



Unequal development in Barcelos, Northwest Portugal: articulation of the central-peripheral model with the territorialist model*

Desarrollo desigual en Barcelos, noroeste de Portugal: articulación entre el modelo centro-periferia y el modelo territorialista

Développement inégal à Barcelos, nord-ouest du Portugal: de l'articulation entre le modèle centre-périphérie et le modèle territorialiste

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Abstract

In the context of Minho's regional dynamics, some statistical indicators highlight serious socio-spatial and socio-economic disparities, not only between social groups, but also between sectors (agriculture, industry and services) and socio-spatial areas with different levels of (under)development. From the historical-sociological perspective, this study briefly describes socio-demographic change in the northern region, more specifically in the municipality of Barcelos. Territorial imbalances were detected in comparing more central municipalities with those of the interior. Besides this, the aim is to detect other dimensions of social inequality such as infrastructure, unemployment, and health; social security and housing, on the one hand, and culture and education on the other. Despite some improvements in infrastructure and facilities, the Minho region is permeated by social, educational and cultural disparities. This asymmetrical situation reproduces at the regional and local level an unequal national distribution of health, education and cultural resources. In the current context of globalisation, these indicate the analytical importance of the centre-peripheral theory, not only at the global economy level, but also at the national and regional levels.

Keywords: territory, development, social inequalities, globalisation, Minho/Barcelos, Portugal

* Reflection article: This is a text in which the authors present the results of a research with an analytic and interpretive perspective. They are based on original observations or sources

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Resumen

En el contexto de la dinámica regional de Minho, los indicadores estadísticos permiten destacar notables disparidades socioespaciales y socioeconómicas, no solo entre grupos sociales, sino también entre sectores (agricultura, industria y servicios) y áreas socioespaciales con diferentes niveles de (sub)desarrollo. En una perspectiva histórico-sociológica, se da cuenta brevemente de la evolución socio-demográfica de la región norte y, más concretamente, en el municipio de Barcelos, lo que nos permitió verificar asimetrías de tipo territorial por municipios más centrales frente a municipios del interior. Además, se pretende evidenciar otras dimensiones de las desigualdades sociales en materia de infraestructuras, desempleo y salud, seguridad social y vivienda, por un lado, y la educación y la cultura, en el otro. A pesar de algunas mejoras en infraestructuras y equipamientos, el territorio de la subregión Minho es cruzado por disparidades sociales, educativas y culturales y reproduce en su interior y en la escala regional la distribución desigual de los recursos nacionales de salud, educación y cultura, señalando, en el marco de la globalización actual, la relevancia analítica de la teoría del centro-periferia, no solo en el nivel de la economía mundial, sino también en términos nacionales y regionales.

Palabras clave: territorio, desarrollo, desigualdades sociales, Minho/Barcelos, Portugal

Résumé

Dans le contexte de la dynamique régionale du Minho, les indicateurs des statistiques permettent de mettre en évidence, de manière notoire, des disparités socio-spatiales et socio-économiques non seulement entre les groupes sociaux mais également entre les secteurs (agricole, industriel et tertiaire) et les zones socio-spatiales aux indices différenciés de (sous)développement. Dans une perspective historico-sociologique, nous noterons la rapidité de l'évolution sociodémographique de la région nord, particulièrement pour la commune de Barcelos, ce qui nous a permis de vérifier des asymétries de type territorial entre des communes plus centrales et des communes de l'intérieur des terres. De plus, nous voudrions mettre en évidence d'autres dimensions des inégalités sociales en ce qui concerne les infrastructures, le chômage et la santé, la sécurité sociale et le logement d'une part, et d'autre part, l'éducation et la culture. Malgré certaines améliorations au niveau des infrastructures et des équipements, le territoire du Minho est traversé de disparités sociales, éducatives et culturelles. Il reproduit en cela, aussi bien dans les bassins territoriaux qu'à l'échelle régionale, l'inégale distribution nationale des ressources de santé, éducatives et culturelles, ce qui pointe, dans le cadre de l'actuelle mondialisation, la pertinence analytique de la théorie du centre-périphérie non seulement au niveau de l'économie mondiale mais également aux niveaux national et régional.

Mots-clés: territoire, développement, inégalités sociales, Minho/Barcelos, Portugal

Introduction: the problem

Issues such as development and social inequality in recent years have once again deserved the attention of several institutions and social actors; these continue to be highly controversial and to be the object of different interpretations, ranging from the classical to more recent ones (cf. Bader & Benschop, 1988; Silva, 2009, pp. 11-40). The problem has given rise to debate, particularly since the 2008 crisis, within the governing authorities of a number of countries—including Portugal—and international organisations (EU, ECB, IMF, FAO), political organisations and parties, and has drawn the attention of academics, the media, and civil society. It has also gained in visibility through political discourse and become more relevant in theoretical and empirical studies.¹

Barcelos is located in Baixo Minho² and because of its geographic proximity is in many ways interdependent with, and similar to, neighbouring municipalities (Braga, Famalicão and Guimarães), particularly in socio-demographic and economic terms, while at the same time differing from others. It particularly differs from the municipalities of the interior of Minho, and more widely, from the region and the country as a whole. A few relevant questions are: What is the place of the Minho and, particularly Barcelos, compared to average indicators for the whole country? And, if this location is peripheral in relation to central regions, why are there socio-spatial inequalities and why do they persist? What are living conditions like in economic, social, and cultural terms for the communities in the region and, in particular, in Barcelos? And if inequalities cannot be eliminated in the short and medium term, then how can they be reduced? Because these are somewhat complex questions, in this paper we will do no more than presenting a brief comparative diagnosis, basing our work in terms of method and technique on the statistical sources of the National Statistics Institute and other institutional sources, as well as some studies. So after a brief overview of the current theory on (under)development, and adopting a multi-dimensional and multi-causal perspective, in the best Weberian tradition, we will make a brief socio-demographic analysis and present a concise view of the relatively (semi) peripheral situation of the Minho region and particularly of the municipality of Barcelos. This analysis will include their socio-demographic dynamics, as well as advances and weaknesses in several aspects: socio-economic, educational, and cultural.

Development and underdevelopment: different conflicting models

According to Silva and Cardoso (2005), not only the concept of development is polisemic, but in the social sciences there are also several conflicting analytical approaches, as well as different cultural and political-ideological worldviews. Among the trends of economic thinking, in the 1950s the theories of growth and modernisation and the correlated proposal of growth in stages emerged. This trend suggested that the so-called underdeveloped regions and countries should pursue economic patterns of modernisation according to the logic of the laws of supply and demand, as well as the standards and values in force in western countries, that is, more developed countries (cf. Rostow, 1964; & Hoselitz, 1960).

An initial critical reaction to this school of liberal thinking, later known as the (neo)-institutional school, came from the authors in several Northern European countries. Of those, Myrdal (1974), faced

1 Cf., among others, Almeida *et al* (1992, 2013), Silva (2001, 2009a), Carmo (2010), Rodrigues *et al* (2012), A. Costa (2012), Remoaldo and Nogueira (2012).

2 According to the division based on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS), Minho corresponds approximately to NUTS Minho-Lima, Cávado and Ave, a total area of 4,710.6 km² (around 5% of national territory), covering 24 Municipalities with a total of 798 parishes. It is a region of smallholdings and is divided into two NUTS: Cávado, with a population of 410,169 inhabitants and a high population density, 328.9/km²; and Minho-Lima with 244,836 inhabitants with an average of 109 inhabitants/km². The population of NUTS Minho-Lima, Ave and Cávado, which in 2001 had a total of 1,153,306 inhabitants, in 2011 rose to a total of 1,166,742 (INE, Census 2001 and 2011, Anuário Estatístico da Região Norte, 2011).

by stalemate and no solution to the gap between the rich and poor countries, suggested that the State should have a controlling and corrective role in relation to the market, a pragmatic intervention in the take-off, and an indicative planning for the development. Others, radicalising the neo-institutional view, were developing theories of dependence³ and provided an alternative historical-structural view to explain underdevelopment problems through a radical criticism of the classical liberal economy.

Also, in the sixties, the neo-Marxist theorist on development arose, inspired by the Marxist approach about the labour value, the critical perspective on the (neo)colonial systems, and the transition of the non-capitalist modes of production within the context of the world-economy.

Based on this neo-Marxist interpretation, development should be thought out differently, maintaining that development in the central regions and countries is achieved at the expense of underdevelopment in the peripheral countries and regions. In analysing unequal development in the light of neo-Marxist trends, three visions emerge: the view of development as a structuring factor in inequalities throughout the world, as claimed in Frank's dependence theory (1967); the perspective that the relationship between the central and peripheral economies would be affected by a critical comprehension of development models and their structural changes, in harmony with Wallerstein's perspective of the world capitalist system (1990); and, lastly, the view involving the analysis and dynamics of the social classes in the central-peripheral scheme (Arrighi, 1971; Brenner, 1977), or the defence of the theory of disconnection from the peripheral countries, as a means of constructing a new poly-centric economic system (Amin, 1974). In all of these different views development is only possible by implementing the socialist model, meaning not only a critical perspective, but a break from the capitalist system.

In view of the failure of neo-liberal proposals, the inefficiency of neo-institutional proposals and the out-of-reach utopic worldview of socialism, according to theories of dependence and central-peripheral status, other authors (Stohr, 1981; Reis, 1994; Bailly, 1999) suggested another approach of a territorial nature. One centred on the native development of local potential and resources, which, apart from its virtues, has the advantage of contradicting and/or correcting, and complementing the excessively linear and externalist perspectives of long term macro-economic models, or even from what Wertheim (1971) calls 'counterpoints'.

The dominant economic theories of the countries of the so-called developed first world have associated debates on growth and stability policies for the economic system in force and their strategies for dissemination in the non-developed economies and societies. At the same time neo-institutional theories aim to overcome through political regulation the failures and harmful effects of (neo) liberal doctrine, while (neo) Marxist theories of dependence and central-periphery aim to change the direction of neoliberal policies, re-nurturing and/or reinforcing socialist planning.

Demographic dynamics: the North and the municipality of Barcelos

Today's many modern societies, particularly western societies, are suffering a considerable demographic decline, also visible in recent decades in Portugal, although at a slower rate and with regional differences (INE, Census 2001 and 2011). Between 2001 and 2011 the resident population increased by 2.0%, but this was due mainly to the arrival of immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe. The North (cf. Figure 1), showing a high density from the population point of view, saw a rise in population of around 6.0%,⁴ however, in 2011 there was no change in population compared with 2001.

3 Based particularly on Prebisch (1963), but pursued by Furtado (1961), Cardoso and Falleto (1970) and Frank himself (1961, 1971). In Portugal, cf. Santos (1985) and Fortuna (1987). For an ethical-cultural and universal view of development cf. Gonzalez Guevara and Cuellar (2012). For a summary of the different contributions, cf. Silva and Cardoso (2005).

4 Although in most sub-regions, especially within the Northern Region, there were positive changes — from 8% in Porto up 11.3% in Cávado—, in Douro and Alto Tras-os-Montes are documented negative variations, i.e. -7.1% and -5.1% respectively. In these and other sub-regions, particularly in Minho inside with sparsely populated parishes, the situation tends to deteriorate (Cardoso, 2012, p. 100).

In recent decades, the Minho has suffered radical demographic, social, economic, political, and cultural changes and today its morphological, territorial, political, and cultural layout is very different to that of the 1970s. Bearing in mind demographic and socio-economic aspects, some economic growth resulting from investment has certainly contributed to this change, together with the work of economic and social agents and the convergence of several factors. These are the result from industry, construction, and services, and the respective flows of labour and students to the main towns and cities in the Minho-Lima valley (Viana do Castelo and Ponte do Lima), and above all Ave-Cávado (Barcelos, Famalicão, Guimarães, and, particularly, Braga).

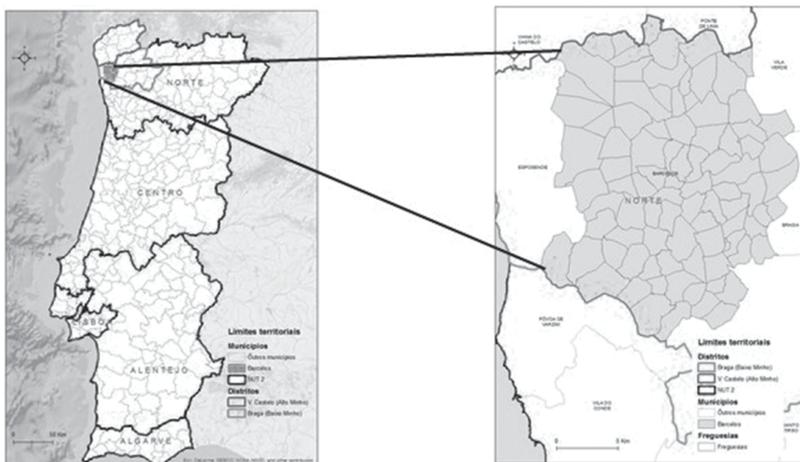


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the municipality of Barcelos (in NUTS Cávado)⁵

Source: Carta Administrativa Oficial de Portugal, 2014

Other indicators referring to quality of life include those of ageing⁶ and dependence.⁷ More specifically, in the heart of the North region, the ageing rate rose from 79 in 1993 to 129 in 2011. In NUTS Ave and Cávado, which had a low ageing rate in 1993 (45 and 46 respectively), the figure has almost doubled in eighteen years, to 96 and 87 respectively. NUTS Minho-Lima has a higher ageing rate, with the 94 rate in 1993 rising to 175 in 2011 (INE, Anuário Estatístico da Região Norte; Census 2001 and 2011).⁸

In the Minho region, Barcelos is one of the four most dynamic municipalities in the district of Braga; particularly within the urban square formed by Braga, Guimarães, Famalicão, and Barcelos, extending to the north to include the city of Viana do Castelo. These five cities account for more than 60% of the total population.

5 In the same northern region, that is in Minho, the sixties and seventies saw a considerable drop in population numbers due to an intense rural exodus and, above all, to massive migration to Europe (France and Germany) (32% in Braga and 33% in Viana do Castelo), recovered in Porto and particularly in Braga: 16% between 1971 and 1981, 16% between 1991 and 2001.

6 Ageing index – population over the age of 65 or over, divided by the number between the age of 0 and 14, result expressed per 100.

7 The old-age dependency ratio – the ratio between the ageing population and working-age population, defined usually as the ratio between the number of people aged 65 or over, and the number of those aged between 15 and 64 (usually expressed per 100 persons aged 15-64); Total dependency ratio - the ratio between the population aged between 0 and 14 and those 65 or over by the number of people aged between 15 and 64.

8 Relevant research was done in the University of Minho (cf. Silva & Ribeiro, 2000), and important from the demographic and sociological standpoint was a study was done by a team of researchers at the University of Porto, coordinated by Gonçalves (2007).

In regard to demographic change in Barcelos between 1991 and 2001 and between 2001 and 2011, Table 1 gives us an outline of growth, rejuvenation and demographic decline. According to this census the resident population in Barcelos increased by around 572 inhabitants per year from 1981, leading to a population increase of 16,618 inhabitants (16%) between 1981 and 2011, although between 2001 and 2011 it lost 1,705 inhabitants (-1.4%).

Table 1.
Demographic change in Barcelos (1981 and 2011)

<i>Census</i>	<i>Number of residents</i>	<i>Difference (%)</i>
2011	120,391	- 1.4
2001	122,096	9.3
1991	111,733	7.7
1981 (=100)	103,773	

Source: ine, Census 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011

In the district of Braga, in the decade from 2001 to 2011, Barcelos is the second municipality, after the city of Braga, with the highest demographic growth. High birth rates contributed to this growth (12.7‰) and the fact that death rates in Cávado are among the lowest (7.3‰). Apart from Catholic inspired ethical and religious reasons, the population increase was also due to the return of emigrants and the settling of immigrants, an increase in the student population in higher education, and also to a certain industrial drive, particularly in textiles, footwear, and ceramics.

Looking at the population distribution in the different age groups, the municipality of Braga, in 2001, had a high rate of young people under the age of 15 (20.2%), although this dropped to 16.6% in 2011 due to several factors including: a low birth rate; a relative low rate of individuals aged 65 or over (10.8%) in 2001, which rose in 2011 to 14.1%; and a low rate of ageing in 2001 of around 59.4%, although this had risen in 2011 to around 78.2%, an increase of 18.8% in ten years. Although there has been a general increase in ageing nationally (19.4% of the population aged 65 or over), the municipality of Barcelos in 2011 was below the average, with 13.8% of the population aged 65 or over.

Regarding age group distribution in the resident population, we find in 2001 that 45,487 inhabitants, 37.3% of the population, is under the age of 25, but in 2011 this figure falls to 29.6%. However, in the population as a whole, almost 56.6% are in the 25 to 64 age group.

By way of a summary, we can claim that demographic structures in Barcelos, are not all that different to the other cities in the urban square, have a relatively high proportion of young people, and a tendency for renewal, although it is seeming to fall due to the demographic decline, already reflected in the young population. Despite this slight counter-tendency, the balance is still positive in that the population under the age of 15 exceeds the population over the age of 65 by a wide margin. Demographic growth is co-structured by capital investment, flows of manpower, and by the movement and retention of students, although temporary, as mentioned above.

Dependent economy: an old model

Basically, despite some improvements, particularly in road transport, transport structures remain the same. Although given somewhat ill-planned construction, it is increasingly difficult to plan a road and rail transport network to serve communities, not only those most isolated, but also the residents in the urban square of Famalicão, Guimarães, Braga and Barcelos. Rail transport has improved since 2001 with the introduction first of the *Intercity* service, and later the *Alfa* (fast connection) Braga-Lisbon and

vice-versa; however, the Minho to Viana do Castelo and Valença line⁹ is decidedly not a priority. This policy of disinvestment in the railways goes with more room for manoeuvre for the road companies that have managed to reap dividends from this policy from both secondary roads and the construction of highways and motorways.

In terms of workforce, between 1981 and 2001 there was a considerable increase in the working population, both nationally (from 42.5% to 48.2%), and regionally (from 42.4% to 48.1%) (Gonçalves, 2007), mainly due to the massive increase of women on the labour market. The increase in workforce made more complicated the problem of unemployment in that increasing the number of working individuals (for example, by 5.1% between 1998 and 2001) makes more difficult, particularly in times of crisis, to reduce or, at least, to slow the rate of unemployment, which was around 6.4% in 2001; 13.6% in 2011, and 15.2% in January 2014 (INE & Eurostat, 2014).

In regard to the industrial population in the district of Braga, the municipalities of Guimarães, Famalicão, Braga, and Barcelos absorbed, according to Ribeiro (1984, pp. 33-34), 90% of the industrial manpower in 1971 and 79% in 1981. This, apart from detecting some intercity movement, is a situation of unequal territorial distribution, leaving municipalities in the interior to face gradual desertification and a decline in rural areas suffering demographic and economic losses (40% of towns with 2000 to 5000 inhabitants).¹⁰ This decline is even greater the further we go into the interior of Minho and, particularly, Alto Minho (cf. Silva & Cardoso, 2003, p. 203).

The lack of modern industry, as well as little industrial diversification in the Minho region, mainly in Minho-Lima, exacerbated by the added problems of low productivity and the break-up of manufacturing industries, weaken the economy of the region, obviously including Barcelos, making it highly vulnerable to external influences. This accumulation of problems, historically rooted in old contexts of scattered industrialisation based on extracting maximum profit, may work, according to Cabral (1979), thanks to the wage difference working to the benefit of industry. Also thanks to the fact that low wages for families whose members are docile, submissive (semi)peasant workers, serve to complement their sparse farming incomes; a model that, according to several authors such as Ribeiro (1984), Ferreira (1993), M. Silva (2000), and Silva and Ribeiro (2000), once prevailed but today is beginning to die out.

Currently, in the process of globalisation and international competitiveness, evidenced mainly from the import of textile products from other countries, particularly China, the textile industry has gone through a worrying crisis. This is due that, as a whole, the fabric industry was not modernised and mainly micro, small, and medium sized family companies now prevail; above all small and micro family firms with no investment capacity, and sometimes even insolvent, with only 0.1% of companies with more than two hundred workers.

The purchasing power indicator is below the national average (indicator 100): 61% in Minho-Lima, 67% in Ave, 74% in Cávado and 58.7% in Barcelos, in 2000; 77.6% in Minho-Lima, 81% in Ave, 86% in Cávado and 72.6% in Barcelos, in 2011 (Pordata, 2012). The current northern region, including Greater Porto (with 111.3% that exceeds the national average), is around 89% (Pordata, 2012), without any major changes between 1993 with 81.7%, and 2002 with 85.6% (Silva & Cardoso 2003, p. 205). Many of the rural inhabitants in the region have more than one job, a labour situation that prevails throughout the country and in Barcelos itself; a trend highlighted by Silva (1998). This situation goes a long way to understand the relative low level of social conflict in a scattered industrialisation context, when

9 This state disinvestment was, in any case, found throughout the whole northern region, particularly affecting short haul rail routes, resulting in line closures and fewer trains, and, to make matters worse, handing over of assets or certain facilities (railway halts) to private hands for the private use of road companies.

10 The trend is similar in Viana do Castelo: 65% between Viana do Castelo and Ponte do Lima in 1971 and 59% in 1981.

compared to other regions and towns in metropolitan areas. This job distribution, for those remaining in the village, has been in a state of constant change since the 1980s and has one advantage: spreading the risk of unemployment or uncertain work situations in industry and services.

A territory of disparities

Having presented a brief socio-demographic overview of the North region, as well as a run down on the state of the economy in Minho and, particularly, the district of Braga and the municipality of Barcelos, a brief note is necessary on infrastructure and facilities. At this point the first observation is that despite considerable improvements over the past two decades in infrastructure and facilities in the municipalities of the urban square mentioned above, they are neither sufficient nor adequate for the current needs. Moreover, as in other countries and regions, in the Minho there is also an unequal distribution of infrastructure, facilities, and human resources throughout the territory. This means that despite continuity between town and country, there are some inequalities and socio-spatial imbalances.

Based on studies by Cónim (1999) further elaborated by Pinheiro (2007) on human development indicators (education, longevity, comfort, income and gross domestic product),¹¹ we find that the region, and principally NUTS Cávado and Ave, has rates slightly higher than those of the country as a whole in most indicators, including education (0.933 compared to 0.922, the national average) and life expectancy (0.86 against 0.853), but slightly lower in comfort (0.941 against 0.952), adjusted income (0.875 against 0.894), and real gross domestic product (0.380 against 0.466).

Below, in an attempt to assess the regional situation and particularly that of Barcelos, in terms of social indicators, we must now consider other dimensions and aspects of social inequality in unemployment and health, social security and housing and, lastly, culture and education.

Unemployment and health

Now we return to the question of unemployment and seek to understand how the unemployment rate has changed in the region, sub-regions and municipalities (Cardoso, 2012, p. 117). The reality of unemployment is very serious, mainly in recent years, time in which the North has had an unemployment rate higher than the national rate and it has doubled compared to that of 2001, particularly in NUTS Cávado, where Barcelos is located. Barcelos in 2011 had around three times the number of unemployed it had in 2001, rising from 3.3% to 12.1%. In 2012 the unemployment rate rose to 15.5% in the country and 16.1% in the North region (Pordata, 2012).

The unemployed are not only less skilled adults, but also there have been increasingly more unemployed young people, including skilled young people: around 30% in 2011 are below the age of 25. Besides this, given the prevailing trend of institutionalised individualism, we see an increasing duality or even fragmentation of labour markets, in which growing fringes of young people are subjected to temporary and uncertain jobs that are flexible and poorly paid.¹²

Health sector indicators in the region, as in the rest of the country, have seen improvements in infrastructure, services, and facilities since the 1970s, and particularly following April 25, 1974, and the implementation of the National Health Service (NHS). Improvements also given thanks to the principles of universality and the tendency for the public health system to be free of charge, enshrined respectively in articles 63 and 64 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of

11 Cónim (1999) summarises those five indicators into three: human development (IDH), economic and social development (IDES) based on the arithmetic mean of the adjusted income indicator adjusted by the gross domestic product indicator, and the social development indicator or the population well-being indicator, like this covering education, longevity and comfort.

12 For further development of these problems, cf. Sennet (2001), Beck and Beck (2006) and, in Portugal, Kóvacs (2002), Gonçalves *et al.* (2001, 2004) and Marques (2005).

1976 and further developed in Law 56/79 on the National Health Service (NHS). However, these principles, although not revoked, have been undermined in their practical application by several factors associated with inefficiency and the slow response time of the system (for example, waiting lists for specialist consultations), the mix of public and private interests, and the reinforcement of private medicine and private health systems. In fact, as proved by S. Silva (2007), between 1988 and 2004, in the northern region there was a slight reduction in the number of public hospitals per 100,000 inhabitants. All the while there was an increase in private hospitals in the remaining sub-regions, with the exception of Trás-os-Montes, Douro and Minho-Lima where there are none, and principally in NUTS Greater Porto (from 0.9 to 1.2), Cávado (from 2.0 to 2.5), and Ave (from 0.2 to 0.6). That is, between 1988 and 2005 public hospitals fell from 1.3 to 0.9 per 100,000 inhabitants (from 1.4 to 1.1 in the country), while private hospitals increased from 0.6 to 0.8 (remaining during this period at 0.9 in the country). The falling trend in the public sector is also visible by closing of maternity hospitals and health centres.

In 2002, NUTS Cávado and Ave, together, had a total of 17 hospitals, 11 of which were private, while in 2012 the same NUTS had 20 hospitals, 14 of which were private. In other words, this was increase of 3 private hospitals over 10 years (INE Hospital Survey, 2013). These 20 hospitals have 2,996 beds and 2,495 working medical doctors, that is 3.3 doctors and 4.8 beds per thousand inhabitants in NUTS Cávado, and 2.2 doctors and 2.0 beds per thousand inhabitants in NUTS Ave (INE, Estatísticas de Saúde 2014). In the case of Barcelos, although it does not suffer from the setbacks of the small municipalities of the interior, it does suffer considerably from a lack of health facilities, with only one public hospital. Said hospital functions so badly that patients are forced to use one of the two high-cost private hospitals or be taken to the district hospital due to a lack of resources and specialist treatment.

Apart from the general defects of the system, in assessing the situation on a national, regional, and sub-regional scale, there is a sharp territorial and social inequality in gaining access to health services between the major cities —Lisbon, Porto, and Coimbra, in which most means and (para)medical personnel are concentrated, particularly the more highly specialised personnel— and other towns and cities in the country. This logic of concentration and territorial inequality on a national and regional scale, in terms of infrastructure and facilities, medical specialisation, and health personnel, is even more evident in the average or even small towns and villages, particularly those remote from hospitals and health centres.

An extraordinary change has taken place in infant mortality rates, as proved by INE statistics, from the four year period 1980-84 to the four year period 2001-2005, both in the country and in the region (cf. S. Silva 2007): for Alto Trás-os-Montes (from 31.33‰ to 5.53‰), Greater Porto (from 21.36‰ to 5.21‰), Cávado (from 22.16‰ to 4.38‰), Ave (from 22.16‰ to 4.05‰), and Minho-Lima (from 21.39‰ to 4.67‰). Between 2001 and 2012 the figures drop again from 9.2‰ to 2.5‰ respectively for Minho-Lima, from 8.4‰ to 2.4‰ for Cávado, and 7.1‰ to 2.5‰ for Ave. In the same period the national infant mortality rate fell from 5‰ to 3.2‰.

The municipality of Barcelos differs slightly from the district average (from 8.3‰ vs 7.7‰ in 2001, to 3.7‰ vs 2.5‰ in 2012), raising queries as to life-styles and living conditions, as well as health and health education; the figures being higher for the interior of each sub-region, mainly in the more remote municipalities.¹³

13 In some municipalities in the interior, data on infant mortality were fairly negative in 2001, although they improved considerably in 2012: for example, in Arcos de Valdevez from 13‰ to 4.2‰, in Valença from 16.4‰ to 3.6‰, both in Minho-Lima.

Social security and housing

Similar to the national trend,¹⁴ the northern region also saw a considerable increase in the number of individuals retiring due to disability or old age (retirement/pension) between 1981 and 2011. The increase went from 16% for the whole country and 13.9% in the northern region in 1981, to 36.1% for the whole country and 32% in the northern region in 2001 (Gonçalves, 2007), and 28.2% in the country and 26.8% in the region in 2011 (INE, Censo 2011), explained by improvements in health care and a higher life expectancy.

Social security indicators for Minho, apart from the discrepancy in average social spending compared to the European average,¹⁵ also differ in the percentage of pensioners when comparing the national average with that of the remote parts of Minho – where most live on low pensions. Therefore, in regions with fewer resources, with older citizens receiving old age or subsistence pensions whose past contributions were over a short period, low, or non-existent, there are more pensioners living in difficulties (annex 1). However, the most important indicator for the living conditions of pensioners is the average monthly amount of pensions based on work associated with the primary sector or other low wage sectors, or those with no retirement contributions made at all, being penalised. Between 1993 and 2011, the average monthly pension, in all regions, more than doubled and in some almost tripled, although this fact should be weighted against the rise in inflation and cost of living, to which are added considerable cuts made since 2011.¹⁶

One specific category in a particularly vulnerable situation includes those receiving social benefits (*Rendimento Social de Inserção - rsi*). Looking at 2004, the North Region, according to Pinheiro (2007), had almost 60% of all beneficiaries receiving social benefits, most of them women, who form or are part of family units with children, and in second place, single parent families.

When it comes to social facilities, namely crèches and play-schools, on the one hand, and old age homes, on the other, apart from an unequal internal geographic distribution in each NUT, and a relative concentration of 65% private social solidarity institutions (IPSS) in the main cities in the square (Silva & Cardoso, 2003), the sub-regions have the following coverage rates: Cávado with 18, Ave with 16, and Minho-Lima with 14 crèches and infant schools per 100.000 inhabitants – averages equal to or slightly lower than the national average of 18/100,000 inhabitants. Minho-Lima and Cávado have 7 old age homes, Ave has 5 per 100,000 inhabitants, while the national level is around 8 per 100,000 inhabitants, and quite a number of them were created with a perspective towards profit-making.

In terms of housing, the North region, according to Pinheiro (2007), is in a better position for traditional housing with 58.7% against the national average of 48.4%, as well as for resident families (35.4% against 25.7%). Apart from internal migration to the coast in search of work, in the sub-regions of Cávado and Ave, mortgage facilities at a subsidised interest rate for home buying, or for buying a second home for different uses, have contributed to the increase in housing. This situation is linked to the deep-rooted feeling for property in a region where the small holding is traditional, in which different strategies from inheritance, marriage, and emigration, all lead to keeping or acquiring a property beginning with the first home.

14 The number of pensioners in Portugal rose from 861,700 in 1975 to 2,528,800 in 2001, while in 2013 the number of pensioners rose to 3,615,416. Specialists have analysed the reasons for this increase (cf. Carreira, 1996; Mendes, 2005; Gonçalves, 2007; Pordata, 2014).

A considerable part of this non-working population (old age pensioners or those receiving subsistence pensions), mainly in rural areas, are only partly retired from work because they continue to be occupied in arable or pastoral activity, or livestock, from which they earn an income supplement.

15 Between 1993 and 2003 social spending in Portugal increased, rising from 1,547 euros *per capita* to 3,192.2 euros, while the European average rose from 4,682.9 euros in 1993 to 6,880 euros in 2003.

16 Source: Ministério de Segurança Social e Trabalho, Instituto de Informática e Estatística de Solidariedade (IIES), European Social Statistics, Social Protection in Pinheiro (2007), Anuário Estatístico da Região Norte, 2013.

In 2001 public utility coverage in the North region for homes, such as electricity, drinking water supply, sewerage, and drainage services varies: electricity coverage is almost total, sewerage services cover 97.5%, and drinking water 95%, the use of a shower 92% and drains 98%. However, there are inter-regional disparities, and also within the Minho region there are major disparities between Baixo Minho and Alto Minho, and remote areas of Minho. There is almost 97% use of domestic appliances such as cooker, refrigerator, and television; between 50% and 80% use of washing machine, telephone, vacuum cleaner, room heaters, and car; between 50% and 20% of use of other appliances such as mobile phone, video camera, computer; and, lastly, below 20% for cable television and satellite television.

Culture and education

Cultura and education are important indicators for assessing the state of development. Contrasts remain in cultural terms. For example, the number of libraries per 100,000 in habitants in the different sub-regions of Minho is lower than the average for mainland Portugal (16.5/100,000): Minho-Lima 12, Cávado 9, Ave 8, per 100,000 inhabitants. In numbers of museums: while in Alentejo there are around 7/100,000 inhabitants and, in mainland Portugal, 3.1/100,000, in Minho-Lima there are around 2/100,000 and 2.3/100,000 in Cávado-Ave (INE, Anuários Estatísticos do Norte e Alentejo, 2013). In the NUTS III Minho-Lima there are 28 press publications with a print run of 766,164 copies, while in Cávado 55 papers ensure a print run of 8,948,965 copies, and in Ave the 36 periodical publications reach a total of 1,882,261 copies (INE, Anuário Estatístico do Norte, 2013).

Another important fact on living standards and quality of life is schooling. Firstly, the Portuguese education system has made several important changes over the past thirty years, proof of which are the many indicators on schooling, particularly in the two decades 1990-2011. Looking at the decade 1990-2011, as mentioned by Resende and Vieira (2003), a considerable recovery was made to bring schooling up to date, visible in, among other indicators: the fall in the illiteracy rate (from 11% to 9% and, in 2005, down to 7.5%); the reduction in the school drop-out rate of children between ages ten and fifteen (from 12.5% to 2.7%); the rise in the rate of pre-schooling in public and private schooling for children from three to five years of age (from 41.7% to 71.6%); and the increase in schooling rates at all levels of teaching. Despite this progress, today there are still weaknesses in Portuguese education when compared to that of the other Member States of the European Union. The problem of low schooling rates persists, bearing in mind the skill level of the Portuguese working population aged 25 to 64, and the same goes for the significant percentages of early school drop-out in the population on the age fringe of 18 to 24: 39.4% in Portugal against 15.9% in the EU.

Despite progress, Portugal has an illiteracy rate higher than other countries (9.2% in 2001 and 6.8% in 2011). Looking at education in regional terms, there were socio-educational differences and inequalities in Minho in 2001 and the illiteracy rate was high, Barcelos with a medium rate of 7.6%.¹⁷ By 2011, although the situation had improved compared to previous surveys (cf. Braga with 3.4% and Barcelos with 4.6%), there are rates of 9 and 10% in districts in the interior.

There are more pre-school teachers, an increase from 2,004 in 1995/96 to 5,500 in 2005/2006 (INE, Education Statistics *in* Magalhães, 2007). Despite this positive increase, distribution is irregular and supply inadequate, particularly the lack of infrastructure and qualified professionals; coverage is only 39.4% in

17 The district of Braga, although the rate has tended to fall over recent decades, had an average higher than the national average in 2001 and 2011. That is 10.6% and 6.5% respectively. For example, while rates in Celorico de Basto were 16.6%, Cabeceiras de Basto 16%, Terras de Bouro 15.6%, and Vieira do Minho 12.8%, other municipalities in the district of Braga had in 2001 illiteracy rates lower than the national average (9.2%), namely, in descending order, Vizela 7.9%, Barcelos 7.6%, Guimarães 7.4%, Esposende 7.3%, Vila Nova de Famalicão 6.7%, and Braga 5.8%. Regarding individuals who are either illiterate or know how to read and write but who did not achieve basic school level, the rate in the district of Braga was, in 2001, 14.5%; those who completed the first cycle accounted for 36.7% of the total; and those who completed the second cycle 17.6%; in the district of Braga 11.7% of the population achieved the third cycle.

the North region for public and private pre-schools. In cities such as Braga, Porto, and Viana do Castelo there is over-occupation, contrary to the under-occupation in other cities (Minho-Lima).

In relation to first cycle schooling, both nationally and regionally, between 1995-96 and 2002-03 there was a decrease in schools due to the lack of a minimum number of pupils, leading to fewer teachers in the North region, with the number falling from 14,640 in 1995/96 to 13,381 in 2005/2006 (Magalhães, 2007). This leads to school closures, understandable with the demographic decline in numbers, affecting above all the villages in the interior that are losing one of their central institutions.

Schools in the 2nd. and 3rd. cycles differ in terms of coverage and unequal support, and according to data supplied by the Regional Directorate for Education in the North (*Direcção Regional da Educação do Norte - DREN*), these rates are 28%, against 42% nationally. Only 12.1% of the population in the district of Braga completed secondary education: an average lower than the national average of 15.7% (cf. INE, Census 2001). Among wage-workers, more than 90% have reached a level equal to or below that of 9th. year,¹⁸ while nationally this level of schooling is around 77%, indicating a much lower level of schooling in this region (Ribeiro *et al*, 2000, p. 17; Silva & Cardoso, 2003, p. 208).¹⁹

Referring to either, secondary or higher education, despite the relative progress made between 1991-2001, schooling rates in the district of Braga are below national averages. Data on schooling in more central, urban, and more 'coastal' municipalities are somewhat more satisfactory than data on municipalities further into the interior and more remote from the main towns and cities of Minho. All data related to the district of Braga, as well as that related to the district of Viana do Castelo, demonstrate the relationship between the proximity of infrastructure, facilities, and human resources accessible and available with the possibility of communities to attend higher teaching levels. For example, while Porto and Braga, as districts, have a population in which 25.3% and 19.2% respectively have achieved higher education, districts such as Guimarães and Barcelos have significantly lower levels, with only 9.3% and 7.1% respectively (Pordata/INE, Census 2011).

Conclusion

This brief overview of society and the economy in regional terms and, particularly, in the municipality of Barcelos, shows that we are dealing with a semi-peripheral region and an economy of unequal growth that is increasingly vulnerable. Moreover, INE statistics and other sources and studies consulted suggest situations of social disparities with emphasis on the spatial factor which, associated with demographic dynamics, is a co-determining factor in social, educational, and cultural inequalities.

In fact several infrastructural, economic and social indicators account for the (semi) peripheral situation of the North of Portugal (specifically the sub-region located to the north of Porto and, very specifically, areas in the interior of Minho), as well as the relative disparities and different types of inequality in Minho itself and in the municipality of Barcelos, particularly an unequal territorial distribution of infrastructure, facilities, and human resources. This means that despite continuities between the (backward) rural space and the urban space, there are some socio-spatial inequalities and imbalances.

This situation can be neither understood nor explained without bearing in mind the respective historical conditioning factors particularly in economic, political, and cultural terms, exacerbated by the

18 According to more recent results and international comparisons, there is a sharp concentration of Portuguese nationals with lower levels of illiteracy (Benavente *et al.*, 1996; Gomes *et al.*, 2000).

19 In this field Portugal has the lowest level: 17% of pupils against an average in the OECD countries of 12%. However, the situation is more worrying when we consider the percentage of pupils that do not even achieve level 1 and have serious difficulties in using reading as an effective instrument for improving knowledge and skills in other areas. 10% of Portuguese pupils are in this situation, the average for the OECD countries being 6% (Ministério da Educação, 2002).

recent declines in agriculture and industry.²⁰ However, this decline is aggravated by a certain neoliberal oriented macroeconomic deregulation that benefits various national and international centres.

If in the medium term there is no substantial change to issues affecting society, this asymmetrical situation will only be corrected, and the relative, but persistent, negative trend reversed, by a combination of neoinstitutional and territorial-based proposals. In other words, there is a need, side by side of private investment, for a State intervention policy based on public investment. Also, there is a need for a strategy for regional and local mobilisation to promote endogenous resources and to diversify economic activities, improving and modernising agriculture and encouraging other activities in productive industries and services.

In the wake of Ribeiro (1984), Figueiredo (1985), and Silva and Cardoso (2003), you could say that the future of the region needs an institutional framework in which the regional powers could provide fundamental support for social, economic, and cultural development, which in turn will depend on the participation of communities in Minho and the northern region, within the context of the referred territorial-based strategy.

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20 The decline in agriculture (*desagravização*) is a process that reduces the dependence of the rural population on farming, while deindustrialisation (*desindustrialização*) involves the loss of the industrial sector's share in the overall production of the country or the region.

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Annex

Annex 1.
Number of pensioners per 100 inhabitants

	1993	1998	2003	2011
Portugal	22,9	24,4	24,3	28,2
North Region	20.9	21.4	22.2	26,8
Alto Trás-os-Montes	29.2	31,2	31,9	35.3
Ave	19.1	19.8	20,4	26.9
Cávado	19.4	19.5	19,6	23.2
Douro	26.4	26.5	28,6	31.5
Entre Douro e Vouga	20.3	20.3	21,5	26.7
Grande Porto	19.5	20.5	21,5	26.8
Minho-Lima	25.5	26.1	27,2	30.7
Tâmega	18.7	18.4	19,0	22.5

Sources: Ministério de Segurança Social e Trabalho, Instituto de Informática e Estatística de Solidariedade (IIES), (data prepared by Pinheiro 2007), Anuário Estatístico da Região Norte 2011.