

# Unequal and Dependent Development: the Minho region in the Northwest of Portugal\*

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## Abstract

Drawing on statistical data, this paper analyses how and why the Minho region (Braga and Viana do Castelo districts) came to hold its semi-peripheral position, not only in relation to central regions but to urban centres such as Lisbon and Porto. Subsequently, it presents a number of development models: neoliberal theories on growth and modernisation, the neo-institutional perspective, neo-Marxist versions of independence and centre-periphery relations, besides territorialism theory. Using the method of statistical analysis of socio-demographic indicators, a clear socioeconomic difference between social groups and sectors was verified. Nevertheless, despite upgrades in infrastructure and transport, Minho suffers from socioeconomic, educational and cultural inequities created by endogenous and exogenous factors such as the globalisation that is currently taking place.

## Keywords:

Territory, development, social inequities, globalisation, Minho, Portugal.

## Keywords plus:

Urban development, social inequality, globalization.

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# Desarrollo dependiente y desigual: la región Minho en el noroeste de Portugal

## Resumen

A partir de datos estadísticos los autores analizan el cómo y el porqué de la posición semiperiférica de la región Minho (distritos Braga y Viana do Castelo) no solo en relación con los países centrales sino con centros urbanos como Lisboa y Oporto. Subsecuentemente se exponen los modelos de desarrollo: la teoría neoliberal del crecimiento y la modernización, la perspectiva neoinstitucional, las versiones neomarxistas de la dependencia y de centro-periferia, y la teoría territorialista.

Tomando como método el análisis estadístico de los indicadores sociodemográficos los autores verifican una notable diferenciación socioeconómica entre grupos sociales y entre sectores. No obstante las mejoras en infraestructura y equipaje, Minho está permeada por desigualdades socioeconómicas, educativas y culturales, las cuales son coestructuradas por factores endógenos y exógenos así como por la globalización en curso.

## Palabras clave autor:

Territorio, desarrollo, desigualdades sociales, globalización, Minho, Portugal.

## Palabras clave descriptores:

Desarrollo urbano, desigualdad social, globalización.

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# Développement inégal et dépendant: La région de Minho au sud-est du Portugal.

## Resumé

À partir des données statistiques, les auteurs analysent le comment et le pourquoi de la position semi-périphérique de la région de Minho (les districts de Braga et de Viana do Castelo) non seulement par rapport aux pays centraux mais par rapport aux centres urbains comme Lisboa et Oporto. Par la suite, les modèles de développement sont exposés: la théorie néolibérale de la croissance et la modernisation, la perspective néo-institutionnelle, les versions néo-marxistes de la dépendance et de la périphérie et la théorie territorialiste. En prenant comme méthode l'analyse statistique des indicateurs socio-démographiques, les auteurs vérifient une notable différenciation socioéconomique entre les groupes sociaux et les secteurs. Malgré les améliorations de l'infrastructure et de l'équipement, Minho s'est enfoncé dans des inégalités socioéconomiques, éducatives et culturelles qui sont aussi structurées par des facteurs endogènes et exogènes ainsi que par la globalisation actuelle.

## Mots-clés auteur:

Territoire, développement, inégalités sociales, globalisation, Minho, Portugal.

## Mots-clés descripteur:

Développement urbain, l'inégalité sociale, mondialisation, Minho (Portugal).

## Introduction: the problem

Diverse economic and social indicators data express the northern Portugal (semi) periphery situation, namely in the subregions above Porto and, in particular, in the inland areas of Minho, as the gaps and diverse types of social and economic disparities exist within region. The pertinent issues that may arise will be, among others, the following: what is the place of the Minho region in relation to the average indicators of the country? How and why has the Minho region remained relatively peripheral not only towards core/central countries but also towards Lisbon and particularly towards the Porto metropolitan area?

Methodologically, the approach that seems more suited to 'dissect' the regional development, particularly the urban, is to articulate three analysis levels: socio-structural, organizational and interactive<sup>1</sup>. This does not mean that the different analytical levels must be understood as eclectic or random, but that their explanatory priority should be assessed from socio-structural, through the organizational, to the interactional. In order to understand and explain the place of Minho region in national context we use the statistical method focused on the Minho, a historical province of Portugal.

According to the division based on so-called regions-plane, the Minho correspond roughly to the sub-regions (NUT III) Minho-Lima, Cávado-Ave, totaling an area of 4711 km<sup>2</sup> (about 5% of national territory) spread over 24 counties with a total of 797 parishes. As *minifundio*<sup>2</sup> region, Minho includes two districts: Viana do Castelo and Braga, with high population density (223/km<sup>2</sup> in 2011): Viana with 246.296 inhabitants in 2011, an average of 111 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> and Braga with an average of 852.841, an average of 265 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (INE, 2011).

Presented with demographic data, this paper lies more in the sociology of development. Being the research's main issue the relation between territory and development, will be presented the main sociological approaches about development.

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1 These different levels of analysis have indeed been advocated by authors from various theoretical quarters since the neofunctionalist Luhman (1975) by critical authors as Bourdieu (1980), Giddens (1984) and Bader and Benschop (1988).

2 *Minifundio* means a ownership system of division of land in small/small pieces.

# 1. Territory and development: a review of main theoretical approaches

In the relation between territory and development, we must emphasize that the social and regional inequalities, namely in the modern urban-industrial societies, are co-structured by territorial and economic-political centralities. However, at the level of strategic interactions, the spaces (local communities, cities, regions, national territories) are not simply physical units completely conditioned by the socio-economic structure. These spaces provide several contexts of transaction between individual and collective social actors, in which it is possible to develop modes of coexistence, solidarity-opposition, inclusion-exclusion, integration-segregation.

Themes and topics such as 'development' and 'sustainable development' seem at first sight to generate a broad consensus, in which certain minimum targets (eg modernizing, overcome strangulations, seize exogenous and endogenous potentialities, respond to certain "challenges" including globalization) would be shared by all political actors (e.g. state and municipal institutions, political parties, trade unions and employers associations, local development associations). However there is not real convergence on explanatory models of unequal development, as in the diagnostics of social inequalities especially in urban context.

The neo-liberal theory of growth and modernization (cf. Rostow 1964, Hoselitz 1960) trusts blindly in the logic, in the laws of the market, and points out that the 'less developed' countries, regions and rural or urban communities should proceed to follow a development program spread and imported from countries and central regions. In turn, the neo-institutional theory (Myrdal 1974, Schiavo-Campo and Singer 1970), acknowledging the inequality gap between the regions, as well as the incapacities, impasses and short-circuits of neoliberal thought, advocates a soft, corrective and pragmatic intervention of the State in the economy in order to reduce some gaps and imbalances in the (under)development. Finally, dependency and centre-periphery theories (Frank 1961, Wallerstein 1990, Santos 1985) assume that the development of the central countries and regions is accomplished at the expense of the underdevelopment of the peripheral countries' and regions', and that the logic of the capitalist market necessarily leads to unequal development. The socialist

way presupposes a rupture with the capitalist system, and the subsequent economy planning, even if transiently articulated with other forms of economy.

Considering the perspectives outlined above, we assume, first, a rejection of the failed neoliberal theories of growth and modernization. Second, although we consider the neo-institutional theories as a critical step of the neoliberal assumptions, we will exercise a critical surveillance over them, in so far as they do not call into question the nature of the economy and the state itself. Finally, although we subscribe, in a general way, the assumptions of neo-marxist theories of dependency and the center-periphery, these evidence some insufficiencies, in a way that overstates the external determinations and underestimate the local and regional capacities in order to potentiate endogenous and exogenous resources. In this sense the approach centered on the territory and in the local-regional development is an interesting contribution. Summarizing, we assume a critical and plural approach, but taking as its starting point the theories of dependency and the center-periphery (Silva and Cardoso, 2005).

The impacts of industrialization, the penetration of new technologies and the regulatory and absorbent role of the State and, most recently, of other supranational entities (EU, ECB, IMF, WTO)<sup>3</sup> frame rural and/or urban configurations that must be examined in concrete.

The exchange relations between the country and the city, are, as a rule, of unequal nature in favor of the city or, more specifically, of the ruling classes present in the city, implying, if not (over)exploitation of salaried rural labor force, at least the formal submission of the peasant producers, whether via the market in setting prices, either by way of interest payments to moneylenders and banks or taxes to the State. As it has been theorized by Marx (1974) and Kautsky (1974), the capital and urban areas were growing at the expense of peasants and rural areas. The process of agricultural disintegration and destruction/absorption of small peasantry is neither linear nor uniform, given the specificity of the agricultural work (Servolin 1972). The historical process of depeasantisation in Portugal did not occur in the same way as in the English model of capital accumulation, and there have been various forms and degrees of relative autonomy, and resistance at this

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<sup>3</sup> European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO).

slow process rhythm, highlighted by Pinto (1985, p. 8iff), Almeida (1986) and Silva (1998), converging with the ‘hidden transcripts’ of Scott (1990).

After this brief theoretical review, we try to give an overview of the weak development of the region, featuring the Minho region in demographic, economic, social, educational and cultural terms.

## 2. The northern regional dynamics: some indicators

In the intertwining of the different views on regional and local development, particularly urban, there are often differences in the strategies and interests, emphasizing the difficult relations between the technical rationality in the name of efficiency, and political reasons motivated by electoral convenience, lobbies or pressure groups (landowners, construction enterprises and real estate speculators).

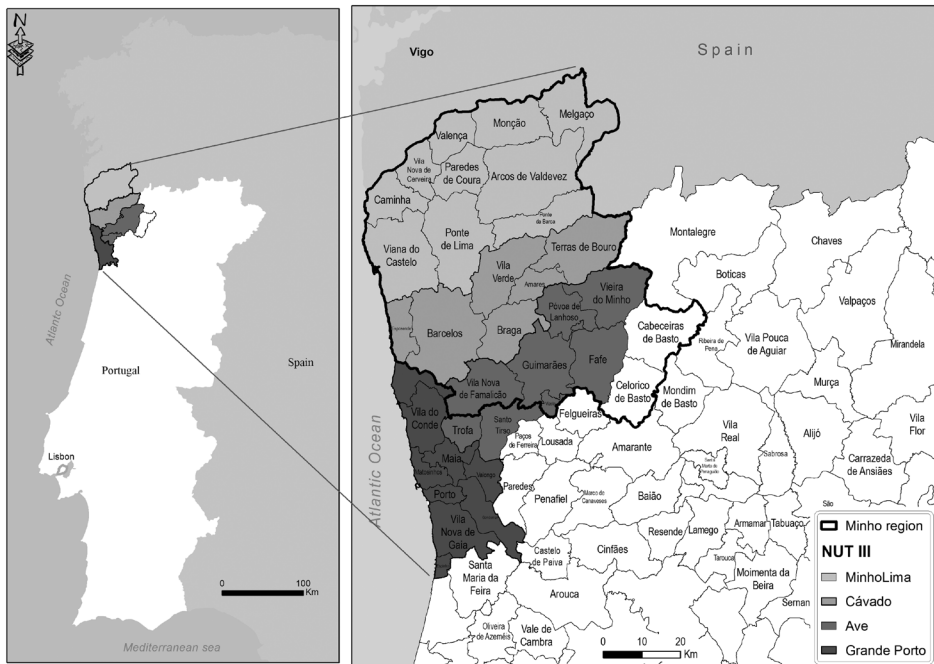


FIGURE 1. Case study frame

SOURCE: Portuguese Geographic Institute (IGP), Official Administrative Map of Portugal (CAOP), 2010.

Despite being given some data on the North region, we will focus mainly in the historical Minho region. This region is an historical province of Portugal which include nowadays Braga and Viana do Castelo districts (figure 1). As we shall see, several indicators highlights some improvements but show a weak and unequal development of the Minho region. In addition to a disparity with other regions/central cities like Lisbon and Porto, some inequalities can be found between the Minho urbanized, especially the coast, and the inland Minho.

As the present western modern societies are suffering a considerable demographic decline, also inland municipalities in Portugal, namely rural spaces, are facing a huge decrease of population and simultaneously an ageing effect, which replicates in Minho.

Comparing the situation in 2011 with the previous census of 2001, except Alentejo that register a population decline, there is an increase in resident population at 2%, namely due to the influx of African and Eastern Europe immigrants.

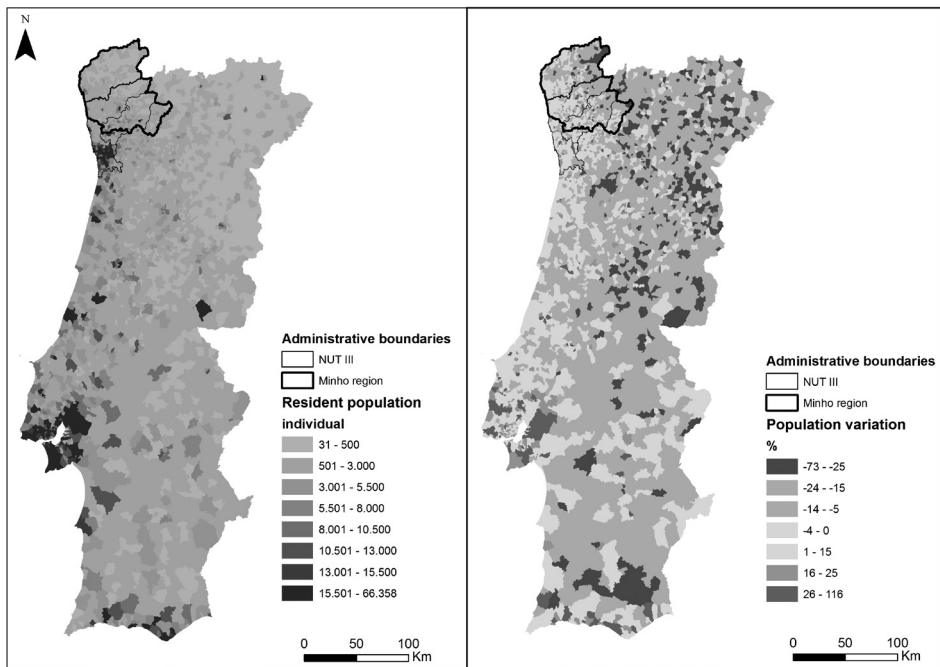


FIGURE 2. Resident population in mainland Portugal (2011) and Population variation (2001-2011), by place of residence

SOURCE: INE, Population and Housing Census, 2001 and 2011.

The demographic concentration occurs in the metropolitan areas of Porto and Lisbon. In the North Region, aside Great Porto NUT III, also some dynamic municipalities in Cavado-Ave disclose increasing (figure 2).

Looking to have a global view of data on birth rate and death rate, we verify a rate of effective increase, there is the following data (figure 3).

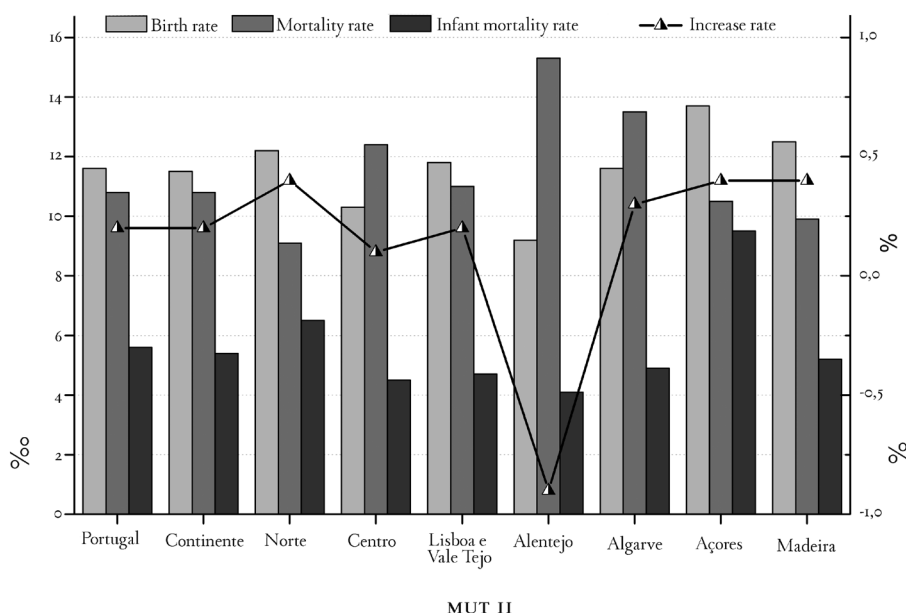


FIGURE 3. Main demographic indicators by NUT II, 2001

SOURCE: INE, Population and Housing Census, 2001.

Alentejo excluded, who knows even a drastic population decline, the North, Açores and Madeira are the regions with the highest rate of increase, higher birth rate and lower mortality rate. With regard to infant mortality in Portugal was a spectacular decrease from 55.5 ‰ in 1970 to 3.1 ‰ in 2011 (Pordata, 2012). Nowadays the North, Açores and Madeira show an infant mortality rate slightly higher than other regions, registering intraregional differences, as discussed below.

Concerning the average age of the first marriage, there is a rise in the rate from 26.6 years in 1970 to 31 in 2011, for men; and from 24.3 to 29,5 for women in the same period (INE, 1970; Pordata, 2011). Considering other indices denoting the



level of quality of life, we must stress that life expectancy at birth grew for men from 64 years in 1970 to 76,4 in 2010; and for women from 70,3 to 82,3 in the same period (INE, *Estatísticas de Óbitos*; Pordata). Regarding other indices namely of dependency and aging, the table shows us the respective rates (table 1).

TABLE 1. Main demographic indicators (Rate %)	1981	1991	2001
Rate of aging (65+years / 0-14 years)	44,9	68,1	102,2
Rate of total dependency (0-14 e 65+ years) / 15-64 years	58,6	50,6	47,8
Rate of dependency of young (0-14 / 15-64 years)	40,5	30,1	23,6
Rate of dependency of elderly (65+ years / 15-64 years)	18,2	20,5	24,2

Source: INE, Population Census, Pordata.

Portugal is an aging country that presents a similar trend like in European societies. From Table 1 it can be concluded that between 1981 and 2001 the rating of aging more than doubled. At the same time there has also been over the various population census a significant increase on dependency of the old people.

### 3. The Minho region: population dynamics and economic and social situation

Although there is still enough to research about the great region of north of Portugal, and in particular on the Minho, today there is already a considerable level of knowledge about this region that several studies by social scientists, coming from sociology, anthropology and economics<sup>4</sup>, have provided.

4 The research performed at the regional level is numerically significant. Although not comprehensive, the database of the Documentation Services of the University of Minho confirms it: from monographs, master and doctoral theses and papers in congresses and symposia, was scheduled about two hundred titles, some of them presented and published in foreign language. How tedious it would be his enumeration, we must highlight, among the most significant production, especially in the last two decades, some issues and problems related to European (semi)peripheral and border regions integration as Minho; the limited positive impact of integration European in the regional development (Fernandes 1994); regional planning, the process of regionalization and the relative regional homogeneity of Minho to the south of the river Douro (Figueiredo 1985), the economy and regional and local development (Ribeiro 1984, Ribeiro and Cruz 1997, Ribeiro *et al.* 2000), local and European Integration (Costa *et al.* 1999), interethnic relations (Silva *et al.* 2006). In the field of sociology and anthropology, there should

The Minho region (Northwest of Portugal) underwent, in the last decades, deep changes, which transformed not only its physical, demographical and social-economic morphology, but also its cultural and political configuration. This was caused by the development of productive forces, and from the point of view of economic and social agents, by a considerable dynamism thanks to the confluence of different factors of urban attraction, in terms of industrial activities and services and their labor and student flows in major urban centers in the valley of the Minho-Lima (Viana do Castelo and Ponte de Lima) and especially the Ave/Cávado (Famalicão, Guimarães, Barcelos and mainly Braga).

### 3.1. Demographic dynamics

This region, which in the sixties and seventies was marked by strong population losses due to intense rural exodus and especially mass migrations to Europe (France and Germany) - 32% in Braga and Viana 33% -, is recovered in the Porto (with 370 000 inhabitants or 12% between 1970 and 1980) and Braga, with new additions: 16% between 1971 and 1981, 16% between 1991 and 2001 and 11% between 2001 and 2011. In the Minho region, the city of Braga has experienced a strong renewal: 36% of residents are younger than 24 years, 54% between 25 and 65 years and only 10% over 65 years.

According to data obtained in the 2011 Census, the North Region of Portugal has 3,689,713 inhabitants. Around 35% is located in the Great Porto NUT III, while 32% lives in the Nut III Cavado and Ave, of which around 50% live in the municipalities where the four main cities are situated (Famalicão, Guimarães, Barcelos and Braga) (figure 4).

The Minho population amounts to 1,166,858 inhabitants, distributed as follows: Minho-Lima - 244,947; Cávado - 410,608 and Ave - 511,303. The mentioned four counties, especially the quad city area, are the most dynamic areas in Minho, extending to the town of Viana do Castelo. These five cities absorb more than 60% of the total population of those five counties. From demographic point of view, the contrasts are, however, intense: as in Cávado and Ave there is a high population density and a considerable population growth, in the Minho-Lima (NUT III) it is quite the opposite, letting the extreme periphery of this sub-region in the national context.

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also be noted that other relevant studies, although with little impact on policy makers, have been important steps towards the knowledge of rural society in Minho: Geraldès (1986), Cabral (1989), Brettel (1991), A. Silva (1994), Silva (1998), Wall (1998). Cf. Silva and Ribeiro (2000).

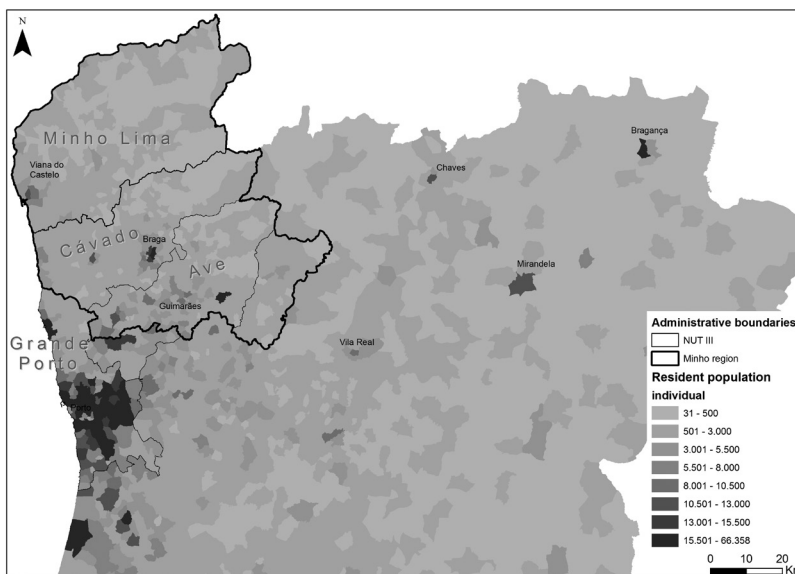


FIGURE 4. Resident population in North Region of Portugal by place of residence, 2011

SOURCE: INE, Population and Housing Census, 2011.

Birth rates and mortality confirm these different dynamics of population. While the Minho-Lima's birth rate is 9.2 ‰ and the death rate of 11.3 ‰, causing a negative natural balance (-2.1‰), in Cávado and Ave the results are inverse: birth rate of 13.7 ‰ and 13.1 ‰ and mortality rate of 7.7 ‰ and 7.4 ‰, respectively. The natural balance is largely positive, with 6 ‰ and 5.7 ‰, showing a considerable demographic vitality, together with a binding capacity of young people through a dynamic socio-economic attractive in terms of employment opportunities, whose volume - in the national average would be 14% - would have increased by 33% in the gap trough between 1991 and 1997 (Ribeiro *et al.* 2000: 10). These data will certainly be justified by the dominant economic structure, which emphasizes a very weak secondary sector in Minho-Lima, compared to other sub-regions. Furthermore, unlike cities like Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, which are losing population in its urban centers, turning out to the outskirts a notable portion of the population, the urban quadrilateral above has seen increases in urban population, verifying, in particular from the 70 decade (cf. Varão 1974:192), increases in the order of 13%, reinforcing the urban density of Minho.

Another important demographic aspect is the relative distribution of population by sex, predominantly female. The ratio of the resident population in the district of Braga is 404 380 men to 426 986 women, that's 48.6% for men by 51.4% women.

## 3.2 A growing economy, but dependent and unequal

Although there are a few improvements, mainly in road transport (discongestion via the highway), the transport structures remain deficient. On the other hand, the construction of buildings appears somewhat disordered and unplanned, that is becoming more difficult to plan a network of rail and road transport in order to serve the people, not only the most isolated but even the urban residents in the quad Famalicão, Guimarães, Braga and Barcelos. The railway that until about 2000 was very slow (50Km/hour) has met yet some major improvements such as Intercity (*Intercidades*) and Alfa-trains from Guimarães-Braga-Porto-Lisbon and vice-versa, but the railway to Viana do Castelo and the connection to Galiza (Spain) is too slow and lacking.

As for the distribution of the active population, in 1950 the Minho occupied 52.4% of the population in the primary sector, 29% in secondary and 18.6% in the tertiary sector; in 1981 the primary sector has fallen to 26% and the secondary had risen to 49% and tertiary to 25%.<sup>5</sup> In 1998, the commerce and service sector is dominant, representing about 61% of the active population, followed by industry and construction 33% and remaining 6% for agriculture and fisheries. Many of the region's rural dwellers combine new activities with part-time or weekend agricultural activity, turning "plural-activity" into a dominant regime (cf. Almeida 1986, Silva 1998).

North Porto and in the Minho region, while cities basically 'litoralized', which in addition retain about 80% of the population, remain polarizing and attractive spaces for inducing some economic growth, other inland cities and towns suffer a gradual desertification or, at least, regression by rural areas in demographic and economic loss (with 40% of urban centers with dimensions 2000-5000 inhabitants). It is this traditional inequality within the Minho, which leads Ribeiro (1984) to make a typology of three sub-regions: a) a subregion composed of the counties of Famalicão, Braga, Guimarães, Fafe, Viana do Castelo, Esposende and Barcelos, who has a demographic dynamism and more industrial features, but only mainly from the eighties, there has been an intense process of urbanization;

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<sup>5</sup> In terms of industrial population in the district of Braga, the municipalities of Guimarães, Famalicão, Braga and Barcelos absorbed, according to Ribeiro (1984:33-34), 90% of the industrial workforce in 1971 and 79% in 1981, showing a discrepant duality regarding the inland counties. And, as for the district of Viana do Castelo, there is a similar trend: 65% to Viana do Castelo and Ponte de Lima in 1971 and 59% in 1981.

b) the transition subregion consists of Póvoa de Lanhoso, Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte do Lima, Caminha, with still agricultural features but with some already demographic gains and economic initiative in the secondary and tertiary sectors; and c) the innermost subregion, even when ‘urbanized’ with some infrastructure and using economic and intervention instruments after the ‘Carnations Revolution’ of April 25, 1974, remain rural but desertified, comprised by the counties of Celorico and Cabeceiras de Basto, Vieira do Minho, Terras do Bouro, Ponte da Barca, Arcos de Valdevez, Paredes de Coura, Vila Nova de Cerveira, Valença, Monção and Melgaço.

In terms of production structure, the tertiary sector, retail trade, restaurants and hotels have in 1997 an average volume of employment less than the mainland (17% *versus* 25.7%). For other services of social or personal, Minho-Lima had about 8%, Cávado 6.7% and Ave 5% of total employment, thus below the national average: 12.7%. The same applies for banking and insurance (up 0.5%), transport, storage and communications, except the shipbuilding/haven of Viana do Castelo, has a low volume of employment (1.7%). However, the sector that absorbs most employment is the set of manufacturing (textiles, clothing and footwear, plastics and metal products, food and beverages) which, although it suffered a slight fall of 7.7% from 1991 to 1997, still holds rates above the national average (39%): about 78% in the Ave, Cávado 61%, 50% in the Minho-Lima, averages that were already present in the seventies and eighties. The lack of industrial diversification in both districts, particularly in Viana do Castelo, along with other problems (low productivity, lack of creativity and “pulverization”), makes the industrial economy of the region somewhat weak and mainly manufactured. According to several experts, namely Ribeiro (1984), and Silva and Ribeiro (2000), this accumulation model, which, as M. V. Cabral (1979) states, had an economic reason due to the salary differences and diffuse industrialization that benefited industrialists and complemented the meager incomes of the poorest country peasants/laborers, is today almost depleted, as is shown by studies carried out by Ferreira (1993), M. Silva (2000) and Silva (1998).

In fact the enterprises with less than 10 employers represents 95,7% at Minho-Lima, 93,9% at Cávado and 92,7% at Ave NUT. The industry in the region, particularly textile and clothing industries, which together with the shoe industry already in 1960 made up 22% of Portuguese exports, accounted for 32% in 1983 (Ribeiro 1984:65), the same percentage as today. For example, in the sub-region

of Cávado, it reaches 57%, while the percentage for continental Portugal is 47%, and with a sales sector in the international market averaging 36%, it is above the national average (27%). However, in relation to other indicators, the consumption of electricity for industrial use is about 73.5% of average on the mainland (Ribeiro *et al.* 2000).

Another sector to highlight is the construction and public works with about 13.5%, a rate slightly higher than the national average in total employment (9.9%). There is less economic diversification in this region than elsewhere in the country, especially in the NUT Cávado. The three sectors (manufacturing, trade, construction and public works) cover 91%, while in this county does not exceed 75% (Ribeiro *et al.* 2000:19-25).

If we want to know the number of enterprises in the region, they do not exceed the 108 000 and certainly fall short not only of the Great Lisbon (337 300), the Great Porto (142 978), but also other regions: the southern Peninsula of Setúbal, the Algarve and Baixo Vouga, but certainly north to Galicia (Spain), which adds about 201 263 enterprises (INE, 2009; EURES, 2010). The business activities in different sectors is predominantly characterized by the presence of middle, small and micro family enterprises, with only 0.1% of enterprises with more than two hundred workers (figure 5).

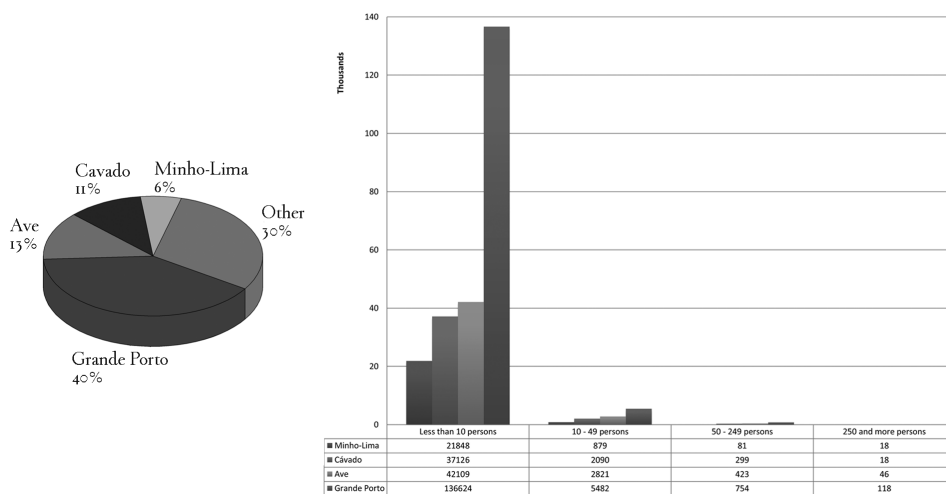


FIGURE 5. North Region enterprises (A) by head office NUT III and according to employment size class (B), 2008  
SOURCE: INE, Statistical Yearbook of North Region 2009, Lisbon.

These data suggests a model for development of a (semi) peripheral region, in which productivity is, in relation to other sectors and across the continent, although slightly lower, but that the cost of labor is very intensive and cheap and still well below the actual rate of productivity, in terms not only national but also regional<sup>6</sup>.

With regard to purchasing power in 2007, according to figure 6 we can see a difference between the inland and the Minho coast. For example, within the same NUT III, eg Minho-Lima, indicators intervals ranging from 47-55 and 109-164. Comparing these values with those of 2000, we found that the purchasing power decreased in all NUT III.

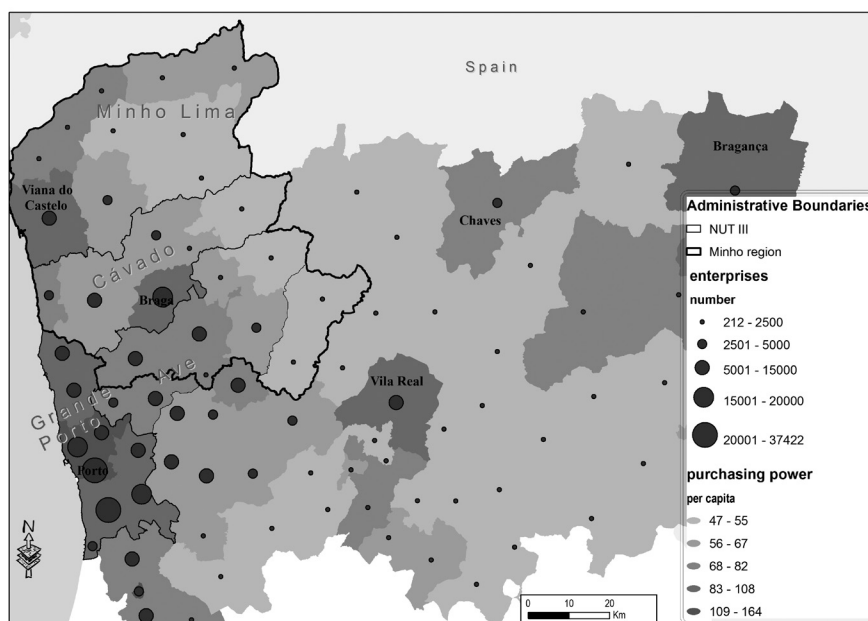


FIGURE 6. *Per capita* purchasing power and enterprises number by Geographic localization, 2007

SOURCE: INE, Statistical Yearbook of North Region, 2007.

6 Indeed, according to the wages, Ribeiro *et al.* (2000), studying the situation of the two sub-regions - the Cávado-Ave and Minho-Lima - conclude that the average wage in 1997 was around 99.000 escudos (495 euros) at current prices, which, being a value very low, equivalent 72% of the national average. GDP per capita on average in continental Portugal in 1995 stood at 1.680.000 escudos (8400 euros/year) in Ave was around 1.400.000 escudos (7000 euros/year) in Cávado 1.200.000 escudos (6 000 euros/year) and in the Minho-Lima 1.000.000 escudos (5000 euros/year). The index of purchasing power in this region is below the national average (index 100): 61% in the Minho-Lima, 67% in Ave, 74% in Cávado, and trough and the very northern region, including the Porto, it is up 86%.

### 3.3 A territory permeated by social, educational and cultural inequalities

As in other countries and regions, in the Minho region there is also an unequal distribution of infrastructure, equipment and human resources. This means that, despite the continuities between the rural and urban and in the rural territory, there are still some inequalities and socio-spatial imbalances. It reveals that the spatial factor, coupled with demographic dynamics, is a co-structuring factor of socioeconomic, educational and cultural inequalities.

The unemployed population in North region was at 297,5 thousand people while the unemployment rate reached at 15.1%, up 2.3% from the same quarter of 2011. This increase was mainly due to the social groups or categories looking for a new job. This region had the higher percentage of unemployed people seeking a job for less than 12 months (INE, 2012).

In the social indicators, the region experienced small improvements in infrastructure and equipments since the sixties but not sufficient for the needs. As regards health, there is a marked regional inequality in access to health goods between the major centers - Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, which concentrate most of the facilities and (para)medical staff, especially the more highly specialized personnel - and the other cities and towns of the country. This logic of concentration and territorial inequality at national and regional scale reproduces still on a more striking way between the average or even small town and villages, especially those furthest from hospitals and health centers<sup>7</sup>. Access to health is therefore not only dependent on the socio-economic conditions of different classes or social groups, but also the uneven geographical distribution of infrastructure, equipment and health personnel, which places once more people living in areas more remote and geographically and socially isolated.

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7 As such, Braga, has 2.6 hospitals per 100,000 population - in practice has three private hospitals and one public hospital - 6.58 beds per 1,000 inhabitants with an occupancy of 76.23%, 1.86 health centers per 100,000 population, 6.2 extensions of health, 3.72 medical clinics and 2.1 pharmacies and 3.77 doctors, per 1000 inhabitants - above the national average of 3 doctors per 1000 inhabitants: 0.3 for Vila Verde, 0.3 for Póvoa de Lanhoso, 0.3 for Celorico de Basto, 0.5 for Terras de Bouro, 0.6 for Cabeceiras de Basto, 0.6 for Amares, 0.7 for Vieira do Minho, 0.7 for Barcelos, 0.8 for Fafe, 1.2 for Vila Nova de Famalicão, 1.3 for Guimarães, 1.4 for Esposende, averages these very distant compared with the national average - three doctors for 1000 inhabitants (Governo Civil de Braga, 2001).



In terms of infant mortality, in 1997 the values were, respectively, for the Minho-Lima, for Cávado and the Ave, 9.2 ‰, 8.4 ‰ and 7.1 ‰, rates above the national average of 5 ‰. In 2011 the values for the same NUTS III are respectively 1.7 ‰, 2.6 ‰ and 4.1 ‰, which represents a remarkable reduction. However, if we compare Viana county (1.4 ‰) with peripheral inland counties, there are considerable differences: Arcos de Valdevez with 7.2 ‰, 10.2 ‰ Valença and Ponte da Barca 11%, showing that the primary health care and social economic situation of many families in these counties are precarious (INE, Pordata, 1997 and 2011).

Another aspect that highlights the disparities within the Minho refers to indicators of social security in 1997: 25.9% of pensioners in Minho-Lima, higher than the national average (23.8%), exceeding 30% in some counties (Ponte da Barca with 33.8%, Paredes de Coura 32% and Vila Nova de Cerveira 30.7%). On the contrary, Cávado and Ave have values below the national average (respectively 19.6% and 19.7%). But here too the asymmetries are strong: in the municipalities of Terras de Bouro and Vila Verde (Cávado) and Vieira do Minho (Ave) pensioners are in the range of 25-30% of the total population<sup>8</sup>.

Considering the social facilities, namely nurseries and kindergartens, they have the following coverage rates: Cávado 18, Ave 16 and Minho-Lima with 14 nurseries and kindergarten per 100.000 population - means the same or slightly lower than the national average of 18/100.000 inhabitants; and, on nursing homes, Minho-Lima and Cávado with 7, Ave with 5 per 100.000, while the national level is around 8 per 100.000 inhabitants, many created them for profit.

Furthermore, it should be the uneven geographical distribution of social facilities run by public and private institutions. For example, in the district of Braga, 302 private institutions of social solidarity, 65% are concentrated in four major cities: Braga, Guimarães, Barcelos and Famalicão.

For indexes to pensioners by NUT III, Figure 7 shows us its unequal distribution, in which the inland has a higher number of pensioners than the coast:

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8 Taking into account the amount in absolute terms, according to Ribeiro *et al.* (2000), every pensioner was receiving on average in 1997, approximately, 380.000escudos/year (1, 900 euros/year), while the national average stood at 432.000 escudos (2.160 euros/year), which were not unfamiliar to the low salaries in the region.

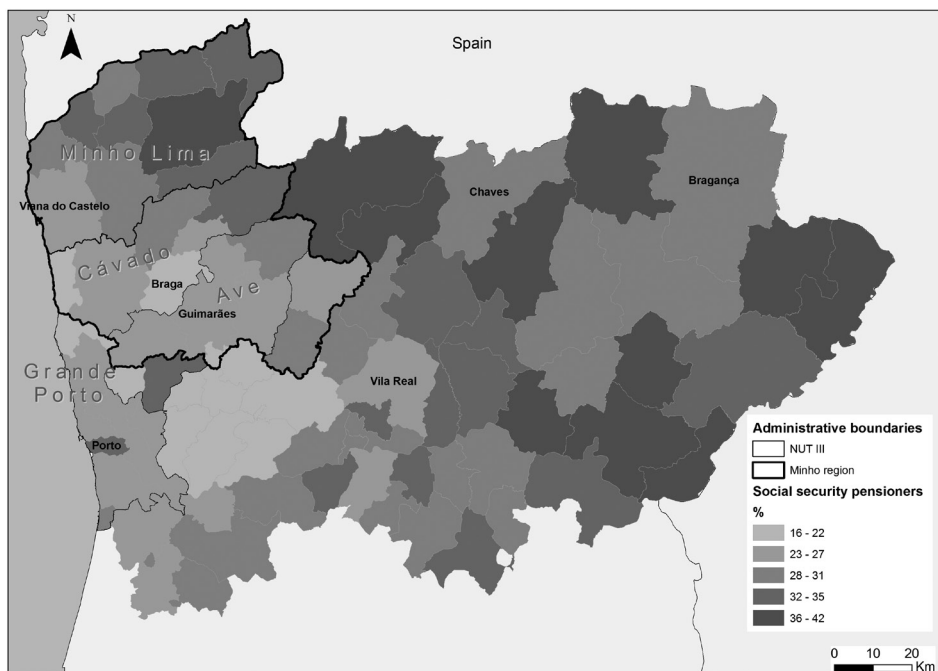


FIGURE 7. Social Security pensioners (% in North region per NUT III), 2009

SOURCE: INE, Statistical Yearbook of North Region 2009.

At the cultural level, the contrasts remain. For example, the number of libraries per 100.000 inhabitants in the various subregions of Minho is below the average of the Continent (16.5/100.000): Minho-Lima with 12, Cávado with 9, Ave with 8 per 100.000 inhabitants. Or, in the number of museums: in the Alentejo around 7/100.000 inhabitants and, mainland Portugal, the 3/100.000, in the Minho the 2/100.000 (Ribeiro *et al.* 2000, pp. 63-64)<sup>9</sup>.

Regarding the level of education, the district of Braga had an average illiteracy rate of 10.6% with internal discrepancies by county from 5.8% in Braga to 16.6% in Celorico de Basto. Similarly, the district of Viana do Castelo knows averages ranging from 7.1% in Viana do Castelo to 20.3% in Ponte da Barca. As for secondary education, only 12.1% of the population of the district of Braga completed his secondary education and, at the level of the district of Viana do

9 Regarding the sports equipment, if we take as an indicator the municipal swimming pools, the region also holds a position lower than the average of the continent (3/100.000 inhabitants), being up by 2.5 in the NUT Minho-Lima, 1.7 in the Cávado subregion and 1 in Ave for every 100.000 inhabitants. And as for sports pavilions, the average on the mainland was in 1994 25/100.000 inhabitants, while in the Minho-Lima was 20/100.000 and in Cávado and Ave 19/100.000 (INE, 1994).

Castelo, 11.7%, both districts with lower averages than the national average of 15.7% (see INE Census 2001)<sup>10</sup>.

We need a reversal of priorities in public investment not only in infrastructure and in the social sectors as in the productive sectors, since, in the program of PIDDAC<sup>11</sup>, the North, while retaining over 37% of its population has not a corresponding share in the distribution of financial resources of the PIDDAC of European funds including the successive Community Support Programs. In the path of Ribeiro (1984), it may be said that for the future of the region is a necessary institutional framework in which the regionalization must be a key lever for economic development, which will depend, in turn, on a strategy of exploitation of local resources in conjunction with a strong participation of the populations in a framework of socio-economic continuity of Braga and Viana do Castelo.

## Conclusion

Regarding the evaluation of the type, stage and indicators of weak development in the context of northern Portugal, and in particular of the Minho region, we find, besides a disparity with other regions and central cities like Lisbon and Porto, a relative discrepancy between a urbanized coastal Minho and the inland Minho.

In this paper we seek to highlight some data on certain demographic, social and economic indicators of the North of Portugal, particularly the region of Minho. Beside the contexts of advanced techno-economic and scientific terms, there remain situations of demographic devitalization, economic backwardness and of social exclusion. Moreover, the Minho region knows within it, along with some demographic processes of rejuvenation in some urban centers equipped, aging situations and insulation in the interior areas devoid of infrastructure and social facilities. This situation cannot be understood and explained without taking into account their historical conditioning especially in economic and political-cultural terms.

Although some further strenuous efforts by various regional, national and even supranational entities, the Minho region met some advances but requires a

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<sup>10</sup> Among the salaried workers, over 90% of these were at level or below the 9th grade, while this type of education, in national terms, stood at 77%, indicating a level of schooling lower in this region (Ribeiro *et al* 2000: 17).

<sup>11</sup> Central Administration Public Investments Program

concerted regional strategy with those instances in order to reduce the differentials in development and persisting forms of inequality. These are still produced and reproduced by the actions of multinationals, from various organizations including government and other collective and private social actors. This action is, in turn, structured by the (pre)existing conditions by exploiting of economic resources and unequal distribution of power of disposal over them, also on the scientific and cultural resources.

Evaluated the collected data and the comments made, we like to point out the geo-social duality within the region. The levels of uneven development in space which is the Minho, with a Minho-Lima area, which includes the counties further north in the region, in a situation of double periphery, both in relation to the more dynamic areas of the region and better equipped coast area. Moreover, the situation of the region as a whole, when evaluated against the national context, is clearly peripheral, despite the investment, some unrepayable, realized by national and European institutions. However, that brings us, again, for present theory of the center-periphery: the inequalities in the development resulting from endogenous and exogenous factors, namely from the world system and world-economy. By articulation of the center-periphery theory with the territory based model it is necessary to promote development and fight against regional disparities. This means, in our view, to think about developing a perspective of effective reduction of economical and social inequalities, both between different geographical areas or within them, having as their horizon thinking and make an alternative society.

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