



*2nd International Workshop on Lifestyle Migration and Residential Tourism
Madrid: March 23-25, 2011*

Contested Spatialities of Lifestyle Migration Public policies, local democracy and global market forces

João Sardinha

Universida Aberta, Lisboa

E-Mail: [jmssardinha\[at\]gmail.es](mailto:jmssardinha[at]gmail.es)

ABSTRACT

Lifestyle Migrants in Central Portugal: Strategies of Settlement and Socialisation

Certain areas in Portugal, above all those located in coastal regions – namely the Algarve and the Costa do Sol/Estoril on the outskirts of Lisbon – have for decades been a destination for migrants originating from Northern and Central European countries (above all from Great Britain, Germany, Holland and Sweden) and North America, having come in search of an improved leisured lifestyle, a better climate, as well as a less-expensive standard of living. In more recent years, however, an increase in lifestyle migration to non-coastal Portuguese regions has equally been witnessed, with many of these migrants searching out isolated/unpopulated areas, inexpensive real-estate opportunities, as well as ecological lifestyle environments to settle down in. This has particularly been the case with the geographical area of my analysis: that of Central Portugal.

In Portugal's in-land regions, known for its rural life and often its disparities, de-population has become a common trend, with many individuals and families either moving to the bigger cities in Portugal, or emigrating to other countries. One such consequence of these mobility patterns has been the abandonment of lands and properties, and even entire villages, which, in turn, has led to property price devaluation in local real-estate markets. This same price devaluation has equally become a primary point of attraction for many newcomers originating from countries considered economically more prosperous than that of Portugal (e.g. Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, etc.). Replacing the outward migration has, on one hand, been that of ex-pats and retirement migrants searching out a less-expensive, more tranquil lifestyle in the sun; on the other, third-country counter culture dropouts and ecologists who have come looking to escape certain societal norms and in search of a more sustainable lifestyle.

That said, the research I here propose looks at migration trends, settlement patterns and socialisation strategies adopted by these incoming migrants in two particular sub-regions of Central Portugal: *Pinhal Interior Norte* (Interior Woodlands North) and *Medio Tejo* (Medium Tagus). Through in-depth interviews, participant observation as well as

2nd International Workshop on Lifestyle Migration and Residential Tourism

*Centre of Human and Social Sciences, Spanish National Research Council
Department of Political Science & International Relations, Autonomous University of Madrid*



through internet blogs and cyber forum debate analysis, I look at the impact these new arrivals have upon local communities and landscapes; how they perceive their own integration and acceptance, and formulate relations with local populations (inter-community connectedness); and thirdly, how they construct and maintain intra-community relation and support patterns, including social, cultural and information network building (physical and virtual).

The empirical findings to be presented are based on preliminary results from on-going research with lifestyle migrants – primarily of British and Dutch origin, but also including German and American nationals, among others – residing in the two sub-regions of Central Portugal.

2nd International Workshop on Lifestyle Migration and Residential Tourism

*Centre of Human and Social Sciences, Spanish National Research Council
Department of Political Science & International Relations, Autonomous University of Madrid*