



REGIONAL AND LOCAL RESPONSES IN PORTUGAL

**IN THE CONTEXT OF
MARGINALIZATION
AND GLOBALIZATION**

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DAILY MOBILITIES

Mobility as an expression of individual lifestyle

In terms of general spatial mobility, Portuguese society has come to register a wide variety of movements of a permanent nature. The search for wealth and competitive power, together with a supporting trend towards urban growth, has given rise to a clear increase in temporary movements in Portuguese society. Whilst this does not have any great impact on models of location, as Morrill (1974) states, it is responsible for a rise in the volume of production and consumption and a substantial increase in investment in traffic infrastructure. In addition to the importance of transport and communications infrastructure, which are determining factors in the process of utilising resources (the densest road systems are provided in the most industrialised districts and/or where the tertiary sector, which is basically the most important, represents an important part of the population's activity), it is also evident that the preference given to certain specific channels of mobility depends on the social form and the nature of work done by the individual (man/resource).

Work, the workplace, housing, the family, leisure and consumption all give rise to spatial mobilities which are indicators of the different levels of insertion into society and which are the result of individual characteristics, such as professional mobility, life cycle, social integration and cultural profile (Figure 1). It is from this perspective that, through their mobility, “the organisation of the way of life of the various residents in a particular geographical area may be considered an authentic language which describes for us, when correctly *described*, the elements of the social adaptation of individuals to the features of their environment” (Tarrus, 1989: 116).

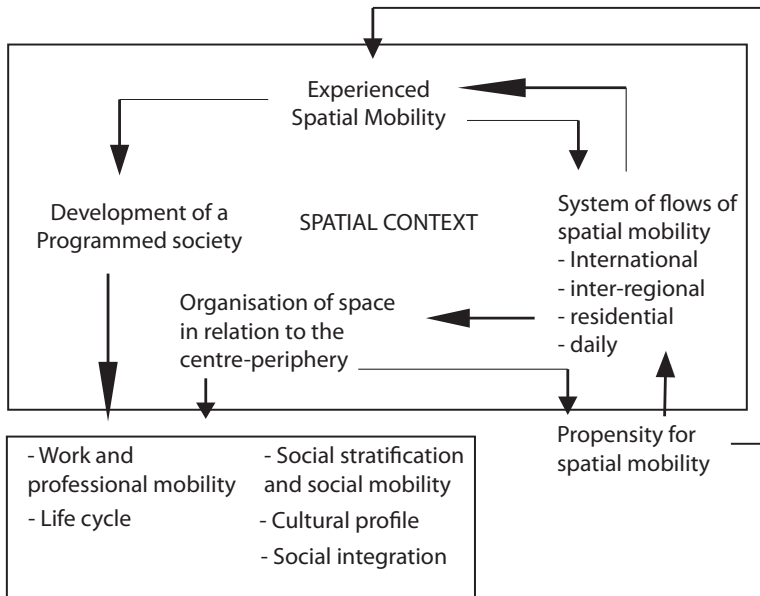


Figure 1 — Mobility as a system of practices and representations

Source: JOYE, BASSAND, SCHULER, 1989: 36

The spatial expression of these mobilities even acts as an indicator of development, as a result of the different powers of attraction the different regions possess. In the central region of Portugal, the district of Coimbra plays a dual role as a focal point of attraction and also as a major nucleus for the dispersal of the population, following the spatial mobility patterns of the region to which it belongs and in which it is defined as a small regional metropolis.

By referring to the Lefebvrian interpretation of spatial practices, representation of spaces and representational space, it may be said that “mobility is also a system of practices and representations” (Figure 1) (Joye, Bassand & Schuler, 1989: 37).

Patterns of mobility exist and the greatest variation in movement occurs on a daily rather than weekly or yearly basis. However, movements which

structure the daily life of the individual also exist and define the home and the workplace as the poles of the main everyday activities and journeys. It is therefore essential to understand the relationship between residence, work and spatial mobility.

Residence and family journeys

Mobility and the movement of individuals form part of the relationship between the urban centres and the suburban areas, as part of the process of spatial tertiarisation structured around the creation of residential buildings.

The periurban industrial areas have given way to vast urban development areas of housing estates, which, together with the villages on the outskirts of the urban centres, have also established themselves as 'halfway houses'. The effect has been to multiply the types of social relationship available between the urban and the rural areas, and to completely reformulate the rural areas by creating dormitory satellites in the middle of the countryside, whose quality (both environmental, architectural and in terms of services) is determined by the prices and, obviously, by the location of the venture.

These options have helped to increase spatial mobility, which can be identified by the relationship between indicators such as place of birth (which coincides with the residence of the parents at a particular time), current residence and the distance between the two. The number of people spending their whole life resident in the same parish with their parents (therefore without changing their residence) is particularly significant in the most rural areas (involving 75 to 80% of the population).

These figures are lower for urban areas (where 48% of the population have remained in the parish they were born in). This is the materialisation of the differences between the more stable, closed rural world and the more active and open urban world. These data can be ratified by counting the number of residents not born in the area, or, in other words, those who have changed their residence between administrative areas (parishes) at least once. In urban areas the figures are up to 78%, whilst in the

neighbouring rural area it is only 28%; suburban or periurban areas show intermediary results ranging from 36% to 51%.

The importance of this residential mobility is considerable, since it implies different ways of relating to differing life styles (expressed more strongly in urban areas and less significantly in rural ones).

Thus residence is, in Western consumer society, a way of exteriorising lifestyle, and financial means, in the same way as culture and individual taste.

The location of residence can also be interpreted as a differentiating factor, in an analysis in which distance means more than just considering the city centre or its outskirts as different functional areas. A change of location for professional reasons, related to the location of the workplace itself, and the search for a residence that allows quick, easy access to it, is the aim of the majority of the working population. This is understandable if one takes into account that individual journeys to and from work involve both expense and time and create psychological obstacles at different stages of the journey. It is even more important nowadays, given that journeys into the social world are on the increase due to people's social, family and professional commitments.

There are three main reasons for changing residence. The most important is a move due to a change in civil status. A second reason given for a change of residence was for professional reasons. A third motive for changing residence is the search for better living conditions in terms of housing (the quality/location/price relation).

It is this last notion of a change of residence resulting from a desire for better housing, in a better area and at a better price, in conjunction with professional motives, which clearly distinguishes the city parish from the others. In fact, people from the both neighbouring rural area and the suburban area gave the main reason for changing residence as a change in civil status. It may therefore be concluded that the city imposes modes of behaviour which are different from those to be found in the suburban and periurban areas, since there is a greater preoccupation with economic matters and quality of life and, consequently, with work, the prime source of the family income.

The reasons for changing residence in different areas enable us to conclude that general spatial mobility is much lower in the neighbouring rural area, in contrast to the other areas. Moreover, the type of residential mobility found there expresses lifestyles whose life cycles contain greater spatiality and a greater dependence on affective reasons (desires rather than needs), such as location or emotional affinities.

Spatial mobility resulting from professional activity.

Daily travel and commuting.

With or without any previous move, access to and from home is also a very relevant factor, since the daily journey to the workplace, which can be seen as one of the most characteristic aspects of present-day society, is responsible for the establishment of the majority of transport and road infrastructures. In fact, travelling time, as defined by the various features of the journey (routes, type of surface, number of stops, traffic flow) and the means of transport used, defines the urban structure itself and has a decisive influence on periurban growth. The study of these commuter patterns is even more important once a series of stops between home and the workplace, related to specific activities, is added to it. These stops result in increases in distance, time and often the total distance, whilst at the same time imposing the outline of communal actions on the family unit.

In Coimbra, the majority of people (77.66%) spend less than 30 minutes on this type of journey, with 15 minutes being the accepted average, given that 34.64% of those interviewed said that they spent less than 15 minutes travelling to work. Therefore we may conclude that the Coimbra population does not spend much time on daily travel to and from home, in contrast to the situation in the Portuguese metropolitan areas, and that this factor contributes towards defining the quality of life attributed to medium-sized cities and expressed by the idea that *everyone wants to drive right up to the door of the workplace*⁶.

⁶ This idea is, however, changing rapidly, and without speedy intervention in the city of Coimbra traffic problems will soon contribute towards lowering the quality of life. It is hoped

This notion of quality of life should be understood in various ways. If less time is spent travelling by car or bus, then there is a parallel lowering of stress levels and it also becomes easier to economise on a family level. There is more time for other activities, either at home, since more time can be spent with the family or on activities which provide a measure of relaxation, (hobbies, spending time with neighbours, simply relaxing), or outside the home, as there is more time for after-work interests which benefit the individual physically or culturally. Later it will be seen, however, that activities outside work are not always that significant, either in number or in terms of the amount of time spent on them; still, the possibility of choice, as well as having less pressure on time, do remain very positive stimuli for the individual.

Socio-professional categories

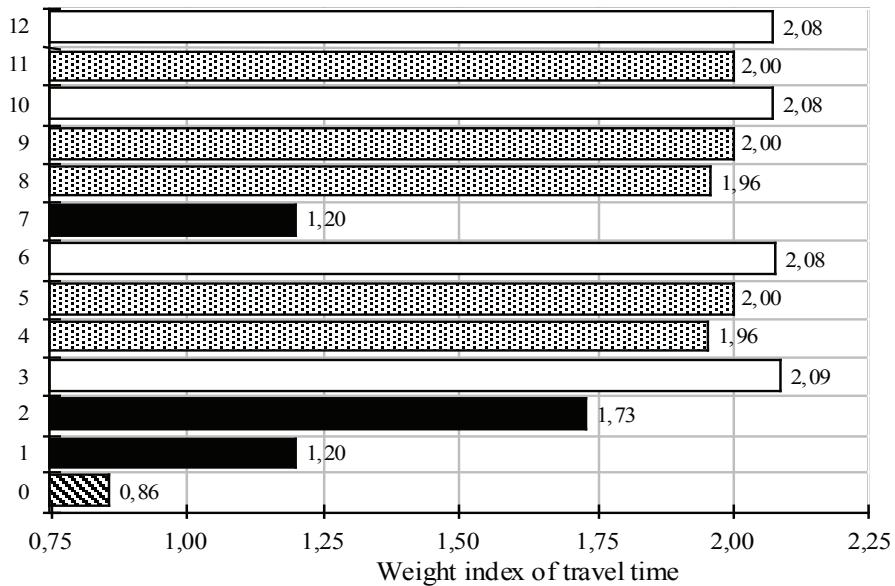


Figure 2 — Time spent travelling to and from work, according to socio-professional categories (weighted index)⁷ Source: Santos, 2001.

that current projects for traffic systems (roads and car parks) will provide the desired results. Even so, the car will very soon lose its power to 'drive you right to the door'.

⁷ The weighted index was obtained by attributing a figure from 0 to 5 for people who did not reply or stated that they spend more than 1 hour travelling, with the figure 6 attributed

Key: students and domestic workers (0), farm workers (1), lower/lower-middle class employed in commerce and the service industry (2), lower-middle/middle class employed in commerce and the service industry (3), factory workers, transport workers and mechanics (4), civil construction workers (5), public sector workers and security forces (6), suppliers of personal services (7), traders and sales representatives (8), technical and higher administrative staff (9), senior and executive staff (10), businessmen/women (11), professional occupations (12).

When we consider the time that each socio-professional group spends on travelling to and from work (Figure 2) we can identify four subcategories. *Students and domestic workers* reveal the lowest levels of travel (0.86), thus displaying a low level of mobility — a normal situation if we take into account the fact that the majority of housewives spend their time at home and that students aim to make their home as close as possible to their place of study. Thus, not having a paid job is a factor responsible for reducing individual mobility.

In addition, amongst the working population three categories reveal low levels of travelling time, evidence of living nearer to the workplace: farm workers (1), the lower and lower-middle class employed in commerce and the service industry (2) and suppliers of personal services (7).

The figures for the first group are related to the fact that the home is close to the farmland, since the journeys are normally made on foot and longer distances imply more travelling time. In the case of the second group, the low level of travelling time (involving motorised journeys at this stage) is due to the low income generated by this type of employment, meaning that travelling expenses have to be as low as possible. The income of the third group is much higher and the reduced travelling time has nothing to do with salaries, but rather with the tendency to self-location. Normally the investment made in the premises where a business is based (for example leather work, decorating, hairdressing, dressmaking) means that it also becomes the residence, or is located very close to it, thus explaining the low figures.

as *variable* since it related to situations which involved a great deal of travelling to and from work (for example sales representatives or publicity or information agents).

The remaining socio-professional groups all reveal higher levels of travelling time, particularly the lower-middle/middle class employed in commerce and the service industry (3), the public sector workers and security forces (6), senior and executive staff (10), and professional occupations, or similar (12). The first two categories, and predominantly the public sector workers, represent a significant part of the population who, having acquired jobs in the tertiary sector, still live in suburban or periurban areas and carry out other types of work, mainly agricultural. The two latter groups, many of whom are also public sector workers, are those who, having greater economic resources, are able to opt for an area determined more by subjective factors. However, owing to high prices in the Coimbra housing market, their ambitions to achieve quality of life are more easily realised on the outskirts of the city, since, as has already been emphasised, travelling times in the city are relatively short and an individual can easily get to anywhere in the city itself in just a few minutes. This therefore explains the longer travelling times.

Travelling time largely depends on the means of transport, that is, on the type of vehicle used on the journey between home and work. Most people (54.50%) use a private car, thus confirming its importance in the organisation of the individual life cycle. When the analysis is carried out by area, other results emerge showing that different modes of travel are favoured according to the area in question. Therefore, the use of a private car is predominant in suburban and urban areas, while bus travel predominates in the neighbouring rural area, although they are also important in some suburban areas.

Spatialisation of work-related mobility

In a local or even a sub-regional area (understood as the area of direct influence of a city-region), journeys to work predominate over all other types. Varying in frequency, duration and distance, they depend to a great extent on individual attributes (age, sex, culture, social situation, profession) and on the actual sociospatial organisation.

Present day journeys to work remain socially dominant since “their job is so important that people have to travel much further to work” (Morrill, 1974: 157), as opposed to travelling to obtain services or goods. In the same way, it is also the daily journeys to and from work that “feature as some of the most well-known of habitual movements, for three reasons: they are the most frequent and rhythmic, they create huge traffic jams, and population censuses enable them to be easily identified and calculated” (Thumerelle, 1986: 21).

Today we are witnessing an increase in the distances travelled by populations between home and the workplace, since “the dispersal of living space across multiple, unrelated places as a solution to continuity characterizes the societies of the developed countries” (Thumerelle, 1986: 22)

Increased itineraries are due to the fact that there are many other stopping-off points between the main departure and arrival points. The way in which people utilise space (Figure 3) in relation to the home/workplace differs according to the area in which they live. Using a distribution system which has an equal number of parishes per class, in order to favour the spatial element of the distribution, and by having three district levels (parish, municipality and other administrative units), it can be shown that employment within the parish of residence seems to conform to one central principle. This is the existence of a large number of workplaces within these parishes that enable a significant number of the population to live close to their workplace.

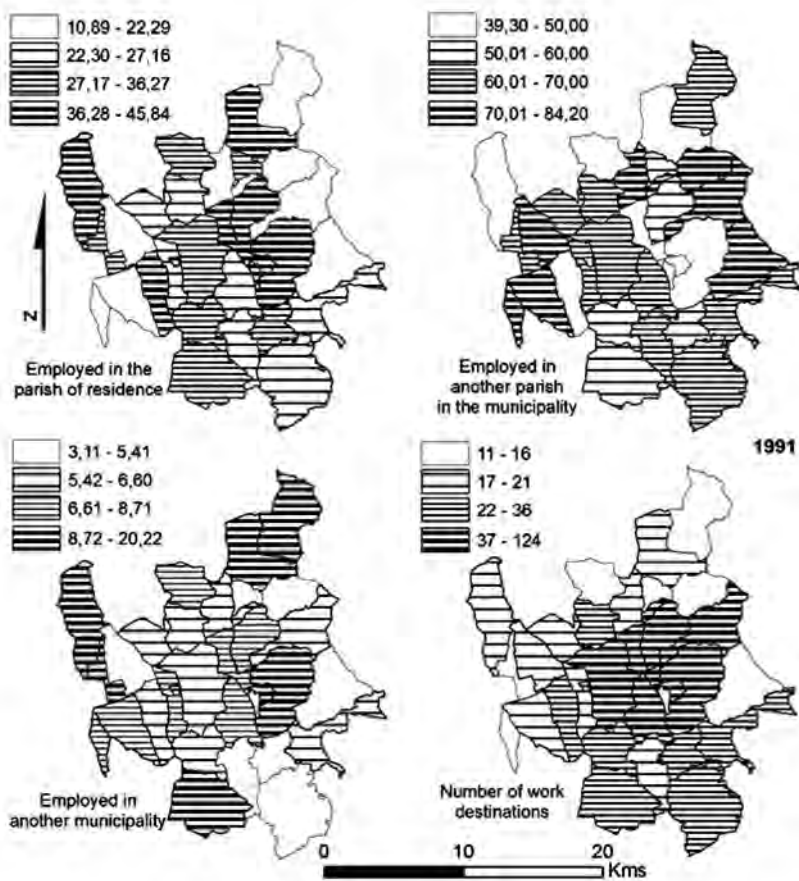


Figure 3 — Work-related spatial mobility of the population of the municipality of Coimbra, by parish.
 Source: General Population Census, INE, 1991.

However, the professional activities of the people who enjoy this proximity are very dissimilar. In the city centre parishes this situation is due to the large amount and variety of work available in commerce and the service sector: related particularly to the need for an industrial workforce or due to the importance of agricultural work. Work in another parish in the municipality marks the suburbanisation of the residential use of land. In effect, the central parishes of the city are encircled, which is evidence of the importance of the relationship between the city centre and the

surrounding parishes and explains the establishment of highly significant daily flows between the suburbs and the city centre. During rush hours, this movement, mainly undertaken by private car, creates problem traffic areas and thereby increases travelling time.

Working in another municipality, on the other hand, depends on two main circumstances: the relative location of the parishes, and the relationship to the businesses based there. This results in the parishes with the highest populations working outside the municipality being those in the city (with the exception of one, due to its ageing population) and those located on the boundaries of the municipality, due to the influence of other urban satellite centres on Coimbra.

Spatial differentiation is therefore very evident in journeys to and from work and calculating the number of work destinations (Figure 2) shows the urban areas to be much more mobile than the suburban and periurban areas (whether rural or not), which are far less dynamic in terms of work-related spatial mobility.

In this context of work-related spatial mobility it is possible to corroborate this lower mobility of the working population in the neighbouring rural area, which directs them to areas that are very close by, although the more distant cities (Lisbon, Aveiro, Viseu, Leiria) also serve as poles of attraction.

The urban parishes reveal a much wider work area, with a much more varied spatial mobility, which has clearly defined, specific levels. The urban work area thus shows just how important movement in urban parishes in medium-sized cities is and how it occurs, through work and personal and institutional relationships with large areas, in which proximity, functional diversity and accessibility define the criteria for spatial mobility.

Between 1991 and 2001 there was indeed an increase of mobility, as shown in Figure 4, as more people travelled to work in another municipality. The increase in distance is not always significant (can be larger within municipalities than between municipalities), but many parishes have between 40 and 124 work destinations of their inhabitants. Contrary to the increased mobility of labour in another municipality is the number of people employed in the parish of residence. The result of these two facts is the rise of work mobility, since the place of residence now clearly has less influence on people's job options.

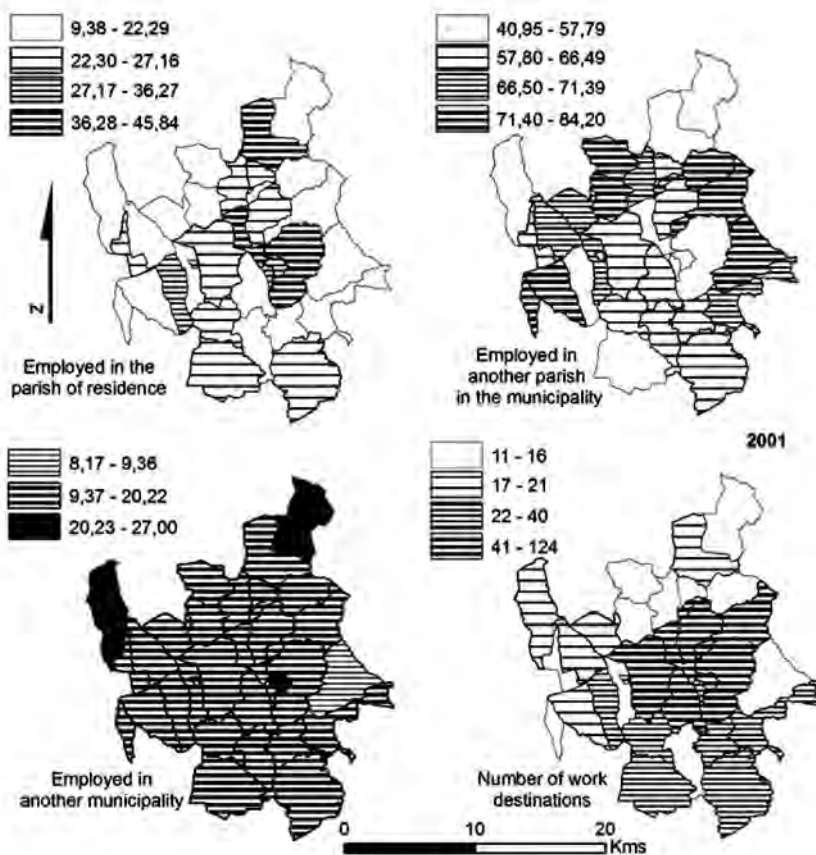


Figure 4 — Work-related spatial mobility of the population of the municipality of Coimbra, by parish.

Source: General Population Census, INE, 2001.

As Thumerele (1986: 23) states, “residential mobility, everyday work-related mobility and socio-professional mobility are understood to be related, and form a kind of complex equation. Within the same conglomeration, we may change our workplace without changing residence and, conversely, we may move to the outskirts of the conglomeration without breaking contact with places related to work, recreation and shopping”. The life of the urban population centres on three key concepts which define lifestyles and structure their cycles: the desire for sedentarisation, the search for quality of life

through housing, especially in Portuguese society and specifically in that of Coimbra, where the idea of owning a residence (either a flat or a house) is clearly predominant, and the daily travel routines to and from the home, which are replacing the migrations or emigrations characteristic of the social modernity of the first three quarters of the 20th century.

The recreational, leisure or cultural activities of the individual, such as collecting the children from school, taking them to their English, ballet or music lessons and/or private tutor and combining timetables with a husband/wife, lead to a major increase in the population's daily journeys to and from the home, involving daily contact with urban spaces. The only way to avoid this is to increase spending, either on public transport or on the acquisition of a second car. It is therefore worth emphasising the family strategies for economising, since the purchase of one or more vehicles is very important in the organisation of family life, especially for those families whose daily activities are spread across the urban centre, the periurban area, the suburbs, or even further afield. The imposition of timetables is not compatible with a more diverse use of time, and families find themselves forced to acquire one or more vehicles, according to the nature and location of their professional employment and in order to make the best use of their free time after work.

Chrono-geography applied to the Coimbra area

Chrono-geography enables us to identify two time categories: one when the population is stationary and the other when they are travelling. It is the interplay between these two phenomena, interrupted by an increasing variety of stations, which provides the model of the use of individual daily space and time. Highlighting everyday routine as a model involves taking into account the existence of habitual journeys which take place at specific times and which are repeated day after day. It is from these circumstances that a representation of individual routes can be created (in isolation or as part of a group), although "our patterns of life, the spatial-temporal movements of 'normal citizens' may not always be completely visible" (Hannah, 1997: 349).

From a chrono-geographical perspective, representation of the way of life is organised in terms of the two main defining stations in spatial mobility: home and work.

Between these two stations a daily routine evolves, which “is what happens every day. But we are also used to saying that, in everyday events, nothing happens that diverges from the monotonous, routine order. Therefore, the everyday would be what happens every day when nothing seems to be happening” (Pais, 1993: 108).

The work cycle is a set of trajectories which are completed without question, with attitudes captured in phrases such as *you do it with your eyes closed* or *the car knows its own way*. These trips form part of trajectories which suggest that “a series of successive points is not the simple result of chance but, on the contrary, [they are linked] into an intelligible order” (Grafmeyer, 1994: 81); they are aimed at carrying out specific objectives and the “system of work is the source of heavy restrictions on individual mobility, attributing to each person a fairly considerable arbitrary margin between professional commitments and those which arise from other areas of practice” (Grafmeyer, 1994: 83 and 84).

Daily trajectories are normally distributed according to basic physiological needs (rest and food) and work; the periods of time which separate the places where these occupations or activities are carried out are responsible for routine spatial mobility such as the morning journey to work, going for lunch near the workplace or at home involving differing amounts of movement, the return home in the evening and the sporadic trips within the whole population, which may be routine to certain individuals. The work cycle, however, also influences other, less routine, movements in which the places-stations become more diverse and depend on the specific needs of individuals at a particular moment.

For example, whether for the traditional or the newer forms of shopping, there is provision in the work cycle for trips to these places, usually organised in relation to the location of the home or the working hours.

The set of individual journeys makes explicit the intended understanding of individual routines and shows the need to identify other perennial and casual trajectories, in addition to the routine ones, which are “denouncers

of the many meanderings of social life which escape the itineraries or abstract routes which some theories (...) project onto the social” (Pais, 1993: 109).

In reality, these meanderings are already routines for many families. The activity-time trajectories correspond to what is understood as everyday routine, remembering that everyday routine is what happens when nothing else seems to be going on, as Pais (1993) notes. Differences are registered in a number of aspects which are worth examining: the time dedicated to children (in the mornings and evenings) is more important in the urban area than in suburban and neighbouring rural areas.

A second set of differences relates to the way in which time is occupied after work, both in the late afternoons and evenings. Once again, a difference in behaviour in the urban area and areas surrounding the city is evident: they reveal more activity, both outside and inside the home. Indicators of after work-activity, usually in leisure/sports, which occupy the period of time before dinner, correspond, in the after-dinner period, to some social activity, such as hobbies or family relationships.

The use of space largely depends on the perception individuals have of the area where they live, and their perceptions are very varied. Different places therefore present different problems and varying potential. The population of the municipality of Coimbra characterises its area as one that has a huge density of traffic (particularly cars), as well as a low level of services and commerce; they also refer to deficiencies in basic sanitation. Obviously these figures differ when they are analysed by parish. This clearly defines the nature of the concerns in the non-urban parishes. These populations indicate that the main problems are the lack of structures and infrastructure, both basic ones and those which define a style of living. The lack of basic sanitation, commerce and services are the most frequently voiced concerns and the ones that most affect people’s daily life. The lack of the commercial structures and services that organise an area makes housing, together with the road transport network and the large areas of open land, the main structuring features in these areas. In fact, in the periurban and neighbouring rural areas, transport and the existence of green spaces are considered their most valuable assets. It should be

emphasised that a rural morphology prevails, which is still very important and this, as much as the existence of good access roads and transport systems making it easy to travel into the city centre/outskirts and vice versa, encourages people to leave the centre and head for more pleasant residential areas, closer to the countryside. Equally, it also encourages people from the periurban and rural areas to commute into the urban centre, since it allows them to maintain links with their local area and consequently sustain neighbourhoods and communities, although they may be somewhat more emancipated and are certainly protected.

On the other hand, the population of the urban parish voices other concerns. The main concerns, such as the density of traffic, the high population density and pollution, in fact result from overcrowding, whilst commercial and service structures and infrastructures are not considered to be in short supply. It should be stressed that the lack of green spaces is an important concern for many individuals who live in the city, and leads them to move to periurban or even rural areas, as long as they have good access roads.

In this way, therefore, two distinct sets of individuals can be distinguished, not always the result of the influence of the place of residence, but, rather, of opting for lifestyles other than those which predominate in the neighbourhood or community. In fact, effective integration into groups can result, above all, from similarities in professional activity or in ways of spending time after work.

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