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# The police community on the move: hierarchy and management in the daily lives of Portuguese police officers

In this article, I argue that in order to maintain some organisational uniformity the Portuguese police institution must ensure a high level of individual mobility – that is, a professional community *on the move* all over the country. Based on in-depth fieldwork in Portuguese police stations, I treat police bureaucracy not only as an institution with fixed boundaries but also, and simultaneously, as a unit continuously sustained by broader environments and the officers' own domestic rationales.

**Key words** police bureaucracy, police careers, mobility, time-space dynamics

## Introduction

Policing is all about movement, circulation, car patrols, entering and heading out into different encounters and urban scenarios, street action followed by pauses, or detectives energetically searching for clues. There are many forms of movement inscribed into daily police work. In this article, I am interested in a different dimension of movement. I aim to explain how mobility is conceived as a central feature of national urban police force management. The Portuguese *Polícia de Segurança Pública* (hereafter referred to as PSP) displays what may be termed a national professional community, i.e. a kind of differentiated internal social unity composed by its officers.<sup>1</sup> At the core of this article is a reflection on the notion of institution (see Durão and Lopes in this issue), because the police force is not only a state-bureaucracy but is also an entity continuously sustained by broader environments and the domestic rationales of the officers themselves, which render the organisation a complete social representation of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 When I use the term officer in this article, I am referring to constables and above (also the members who do not engage in regular patrol services).
- 2 I should highlight that the term bureaucracy is deployed in the sense of a public administrative institution as a certain methodology for the government of cities and citizens, within the framework of which state employees, organised for such purposes, acquire broad and discretionary scope for the interpretation, application and management of policing norms. A wide-reaching discussion of the different sociological and political facets of the 'bureaucracy' concept may be found in Albrow (1970) and in a work that captures the emotional aspects of the theme by Herzfeld (1992).

This article also offers a detailed ethnographic view of the implications of mobility for police officers' 'social careers' (Hannerz 1983: 270), expanding the idea of professional paths to include other dimensions of the life of individuals. Police bureaucracy can impact on and be reciprocally affected by the way police officers individually and collectively trace and manage their professional, family, spatial and organisational trajectories. My approach, influenced by the work of Laurent Thévenot, calls attention to the connections between the bureaucracy and officers' 'domestic' interests and oriented actions. As Thévenot states, it is crucial to take 'seriously into account the political and moral orientations of the agents because they play a central role in the dynamics of coordination' (2001: 420). The complex system concept may be applied to define wider levels of perception, where many sociological and anthropological approaches actually thrive (Thévenot 2001; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Latour 2005; Law 1994; Thrift 1999; Urry 2005; Ardener and Moore 2007). My argument is that in order to maintain some organisational uniformity the police institution must ensure a high level of individual mobility – a professional community *on the move* – this flexibility explains part of the persistence of the professional community over time. I begin by describing how police officers perceive themselves and act as migrants before moving on to explore the relationship between that dynamic and the hierarchical design of police careers (horizontal vs vertical paths). Consequently, as we shall see, various coordinated managerial arrangements have to be made and officially negotiated for officers to balance their working and domestic lives, both often separated in space and time.

This article is based on an ethnographic study of Lisbon's police stations involving participation in operational routines over the course of 12 months between 2004 and 2005 (culminating in a PhD thesis). I interviewed more than 100 officers engaged in a broad range of professional duties and in different internal security roles. Since 2004, I have also maintained a long and detailed field diary, a methodological procedure with epistemological consequences common to social anthropology (Werner and Schoepfle 1987: 273). Recently, for some months over 2010 and 2011, I have returned to the field, in different police stations, generally in urban areas of the country. Moreover, my interpretations have been discussed with the officers on several occasions. Since I am responsible for collaborative research projects within the police force, I have been able to initiate connections with all types of police personnel. As I have been invited to give lectures in social sciences to postgraduate police cadets, I have also had the opportunity to move across the institution, and participate in meetings and celebrations, which gives me a certain authority and readability but also presented many challenges such as the risk of personal exposure (see Cefkin 2009; Lopes and Durão in this issue). Over years of fieldwork, I decided to take at face value the importance that many officers attributed to their work–life balance. More than questions about risks or crime, formal careers or local planning and policing tactics, what occupied the talk-time of most of them was the difficulty they experienced in organising their personal lives and establishing a professional, family (domestic) and urban work–life balance. Many anticipated transfer to distant police stations and, as a consequence, they had no fixed residence in Lisbon.<sup>3</sup>

3 It is important to say that there are no officially available data about the residence or even the regional origins of police officers in Portugal, nor is there information about the regional or unit by unit distribution of human resources (cf. Balanço Social 2008). I base my analysis on field participant observation, interviews and a local survey in a police division in Lisbon (covering five police stations)

## Police officers as migrants

The PSP is a national institution that demands a huge centralisation of policies and management in accordance with a secular policing model. While in some countries police organisational structures have been subject to frequent reform, in Portugal the model has remained all but unaltered since the end of the 19th century (see Gomes et al. 2001; Monet 2006). This is the case across the states of southern Europe including Portugal, Spain, France and Italy (L'Heuillet 2004; Monjardet 1996).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, PSP is based on a widespread and decentralised operational system manifest in its small operational units deployed throughout the country's main cities, a total of 197 'generic police stations' (*esquadras de polícia*) – also referred to as neighbourhood or territorial stations – with no more than 80 police officers in the biggest stations in 2010. Over the last 10 years, other more specialised units (given the institutional emphasis on crime- and riot-oriented policing) have attained a higher organisational profile within this police force.<sup>5</sup> Thus there is a permanent tension between highly localised policing plans and the national uniformity of plans, designed by regional and national commands and carried out in accordance with all sorts of national stipulations, such as regulatory norms, service orders, modifications to laws in effect, as well as others.

Nevertheless, we must take note of the importance of context in police work. The city is, to a large extent, composed of the personal relationships that we establish with it; 'the trajectory through the urban environment is simultaneously about knowing and discovering' (Roncayolo 2003: 62). While that may hold for any city dweller, it represents an important tool for the work of any police officer. His or her performance depends on acquired urban knowledge and familiarisation with the 'environment' (see Durão and Lopes in this issue). Such perceptions are individually acquired and conveyed; in other words, they are 'private' and not 'institutional'. However, while from the bureaucracy perspective they may be summarised as 'practical' and not 'modern' collective and formal shared knowledge, those apparently pre-modern action orientations are essential for local policing performances, such as, for instance, establishing different policing routes and developing variable interactive reasoning with different citizens (see Durão 2008a, 2008b, 2010). Moreover, whenever a police officer is transferred from one unit to another all contextual skills must be re-learned, the organisational environment must again be socialised, the urban space and the relational

with 300 officers where a large majority considered themselves to be 'dislocated from home' (see also Durão 2008a).

- 4 This model has a dualist organisational structure in relation to the larger police bodies: a police force with military status to cover the rural areas (GNR) and another civilian force for the urban areas (PSP). Furthermore, this is highly centralised in the national capital, hence the police forces answer independently to the central authorities. This differs from what is termed the 'national model', predominant in the north of Europe (with a single police structure), and the 'decentralised model' characteristic of Anglo-Saxon countries (whether Anglo-Dutch or American-Germanic). These main organisational models nevertheless result in different styles of policing even if, nowadays, they are tending to converge.
- 5 There are also 57 criminal investigation police station, 53 transit police stations, and 44 rapid and riot intervention police stations. Notice that the term 'generic police station' was itself recently put forward in order to contrast with the creation of other station types, units with specialised competences, less 'preventive' than the former. The PSP is made up of approximately 21,500 police officers distributed by rank: constables – 84.5%; intermediate chiefs – 12%, and higher rank officers and managers – 3.5% (Balanço Social 2008).

networks produced at work must be re-established – a process that takes up the time and energy of all participants. Transfers are frequently experienced and identified by local commanders as losses since they represent losing not only known officers, and any eventual affective ties, but most of all the experience and the contextualised non-transferable knowledge carried by the respective officer.

The PSP recruits new officers from all over the country. However, one rule fits all: the vast majority of recruits will have to spend many years in units where they are most needed, namely in metropolitan Lisbon. Over the past two decades the PSP has developed coterminous with the urbanisation process in Portugal, which has led to the enormous expansion of the capital and other nearby cities – Sintra, Loures, Odivelas, Amadora, Almada, Setúbal. Economic growth and increasing population densities in coastal urban regions demanded more police officers and, correspondingly, there was a hollowing out of police stations in small towns. Thus, police men and women are not born or resident in the metropolitan areas where they work. As many usually say, they have two residences: one ‘effective’ (with the family, far from Lisbon) and the other ‘temporary’ (at work, in Lisbon). They spend lots of hours on the road because of these two living sites and, for the majority, this represents running two lives with fractured identities (for more detailed ethnography see Durão 2008a, chapters 6 and 7).

Retired police officers spoke to me about the period through to the 1960s in which officers from all over the nation took up residences along with their families either in Lisbon or in its suburbs, renting rooms in apartments or, when wealthier, renting their own apartments. Later in life, some would return to their ‘home region’ (*terrinha*). Thus, police officers participated in the intense rural exodus and internal migrations – intensifying between 1960 and 1974 (Ferrão 1996) – that were then demographically and geographically transforming the country. We may say the police institution – or, indeed, the Portuguese civil service as a whole – served as a motor for spatial as well as social mobility. Portugal began to feel the impact of important modernisation processes in the late 1980s, such as motorway transportation and communication technologies, and police officers were able to maintain their residence far from Lisbon and participate in the mobility system. According to Urry (2007), since the late 1970s this system has involved persons constantly circulating on their individual journeys but also circulating through interdependent systems that involve work, professional paths, families and others in addition to mass media, computers and software. For instance, for many policemen today, marriages to women with their own jobs and careers back in their home region meant that they often opted not to move the entire family to Lisbon and instead continue their long-distance commuting.

Internal migration and immigration, as well as urbanisation, are key features in the complex and changing landscapes encountered by police officers. Since the 1980s demographic expansion in the main metropolitan areas of the country started to be fed by flows of international migrants (cf. Rosa and Vieira 2003: 99–100). Despite the changing urban landscape, reflections of this change inside the police institution continue to be derisory. One example of that is the PSP’s reluctance to incorporate into its rank and file police officers with distinct ethnic backgrounds, people with a significant presence in Portugal (coming from Africa, Asia, Brazil and East European countries). Furthermore, the institution itself is still hung up on the idea of having to recruit and manage a professional community of Portuguese citizens on the move.

## On horizontal and vertical paths

The mobility of PSP officers may be approached across several levels. There is horizontal mobility, between stations (officers can ask for unit transfers twice every year) and there is significant circulation and turnover between service units (from police stations to special units or vice versa, for example). The most crucial expression of this type of mobility is the so-called 'final transfer' (*transferência final*) that so many police officers long for. This means getting a police post in a unit closer to their original place of residence and generally far from Lisbon. The anticipation of that expected vacancy involves officers in detailed arithmetic, counting the years remaining (sometimes five, sometimes ten or fifteen) until the move. The number of years of waiting for this transfer depends on the number of new recruits and the frequency of recruitments, the number of retirements, police unit vacancies throughout the country, as well as administrative priorities. And if one's target police station is in a remote and small town, few vacancies may appear there. Thus, one of the most frequently consulted documents, emanating from the top of the hierarchy and applying to the PSP on a national scale, is the so-called police station 'transfer list' (*lista de transferências*). This list is displayed near every station attendance desk, which means it is available to all at any time. In the list, all officers can identify their exact service position, a regular process managed by the administrative department, the human resources cabinet located in the National PSP Directorate.

The trajectory of the police officer named Mendes is a good illustration of this sort of movement. A few weeks after my arrival at a police station, I made contact with this officer who was about to leave. He had received the notification he had been awaiting for over 7 years: he was finally going to be transferred to a station in Oporto, the only vacant destination nearer to his home, the city of Braga, where he had a sick wife and a little daughter who was looking forward to having him with them permanently. He was so happy that he had decided to pay for lunch for his colleagues, chiefs and commander. I was also invited. During lunch, everybody was talking about the issue. The commander, an internal migrant from the Azores, was downbeat saying, 'You are lucky. I'm still waiting. I go to the National Directorate every week to check up on my situation, to find out about my own transfer'. This commander had trained as a Sub-Commissioner in Lisbon, where he was temporarily working. Despite having to wait for the transfer, it only took 1 year for his return home, a dynamic related to his upward mobility.

The movement resulting from career progression, vertical mobility, is effectively another component of the system. From the late 1980s onward, police elites were reformed and the careers for higher ranks – commissioners, intendents and superintendents (see Table 1) – were invested in by the then ongoing organisational reform process and prioritised by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The aim was to produce a totally 'civilian' institution with the necessary human resources to replace the previous military elites. In practice, this meant that a majority of higher ranking police officers have never patrolled the streets. They begin their career at a very early age at a Police Academic Institute (named ISCPPI, in Lisbon) set up in the late 1980s but for a very limited number (20–40 members are annually recruited for the degree course). Young cadets spend five intense years studying for a Diploma in Higher Policing Studies (now a Master's Degree).

Table 1: PSP's police ranks in 2010

Rank	Categories
Higher rank (Oficial de Polícia)	Chief Superintendent (Superintendente-Chefe) Superintendent (Superintendente) Intendent (Intendente) Sub-intendent (Subintendente) Commissioner (Comissário) Sub-Commissioner (Subcomissário)
Police chief (Chefe de Polícia)	Chief First Class (Chefe Principal) Chief (Chefe)
Constable (Agente de Polícia)	Constable First Class (Agente Principal) Constable (Agente)

Constables' careers are shaped by a totally different background. Not so early in age when they begin, they receive 6–9 months of training in large courses with 1,000 recruits at a lower ranking and larger academy, *Escola Prática de Polícia*, located an hour away from Lisbon. The majority will never rise above the level of Constable First Class (see Table 1). Some do apply for a position as Police Chief (the intermediate rank, see Table 1), when vacancies open, taking a course (generally with no more than 500 people). However, only a very insignificant percentage of constables and chiefs ever rise to become higher ranking officers and only when they successfully pass the hard physical and psychological tests and have spent the requisite 5 years training with younger 'civilian' cadets.

A certain solidarity among 'street cops' and feelings of solidarity against the 'management cops' emerges from the process of internal social differentiation described above. In a classic monograph, Reuss-Ianni (1983) wrote about a similar process in the New York Police Department. Two cultures confront each other in the Department:

a street cop culture of the good old days, working class in origin and temperament, whose members see themselves as career cops; opposed to this is a management cop culture, more middle class, whose members' education and mobility have made them eligible for jobs outside policing, which makes them less dependent on, and less loyal to, the street cop culture. (1983: 121)

In part, what Reuss-Ianni perceived at that time were the beginnings of a more general tendency towards a process of progressively de-qualifying street work (with its lower status) and up-grading the management style in accordance with the new public management philosophies that emerged during the 1980s (cf. Hughes 2003). What I see in the PSP is something more complex and historically implemented than a culturally emergent contrast. The fact underlined here is that for officers horizontal and upward mobility are perceived as heading in opposite directions. Even in horizontal mobility – as institutional opportunities are almost integrally located in Lisbon's metropolitan command and the central administration structures – the more officers seek out the final transfer, the more difficult it is for them to progress in their occupational careers. This explains why I have encountered a collective of constables and chiefs particularly worried about the management of their daily lives while also expressing the sensation

of being stuck – unable to progress and not allowed to progress in their occupational careers.

Higher ranking officers also circulate regularly and widely through units and commands. However, the ability to take their families with them and the benefits deriving from a better employment position leads this circulation to be perceived differently by them (when compared with that of constables and chiefs). It is enough to say that usually for a superior ranking officer – like the commander from the previous example – vertical and horizontal mobility do meet up: they are after all ‘doing a career’, as many say. Higher ranking officers move geographically as a consequence of a promotion. Geographical mobility here functions as professional compensation.

In any case, for constables and chiefs the sentence is passed: the majority will spend hours travelling across the country between their place of work and their place of residence while waiting years for the final transfer. The change will take them from so-called ‘transitory police stations’ (*esquadras de passagem*) located in metropolitan Lisbon to ‘terminal or fixed stations’ (*esquadras terminais*) located all over the countryside and especially in small towns. Within PSP, Lisbon is considered as ‘the school for policing’. No one doubts that along with the transfer to remote areas and stations, officers will barely experience such problematic and tense occurrences along with the heightened working routines of Lisbon’s stations and surroundings – with all its symbolic and political resonances. However, what they actually mean is much more than that: passing through Lisbon’s stations is a required step for officers in their occupational trajectory through the institution, and a trajectory that for many will surely not end there.

It is also important to state that, probably due to a Portuguese political history of long-term dictatorship (1926–1974) and a certain feeling that the state and officers are ‘indifferent’ in relation to the people they serve (cf. Herzfeld 1992), the social status of patrol work remains ambiguous outside and also inside the Portuguese police organisation. It is not uncommon to see this kind of job devalued even by the police elites when compared with other more ‘modern’ special units, even if socially there is widespread demand for more police on the streets. Nevertheless, frustratingly, patrol work is the only opportunity for most officers to gain access to mobility opportunities or have that much desired final transfer approved. In some ways, ‘street work’ is the means by which individual police men and women gain a sense of freedom and control over their paths inside the bureaucracy. Maybe national modern bureaucratic orders enacted by higher officials – who have gained the power to symbolically represent the police organisation – are fulfilled but not internalised by the rank and file who seem to continue to trail behind what they consider pre-modern ways of administering their professional routine activities. Nevertheless, as far as mobility is concerned, other anthropological variations arise, as I analyse below.

## **Mobility, ‘relative’ class, age and gender**

The geographical mobility of police officers has a direct correlation with the fixity of careers. In other words, officer spatial mobility is the inevitable PSP cost for a hierarchical and classist model to the extent of even being nurtured by it. The bridge between the three branches, considered different career paths, is not just symbolic but

an extensive socialising process. Even today, this intense segmentation inherited from the military persists, even though the police force almost entirely 'civilianised' their staff over past years. We may take a notorious example. Recently, I did fieldwork in a brand new precinct in a city near Oporto. To my surprise (or perhaps not), I found that inside the building there were separate toilets for regular police officers, chiefs and higher ranks, duplicated by gender standard differentiations. In a period of financial crisis, a reduction in material resources and the rationalisation of means, alterations made to the same surviving institutional features of the urban police have proven insufficient. Precisely because these distinctions share little relationship with the concept of working practice efficiency, they actually tend to intensify the interpersonal tensions always present in workplaces such as police stations. It is a commonplace comment across the force that police constables with some degree of seniority are able to perform exactly the same technical tasks as more senior officers inside stations. This is not only a rhetorical possibility but an observable fact in police station routines. Until recently and prior to the most widespread organisational reforms carried out at the end of the 20th century, the station's commander was a role occupied by a chief and not by a higher-ranking officer.

My point here is that the fixity of formal careers seems to accelerate the geographical mobility of officers. Patrol officers move in space because they cannot otherwise professionally move. Contrary to the precedent established for higher ranking officers, mobility does not function as a professional compensation but rather as *the* compensation. Nevertheless, the question is neither as simple nor schematic as it seems. We can grasp and learn from the field more about the complex correlation between social class and geographical mobility. I dare to call this a *middle-classifying* process of officers, meaning a variable geometry for middle- and working-class police officers. Constables perceive mobility from Lisbon stations to others near their home town as a means to implement personal and social projects not necessarily motivated by professional interests. We may affirm that the personal status of officers also takes on geographical variations. As the anthropologist Gilberto Velho argues, even while constrained by socio-historical processes, individuals always find creative ways to enhance their own personal projects by decoding what he calls the 'field of possibilities' (1994: 28). In our case, space does in fact represent an opportunity. When dislocated in Lisbon or other big cities, the status of officers is diluted. In more remote inland cities, however, they can aspire to a status they would never otherwise experience back in Lisbon. In the north of the country, in a city police station in the Vale do Ave region, for example, from where the local textile industries have relocated resulting in massive layoffs over the last decade, officers consider themselves wealthier. Most people in contact with the police, their 'public', as they say, only take home the minimum wage, are unemployed or depend on social security support. Having visited those kinds of stations and interviewed some of the middle-aged officers and wives I had known for a long time in Lisbon, I noticed how they could maintain big houses and properties they would never be able to aspire to in Lisbon. Nevertheless, before that, most had spent more than 10 years living in Lisbon experiencing the opposite conditions: paying more than one rent, spending significant sums on transportation, and having to constantly eat out.

Thus, it is worth noticing that the age factor is crucial in the professional process. Police officers in the early years of their careers experience the profession with a weight that amplifies their already precarious status when we take the career institutional architecture into consideration. Mobility and all its material and symbolic costs are

more intense for less experienced and younger officers. Likewise, allocation in a desired station, near home and far from the capital, represents a kind of endurance premium for being able to sustain the very demanding police force path. Administrative processes have to deal with this collective wish for a large number of constables and chiefs to relocate far from metropolitan Lisbon: as far away as terminal stations. This creates a much differentiated demography throughout stations in the different regions of the country. In fact, I have observed how the idea of passage and terminal or fixed stations is not a mere metaphor but a sociological reality. In Lisbon's stations, I encountered officers aged between 20 and 40 years old. In some more remote stations, I met officers who were between 40 and 60 years old.

Within this context, some other differentiations between police men and police women arise, even though the ideology of gender equality inside PSP has been in effect in Portugal since the late 1980s (Cordeiro et al. 2003). I have long been searching for explanations as to why I always met so few police women inside the police station. When I asked where the police women were, officers gave a straight answer: they are backstage, doing departmental paperwork. It is said that female life cycles (such as childrearing) predispose them to clerical work. Furthermore, and in contrast with the situation in other forces such as that in the UK (see Dunhill 1989; Young 1993), women are not perceived as 'one of the boys' in the organisation and are rarely considered 'real cops', even if one or two may occasionally be identified as 'experts' in their respective lines of duties. I have met women who because of their gender, because they are young, inexperienced and usually not from Lisbon, are 'invited' (or 'invite themselves') to take up different positions in the organisation in order to perform non-operational functions. The idea is to spare them the experience and the possible opportunity of engaging in patrol work right from the outset. Under the umbrella of sympathy from chiefs and commanders, these women enter into a kind of softer and more protected indoor environment within a male-dominated institution, likewise contributing to the reproduction of static ideologies of patrol work as predominantly male work.<sup>6</sup> It is my impression that the factor of mobility plays an important role in hindering the integration of women into patrols because they are perceived as subjects requiring protection from the tough duties performed by ever-mobile constables. Mobility is configured as a positive attribute for men, suggesting endurance, but for women it is a sign of vulnerability. However, interestingly, this may help explain the increasing percentage of police women who are rising up through the hierarchy, a trend that has also been noticed in the French context (Pruvost 2009).<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, with mobility at the root of all managerial problems, PSP had no choice but to consider and to integrate the creative micro-management tactics of officers.

6 It is worth noticing that even in operational units, a large percentage of the few women constables may be engaged in minor clerical tasks. Official statistics do not deal with that kind of data. In general, not being a permanent presence in patrols enables everyone to doubt the competence of women for this role. This atmosphere favours the *status quo*. Like Douglas (1987) says, when the institution does not have the confidence of their members, the institution thinks for them.

7 PSP's annual reporting data indicate that out of a total of 22,000 police officers, female constables represent only 7%, while women in intermediate management positions number over 10%. Furthermore, when looking specifically at the presence of women in senior hierarchical positions, the percentage jumps to 13% (cf. Balanço Social 2008).

## Daily arrangements and the arithmetic for living on the move

I now proceed to analyse the daily arrangements between agents and the police bureaucracy that maintain the institutional mobility system. A formal schedule organises all the work of police stations into five groups (from A to E). Each group has a variable number of agents (generally no more than 10) and a permanent chief, with the groups distributed into perfect sequences of 6-hour shifts for the 24 service hours (days off included). The 6-hour shift is constantly performed at every police station by each group with the group changing shift every 2 days. As noted above, the schedule is designed every year, with all the stations and their staff knowing their working shifts in advance – a process centralised by the National Police Directorate. However, the official design for Lisbon's metropolitan command schedule alone requires special attention and it is subject to greater levels of change due to the widely-held understanding that its officers are from 'abroad' (cf. Durão 2008a). Moreover, there is always a shift-maker (*escalador*) in police divisions in Lisbon (units that administer and oversee stations operations). This is a key figure, well known to each officer in his/her daily life because the shift-maker dominates all shift work-related information.

Even if not entirely 'blind', these bureaucratic arrangements are simply not enough to enable dislocated police officers to satisfactorily organise their off-duty lives. They have to figure out ways of literally compressing work-time shifts (shrinking off-duty time between work shifts) in order to extend day-off time and thereby be able to spend more days at home, thus offsetting expenses and travel time. This is difficult to achieve all at once because the group working schedule is standardised. The only way around its structure involves personal and detailed inter-personal exchanges. Officers seek out opportunities to re-arrange routines between them while trying not to overly interfere with the established institutional and normative system. Local commanders authorise, to a limited extent, officers to exchange shifts with workmates from the same station. What started out as authorisation for exceptional cases has turned progressively into what could be called an institutional subsystem of shift exchanges.<sup>8</sup> During fieldwork, many local commanders referred to the weight of this human resource organisation process that took up many working hours and raised concerns as they then had less time for programming local policing. One day a commander blurted out to me, 'How can I think about policing when I have all these personnel dislocation problems to manage myself?' The weave of interpersonal exchanges of services and shifts has to be administratively controlled whilst the around-the-clock nature of police work may never be interrupted. However, the system differs dramatically the further one moves away from the capital's stations.

In Lisbon, we find a significant number of officers doing organised shift exchanges between them with the help of a very popular and widespread document: a personal pocket-schedule (*caderneta*). This is where they can finally set down in writing all the

8 I should note that prior to the bureaucratic centralisation of schedule management, before the late 1990s, local arrangements were not programmed and rather made in personal negotiations and day-by-day. At that time, each station could have its own shift-maker. This figure had huge discretionary powers to decide how to distribute the shifts among the personnel in consultation with the local commander. As some senior police officers remembered, 'He was a powerful man. Sometimes we had to pay him money to have better shifts, and every time we came back from holidays we had to bring him gifts. In some cases, he was in fact the chief of the station'.

negotiated interpersonal exchanges. According to my interviewees, the pocket-schedule was introduced in the late 1990s by one officer in one police station and was rapidly adopted by colleagues in many others. It was an ordinary A5 timetable of the different shift patterns, with one month per sheet, but with enough blank space left to enable officers to register all alterations made or planned. Police force members, generally of the same rank, distinguish between three levels in organising the subsystem described: an exchange (*troca*) when one person asks a member of another group to do his/her shift, an interchange (*permuta*) when two persons switch shifts and representing the ideal situation and sometimes leading to long lasting agreements between two persons in two groups, and a pay-back (*destroca*) when one officer replaces a colleague for a shift with the implication of a future obligation of reciprocity. It is a sign of the times that police officers can recreate a space for negotiation and improvisation in a regulated and nationally administered bureaucracy such as the PSP. In this case, the modernising process of police reconfiguration is not easily imposed onto long-established structures based on pre-existing interdependencies (contrary to that described by James Scott in 1998). But the problem is not as simple when expressed from a totally different angle: management studies. In bureaucratic organisations, one may hypothesise that people will rely on the hierarchy rather than on improvisation as a guide for action and that improvisation is the exception (cf. Cunha 2002). In this ethnographic example, we have seen that it is the very possibility of improvisation inside the organisational structure that warrants inertia. Improvisation is based on a historical background that has long since maintained the institution, at least as a human and social organisation, such as it is, even while in conjunction with a modernising process of some of its managerial structures.

We can go further with this analysis. In fact, what the subsystem of shift-exchange negotiation guarantees is the effective maintenance of the existing policing system itself, with the institution able to sustain many people at work who 'have their hearts at home while having to have their bodies at work', as one agent bluntly put it. This is one way for the institution to deal with a professional community on the move, maintaining some level of rootedness through the inclusion of flexibility. When commanders sporadically do not authorise subordinate exchanges, interchanges and pay-backs 'everything goes upside down', officers say. Absenteeism increases, officers resist commander orders, and also use their discretionary powers to resist enforcing the law on citizens in their daily routines. 'We are demotivated' was the recent motto adopted by police unions when dealing with the media.

However, ethnographic research provides deeper insights. What we can clearly see is officers trading space for time within the PSP. The entire schema operates like some great reciprocal *exchange*, in the Maussian sense (Mauss 1968; Yáñez Casal 2005). In an authorised subsystem, the flexibility of the institution in relation to the micro-management of time functions like a *gift* from the organisation to the rank and file officers (and correspondingly is always deemed to be an 'exception to the rule'). This compensates for the impossibility of the system responding to officer expectations: PSP does not have the means to give most of its members what they want – the final transfer. This exceptional but permanently enacted authorisation is a way of guaranteeing that officers will not collectively abandon the police force or, alternatively, resist the orders of superiors. A promise is always on the table: officers will be compensated with the final transfer in the long term (functioning as *differed reciprocity*). Accordingly, with help from more senior officials, officers from lower ranks interfere directly at the core

of the bureaucratic system. They force it to take into account their time-management demands on a routine basis – maintaining proximity ties with relatives and homeland – without jeopardising the rational and bureaucratic fixed shift management. In the end, the entire process enables officers to wait for the geographic transfer they crave.

We can apprehend the complexity of these arrangements through Ulf Hannerz's concept of the 'social career'. In his sense, a career should not be taken to denote a straightforward, more or less rapid, more or less linear, upward occupational change. Rather, a career is 'the sequential organization of life situations ... the way all the domains are made to fit together in a way of life through time' (1983: 270). From this point of view, the routine subsystem of internal exchanges in PSP can make the years spent in limbo awaiting personal transfer more bearable. This is one way through which officers can deal with the long period before gaining a final transfer. Likewise, this schema is more than some mere opportunistic solution to structural inertia. As urban anthropologists have shown, professional communities are not isolated from wider social configurations that involve family, friends, neighbourhoods, clients, and a range of groups, persons, activities and objects (cf. Gulick 1989; Weber 1989).

However, none of this operates in perfect harmony. Officers living on the move are constantly reminded of how working in an institution such as the PSP is extremely wearing. Joan Barker (1999) describes the individual and collective sense of frustration and disillusionment among Los Angeles police officers and argues that it is based on solidarity in the face of fear and danger. But fear and suspicion related to professional dangers are not the most crucial phenomena arising out of my data.<sup>9</sup> Rather, PSP officers share the sense of being consumed by a 'greedy institution', to borrow a term from Lewis Coser's (1972) study of the lifestyle in sects. I find a parallel with Segal's (1988) analysis of women's careers in military contexts, wherein the military and the family were perceived as greedy, especially by young officers. It is widely held that family factors condition the professional and that professional aspects interfere in family life, particularly when working shifts. However, in this case both the family and the police force may both be perceived as extremely demanding for dislocated officers. Correspondingly, police members maintain that one very much hinders the other and that both consume the subjects.

Still, these 'greedy institutions' are seen here as interdependent and not as closed and fixed entities. As John Urry notes, nowadays, organising 'co-presence' with key others (workmates, family, significant others, friends) within each day, week, year and so on becomes more demanding with the loss of collective coordination (2007: 15). Even though it is not effective for the institution to have their community of officers permanently on the move, and it also seems fairly difficult to motivate them in their law enforcement activities, especially given the very demanding human resource managerial challenges, the fact is that the 'human problem' is ignored at the slightest possible chance. Indeed, to be more flexible about the fixed and annually predetermined bureaucratic schedule of work would be the least the police organisation could achieve.

9 Throughout the 20th century, crime was the most commonly deployed political justification for police actions. However, ethnographic research demonstrates that crime represents only a small proportion of the police mandate and has only a tangential presence in the lives of members of the police force. Official data indicate that Portugal does not have especially high crime rates (Gabinete Coordenador de Segurança do Ministério da Administração Interna 2006: 51).

The process described transforms the entire debate around the extent of universalisation of certain core characteristics of ‘professional police culture’ (Reiner 1985: 87–91). In fact, the Lusophone variant (and others) of policing and also police administration has been under-examined in the English language literature, dominant in police studies, which has hardly helped in informing the debate. Talking about such traits with some officers, I rapidly understood that, to provide but one example, the motivation for chasing criminals is insufficient for explaining the urban Portuguese police force. As a heavily administrative bureaucracy, the police force tends to severely penalise these acts should any instances of misconduct be reported. More importantly, most constables with less than 10 years of experience simply do not consider action to be the best aspect of their work. Many experience great joy and satisfaction when persons, ‘citizens’, they say, recognise their actions in public, and often relate operational policing to that. However, of no less importance is the moral arithmetic that is also very present when patrolling police are on the move but concentrating on their shift ending so as to embark on the journey back home. They think twice when getting involved in any emergency as this can force them to spend extra time at work, time they have already counted up and allocated in exchange for geographical mobility. As I have shown, in order to make the daily life and work routine work, officers consider time and space interchangeable.

## Conclusions

A few words must be said to reinforce the conceptualisation of mobility and the ethnographically informed idea of institution I have developed throughout this article. What I have described shows that PSP as a national organisation depends on officers perceiving themselves and acting as migrants. Thus, for officers horizontal mobility (in craving a final spatial transfer) comes as a substitution for vertical mobility (moving up the hierarchy). In the historically inherited police model, careers tend to be fixed and with little mobility for rank and file officers contrasting with higher ranking officers for whom the two types of mobility are different sides of the same coin. Moreover, ‘mobility’ does not mean the same to all lower ranking officers; it expresses internal variations in class, age and gender issues. From a bureaucratic perspective, the official authorisation for officer micro-managements turns out to be the short-term means of compensating for the impossibilities of the system to meet officer expectations of a final transfer. Likewise, the subsystem of shift exchanges combined with other forms of management is one of the few ways officers have to creatively deal with the administrative and modern bureaucratic and rationalistic control over their time/space of work. Ultimately, officers display a sense of being bound up in extremely demanding processes, as if trapped by two greedy institutions – the police force and their families.

This article argues for means of considering the professional and the institutional totality as formations embedded in a wider social environment and not as bounded and isolated islands (Gellner and Hirsh 2001; see also Durão and Lopes in this issue). With the professional community on the move, the institution cannot escape being constantly produced, assembled and reassembled. Therefore, I must agree with Bruno Latour (2005) when he proposes that institutions, organisations and the social do not simply explain: they *have to be explained*. However, organisational flexibility as well as uniformity is produced both in the present and also handed down by institutional history. Having stated that, I believe the mixed study of police officer

identities, organisational administration and the pluralities of management may lead to new theoretical insights and even be able to approximate the fields of anthropology, police and organisational studies.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mark Maguire, David Berliner, Kevin Rose and the two anonymous reviewers for their substantive remarks.

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