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**A CULTURE OF SECULARITY? THE PHENOMENON OF NON-RELIGION IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PORTUGUESE SOCIETY AND POLITICS**

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to study the causes of the growth of non-religious people in Portugal, focusing mainly in the first decade and a half of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. In order to understand this phenomenon, we turn to the theories of secularization and secularity, since they give us, within this specific regional context, relevant theoretical and empirical tools to analyze the object of our study. Within secularization, we investigate the development of the processes of rationalization, societalization and existential security that have been taking place in the country. In regard to secularity, we examine the development and legal, political and social implementation of a set of (secular) guiding ideas, such as morality polices, which help to create a singular culture of secularity in the country. We conclude that there is a correlation between the growth of non-religious people and the development of a specific and hegemonic secular culture.

**Key words:** Non-religion, Secularization, Secularity, Morality policies, Portugal.

## 1. Introduction

As Lee (2015, 1) would argue, “after all, modernity may not be secular”. In effect, from the 1970s onwards the idea that secularization or secularity can provoke a weakening of religious beliefs and institutions seems to be increasingly implausible in scientific discourse. According to Luhmann (2013 [1998]), social sciences determined that we can no longer speak of the decline of religion or the rise of non-religiosity. At most, social scientists can argue in favour of religion’s dereification or deinstitutionalization. Secularization and secularity are often replaced by broader and vaguer concepts such as displacement, mutation or recomposition of religion.

Much of this is true. However, it seems to ignore another relevant part of what has been happening in contemporary societies, especially western ones. According to Lee (2015, 2), in many parts of the world, the idea secularization “remains salient”. In these places, traditional religiosity continues its steady decline and subjective secularity – unbelief and non-affiliation – keeps increasing. Non-religious people or *nones* – those who identify primarily in contrast to religion, “including but not limited to the rejection of religion” (Lee 2015, 203) – have always been part of the social picture, and yet they have been highly disregarded and persecuted throughout the centuries. However, today, *nones* demand more social and scientific attention since they are the world’s third largest *religious* group (Pew Research Center 2015, 2017). Despite their expected decline as a share of the world’s population by 2050, *nones* are expected to continue to grow in much of Europe and North America. They will make up for virtually a quarter of these regions’ population (from 17% to 26% and from 19% to 23% between 2010 and 2050, respectively). In a sense, we are living in what Taylor (2007) calls a secular age, in which an immanent way of life is not only possible but widespread, and in which belief in God or any transcendence is considered just one option among many others.

The growth of *nones* is probably the biggest of challenges for social scientists when trying to explain modern religions and societies. Because of the relatively late recognition of this phenomenon, only very recently empirical research on *nones* has begun. In fact, especially since the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they began to receive more systematic attention from scholars of religion. This area of research has almost no scholarly tradition and some of its fundamental conceptual distinctions are still in development. Nevertheless, particularly by the size and dissemination of this phenomenon and by the need to understand some of its fundamental elements, this is a growing research field taken as necessary by many (Campbell 2013 [1971]; Zuckerman 2008; Lee 2015).

The recent growth of literature associated to *nones* shows scholars' greater awareness to the differences between religious people and those in which religion is conspicuously absent. However, there is still much to be done in this area. There is a need for in-depth theoretical and empirical researches and for case study analysis that consider the time period implied by the specialized literature and by the statistical data. In this circumstance, we regard Portugal as a good picture to understand the increase and diffusion of *nones*. Firstly, because historically it has always been a place of big division between dominant (Christian) religious groups and other strongly non-religious ones; secondly, because it is geographically situated on a continent where the presence of *nones* is and is expected to continue to be more significant; thirdly, because it is a state under the rule of law, with religious freedom, and where the free circulation of religious and non-religious beliefs and values is allowed; and finally, because the state has promoted to some extent a culture of secularity, namely by means of morality policies which, in our view, have helped the growth of *nones* in the last decades, especially since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Let us start by briefly focusing our analysis on the first ground mentioned for choosing Portugal.

## 2. Historic and legal background

The Christian faith enters Portugal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and in a context of religious pluralism with Moors and Jews in the territory. Christianity gradually affirms itself within the problem of religious identity as an existential problem. This happened in particular between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries with the Christian Reconquest, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition and forced conversion of Jews, and with a somewhat triumphant Catholicism, culminating in the liberal revolutions of 1820. Furthermore, because of its geographical position, in Europe's western corner and only with a land border, Portugal was always a late receiver of the cultural and mental changes that were taking place on the continent – in particular, the ideas of the Protestant Reformation (Vilaça 1997, 277). It is in this context that religious and non-religious minorities would (not) develop in the country.

Non-religion enters the Portuguese territory because of commercial trades in the Mediterranean Sea, in particular because of the contact with the Greek culture (Rodrigues 2010). However, it was disregarded and persecuted over the following centuries, particularly after the institutionalization of monotheistic religions in the territory (first Islam and after Christianity). Institutionalized monotheistic religions saw non-religiosity as potentially heretical beliefs that needed to be controlled (through forced conversions) or exterminated (through the Inquisition). This hostility towards non-religiosity increased its resistance in specific

cultural or political moments, namely in the 15th and 16th centuries with the advent of Renaissance and Humanist, in the 18th century with Enlightenment, essentially promoted by the Marquis of Pombal, and in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century with the proclamation of the Portuguese First Republic. If we associate these developments to the inexistence of a real religious pluralistic experience, it is not hard to understand how there never was a moderate religious option between Catholics and *nones*. According to Vilaça (1997, 277), this led to the country's "bipolarization". On the one hand, an anti-clericalism, anti-ultramontanism or anti-jesuitism secularly rooted in some (usually intellectual) environments; on the other hand, a strongly identitary and proselytizing Catholicism, supported directly or indirectly by the state.

With the military coup of 1926, the Republic comes to an end. A military dictatorship is established extending until 1933. In that same year, a new Constitution is promulgated and the New State regime is established. Despite its separation regarding religions, in 1940 a concordat is signed between the Holy See and the Portuguese State. Among the most significant provisions there was the purpose of not returning to the system of official religion of the State, but there was also no hesitation to recognize and guarantee a special position for the Catholic religion. This is clear in the constitutional revision of 1951 where, through the new wording of article 45, Catholicism is defined as "the religion of the Portuguese Nation". In this context, the option for non-religion, especially atheism, was considered reprehensible. Considering the New State closeness to Catholicism, non-religion becomes not only a "blasphemous but unpatriotic way of life" (Rodrigues 2010, 295) that had to be fought.

Because of this closeness one would expect, after the carnation revolution and the fall of the regime in 1974, a break in the religious identification or at least a decrease of Catholicism in the country. However, "none of this happened" (Rodrigues 2010, 361). Even some expected anticlericalism practically did not emerge. As Telo (2007, 385) says, in fact, especially at the level of mentalities, little has changed with the democratic transition – changes were "slower and more modest." The revolution of April 1974 was not very important to significantly hurt the theistic and religious conceptions in the country.

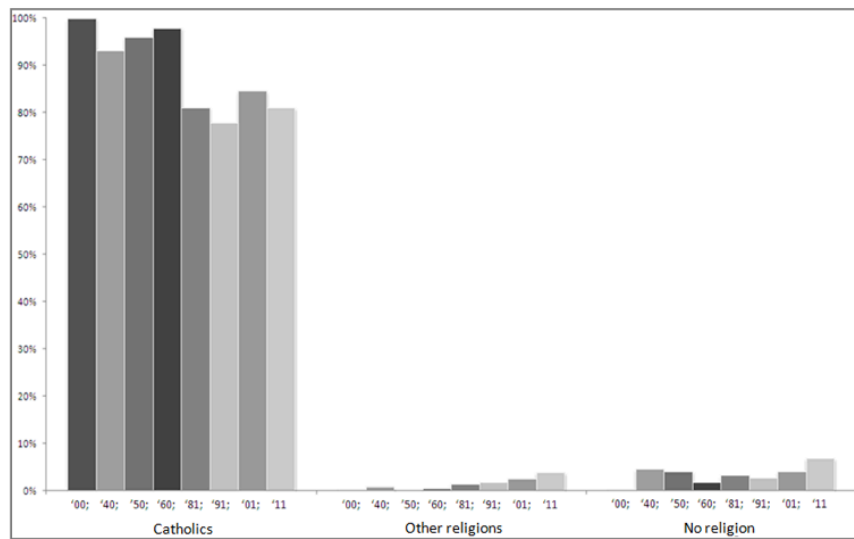
However, it has brought significant legal repercussions. With the advent of the country democratization, 1976's constitution emerges guaranteeing religious freedom to all confessions without any specific limits. The democratic transition and the 1976 Constitution opened doors to a new Portugal. However, relations with religious communities remained the same (on a formal level). The validity of the 1940 concordat would only be touched by the additional protocol of 1975, on the civil dissolution of Catholic weddings, lasting until the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the LRF – Law on Religious Freedom (2001) led the state and the Church to a new concordat born in 2004.

### 3. Socio-religious context and *nones*

As we have seen in the previous section, Portugal’s first cultural matrix was Christian. This still is the most solid cultural link in Portuguese society.

In effect, the analysis of figure 1 shows us, in addition to other things, that the evolution of Catholic religiosity is tangled with the evolution of Portuguese religiosity or non-religiosity as a whole.

Figure 1: Evolution of the levels of religiosity (1900-2011)



Source: INE, Census 1900-2011

If we consider the level of self-declared Catholics in democratic period, we observe that the levels of religiosity, despite their advances and retreats, tended to stabilize around 80% (from 81.1% in 1981 to 81,0% in 2011). This happened notwithstanding the gradual decline in Catholicism, especially from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the advent of democracy (from 99.9% in 1900 to 81.1% in 1981).

Despite stabilization at 80%, losses of more than 18% among Catholics in the period between 1960 and 2011 reflected in increases in other spheres, namely in other religious affiliations. On the second group of columns, figure 1 shows that, particularly at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a significant growth of individuals with a religious position other than Catholic. If in more than sixty years the increase was virtually 1.7% (from 0.81% in 1940 to 2.49% in 2001), in just ten years there was a growth of 1.4% in the number of people self-declaring religious but not Catholic (from 2.49% in 2001 to 3.87% in 2011). In this context, we should

particularly emphasize Protestant groups (including evangelicals) and Jehovah's Witnesses, accounting for 65% of the total membership of other religious groups in Portugal.

In spite of the growth of other religions in the Portuguese *religious market*, that did not break the (Catholic religiously monolithic) traditional *status quo*. In fact, the lack of secular pluralistic experiences in the religious sphere, inexperience regarding democratic culture and weak numerical representativeness of religious minorities led to their relative social insignificance in the Portuguese society.

If on the one hand, other (non-Catholic) religions did not advance significantly in Portuguese society; on the other hand, the opposite happened with non-religious or irreligious groups. Figure 1, in the set of columns on the right hand side, shows that in 1900 almost all Portuguese considered themselves religious (only 0.03% assumed a different position). The liberation from religion is clearer after the secularizing politics of the First Republic, culminating with the New State's concordat (1940). However, the number of *nones* decreased throughout the regime. The institutionalization of Salazar's Catho-secularism greatly contributed to it. As we saw in the previous section, it conferred a privileged place and allowed a strategic evangelization action to the Catholic Church. There was no room left for irreligious positions inside or outside state's sphere of action. Nevertheless, from the last years of the New State and especially after the democratic transition and all it meant – the affirmation of leftist political movements, Europeanization, urbanization or public secular schooling – the rates of non-religious or irreligious people followed a more or less increasing trend.

This is particularly clear in the last decades. According to the study of the Portuguese Catholic University "Religious Identities in Portugal" (Teixeira 2012), within the group of people self-declared believers without religion (from 2.1% to 4.6%), atheists (from 2.7% to 4.1%), indifferent (from 1.7% to 3.2%) and agnostics (from 1.7% to 2.2%), the number of *nones* increased 75% between 1999 and 2011. In other words, it increased from 8% to 14% over this time period, becoming by far the second largest *religious* group in the country.

Despite the quantitative visibility of *nones*, for Dix (2013, 80), their growth is a relatively unexpected phenomenon that emerged from the recent scientific interest on the subject in Portugal. This interest, reflected in the results from the above-cited study, helps us understanding in-depth who the Portuguese *nones* are. Firstly, let us specify the two types of *nones*: (NB) non-believers – atheists, agnostics and indifferent –, and believers – believers without religion (BWR). Now, let us describe them in detail:

1. Mostly man: 71.1% NB and 69.2% BWR. This is the biggest disparity between religious or non-religious groups.
2. Young people: 65.8% NB and 52% BWR with 34 or less years old. This means that the majority was socialized after the

democratic transition. Democratic socialization in Portugal looks substantially more secularized than the one before the fall of the New State.

3. Urban or semi-urban: 55.2% of NB and 43.5% of BWR live in Lisbon's metropolitan area. The second biggest proportion of *nones* lives in the second major Portuguese city (Oporto).
4. High education: 29.4% of NB and 25.5% of BWR have a college degree. Because of that, usually, *nones* are highly qualified workers, working as specialists in intellectual and scientific professions – 30.1% NB.
5. Low religious practice: 12.8% of *nones* attend religious services twice a year, mainly on religious holidays.
6. Low or inexistent relevance of religious interlocutions: 74.7% of *nones* have not talked lately about religious topics. This is a cross-cutting issue since the same happens with virtually 50% of religious people.

In addition to these traits, it is important to emphasize that 18.8% of them choose to be *nones* based on their personal conviction, on disagreement with religious doctrines (17.7%) or religious moral rules (12.2%) or even based on their education or family tradition (6.6%). For instance, only 25.6% of *nones*'s parents attended religious services weekly. Therefore, there is not a strong reproduction of socio-religious life among them. Notwithstanding, there remains a cultural Catholicism even in *nones*'s families. In fact, 45.6% of NB and 51.4% of BWR are baptized and nearly 45% of them had had some kind of religious education.

On the one hand, in Portugal, there is a Catholic nominal and cultural majority and a relatively small number of representative religious alternatives. On the other hand, there is still an unexpected but fast growth of non-religious groups – the second more significantly represented – which, nevertheless, enfold some social behaviours close to Catholic ways of sociability.

How can we make sense of this socio(ir)religious context in the country? How can one explain its dichotomies? What macro-social conditions help to frame these phenomena? How useful are the theories of secularization or secularity for understanding this new and unexpected reality? Are we really witnessing a decline of the religious or just its displacement and recomposition in today's societies? Is the growth of non-religious groups, especially of non-believers, compatible with the idea that religion is an anthropological constant that no process of modernity influences negatively? These are some of the issues that this section and the previous ones have discussed. They will serve as an inspiration for our discussion in the following sections.

#### 4. Secularization and the growth of *nones*

We believe that the theories of secularization are a good starting point for interpreting the conditions, in particular, macro-social, that may have helped the growth of *nones*.

In this context, it should be noted that there is no single theory of secularization. The expression essentially means a set of ideas referring to the tension between modernization and religion. These theories say essentially that, as the processes of modernity advance, the tension between them grows and, with that, there is a diminishing of religion's social relevance. This idea helps theorists to characterize the decline of religion's institutions and of religious norms in peoples' lives.

In particular, they advance with four theses to justify secularization. The first is the theory of functional differentiation. It concerns, essentially, the hyper-complexity of modern phenomena, in which the different social systems tend to increase their internal complexity, restricting the power of any other to control or monopolize the social system. The second is rationalization. In general, it states that social phenomena such as science or technological consciousness promote a rational worldview on societies which, consequently, reduce the credibility of religion's metaphysical or mystical understandings of the world. Thus, religion becomes obsolete and implausible in rational societies. Another classical element of secularization's theories commonly cited by the state of art is societalization (*Vergesellschaftung*). In general terms, this theory says that modernization leads to a change from a community-based organization to a social-based one. Some social phenomena, such as industrialization or urbanization, weaken (traditional) community ties, leading to the loss of plausibility of the moral and religious systems usually related to experiences of community life. We add to the three classic arguments of secularization theories Norris and Inglehart's (2004) existential security axiom. Generally speaking, this theory tells us that the conditions that people experience, particularly in their early years of life, have a strong impact on their cultural values. Thus, as societies modernize and become allegedly more secure, the demand or need for religion is less intense and frequent.

One way of testing the assumptions of secularization theories is by analyzing the evolution of the different elements that form its main processes. We will examine them, although not all, we will exclude from this analysis the functional differentiation theory because of its internal structure, in the light of the most recent period of growth of *nones* in Portugal for which data is available (1999-2014). In order to collect data that is able to integrate and to give body to its different items, we will use data from three sources: the World Bank Open Data, the Eurostat and the OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Due to their experience and quality and to the significant number of scientific

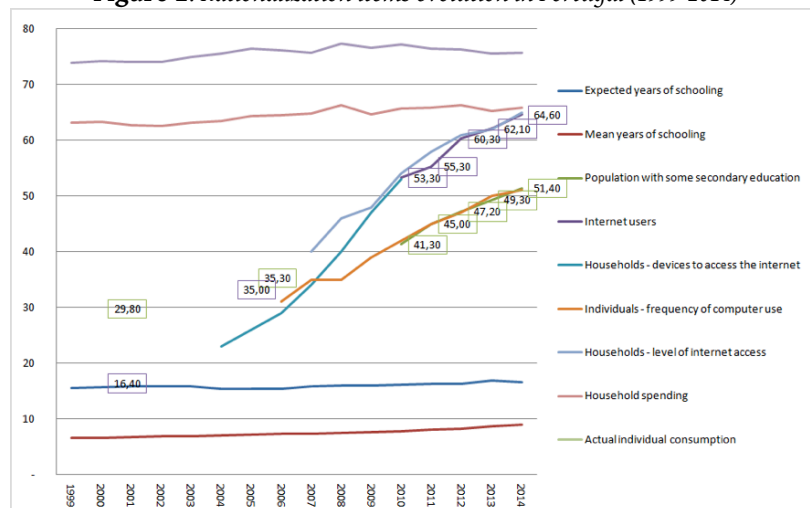


investigations (but also of government decisions) that base their work on these databases, we find them reliable for our research.

Thus, for example, taking some of the typical indicators of rationalization theory, we verify that all increased or stabilized in the period under analysis (figure 2). In particular, we highlight the growth of items related to science and technological consciousness, such as “internet users”, “devices to access the internet” or “frequency of computer use”, but also the ones related to education, namely the item “population with at least some secondary education”. There is also a growing trend, although less pronounced, in consumption/capitalist and education items. By and large, based on the assumptions of rationalization and considering the items and the time period selected, Portugal has become more secularized/rationalized.

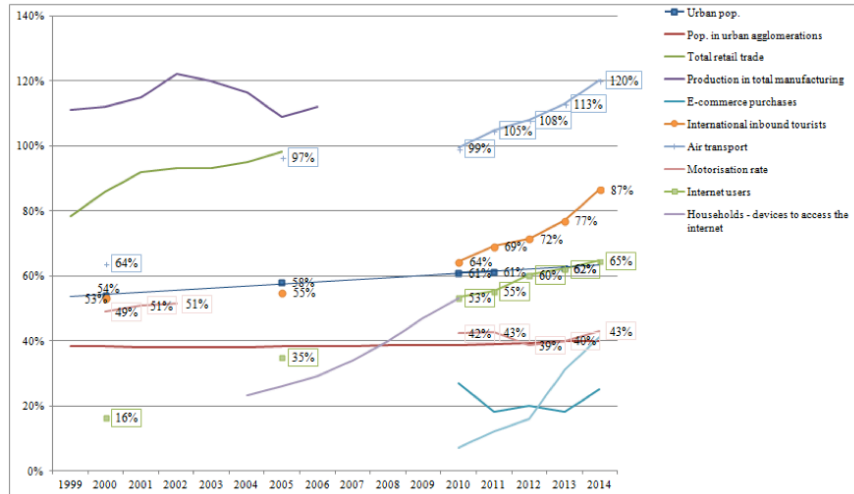
In the items concerning societalization theory we find a more or less similar evolution (figure 3). In effect, despite fluctuations on certain items, especially “e-commerce purchases” or “production in total manufacturing” and the decrease in the motorization rate, in general, we find a growing societalization trend in recent years. We emphasize the strong growth in geographical mobility dimension, particularly in items “air transport” and “international inbound tourists”, and in digital mass communication dimension, especially in items “internet users” and “internet access”. Furthermore, regarding societalization original theory, we confirmed that there was an expansion of urbanization, although relatively less significant than in the previous dimensions. However, by and large, we can say that in the last decade and a half Portugal has become a more societalized country, according to the theorists of secularization.

Figure 2: Rationalization items evolution in Portugal (1999-2014)



Source: World Bank, OCDE and Eurostat

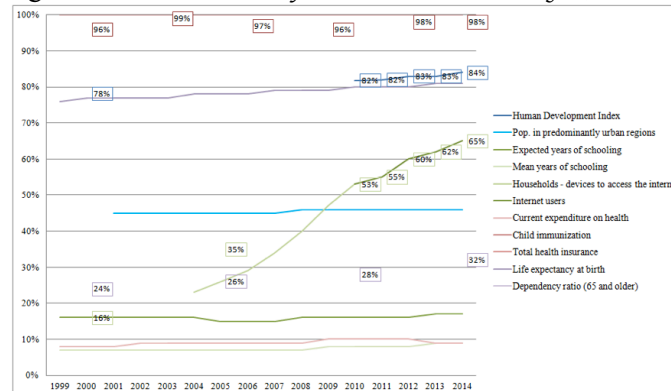
Figure 3: Societalization items evolution in Portugal (1999-2014)



Source: World Bank, OCDE and Eurostat

In the other secularization layer, existential security, we find a similar but less emphasized trend (figure 4). In fact, once again, dimensions mostly related to education and communication have a relatively high increase, namely items “internet users” or “devices to access the internet”. Besides, considering the distinctiveness of some items, we find more gradual increases. The growth of socioeconomic development dimension – “human development index” and “population in predominantly urban regions” -, of demography dimension – “life expectancy” and “dependency ratio” - and the high stability in healthcare dimension – “total health insurance” and “child immunization” - are particularly noteworthy. This shows that Portugal is not only a place with high existential security but also a country where this trend seems to be strengthening. Thus, in secularization theorists’ perspective, Portugal is and has been becoming a more secularized country.

Figure 4: Existential security items evolution in Portugal (1999-2014)



Source: World Bank, OCDE and Eurostat

It is worth recalling that, by and large, these theories advocate that with the advance of modernization (as evidenced by our graphics) and with increasing tension between social spheres, especially religious and secular ones, there is a decrease in the social relevance of the former. Thus, we have to try to analyze this second proposition empirically. A fruitful way to do this is non-originally, but unavoidably, by examining the evolution of the levels of religiosity of the Portuguese.

Here we will not consider the evolution of religiosity and non-religiosity levels of the Portuguese seen in figure 1. Our analysis will then focus on religiosity's multiple dimensions. We will follow the model and items proposed in Moniz (2018) regarding the different dimensions of religiosity: intellectual, ideological, ritual, devotional, and experimental. We will also use, initially, data from the EVS - European Values Survey (1999-2008) and, afterwards, data from the ESS - European Social Survey (2002-2014).

With regard to the intellectual dimension of religiosity, we observe a decrease in the items "children encouraged to learn religion at home" (from 23.4% to 18.5%) and those related to the importance given to religious services for marriage (from 88.1% to 84.1%) or death (from 95.5% to 90.6%). In the ideological dimension, there is a decrease in items related to belief in God (from 62.9% to 51.8%), sin (from 73.3% to 69.8%), and a stabilization of values concerning belief in heaven. Religiosity ritual dimension follows the same trend. In effect, religious practice (from 37.4% to 32.3%) and religious practice up to the age of twelve (from 70.9% to 66.2%) decreased, as well as values related to religious membership (from 88.6% to 87.0%). In the field of devotional religiosity there is also a decrease in the item "would you say you are a religious person" (from 87.6% to 83.1%) and in items about praying practices (from 63.4 % to 61.3%) and meditation or contemplation (from 74.8% to 69.9%) outside religious services. Finally, items regarding its experimental dimension show a relatively higher decreasing trend. Fewer people believe in the existence of a personal God (from 78.9% to 69.4%), consider religion to be relevant in their lives (from 76.1% to 67.5%) and withdraw strength and comfort from religion (from 79.1% to 78.6%).

In sum, data show that, in nearly all items of all dimensions, there was a decrease in religiosity levels. That is, the (bigger or smaller) development of modernity processes was followed by a general decrease in the religiosity of the Portuguese between 1999 and 2014.

On the one hand, these findings are reinforced by the more longitudinal data of the ESS; but, on the other hand, they are also challenged by them. In fact, the ESS data on religiosity show that there has been a gradual decrease in religious membership. From 2002 to 2014 the number of Portuguese who belonged to a religious denomination in the past (-4.5%) or present (-7.8%) declined steadily and almost uninterruptedly. Furthermore, there was an increase in minority (non-

Catholic) religious membership (1.9%). These data highlight what figure 1 already uncovered – during this period of intense modernization in the country, religious minorities experienced a relative growth and non-religious groups had a significant increase. However, the decline of religiosity is not as linear as the EVS data could imply. It has fluctuations, changing between periods of growth and decline. This is particularly clear in the items “how often pray apart from religious services”, “how religious are you”, and “how often attend religious services”. The latter two present a certain stability over time, despite having a slightly decreasing trend. The item on praying outside religious services shows a much more decreasing trend than the others linked to religion. However, it remains relatively stable over time.

In summary, considering the processes of secularization mentioned by the theorists, we can say that the levels of secularization increased in the country during the period under analysis. Moreover, regardless of some fluctuation, there is a decreasing trend on levels of religiosity in all its items and in all its dimensions. These phenomena are followed by a growth of religious minorities, but mostly by the rise of *nones*. Portugal seems to be an example of what Lee (2015, 2) considers a part of the world where “the old story of secularization remains salient”. This does not mean that religion is disappearing. That looks to be far from happening. Nevertheless, it seems to be flourishing neither, especially because of a modern context characterized by such influential processes of secularization. Here, in the midst of a culture distinguished by some secularizing trends, *nones* seem to be in a better position to prosper.

## 5. A Portuguese culture of secularity?

Secularity is a quality of the secular and the secular is a theological-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural-anthropological category aiming to create, codify, and experience a sphere distinguished from the religious one (Casanova 2011). According to Taylor (2011, 38), secularity or the “the Western march toward secularity” is a set of historical transformations occurring from the axial age through Latin Christendom that helped to forge secular modernity. The general historical context for this turn was a *great disembedding* (Taylor 2007) of social and collective life and a step toward reform within Christianity which, simultaneously with other historical changes, led to the chance of perceiving the world in purely immanent (non-religious or nontranscendental) terms. The development of this (immanent) possibility led to a new existential condition in which belief in God or any transcendence is considered just one option among others. For Taylor (2007), it is this shared condition of belief and disbelief that characterizes our secular age.

As Wohlrab-Sahr (2016) points out, secularity also regards the sorts of differentiation or separation between religion and other societal spheres and practices determining the proper framework for religious and non-religious attitudes and behaviours. In fact, together with Marian Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr describes secularity not only as a way of making conceptual distinctions and of institutionalizing differences between religion and other societal spheres and practices, but also as a way of understanding the cultural meanings underlying these distinctions and differentiations (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012, 2017). These phenomena form different cultures of secularity (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, 2012, 2017). In other words, they create a meaningful configuration related to the institutions, practices or discourses of differentiation and distinction concerning religion and they set, implicit or explicitly, the boundaries of religion for the sake of something. Modern states and societies look at these boundaries as their specific *reference problems*, each of them usually associated with particular solutions or *guiding ideas*.

According to the authors, there are four fundamental reference problems often associated to the creation of modern societies and states and to the ideas on which they are founded: individual freedom (answered by the guiding ideas of freedom and individuality), accommodation of diversity (answered by tolerance, respect, and non-interference), national development (answered by progress and enlightenment), and independent development of functional systems (answered through the principles of rationality, efficiency, and autonomy). In Portugal, there seems to be a global legal and political implementation of this set of guiding ideas. For instance, with regard to the first reference problem, we can say that its guiding ideas are confirmed by article 41 of the Portuguese constitution and by the spirit of the LRF, in particular through the non-imposition of a national Church or with the establishment of the principle of separation. In respect to the second reference problem, its guiding ideas are very explicitly confirmed in article 41 of the Portuguese constitution and on articles 7, 23, 24 or 32 of the LRF. The social realm seems to follow these ideas. According to the EVS data for 1999 and 2008, people increasingly consider that there should be no interference of religion in democracy or governmental decisions. Concerning the third reference problem, article 5 of the LRF addresses its guiding ideas by advocating “the promotion of human rights, of the integral development of each person and the values of peace, freedom, solidarity, and tolerance”. Again, this institutional culture of secularity resonates on the social realm when, for instance, religious beliefs and values are among the least valued by the Portuguese. Conversely, other principles such as human rights, democracy or peace are amongst the ones most valued by them, according to the Eurobarometer data for 2008 and 2012. Finally, one good example of the last reference problem and of the guiding-ideas following it is the

confiscation of religious buildings, first in education, economy or administration and then in healthcare, but also the role that the Portuguese state assumed on welfare or in civil registration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2017), these reference problems are usually linked to the creation of modern societies and states and to the ideas on which they were instituted. These ideas become guiding forms of distinction and institutionalization of differences between religion and the other spheres (usually non-religious) which favour modern state solutions and the (secular) ideas inspiring it. Hence, guiding ideas turn into a group of dominant assumptions thanks to the hegemonic secular “involvement of the state in this change” (Taylor 2007, 1). In other words, as democratic societies start to live mostly of secular references in the public space, religion’s contribution must be first, if not exclusively, socio-political and only religious at a secondary level. When intervening in public space, religion is compelled to lose its own religious meaning to a certain degree. Morality policies are an excellent place for us to understand in an empirical way how, in the construction of (moral) public policies, secular hegemonies respect religious doctrines or not.

In the Portuguese case, the influence of the Catholic Church or religious communities settled in the country was important in this initial stage of political discussion of morality policies to slow down or impede the pace of reforms (Resende and Hennig 2015; Vilaça and Oliveira 2015). However, some longitudinal studies, such as Knill, Preidel and Nebel’s work (2014), prove that in Europe resistance to morality policies endures only while cultural and institutional opportunity structures do not promote secular efforts to politicize them, achieving sufficient consensus for political change. Furthermore, it only lasts as long as there is an ideological will or intention of religious leaders to influence these political decisions. This is something that, according to Resende and Hennig (2015), did not happen in Portugal, explaining the general trend of permissiveness towards most morality policies. In particular, medical assistance in reproduction (legalized in 2006) – despite the explicit public resistance of the Catholic Church through the 184<sup>th</sup> bulletin of the PEC - Portuguese Episcopal Conference –, voluntary termination of pregnancy (legalized in 2007) – notwithstanding the influence of the Catholic Church on the Family Planning Commission –, same-sex marriage (legalized in 2010) – despite the public apology of the Catholic doctrine concerning homosexuality (Vilaça and Oliveira 2015) –, and right to gender self-determination (legalized in 2018) – in spite of the Church’s public resistance to it, mainly regarding one of the original clauses of this law that allowed the change of gender at age 16 without medical report.

The hegemony of this type of secular guiding ideas, its codification in law, and its understanding in peoples’s cultural habits are typical of societies living mostly of secular references in the public space.

This happens in Portuguese society, where individuals ignore the relevance of religious topics in daily interactions and privilege secular options over religious ones in politics or public life. The prevalence of secular or non-religious subjectivities, i.e., the idea of *being a none*, has become one an option for some. Moreover, living a life that is fashioned only indirectly by religious cultures and beliefs is one of the most widespread (Lee 2015). In Portugal, this reality is simultaneous with the rise of *nones*, from 3.94% in 2001, to 6.85% in 2011 (INE), to 7.96% in 2015 (Johnson, Grim and Zurlo 2017) in the whole country. But it also mirrors, in particular, the rise of an urban non-religious political elite that discusses these subjects according to its own secular agenda. This is particularly evident in the capital city of Portugal, Lisbon, where there is a population of almost 35% of *nones* (Teixeira et al. 2018).

In effect, in Portugal, there seems to be a culture of secularity. A culture that, in order to answer to the typical problems of modern democratic states and to achieve some political and social consensus, develops around certain secular beliefs or reference problems and remedies or guiding ideas. There is a certain secular bias that claims the primacy of political, rational, and secular authorities and, to some extent, the withdrawal of religion from the public space. As a consequence, there is a decline in religious literacy and in the role of religion in peoples's lives. The public space lives essentially of immanent references. The *great disembedding* of social and collective life seems not only to produce a shared condition between belief and disbelief, but also a certain predominance of the latter.

## 6. Final remarks

Secularization or secularity “is not a myth”, said Martin (2011, 5) in one of his most recent studies regarding the future of Christianity, democracy, and religion. In Portugal, during the period under analysis, these phenomena have been continuously occurring, even though they can present different features and consequences from those original and traditionally described by the ideal types of secularization or secularity. One of its most clear outcomes is the development and hegemony of a culture of secularity and the growth of *nones*. This assertion must be read without any kind of triumphalism, but only as a mirror of an empirical reality which, even today, continues to have theoretical support. In effect, there is no inevitability in the idea of the end of religion, just as there is no unavoidability in its prominence and relevance either.

The current socioreligious and political scene is as complex as it is dynamic. Therefore, we are more cautious than social scientists in the past or in the present when they make predictions about the end or about the perennality of religion, respectively. On the one hand, contemporary

cultural scene is characterized by an institutional and subjective decline of religiosity; on the other hand, there is a strong (secular) resistance to public religious manifestations. Societies, such as the Portuguese one, witness the impact between the irresistible force of religious expressions and the hegemonic object of secular culture. In the context of this study, the *million dollar question* is: - what will be the result? In other words, where do we get with this research? Despite agreeing that modernity has secularizing effects – especially the development of an immanent hegemonic worldview – its consequences have mild effects on religion. Religious doctrines and practices hold their underlying features and significance. In Portugal, we have seen that the levels of religiosity, namely Catholic religiosity, are still high and, in some cases, they are growing, namely within religious minorities. We have also noted the presence of a cultural Catholicism, particularly in regard to christenings and religious education, even among *nones*. However, we have seen the rise of non-religion. In particular, we emphasize the growing lack of attachment to religious convictions and practices; specially traditional ones; the positive development of secularization phenomena, such as rationalization, societalization or existential security; and the growth of a secularity culture that seemingly has become hegemonic, having practical consequences at the political and social realms, as we have seen with morality policies.

Therefore, we conclude that religion and secularization and secularity are not mutually exclusive ways of looking at reality, but complementary approaches to it. Nevertheless, with the advance of modernization, the hegemony of secularity cultures, the cast out of religion from much of the institutional order and from the public sphere, and the dissemination of religious illiteracy it is hard to see how religion can thrive. In this context of *great disembedding*, although religious options continue to be available and hold a majority status, it becomes easier to understand how non-religiosity can prosper, as it has been assertively doing in the last decade and a half in Portugal.

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