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Cape Verdeans in Cova da Moura, Portugal, an ethno-historical account of their destinies and legacies

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IV.   Methodology and use of Ethno-Historical Account

IV.1 Research Design

The research design is mainly qualitative with the use of statistics evolving over time from field work intervention. It follows Miles and Huberman's approach of analyzing qualitative data, using the method of shifting, mapping, coding and sorting data as they were collected and following up analyses with ongoing observation and interviews.

I carried out my ethno-historical research in Cova da Moura from October 2007 until December 2010. This research relies mainly on fine-grained ethnographic and historical analysis of the families and their settlement. It has involved participant observation, informal conversations, in-depth semi-structured interviews, community visits and participation in celebrations and on-going presence in the community setting. I interviewed each member individually, using in-depth semi-structured and open-ended interviews. The interviews were conducted in migrants' homes and in public places, mainly in cafes and at their workplaces.

The techniques and methods I used for the analyses of the Cape Verdean group in cultural terms included recording of anecdotal stories remembered by the three Cape Verdean families, which became important documental data on audio files. This resource-collecting, together with ethnographic investigation and field research, based on a useful ethno-historical and integrating method, leads to a cultural-historical description of the development of the Cape Verdean group through time, as it portrays the selected Cape Verdean families in Cova da Moura, constructing their lives in both diachronic and synchronic dimensions.

IV.2 Ethno-Historical Process

The ethno-historical approach chosen seems to be best suited to the exploratory and descriptive nature of this project. Traditionally, ethno-history has been defined by anthropologists as study of the 'history' of the peoples who are usually the subjects of

anthropological research (Wylie, 1973). It uses concepts and methods from 'other' social sciences, including structural or synchronic analysis by historians and by those anthropologists who are interested in both diachronic and synchronic explanations. Its main objective is the recovery of the history of non-literate peoples through archaeological or even written evidence. However, this narrowest possible definition, which is rarely returned to today, implies the use of non-anthropological diachronic materials by anthropologists.

The ethno-historical concept has developed in response to the problem of analyzing non-literate societies over a span of time. Some of the earliest efforts in this field emphasized the importance of documentary historical data for acculturation research. One example is Oscar Lewis' (1942) investigation of the effects of the fur trade on Blackfoot Indian culture, illustrating one type of study in which the data available in documentary sources are analyzed in anthropological terms in order to illuminate a particular problem.

For my approach, which also emphasizes contact and acculturation, ethno-history has two important aspects 1) collecting historical documents and anecdotal historical records as depicted by diverse populations provides valuable data relevant for these interests. Exploitation of this resource, in conjunction with ethnographic investigation and other forms of field research found useful in dealing with a particular problem, constitutes an ethno-historical method; 2) the use of such an integrating method leads to a cultural-historical description which portrays the development of one or more ethnic groups through time (cf. Valentine, 1960).

IV.3 Structure and Development of the Study

The structure of my thesis is determined by two distinct approaches. Primarily, a general assessment and scanning of my impression of the entire community is given in order to describe the environment, its social context and its transnational connections. The second approach records extensive autobiographies of each family member. Some biographies are more extensive than others; selection of the 'central characters' in the study depends upon their place in the kinship networks that form the sample population of the research.[54] Apart

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[54] The use of the tape-recorder allows people to talk about themselves and relate their observations and experiences in an uninhibited, spontaneous, and natural manner (Lewis, 1961: xii).

from family ties, friendship patterns within the neighbourhood, a short history of the family member's life and information concerning migration from Cape Verde to Portugal are examined. Studying extended families provided a complete genealogy, including names and relationships of all relatives, living or dead, from the first generation of each family until now. Some basic inquiry patterns are applied to each sample family. They deal with household composition and analysis of available space. They also include questions about income, division of labour, recreational patterns, health and treatment of disease, religion and the world view.

From the responses to these research questions I attempt to identify family relations and the arrangements to sustain the life of the three Cape Verdean families in Portugal living in Cova da Moura: the answers to the first research question document how emigration has influenced the lives of the target families and give a description of their settlement. In contemporary Cape Verde, however, the desire to emigrate is so widespread and considering the current emigration rate, it may be assumed migration flows are almost entirely controlled by factors affecting the ability to emigrate (Carling, 2001: 36). This ambition turns emigration into an ideal type project. But what influence did this experience have on their lives? I learned about life in the 1970s in Cova da Moura as told by Judite, Deolinda and Josefina and their husbands and how they adapted to the new neighbourhood without the most basic infrastructure. It enabled me to discover the various strategies these families developed to get by on a low income. I documented their working day from 5 am to 10 pm with other Cape Verdean women (undocumented as themselves). Working hard and raising their children at the same time without the help of their husbands, only relying on the help of neighbours and relatives showed the strength and determination of these women. The third research question aims at the reality of migration, which forms part of Cape Verdean society and continues to shape the islands' way of life in the 21st century. In this sense, Cape Verde may be a unique example of a state that could be characterized as transnational at the moment of its creation (Gois, 2005: 255). These families are not an exception. If we look at the family network, the three families have close relatives residing in Rotterdam, Luxembourg, Boston and London. The existence of this scattered network provides close contacts among its different members and is usually maintained by communicational means or visits. These proved to be instrumental in finding accommodation and jobs for newcomers in what could be considered transnational families. The results obtained for the fourth research question explain the 'laissez-faire' policy of the Portuguese government and local administration after the 1974

Revolution, which turned a blind eye to the building of illegal houses on private land, thus contributing to the proliferation and consolidation of illegal neighbourhoods especially in the Lisbon and Porto areas. Over the years, the inhabitants improved their houses and felt more attached to the particular 'way of life' in the neighbourhood. Negotiations between the inhabitants and the government about the measures of the Redevelopment Project have taken place since 2007 without concrete results. Consequently there is fear among the inhabitants of losing their house, their culture and their neighbourhood.

IV.4 Data Collection

The most intensive part of this research, three years of continuous field work (from 2007 to 2010), took place in Cova da Moura.

My work is based on a large amount of ethnographic data I collected during my fieldwork (more than 200 qualitative interviews and participant-observation), which are subsequently interpreted in the thesis.

I conducted all the interviews with the Cape Verdean families in Portuguese and 'Crioulo'. Although my knowledge of Crioulo is limited, I can understand it due to the similarities of many expressions in the Portuguese and French languages. This permitted close interaction with the target family members and other Cape Verdeans, as it is used by most Cape Verdean inhabitants of Cova da Moura in their daily lives.

During these years in the field, I focused on: interviews conducted with family members, neighbourhood residents and political representatives of the Cova da Moura Redevelopment Project. Furthermore, data was collected on migrants' representation institutions and policies through taped interviews.

My proceedings were influenced by methodologies used by Oscar Lewis in his life-histories, combined with biographical interviews for the study of the history and transnational background of the target families.

I interviewed each member individually, using in-depth semi-structured and open-ended interviews. The interviews were conducted in migrants' homes and in public places, mostly in cafes and occasionally at their place of work.

Due to the reciprocal relationship between me and the interviewers, open-ended interviews seemed more appropriate on some occasions, although a set of general questions to guide the interview was prepared.

Data and additional documentary sources:

Field notes — a fieldwork diary, including notes from participant observation and unrecorded interviews. Besides interviews, data was also compiled from a wide range of available sources: official (ACIDI and INE) and non-official statistical data, information from earlier qualitative and quantitative studies, research projects and reports and other documentation, issued by the local institutions and associations.

Further data was also compiled from official government documents, policy papers, bulletins and articles from local and national newspapers (*Jornal da Região Amadora, A Tribuna, Jornal CNAI, BI Boletim Informativo ACIDI, Pretextos, Diário de Notícias, Expresso, Jornal Público, Sol, Destak, Metro, Global*).

Official inquiries — semi-structured interviews carried out with local officials (20): Mayor of Damaia, Health Director of Damaia, Police Officers exclusively in charge of the neighbourhood, Association Directors, Head of the Cova da Moura Redevelopment Project.

Teachers' inquiries — semi-structured interviews (25) with school teachers and cultural mediator and pupils carried out at Primary School nº1 of Cova da Moura and School B2/3 Dr. Pedro D'Orey da Cunha.

The semi-structured and open-ended interviews include recorded conversations with members of the three families (184), neighbours and residents of Cova da Moura (47). As I spent a long time in the field I had the opportunity to visit the family members several times and go beyond first impressions, creating a higher level of trust - a situation in which first attitudes and ideas change. Moreover, I had the opportunity to collect and record observations on topics not decided upon beforehand and also obtain information from people inside as well as outside the research setting.

I developed a close and lasting relationship with these families, who confided in me on very personal issues, gave me insights and let me take part in their daily lives. This ethnographic study was only possible because I was allowed access to various fields of my informants' lives. I visited them on many occasions (festivities, private gatherings, family parties and during periods of illness) and helped to fill in official forms for naturalization processes or health procedures. I also visited the Ferreira family in São Vicente and the Sousa family in São Vicente and Santo Antão, conducting interviews, taking photographs and collecting other forms of data locally. In Porto Novo (Santo Antão) I stayed in their house and was invited by other members of the family to share their meals. This was not only because we had established close relationships, but also because they wished a faithful portrayal of their histories and they trusted me to do so.

IV.5 Data Analysis and Triangulation

The term triangulation is often used to describe a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. It serves to reach valid, true or transferable findings.

In this study theory I followed Guion's suggestion (2002) of five types of triangulation: data, investor, theoretical, environmental and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation was established in various ways. For each type of interview (in-depth and open-ended interviews with members of the three families, residents of Cova da Moura, representatives from local associations, government representatives), a basic structure was applied. Consequently, the same or similar questions were asked to all members of each family, to the representatives of the associations and to official representatives of the municipality and other institutions. This approach permitted me to obtain several people's opinion about the same issue, and therefore, results are not based on the report of only one person.

Data was also collected over a long period of fieldwork which made it possible to seek clarification, double check for inconsistencies and compare conflicting information with a third view. In this study I used methodological triangulation involving quantitative and qualitative methods, an approach that provided opportunities to compare outcomes from one data set with the others.

IV.6 Limitations of the Study and Validity

During participant observations and meetings with members of the target families, my former work as a teacher with migrant pupils and families served as a form of experiential knowledge necessary in the attempt to understand the complexities and peculiarities of their migratory experience. However, my partial insider status and my acceptance by informants brought risks as my informants might have expected more recognition or support from me than I could actually give.

Also the fact that I am a white, middle-aged woman determines the residents' and the target family's interaction with me. Consequently, I have opted for a methodological approach that supports construction of knowledge based not only on my subjective interpretation of reality, but includes other locally valid perceptions and views. This approach increases the robustness and validity of data integrating this study.

The external limitations I confronted during this study were the following: 1) the mobility of some members of the first generation that returned to Cape Verde; 2) the high mobility of the second generation due to the economic recession (unemployment, lack of social benefits), which led to an increase of internal (José to Açores, Lourenço to Porto) and international migration (Albertino and Felizmino to Switzerland, Paulina to Holland) prevented any further gathering of information; 3) the Cova da Moura Redevelopment Project, planned to be accomplished by 2011 was not implemented on schedule. Due to this delay, this study cannot include an analysis of the project's outcome: of its efficiency concerning achievement of its objectives and its effects on the target families.