

A century ago, people were able to live in better conditions than their parents thanks to the progress made in science and technology. But in practice, the outcome of this progress was slow to materialise. For instance, most people still used to travel long distances on foot or by stage coach. And as mechanisation was not introduced significantly in daily activities, household chores still had to be done manually, and were therefore time consuming. On the other hand, community life was still an asset for social cohesion, since people had more opportunities to meet and interact. So they were able to chat with neighbours at shops or in clubs and have a cup of coffee with friends or relatives and tell stories and jokes. Likewise, family visits were frequent and kept the folklore alive, with the grandparents who used to tell traditional tales or sing lullabies or folk songs to their grandchildren. Unfortunately, with the development of audiovisual means such as the cinema, radio, television and then personal appliances like the computer, CD-roms and DVDs, the chances of socialisation are dwindling and the lack of interaction between people may increase stress, loneliness and anxiety. Could we then complain that we are missing out on some ingredients in life which used to make our great grandparents happier? This is probably so, since closer contacts among neighbours, friends and families had to be beneficial for communal harmony. However, scientific progress in all fields, particularly in medicine, modes of transportation and communication, and agribusiness can only show that our lives are today quite fulfilling and, if anything, more comfortable than a century ago