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The RESCuE project investigated everyday life and practices of vulnerable households in the context of the European financial and economic crisis, in order to investigate if and how they develop resilience.

Resilience is understood as getting by better, suffering less deeper or recovering more quickly than others under the same adverse circumstances. Resilience is less a matter of personal traits, but more of economic, social and cultural resources being made available, and mobilizing these resources, how tiny, obsolete or marginal they may seem. Resilience can be observed not only by the socioeconomic situation, but also by cultural

There is no vulnerable households' resilience without a welfare state, but resilient families and households use it differently.

Poverty or vulnerability is associated with a lack of wealth and sustainable employment – and is in principle a non-resilient situation. This explains the low incidence of resilience among households around the poverty line. Nevertheless, there are some, and social policy can learn from them.

The RESCuE project received funding from the European Commission under the 7th framework programme, from 2014 to 2017. 600 narrative interviews with 250 households and more than 70 experts were conducted, and the households took more than 10.000 pictures of their lives and situation.

A team of 30 scientists from Universities in Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Poland, United Kingdom, Turkey, Finland, Spain and Germany participated in the research.

## Vulnerable households, hardship, crisis and resilience

The pictures in this slideshow have been taken by the respondents of the RESCuE fieldwork 2014-2015, and they have explained their motivations and thoughts in an interview alongside their photographs: What gives them power, what are their abilities and resources of living, how they express their identities, how they experience and celebrate community, but also the adversities they are facing, and their experiences of hardship. The project team had provided the respondent photographers with a written inspirational guideline, associatively relating to the topics of the project and encouraging for different ways to express themselves.



### The annual town fair:

“[Local culture] used to be stronger. I’m not that much into it, but it used to be stronger. When the [Name of town annual] fair starts, they make these parades and the like. Even that has changed, because they used to bring what they called cabrestos [castrated bulls]... And they would bring the wild bull in the middle of it all. They had to make the tour [of the town] and be in total control, so that the wild bull wouldn’t run away. Not anymore – now what they came up with is this poor excuse of a bull!”

*Portuguese case, urban context, ~ 40, female, single mother of one child*

The interviewee is a former optician, she left her home town after marrying and returned after divorcing at the height of the crisis. She now works as a taxi driver. She took this photo during the annual town fair.





## A place to hang out

"I'm always here but I don't bet. People ask me 'how come? You always hang out here'. But I don't bet. I sometimes go to the coffeehouse and play cards, but not this. I sometimes buy lottery tickets, I don't care if I don't win."

*Turkish case, urban context, male, ~ 30, painter*

**The whole is more than the sum of its parts:**

„[...] These are all small components. This is a puzzle. [...] And if you pull out one piece of the spinning wheel, the whole thing will fall apart. “

*German Case, rural context, ~ 40, woman, self-employed*

*Unlike in modern worklife, but very much alike the ancient concept of 'oikos', production, consumption, learning and recreation are spatially and culturally interwoven in this family and their home.*







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### **Tacit knowledge:**

“Have you heard this story based on a true event? - A radio commentator had gone somewhere to upper Lapland and he had interviewed a reindeer herder and the commentator asked the reindeer herder - what happens if you get lost? - The reindeer herder kept on answering that they never get lost. However, the radio commentator kept on asking - but if you get lost in a way or another. Eventually the herder answered - Yah, and then we go home.”

### *Finnish Case*

Being able to light a fire in the snow and to find one's way home without any worry is quite crucial in an arctic environment. The Sami people in northern Finland are packed with tacit knowledge which allows them to act routinely and in an everyday manner in situations others would regard life threatening.



## A hard climb

“[...] I'd like to fulfil a dream: to have my own house. [...] I have tried before. But as I couldn't get a guarantor, it didn't happen. But I have tried. I am a fighter. I may lose a battle but I don't lose the war [laughs]. I keep going.”

*Portuguese case, urban contex, ~40 female, single mother, employed*



## My dream

"I would like to renew our house someday. This is my dream. It is now in a terrible state, but we do not have the money for any repairs. I don't know if this situation will change in the future, but I hope so."

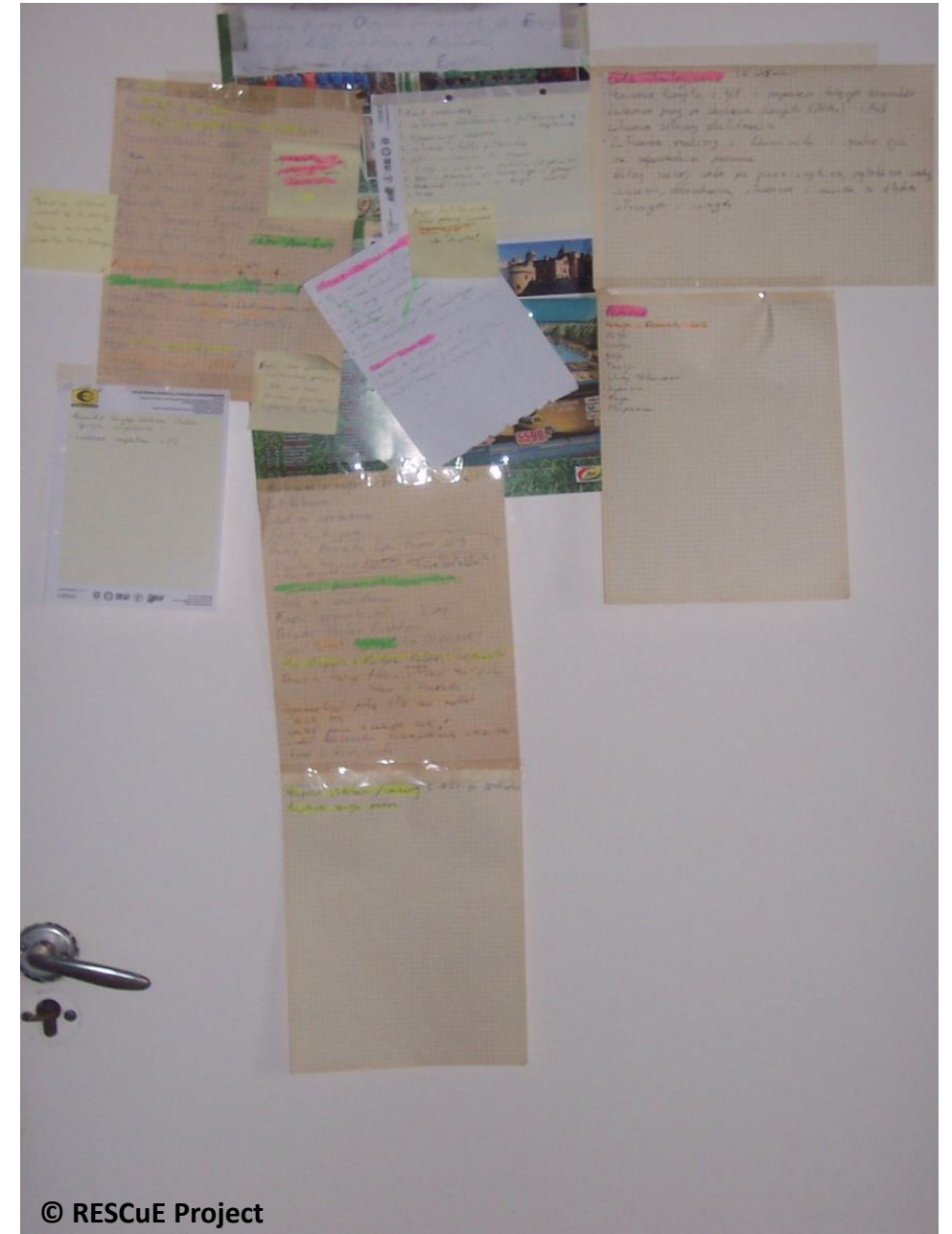
*Polish case, urban context, male (roofer) and female (unemployed), married, one child*



## Source of motivation

“Well, this is my board of targets, dreams, goals - what I want to accomplish. These goals are very different but the point is to get better and better. “

*Polish case, rural context*







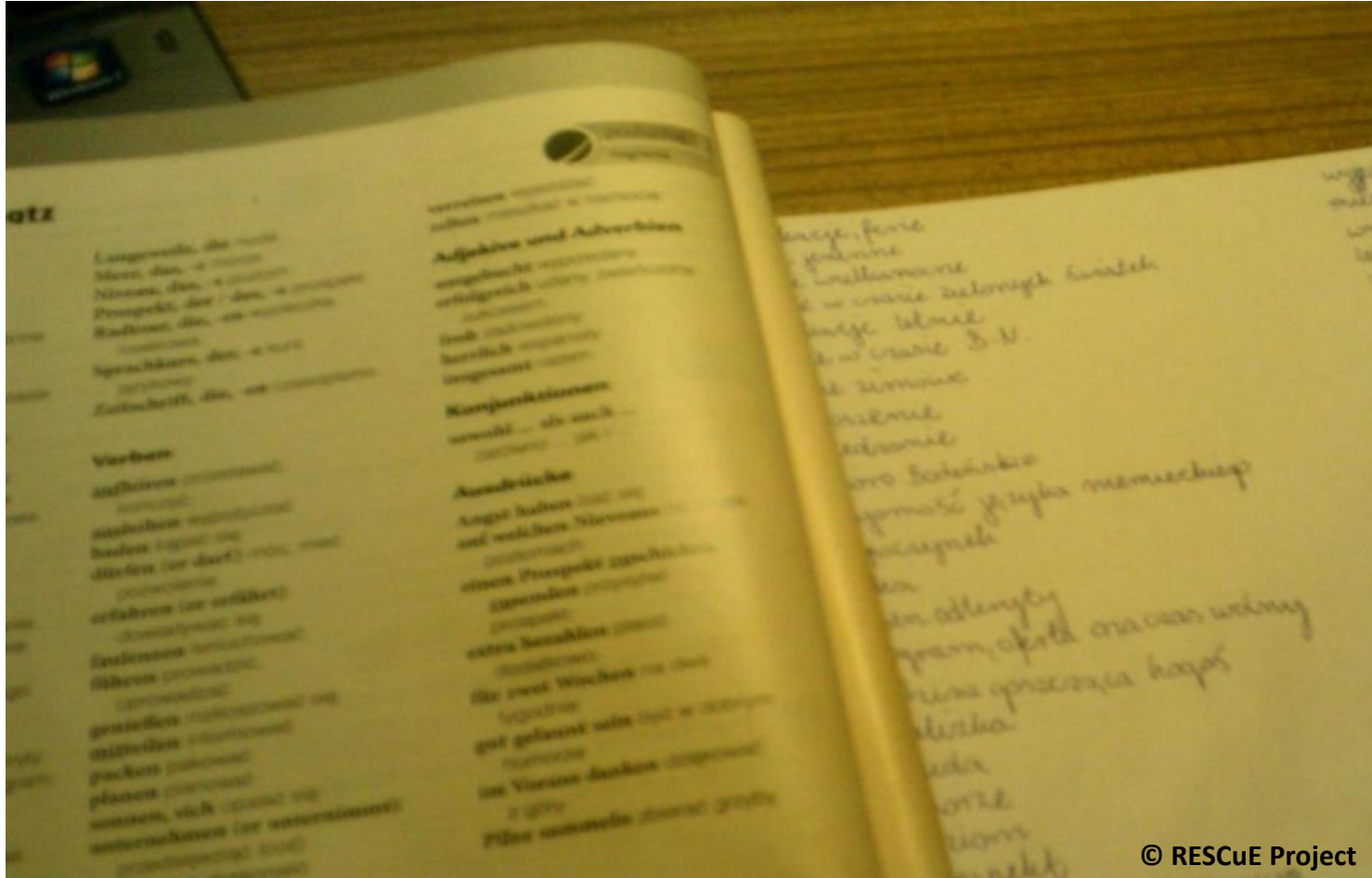
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### **Educational aspirations:**

„[...] I've always been restless, I've always knew about the importance to do so. And that I have to pay for my further education myself, I really had to save for it, but I did.”

German Case, rural context, ~ 40, woman, self-employed

*Long-term career investments as a way out of precarious self-employment*



## Success through learning

“I do like studying [...] I'm doing this for me, to achieve something.”

*Polish case, urban context, ~20, male*



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### University graduation work:

“I started to get into a depression. College was really my salvation. College forced me to keep my mind busy (...). [It] distracted me from all the problems. (...) I began managing my life in a different way.”

*Portuguese case, urban context, ~ 40, female, married, three children*

After successive adult education courses, she enrolled in a university course in 2012. She concluded the course between our first and second interviews.





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### **Dropping the children at school:**

“[Our children] are very polite. We raised them well in that regard [laughs]! That’s [the importance we give to] studying. That they have good training. So that they may get a good job in the future. Doctors, engineers – we dream high, too [laughs]!”

*Portuguese case, rural context, couple ~ 40, three young children*

They are both of Roma ethnicity. They living in a council flat. She works at a nursing home, he is unemployed.



## Exhaustion

"It's kind of just...I don't get time to myself...I'm just...everyone does be like kind of texting me. ...thank God I don't have anyone's hair to do today...I'll just go home and relax and then tomorrow I have a girl for a full head of highlights so I'll be...they are kind of tiring."

*Irish case, rural context, ~ 25, female, Student, part-time worker and informal work in her home.*



**Financial insecurity:**

„[...] at an exhibition you don't know what you'll sell, if you'll sell something and how much.”

*German Case, rural context, ~ 40, male, artist*







### **Working away from home**

*Road construction work away from home,  
finding archeological remains are found*

*Spanish case, rural context*



**'Kocham Cię' = I love you**

*The photo shows the camera that the daughter of the interviewee won in a contest for the best picture from vacation*

*Polish case, rural context*



**Shoveling coal into the  
neighbour's cellar**

*Polish case, rural context*





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### **Kicking the ball for some little money**

“It was probably the worst, when the all the financial problems started at home [...] And to earn some money, even for a ticket to the technical school, I attended all the practices and matches, because then I was getting between fifty and seventy zlotys for the match [...] it was very much for me.”

*Polish case, rural context, male, student*



### **Young adult living at home**

“Yeah, that's the weekly money. Yeah, it is, literally that's all it is and three of them are gone in the next picture”

“Your mum is quite grateful for that?”

“Oh yeah, Jesus Christ yeah, I'd do anything I could you know and she does anything she can for us as well...”

*Irish case, urban context, ~25, male, student, living at home*





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## **Selling jewelry for medical care**

*Polish case, rural  
context, pensioners*

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### Sharing a kitchen

“I live in a room in a 4-bedroom flat. Each person pays 100€ [...]”

*Portuguese case, rural context, ~ 70, immigrant, male*



**A man and his car:**

“The car your husband drives?”

“Yes, in which the suspension immediately falls apart, and the door falls off [laughs], but it is nice on the photo!”

*Polish case, urban context, female*



## Something I cannot live without

“You cannot live without the heating stove, can you?”

“Well, the kitchen stove didn't warm our apartment enough, and we had a fungi in the room. So I wrote a letter to the municipality administration and they guaranteed us the heating stove.[...]there is no fungi [...] anymore, it's a relief. And the children don't get ill so often now.”

*Polish case, urban context, female, housewife, two children*

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**Boiling water in a stove, fired with self gathered wood**

*Using traditional forms of cooking and heating allows family to make use of natural resources and save money*

*Spanish case, rural context*

### The warmth of timber:

“That is just the timber I had to break up. That is what we use on the fire at the moment, that and if we can get a couple of bags of coal a week, that does it, it is mostly pallets that I get.”

*Irish case, urban context, ~ 50, male,*







### **A creative sign of prosperity**

"The poor man's way, that you do not use hydraulic firewood processor, or chainsaw, but frame saw and axe, and then these piles of firewood are bit more 'artistic', a little more effort is used to make them. [...] it is a certain sign of prosperity, if you have made firewood for the use for several months beforehand [...] I have tried to use half an hour per day for making firewood"

*Finish Case, rural context, ~ 60, male, unemployed, freelancer reporter*

## Oil Tank

“... that's the oil tank. So that's the reality of it, there's €20 you put in it from a can. You know it won't last, it just gives you a bit of heat in the night or whenever.”

*Irish case, rural context, , ~ 70, male, retired.*





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### Misfit:

"[...] And then you have a lot of people. You know how it is in the city. Compared to here where there is mostly agriculture. Well, and here nobody knows what to do with me (chuckles). Sometimes even on an intellectual level (laughs). Like, well how should I say? I am kind of a misfit here in this area."

German Case, rural context, ~ 40, male, artist

The interviewee has his studio in the city. But due to the financial situation, his family lives in the countryside

**Compeers:**

"So when I was looking for my Christmas decoration, these also came out and reminded me of their maker. She is one of my best friends, but she lives so far away. We always had a good time while picking berries and we get along well, and she (also) had such a tough childhood."

*Finish Case, rural context, ~ 70,  
female, pensioner*





### Nostalgia:

"I used to work here for several years. I feel nostalgic. I loved that place, it was my home. I spent all my life there"

*Greek case, rural context, male*





## Memories

“This is an old vinyl store. I used to visit it when I was a teenager, where there were no places to go out, and I thought that a place like this would only be in this area.”

*Greek case, urban context, male*



"I like painting, I used to paint..  
but now it's been years since the  
last time I bought paints. I used to  
buy big boxes of paints."

*Greek case, rural context, female*



2014.12.27

**Memories:**

“This is a red, lovely boat. I have so many memories. We have even celebrated a friend’s birthday on this boat”

*Greek case, rural context, male*





## Memories of a better past

“We used to go for holidays with my husband. We didn't have that many problems or things to be concerned about back then - how to pay the bills, what to eat...”

*Greek case, rural context, female*



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### Home:

“This is my neighborhood. I grew up here. These were the best years of my life. I was feeling safe.”

*Greek case, rural context, female*

2014

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## Community activism

“... I'm part of the committee up here so we do a clean-up day once a month.”

*Irish case, urban context, ~ 60, female,*

“I walk in these streets every day. This is my daily itinerary.. But if I could, I would prefer to live in another area”.

*Greek case, urban context,  
female*







## Commuting

„ ... it was merely an extremely mirthless looking morning when I was driving at work. This graveled road is in extremely bad shape“

*Finish Case, urban context, ~ 30, female, project work and traditional subsistence economy*

**Combining resources: soup kitchen and clothing bank:**

*Having access to material resources, such as clothes or meals, constitutes an important source of resilience when economic incomes are reduced among the households.*

*Spanish case, urban context*







## Sexual harassment

“It s not that I am afraid, it is just that sexual harassmt is everywhere around these streets.”

*Greek case, urban context, female*





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### **View from window**

“And have you tried to do something with it?”

“Well, we were in municipality administration. They told us.... No, but if anything, they do not rush to do something about it. They do not have time. [...]”

*Polish case, urban context*





### **Open your heart**

“When the narrow streets of the neighborhood depresses you, these places will open your heart...”

*Greek case, urban context, male*

*Old part of the district is partly abandoned by old dwellers. Shops close and the district deteriorates because of the lack of locally situated economic activity*

*Spanish case, urban context*







## Memories for a lost person

*Polish case, urban context, widow*



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### Improving

“The picture shows what I'm good at. In recent years I have made progress when it comes to my culinary skills. As if to go back five years ago you would not have swallowed it.”

*Polish case, urban context, family of three adults*



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**Traditional family:**

“Well, it's known, that if you have a home, if you have a family, you have to keep it clean. I was raised like that in my home. Because my dad was a stickler for cleaning.”

*Polish case, urban context, female*



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“Yes, I have to take care of it, oh! These cups. Cleaning, polishing these cups it is killing me! It drives me crazy.”

“But these trophies, who polishes - your husband or you?”

“Well, I told him I'll do it, because he does not have time”

*Polish case, urban context, female*



### Gendered skills?

“[...] When daughters can help with renovation work, then boys should help in the kitchen. [...] Our children must be able to do everything. There is no category that this work is for women, and this for men, no! They all have to be ready for life.”

*Polish case, rural context*





„For me a women basically stands for safety. Since thousands of years this has been the role for women. Safety, Family, Safety. And the man, he is more risky. This is the nature of man and woman. There is this great quote from Napoleon: One man can set up a hundred camps, but to build a home you need a woman.“

German Case, rural context, ~ 40, male, artist

*The picture shows the interviewee in his activity as a performer at a medieval festival*



**Low-cost products in a central market:**

"I like these things, old things. Sometimes I shop, very few things, with a few money. I send them to my daughter, who lives abroad."

*Greek case, urban context, female*





**Priceless frozen art:**

"I'm going to a surgery, so I'm happy as long as I have been able to do the snow removal ... (snow&ice sculpting) they are art, you enjoy it"

*Finish Case, rural context, ~ 70, female, pensioner*

The mundane tasks can be turned into aesthetically pleasurable art, for oneself and the community.

