social capital in access to employment, both formal and informal, by young people.
- 3) The characterization of the networking of these young people.

4) Identification of the weight of trajectories and different spheres of sociability in the configuration of social capital.

Along with these four objectives the project wanted to check how much the beginning of the economic crisis of 2007-2008 led to a change in trajectories and the use of social capital by young people, for which they compare labour events occurred prior to the crisis and during the crisis.

To answer the questions raised the project has developed a mixed methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative information, which has had as a central method to obtain data a questionnaire survey of hybrid character. On it there are combined the features of a retrospective longitudinal survey with a survey of the characteristics of personal ego centred networks, along with various elements characteristic of semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Regarding the first of these objectives, the operation of the data has verified that the youth labour trajectories are composed largely of periods in which they combine minor or irregular work with studies, but they offer young people a relatively early contact with the labour market. It has also noted the importance of social origin as a factor in the type of career developed, both during the period before the economic crisis and during the crisis.

Furthermore, regarding the impact of the crisis on these paths, the research has shown that the huge reduction of regular employment, whether permanent or temporary, does not occur in the same proportion as the reduction of irregular employment, which is still present in the paths of many young people.

Regarding the second objective (the role of social capital in research and employment), the results show that the weight of contacts in the employment of young people may be even greater than indicated in previous studies. Thus it would be a structural characteristic of the labour market: the use of contacts to access employment has an important role before and during the economic crisis and jobs skilled and unskilled.

However, during the economic crisis, the use of social capital is especially associated with irregular forms of employment, which shows that the use of networking, with its characteristics of informality and quickness, has become a good way to manage job insecurity among young people. Thus, we can say that in a situation where some of the formal mechanisms of access have deteriorated or even disappeared (such as public procurement through competitive examinations), informal mechanisms of access have become a good way to get side jobs and contract.

Also, the results confirm the unequal allocations of capital among young people, in combination with other factors such as education level or age, are reflected in different inserts. Thus, the profile is accessed contacts mark significant differences with regard to the characteristics of the employment obtained by this method.

In connection with the fourth objective, it seems to be proved the existence of inequality in the allocation of social capital as a result of precarious employment trajectories. The quantitative analysis applied showed a correspondence between social origin, type and characteristics of experience developed, and the network of contacts of the person. Moreover, the qualitative

analysis showed that young people with higher levels of economic capital, and especially cultural contacts seem to have better access to contacts offering help to access quality employment positions.

The reason lies in the access to employment of these young people is based on the mobilization of close ties and homophile (contacts of similar social status), so that this principle works against the possibilities of obtaining a network of contacts that allows break trajectories characterized by insecurity.

Moreover, the mobilization of contacts based on weak ties (acquaintances from work, for example) seem to be important only for some young social profiles associated with medium economic and cultural capital.

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