

## THE EXPANSION OF SECONDARY HOUSING IN PORTUGAL

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### RESUMO

A residência secundária tem aumentado substancialmente em Portugal, desde 1981, data a partir da qual elas começam a ser contabilizadas no Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação. Contudo, vários autores referem que podemos distinguir três fases na expansão destas habitações. A primeira inclui um longo período até 1960, com um número reduzido de habitações, localizadas, sobretudo em áreas rurais. A segunda abrange as décadas de 60 a 80, com um aumento progressivo do seu número, com um crescente predomínio das localizadas em áreas balneares. Por fim, uma última fase desde a década de 80 até à atualidade, em que o seu número aumenta significativamente, quer nas áreas balneares, quer nas áreas rurais.

Neste artigo, começaremos por discutir os conceitos de residência secundária, segunda residência e alojamento de uso sazonal e com ocupante ausente, salientando, ainda, algumas limitações que, a informação estatística não permite descortinarem para um conhecimento mais profundo das características e expansão deste fenómeno.

Depois procuraremos analisar a evolução das segundas residências com base na informação dos Recenseamentos, destacando os fatores que estão na sua origem, tipologias e a sua distribuição territorial.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** segunda residência, lazer, férias, praia, Portugal

### ABSTRACT

Secondary housing has substantially increased in Portugal since 1981, the date from which it began to be accounted for in the General Population and Housing Census. However, several authors report that we can distinguish three stages in the expansion of these dwellings, the first one being a long period until 1960, with a reduced number of secondary houses, located mainly in rural areas; the second spans the decades from 1960 to 1980, with a gradual increase in number, and a predominance of secondary houses located near the beach areas and, finally, a last stage since the 1980s until today, with their number increasing significantly, both in beach and rural areas.

In this article, we will begin by discussing the concepts of secondary residence, second home, seasonal accommodation and with an absent occupant, stressing also some

limitations made difficult to detect in statistical information, so that we can have a broader understanding of the features and expansion of this phenomenon.

Then we will seek to analyze the evolution of second homes on the basis of Census information, highlighting the factors at their root, types and territorial distribution.

**KEYWORDS:** second home, leisure, vacation, beach, Portugal

## INTRODUCTION

Secondary housing has more than doubled in Portugal in the last few years. Second homes have gradually gained ground at the beach and in the countryside, bringing about significant changes in terms of ownership and the territories.

At European level, Portugal is one of the countries with the highest number of secondary housing. In fact, the proportion of secondary housing across the European Union varies considerably, most of which are found in Southern Europe countries due to the great demand and attraction of these holiday destinations. In countries such as Greece, Italy, France, Portugal and Spain, between 10 and 30% of the housing stock consists of secondary housing (Allen, J. *et al* 2004; Casado-Diaz, 2004; Leal, 2006). Although there is a high concentration of second homes in the south of Europe, there is also a high proportion of secondary housing in the north of Europe. In recent years, the number of second homes has increased in many countries, although due to the greater supply compared to demand this tends to slow down, especially given the current crisis facing the real estate sector (RICS, 2012).

The Greek and Roman elites owned, since classical times, an additional house away from the “urban areas”, exclusively for leisure, sometimes for the purpose of thermal spas. In the Middle Ages, kings built palaces for seasonal use, away from the courts, in the mountains, near rivers or lakes, where they engaged in traditional sports, hunting and fishing, serving as well as a place to flee from epidemics that periodically affected the cities. This phenomenon increased during the Renaissance.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for a secondary housing expanded among the urban bourgeoisie as a means to escape from the intense heat and pollution caused by the industrialization of the city. With the dissemination of information about sea bathing and thermal spas, other habits set in as well as other places of interest. As the interest in beaches was heightened, the coastal areas were sought more intensely. The development of

the railway and the improvement of roads made it easier to access new sites, and led the more affluent urban population to seek more remote locations to build a second home.

It was however after the Second World War that the phenomenon of the secondary housing expanded greatly, thanks to the technological development of transports and telecommunications, the gradual establishment of holiday periods for workers and the increase in income. In the 1960s, the phenomenon intensified and expanded to a wider range of population.

People living in the cities are motivated by the offer of facilities, commerce and varied services, but due to the pollution, heavy traffic and stress of city life, urban populations also feed the demand for second homes located in calmer locations like, beach, rural and mountain.

In this article, we will seek to address the expansion of second homes in Portugal and, to this end, we will begin by explaining the concept, then we will refer to its main expansion phases and spatial distribution based on the available statistical data.

It should be noted that this article is a brief study of the second home phenomenon, based primarily on the writings of some authors who have dedicated their research to this topic; we therefore consider it a summary.

## **SECOND HOMES**

The secondary housing unit is defined as follows: “occupied family housing unit used only periodically, and in which no one has permanent residence” (United Nations, 2006), a concept used by the National Institute of Statistics from the 2001 Census.

Although secondary housing is the most used terminology, the dwellings no longer have a purely seasonal and temporary occupancy associated to resting, and have come to serve as a complement to the main residence, coming to be used more frequently and in regular work periods, for example, at weekends, hence the choice of calling it a second home.

Since 1960, secondary housing is referred to in statistics in Spain and France. The *Población y Viviendas* Census defines this concept as: “*viviendas que se construyen en lugares de veraneo o de temporada y que normalmente sólo se utilizan en ese tiempo. (...) vivienda destinada al ocio, localizada en un espacio recreacional y ocupada únicamente una parte del año*” [dwellings built in resort or seasonal areas and normally used only in that period. (...) dwelling intended for leisure, located in a recreational area and occupied only in a period of the year”]. (Barbosa, 2005, p.4).

In 1962, the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* (INSEE) considered second homes as: “dwellings which users occupy for short periods of the year, including, in this category, holiday homes and furnished apartments for tourism, including hotels” (Barbosa, 2005, p.4).

In Portugal the seasonal housing and with an absent occupant started to be accounted for since 1981 in the General Population and Housing Census, and the expression secondary housing is not used. While the former refer to the occupied family housing unit used periodically, and in which no one has habitual residence, the latter refer to the occupied family housing units, owned by individuals who no longer use it as their permanent residence and are absent for long periods of time, for example, the emigrants. Following the 2001 Census, the concept of seasonal or secondary use began to be used, including in this category the concept of absent occupant.

We nevertheless need to be aware that this indicator should be considered with some caution, because in addition to including housing for investment or own use it also includes the houses of emigrants, thus making the figures shown in the last censuses higher than the actual number of second homes. Note also that these second homes are of various types not identified in the statistics, but the knowledge of which is extremely important to manage and plan the territory.

Sector or regional planning policies have attached increasing importance to the second home phenomenon, especially with regard to the promotion of tourism. The National Strategic Plan for Tourism regards residential tourism as one of the ten most innovative products.

## **PHASES OF EXPANSION AND DRIVING FORCES**

The phenomenon of secondary housing was spread in the 1930s. Countries such as Sweden and the United States, are pioneers in the study of secondary housing, and in France, the number of second homes increased considerably post-World War II, as well as in some Eastern Europe countries (Coppock, 1977, p. 23).

In Portugal, the emergence and expansion of secondary housing is somewhat late compared to the rest of Europe, limited for many years to some areas and social groups, and have only grown and spread considerably from the 1980s.

Indeed, second homes were few until the 1960s, located mainly in the countryside (Cravidão, 1989). At the same time, beach tourism spread and settlements of second homes appeared in coastal areas. More recent studies have also focused on metropolitan areas (Caldeira, 1995; Cavaco, 2006; Barbosa, 2007), others studies, reporting increasing cases of

more dispersed settlements, with houses found in semi-abandoned villages in the mountain areas of Lousã and Algarve, or even in the Alentejo, which are being restored in order to be used as second homes, in natural and national parks and even in the centre of historical towns with significant heritage importance.

We can therefore identify three phases of development of the second home phenomenon in Portugal:

- The first one spans a long period until 1960, when their number was reduced and limited to certain social classes;
- The second phase covers the 1960s and 1980s, with an increase in the number of these houses and a wider range of social classes, but most notably of emigrants, and
- Lastly, from the 1980s until today, with a significant increase in number which, in some parishes along the coast and in rural areas even exceeds the number of primary homes and covers a wider range of social classes and profiles of occupants, both national and foreign.

The reasons for the spread of secondary housing are more or less directly related to the phenomenon of tourism, the increasing mobility, the less working time, the more time for leisure, the establishment of paid leave, the gradual urbanization of the population, lack of green areas in the city, cramped permanent houses and increased standard of living. Note also the strong ties with the places of origin, especially the rural ones, of the first and the second generation of domestic and external migrants who spend their weekends and/or holidays in their former places of residence, or build their houses while they are still living in other places.

The increasing attraction of our landscape and standards of living, reflected in the considerable increase in the number of foreigners, mostly retired, who spend a good part of the year in Portugal are other reasons mentioned by authors (Allen, J. *et al*, 2004; Cavaco, 2006).

The growing importance of the mass media and the power of intervention of publicity will gradually control the space and leisure of citizens. Publicity brings in, not only concepts of leisure but it also diversifies the possibilities of use of the tourism sites associated with new real estate products. The number of second homes in tourist facilities, such as resorts and tourist villages, is increasing as a result of the tourist home or residential accommodation.

Secondary houses are of various architectural and construction types, legal status of property and type of residents. Their number is difficult to estimate since this type of information is difficult to detect in the statistics available.

Therefore, these features can only be assessed based on local surveys; another useful source are websites advertising the sale or rental of second homes, whether by private individuals or by real estate companies, providing us with an idea of the type of house and location.

The first proposal presented in Portugal on the types of secondary houses was done by Fernanda Cravidão (Cravidão, 1989, p. 23), who identified six categories:

- Legal and illegal houses (the latter almost invariably hampered land use plans);
- Coastal and inland houses;
- Weekend houses;
- Holiday homes;
- Old family properties (related to the rural exodus);
- Real estate investment and rental houses.

Overall, we can perceive different types of houses taking into account: (1) the tourism nature of houses, purchased or rented for that purpose, and others that had a different frequency of use and later were transformed into secondary houses, corresponding to old family homes, restored or not (fig.1); (2) proximity to the main residence, with distinct weekend, holiday and mixed homes; (3) the single-family or multi-family type (which is gaining ground due to the high land costs, especially in areas where tourism is more intense) (fig.2); (4) new or restored houses; (5) in closed condominiums and *resorts* (fig.3), under leases, own house or shared (*time-share*) or for rental.



Fig. 1 - Secondary houses, Penafiel and Vieira do Minho (photographs by the author)



Source: [http://www.iha.pt/Alojamentos-turisticos/Portugal/Algarve/Quarteira/Apartamento/Torre-Algarve\\_8123\\_1.htm](http://www.iha.pt/Alojamentos-turisticos/Portugal/Algarve/Quarteira/Apartamento/Torre-Algarve_8123_1.htm)

Fig. 2 - Apartments in Quarteira, Algarve

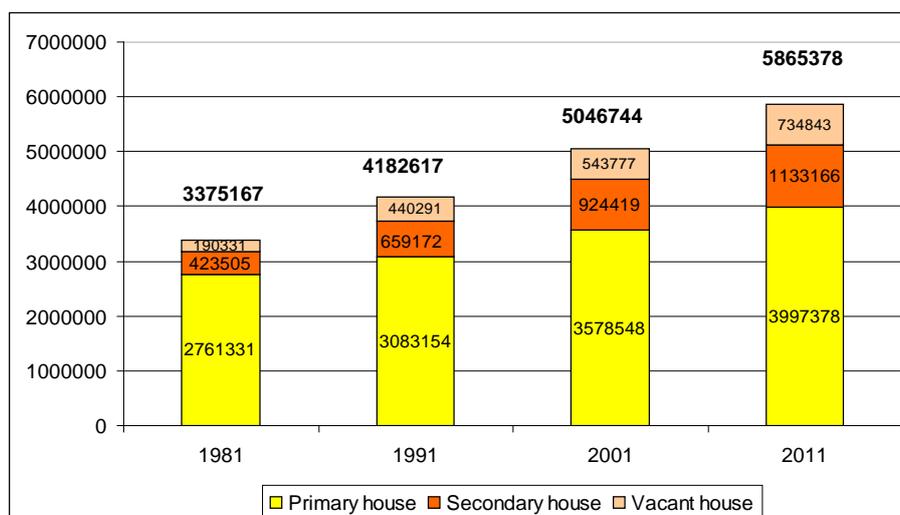


Source: [http://portugalfotografiaaerea.blogspot.pt/2009\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://portugalfotografiaaerea.blogspot.pt/2009_05_01_archive.html)

Fig. 3 - Quinta do Lago Resort, Algarve

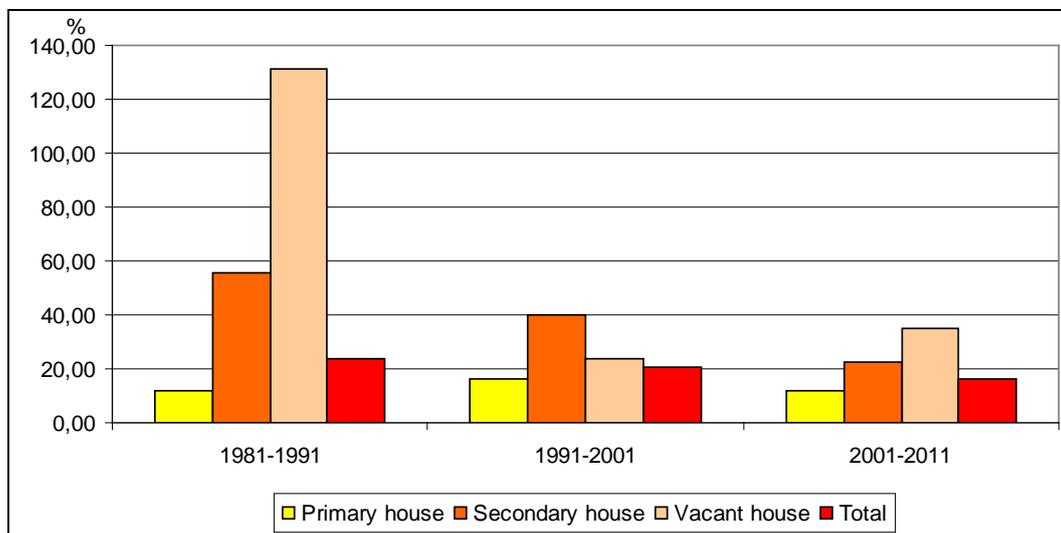
## EVOLUTION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SECONDARY HOUSING

Secondary housing increased from 12.5% (in 1981) to 19.3% (in 2011) of the total housing stock. Most dwellings in 2011 are primary houses, 68.2%. Secondary houses and vacant houses represent 19.3% and 12.5%, respectively, corresponding to 1133166 and 734 846 housing units (fig. 4). Compared to the last decade, these results reflect a very significant increase in the number of vacant dwellings (+35.1%), in secondary houses (+22.6%) and also in primary houses (+11.7%) (fig. 5).



Source: INE, Population and Housing Census

Fig. 4.- Evolution of housing stock by use in Portugal



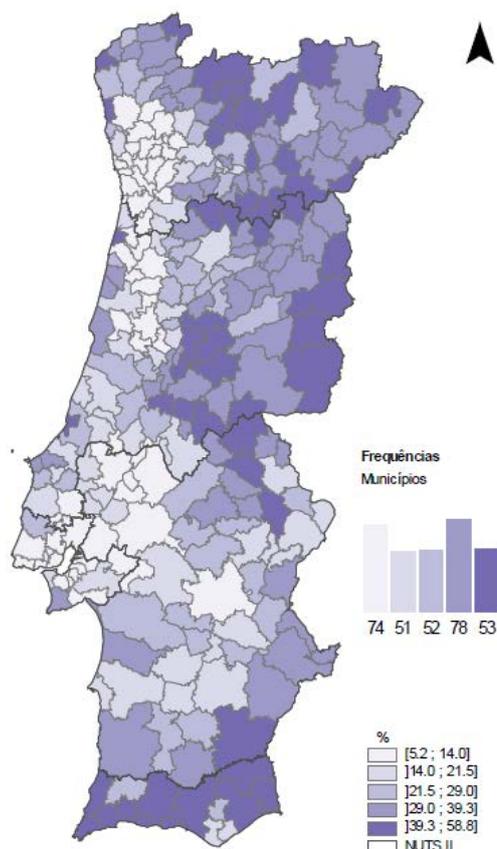
Source: INE, Population and Housing Census

Fig. 5 - Variation of housing stock by use in Portugal

The importance of primary home has gradually diminished (less 2.7% from 2001 to 2011) compared to a joint increase of secondary and vacant homes.

In regional terms, secondary houses prevail in the Algarve, with about 39.4% of the total number of dwellings, followed by the centre of Portugal, with 24.4%. The Lisbon area has the lowest percentage, 11.5%.

As for territorial distribution, note that the largest concentrations of secondary houses are found along the coast, and some councils in the Algarve have a percentage greater than 40%. However, some rural inland municipalities, depopulated and with low densities, for example, Mértola, Monforte, Almeida, Penamacor, Sabugal, Pampilhosa da Serra, and some municipalities located in the perimeter of Serra da Estrela, Gerês and Douro region, areas with attractive natural and cultural landscapes, some of which are natural parks, show significant numbers of secondary houses (fig.6).



Source: INE, 2011 Census – Provisional results, p. 38

Fig. 6. Percentage of secondary houses in the total number of houses units by council in 2011

## FINAL COMMENTS

Second homes in Portugal, as in other Southern European countries, have increased significantly, helping to expand the housing stock. We can list three phases of development of the second home phenomenon in Portugal:

- The first one spans a long period until 1960, when their number was reduced and limited to certain social classes;
- The second phase covers the 1960s to 1980s, with an increase in the number of these houses and a wider range of social classes, but most notably of emigrants; and,
- Lastly, from the 1980s until today, with a significant increase in number which, in some parishes along the coast and in rural areas even exceeds the number of habitual residences and covers a wider range of social classes and profiles of occupants, both national and foreign.

The expansion of second homes marked practically the entire national territory, yet the spatial distribution of different types of buildings intended for second homes is unequal. Thus, second homes in older and single-family buildings are more frequent in unpopulated rural areas, whereas second homes in recent buildings represent an important part of the total number of secondary homes in peri-urban areas, as well as in beach resorts where they are often found in multi-storey buildings or in private condominiums or resorts, occupied by the domestic and foreign elites.

To some extent, it can be said that “the owners of second homes in Portugal have paradoxically become either creators of landscapes for elites or guardians of rural landscapes” (Roca *et al* 2009, p.18).

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