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

Valadas Casimiro, E.M.

Publication date
2014

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
In this ethno-historical study, the statements obtained from the variety of data provided by the three families were synthesized to show the structural and developmental aspects of the changing culture from its earliest beginnings to the present.

V.1 Families: Sample

The sample includes three Cape Verdean families; each emigrated from a different Cape Verdean island:

The Sousa family (Island of Santo Antão, Porto Novo) - ten members (3 members of the first generation, 4 members of the second generation and 1 of the third generation) + relatives = eleven people.

The Costa family (Island of Santiago, Praia) – eleven members (2 members of the first generation, 3 members of the second generation and 2 members of the third generation) + relatives = ten people.

The Ferreira family (Island of São Vicente, Mindelo) – seven members (2 members of the first generation and 2 members of second generation) + relatives = eight people.

The table below shows the ‘theoretical inspiration’ of the target families' settlement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Families</th>
<th>Duration of settlement in Cova da Moura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Sousa</td>
<td>1976_______________________________1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Costa</td>
<td>1979_______________________________2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Ferreira</td>
<td>1975_______________________________2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows the characteristics of the target family members. The majority (24 members out of 44 members) participated in this study and had Portuguese nationality. Sixteen obtained Portuguese nationality more than fifteen years ago and ten received it only recently (less than five years ago) after a long process of legalization. Two family members came to Portugal with a temporary visa for health reasons to get medical treatment on the basis of an agreement between the Cape Verdean and Portuguese governments.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>84 %</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origins:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island of S. Antão</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island of Santiago</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island of S. Vicente</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cap.-Ver. Islands</td>
<td>4,5 %</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>54,5 %</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;15</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-31</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-51</td>
<td>68 %</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic School</td>
<td>66 %</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic sector</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babysitters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Total: 44 members)
The first generation members (68%) were aged between 32 and 51 and 7% of the seniors were over 60 years old. One male pensioner died in 2008. The second generation represented 18% (15 to 31 years old) while the third generation (under 15 years old) represented 7% of the members.

Considering education, there is great discrepancy between the first and second generations: The first generation had a low level of education, 7% were illiterate and the remainder attended three or four years of primary school. All members of the second generation finished at least compulsory education, 86% (Basic School, 9 years) and three members attained or finished Secondary School (12 years). None enrolled in professional education or university courses.

Regarding employment, there is no noticeable generational differentiation. The first generation worked in the service sector. The females worked in the domestic care sector as cleaners, in-house domestics, and/or babysitters or carers of older people. Some of the women worked in more than one job. The majority of males were employed in construction and one was a fishermen. In the second generation, the females worked in the domestic and catering sector. Two men held office jobs while the others had unqualified work. Two males emigrated to a European country. Three members were unemployed.

55 Most of the cleaners and domestics worked in more than one job: from Monday to Friday as cleaners at several houses/offices and kitchen helpers during the weekend.
V.2 Discussion of the Migration Story Described by Families

Profiles:

Figure 14: Family Tree Sousa (My Heritage, 2013)

The lack of economic resources in Santo Antão made the Sousas decide to emigrate to Portugal. The whole family supported this decision even monetarily. Lourenço had already contacted relatives in Portugal who could provide him with temporary accommodation and a possible job near Lisbon. He arrived alone in 1976 and lived in Cova da Moura in his cousin’s shack. At this time it was easy to find work on building sites even for an undocumented Cape Verdean citizen: two days after his arrival he had a job. After two months he started building a shack next to his cousin’s dwelling. Judite (his wife) and her son Daniel, arrived one year later to live there. Through a neighbour she managed to get a cleaning job, working for a cleaning firm that belonged to a Cape Verdean entrepreneur who had lived in Cova da Moura. Every day a van would collect her and other Cape Verdeans women near the main entrance to
the neighbourhood, Rua Direita, at 5 am and bring her back at 6 pm. Two afternoons a week, she also worked in a private home until 8 pm.

The couple had three children, Francisca, José and Martin who were all raised mostly by their mother alone. These children grew up occasionally supported and looked after by other members of the family and neighbours living in the same street (Beco de Santo Antão in Cova da Moura). Beco de Santo Antão was mostly inhabited by the relatives and friends of the Sousas from the same island.

Three years later, Lourenço found a better-paid job as a sailor on a fishing boat and spent a long time away from Portugal (fishing for cod off Scandinavia). His two months holidays a year were spent at home in Cova da Moura where he developed a drinking habit. The couple got divorced in 1997 because of Lourenço’s alcoholism and the ensuing domestic violence.

Together with her children, Judite moved in with relatives and later decided to buy a small apartment in a poor neighbourhood in Cacém. She kept working during the day as a housekeeper in private homes and at night for a cleaning firm. Being the oldest son, Daniel also felt the responsibility of providing money for the rest of the family. Therefore, he left school and started to look for a job. Daniel finished Basic School in the 10th year and did not continue his studies, although he was a good pupil and liked attending classes. Soon after, he got an administrative job.

Lourenço stayed in their house in Cova da Moura, but his drinking habit made him seriously ill and soon he could no longer work. As the illness got worse (he had a stroke and became quadriplegic) he was supported by his younger son Martin and by neighbours who went there every day to keep him company and give him hot meals. He died in 2007. In 2009, Judite remarried to a Portuguese husband, worked as a housekeeper and took care of an elderly woman in a private household, but planned to return to Cape Verde where she had already started to rebuild her family house. In June 2010, the couple moved permanently to Santo Antão, living in Judite’s unfinished house which they continue to renovate.
Deolinda came to Portugal from Santiago in 1970 at the request of her mother who wanted her to have a better future. At the age of fourteen she already had a pre-arranged job (through her god-mother’s connections) waiting for her, as an internal maid in a private home in Algés, near Lisbon. She did not want to stay, but out of respect for her god-mother she kept working hard there. After three years, Deolinda decided that working six days a week from 8 am to 9 pm was too many hours and asked for more time off. As her boss disagreed, she quit the job and moved to the Algarve, where she worked as a maid in a hotel and as a house-keeper in some private homes. At seventeen, she had her first son Rui and raised him alone, because the relationship did not last long and the father never contributed to expenses. Three years later, she moved to Lisbon where she met her future Cape Verdean husband and they moved to Cova da Moura. The couple had two daughters, Luisa and Dália. They rented a small house in Cova da Moura which was very humid as the roof leaked. Deolinda started working as a cook and house-keeper in her employer’s home.

When her husband became an alcoholic and mistreated them, their relationship became unbearable. After getting divorced she was able to stay in her house, as her husband moved out. With the help of her mother who had immigrated to Portugal from Santiago, Deolinda raised the three children. When the family’s economic situation got worse, she got an extra job as house-keeper to survive. Two years later, she remarried and had two more daughters,
Cristina and Carla. Her second husband died soon after (2006). With some money from her husband’s life-insurance, she was able to buy an old apartment close to Amadora. She continues living there with her younger daughters, still doing the same jobs. Cristina is finishing High school and Carla is also in High School. They were very happy to move away from Cova da Moura and thought that it was very beneficial for them because their school has better teachers and a wide range of professional courses to choose from. Every day at 4.30 am Deolinda travels by train to Cova da Moura to work. She hardly leaves the neighbourhood for long - she even spends her scarce free time there with her mother and friends.

![Figure 16: Family Tree Ferreira (My Heritage, 2013)](image)

Extremely poor living-conditions and famine on the island determined Josefina and Alfredo’s decision to leave. The family agreed and helped them to leave São Vicente. After their arrival in Portugal in 1975, they ‘bought’ a house at the end of the Cova da Moura settlement and never moved from there. They had two children, Albertino and Felizmino. Through a friend, Alfredo always worked in construction but never got a contract. When he was 58 years old he had a serious accident at work. But as he was undocumented and had no ‘legal’ working contract, he was not entitled to any welfare benefit or subsidies. The consequences of this accident are his limping and forgetfulness. He always stays at home, sits on a plastic chair in a small yard in front of their house, not wishing to meet or speak to anyone. Although many friends pass by daily, his reaction always remains indifferent.
Josefina, his wife, was contracted by the same cleaning firm as Judite. She left the house at 5 am and returned at around 7 pm. She never thought of getting further education or professional qualifications in Portugal, although she had only studied for two years at primary school in São Vicente. For twenty years, she had always worked for the same cleaning firm without any ‘legal’ contract. Like her husband, Josefina was not eligible for welfare or other subsidies when she fell ill in 1995. Furthermore, she did not get paid and lost her job. Since then she has been participating in the activities of the Association Moinho da Juventude, where she took a course for nannies. After Alfredo’s illness, she decided to offer her services as a nanny in her own house. Since 2008 she has taken care of three children from 8 am to 8 pm at home six days a week.

V.3 Stage I - Pre-Migration and Migration

V.3.1 Arrival in Cova da Moura: Motivations, Expectations and Prospects

This section focuses on pre-migration expectations, including the migrants’ perspectives and prospects at different stages of their arrival in Portugal, from the first to the most recent of the Cape Verdean families, with particular emphasis on identifying their status and visibility, but also their experience of exploitation and discrimination.

Before the independence of Cape Verde in 1975, the great majority of Cape Verdeans were poor. Agriculture has always been precarious: more than one third of the population died of starvation in the 1960s and thousands were forced to leave. Many of them worked in the fields as day-labourers, like the Costa and the Ferreira families. Others, mainly men but also women, depended on the industrial activities at the waterfront, carrying heavy loads in the harbours (Silva, 1998). Women such as Sílvia were “cooking or washing clothes for seamen and passengers in transit “(Akesson, 2004: 60).

According to Carreira (1982), economic and historical factors were the most significant causes of emigration from Cape Verde. “Economic reasons include deficient socio-economic structures, frequent droughts resulting from irregular or scanty rainfall which diminishes the
supply of foodstuffs and provokes catastrophic famines, demographic pressure and bad land distribution”. The main historical cause was certainly “the influence exercised among the islanders by the pioneer emigrants and their descendents affecting above all the flow of emigrants” (1982: 2).

The country had little to offer the world market, except labour. Josefina was aware of this, describing her life in São Vicente as “poverty and misery”. Her lack of economic security was a valid motive for wanting to leave the island. In the background of this precariousness the vision of another country as “a place where everyone can get what they want although through hard work”, is deeply rooted in many Cape Verdeans I talked to in São Vicente.

The history of endless departures has created a nation that is dispersed around the world (Machado, 2004). Migration was almost conceived as predetermined necessity linked to strong feelings of belonging to the homeland. However, Judite told me that “a ‘real Cape Verdean’ never forgets his country and wants to die there” (nunka ta skesè ses terra e quer morer la). An assumption which turns the act of migration into “a sacrifice one does for a better life”. This statement emphasizes the lifelong identification of a loyal Cape Verdone with his country (or island), implying the support of his kin there, as much as possible. These notions prepare the immigrant to be strong enough to work hard abroad and to live separate from his family in exchange for some comfort and mobility when returning at the end of his life. His (financially) successful return would then complete the migration cycle that begins and ends in Cape Verde.

Despite the difficulties in crossing the Portuguese border, caused by a restrictive law imposed on foreigners in Portugal after the independence of its former African colonies (1975), emigration was possible. Nevertheless, “during the first period in the 1960s migration to Europe was male dominated yet by the 1970s, it had begun to slow down considerably with the recession of the world economy and the changes taking place in Portuguese to Cape Verdone nationality” (Akesson: 2004: 76).

According to a survey by the Portuguese National Statistics Institute (INE, 2004), more than half the Cape Verdone immigrants who came to Portugal, were men aged under 30. They joined the labour market, working in low ranked jobs (65%), mainly in construction (48%).
They had a little education and only 1.3% had specialized jobs\textsuperscript{56}.

**Sousa Family** – Lourenço and Judite escaped from very poor conditions in Santo Antão, where they worked in the fields far from their house. Lourenço was the first to emigrate in 1975 with a limited visa but intended to stay longer, even facing the possibility of being expelled due to his undocumented status. He was fully aware and motivated in his decision to adapt to new conditions in a different country with a strong determination of “trying to make a living against all odds”. However, before they arrived, Judite and Lourenço were attracted by the possibilities they believed Portugal could offer in terms of a healthier life. Their common aspirations were to build a house of their own in their home country, a better future for their children and provide for their family-members who stayed behind in Santo Antão. A further stimulus to mobility was the idealized image they had formed of ‘the promised land’ transmitted by other migrants who had arrived in Portugal earlier. On the phone they were told, how easy it was to build a house and buy a car in Portugal - ‘a paraís’ (paradise), compared to life on their island of Santo Antão.

Accounts of life ‘lá fora’ (out there) were central in social orientation towards the outside world. What was impossible to achieve on the island, seemed possible far away, verified by success stories. This aspect of the term ‘image’ was used by Appadurai (1996) who defined imagination as a property of collectives and not only as something produced by an individual. He distinguishes fantasies which may jeopardize projects and actions from an imagination that “… can become the fuel for action” (1996: 7). This latter kind of ‘productive’ projection characterizes the target family’s image of Portugal.

**The First Impact on Arrival in Cova da Moura**

Contrary to what Appadurai (1996) claims, migration always had a strong influence on the ideas and life of Cape Verdeans for centuries. The idea of another life ‘somewhere else’ became easier to put into practice in the 1970s due to improved means of transport and

\textsuperscript{56} Only in the 1980s did female migration start, to work in the domestic sector due to the increasing participation of woman in the Portuguese labour market. Afterwards, it was mostly a migration of families (family reunification), including a high number of married couples with many children. In 2010, men and women emigrated at a quite similar rate according to the Cape Verdean National Statistic Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Cape Verde, 2010).
communication. However, the difficulties for those who intended to leave the islands increased with Portugal's political and economic development. Furthermore, their limited knowledge of the Portuguese language and modest levels of formal instruction created major barriers to social progress and mobility among the target family members. Nevertheless, their expectations of a better life remained intact. Their indistinct understanding of migration as a destiny seemed to prepare people for lives apart, as Judite expressed:

“...It was hard to take the decision but there was the expectation of a better life, even leaving everything and your family behind... I didn’t know what was waiting for us here (in Portugal), it was like a dream of a better life that could help all of us... reality is not always what you dream about...It was hard work, but we had a roof. Also a bad reaction from the Portuguese who mistrusted us: we were considered ‘desgraçados’ (wretched) and they wouldn’t speak to us. We were invisible to them. They feared we would take their jobs away and therefore we closed ourselves inside the neighbourhood (Cova da Moura) and lived for ourselves (the Cape Verdeans). But we were able to face everything, we had to adapt and we are still alive.”

Although Akesson argues that “this adaptation is something that distinguishes Cape Verdeans from other migrants” (Akesson, 2004: 50, 51), it appears that facing discrimination from the natives, humiliating working conditions and low income in Portugal made them isolate themselves inside the neighbourhood. Family and neighbourhood networks proved to be the most important help in the first period of Judite and Lourenço's adaptation to the new country. The choice of where to settle depended on the areas connected to their social networks, usually located around big towns, such as Lisbon, Setúbal, Porto or Faro. Cova da Moura was and still is a neighbourhood where Portuguese and African communities of diverse cultural backgrounds live together.

The family lodged in primitive huts and lived in precarious conditions to save as much as they could in order to be able to send some money to their families back home, most of them in rural areas. Work was relatively easy to find due to strong social networks and economic

---

57 Poor quarters emerged and kept gradually growing in dimension as Cova da Moura and others such as: Fontainhas, 6 de Maio, Casal da Bopa, Bairro da Estrela de África, Santa Filomena, Quinta da Lage, Quinta do Mocho (Greater Lisbon), São João de Deus, Quinta da Fonte (Setúbal), Freixo (Porto), Zambujal, Horta da Areia (Faro).

58 According to the Departamento de Renovação e Habitação de Áreas Degradadas da Cidade da Amadora (Department of Housing and Renovation of Degraded Areas of the City of Amadora), the total population living in poor housing far exceeds the numbers in official reports. Officially, the total number of residents in Cova da Moura in the 1980s was 172 persons, living in 39 shacks (Survey PER- Special Re-housing Program). A survey conducted in Cova da Moura (Municipal Report, Cova da Moura, 1987) identified 836 dwellings and the number of the residents was left unaccounted.
opportunities offered in the neighbourhood (Daniel worked and still works there) and the
closeness “between Cape Verdeans” became stronger as a reaction to the hostile environment
from the autochthones. Since Judite worked alone as a domestic, she was neither connected
to, nor needed to interact with people outside Cova da Moura. The same applies to Lourenço,
whose work colleagues on the building site were mostly Cape Verdeans, living in his
neighbourhood. Lourenço adopted a humble position, feeling ‘rejected’ and in a way
excluded:

“It was two different worlds, us and the others. Even in the neighbourhood the
‘whites’ mistrusted us and considered us as the ‘poor’ immigrants. It was even a
division in the neighbourhood, the south with good houses and the north with huts. Of
course, we kept ourselves to ourselves.”

There was some friction in the relationships between the residents of the northern and
southern parts of Cova da Moura. In the 1980s, some inhabitants of the northern part (mainly
Cape Verdean) did not feel represented by the Association Cultural e Desportiva da Cova da
Moura, situated in the southern part of the neighbourhood, where mainly Portuguese
‘retornados’ and Angolans live. After the people involved had debated and emphasized their
common interests, these problems became less evident. The legitimacy of the members who
would negotiate with the Council of Oeiras about the installation of basic infrastructures in
the neighbourhood increased.

Avoiding contact with the outside world was partly self-imposed. Lourenço refers to a culture
of adaptation in their new ‘bairro’ (neighbourhood) in the host country, but socially and
hierarchically59, Cova da Moura was and still is a continuation or re-creation of their Cape
Verdean island.

The neighbourhood functioned as an important place for partial integration of the newcomers,
as an ‘island’ where they can feel safe and understood by their compatriots.

**Costa Family** – “Departure should take place in adulthood. Only then begins the period when
you can face the real problems of life.” This is how Deolinda describes her experience of
being ‘forced’ to emigrate by her mother at the age of only 14. Deolinda lived with her
mother and five brothers and sisters in Santiago. Her mother, Sílvia, did not have the

---

59 These hierarchical structures distinguish the Cape Verdean ‘badjuda’ (which refers to communities of
different islands) from the ethno-racially and culturally different ‘badius’ who originated from Santiago, the
Cape Verdean capital.
economic means to raise the children alone. Her father hardly contributed to the family income. Deolinda could not go to school for more than three years, because she had to take care of younger brothers and sisters and had other domestic duties at home when her mother was working in the fields, sometimes far from home. Deolinda’s god-mother had already offered Sílvia the possibility of taking her goddaughter to Lisbon. Given the impossibility of attaining social and economic well-being in Santiago, Sílvia decided to send her oldest daughter to the “País dos ‘brancos’” (country of the ‘whites’). Deolinda’s mother thought that such an arrangement would provide a higher standard of living, because work abroad was believed to be very well paid by Cape Verdean standards. The godmother, who had immigrated to Portugal in the 1960s, offered to help the family to find a “casa séria e decente” (decent house with a good reputation), where Deolinda could work in domestic service and become “uma mulher para a vida” (a ‘down to earth’ woman, able to work hard).

Deolinda’s ‘madrinha’ (godmother) became her ‘substitute’ mother in Portugal. Godmothers are a tradition derived from Catholicism and the ceremony of baptism and is strongly upheld by Cape Verdeans. From all interviewed Cape Verdeans, to be a ‘madrinha’ means having great responsibilities for your god-child. The selection of a godmother or godfather requires that they be someone you respect, are affectionate, have some economic well-being and be able to carry out the role of standing in or being a substitute for the parent in the event of the parent dying. In exchange for bringing up a child, the social compensation is recognition within the family and the community. Nevertheless, Deolinda felt that her godmother had taken the wrong decision, and she expressed it in an emotional way: “only after many years could I forgive my godmother, but the suffering is still there”.

When Deolinda knew that she had to leave Santiago, all the arrangements had already been made in Portugal by her godmother with her mother’s approval. She knew little of what awaited her in Algés, the suburb where she would be working. The only information transmitted to her by Sílvia was: “my mother knew that it was a family of five people, a couple with three children; the father being a naval officer”. Deolinda was scared of the unknown, the mainland and the new family. She still speaks about it with a suffering expression on her face and gets emotional when she remembers what she experienced when she left her family and friends in Santiago, thirty years ago:

“I couldn’t sleep any more, I was afraid of going by ship, of the new family, of doing everything wrong. Most of all, I was afraid of not being able to fulfill the expectations
that my godmother and my family in Santiago had of me. But I had to do it. I had to go alone on a ship to Lisbon, leave my family behind… I was just a child… you know… I was counting the days, hoping that something would make me not leave home, but deep inside I knew that this would never happen…”

These expectations produce obligations on both sides: for those who stay and for those who leave: Sílvia’s main motivation was the hope of providing a better standard of living for Deolinda and the expectation of receiving regular remittances from her daughter to help the family. Deolinda ought to feel grateful to her mother who had chosen her among all her brothers and sisters. She was the only one who was given the possibility to migrate and would be able to fulfill the high expectations that the mother and godmother placed in her. However, Deolinda does not feel too grateful and interprets this “sacrifice” (sacrifice) as fate: “in life, there are good and bad moments, but God always helped me. It made me stronger”.

The First Impact on Arrival in Algés

In the 1970s, it was common for wealthy families in Portugal to have two or three girls from the countryside or the colonies as servants in their homes. These demands came mostly from middle and upper class Portuguese households that could afford a maid or a cleaner, relying usually on Portuguese women from the rural low-class or ‘African’ women. An elderly lady of an elite family recalled: “At this time it was ‘fashionable’ to have a Cape Verdean cleaner on a daily basis and an ironing maid”. This situation provided working opportunities for ‘African’ women. “Cape Verdeans were preferred to Angolans, Guineans or other Africans due to their image of being hard working, a similar preference being noticeable for Cape Verdean men in the construction industry” (Batalha, 2004: 147). A member of the Association Clube Desportivo e Social da Cova da Moura remembered these times:

“The Portuguese families preferred young Cape Verdean girls because they were humble and adapted easily. Their household mistress took advantage of their docility and made them work for more than 10 hours a day for a meager salary. We can’t generalize, but it happened a lot… If they were alone in Lisbon and they didn’t know anyone, they had no one to complain to… You know how it is… and they were ‘illegal’ in Portugal, which made the situation even more difficult. This was even the case of some girls from Cova da Moura who went ‘serving’ because their parents had no economic means to raise them here. Many of them suffered a lot, but continued working for many years with the same family, sometimes raising more than one

---

60 These women originated from the rural exodus that occurred in Portugal in the 1950s and 1960s.
generation of children in the same household. Usually, they didn’t study and remained servants all their lives.”

These services were poorly paid and strictly controlled by their household mistresses. The upper-class lady gave me a number of reasons why she chose ‘black’ Cape Verdean servants: “I preferred ‘black’ women as domestics because they took orders from me, and they did exactly what they were told. If something was not done exactly as I ordered, they would do it again, even if they had to spend their free time”. What surprised me was the fact that she did not emphasize that ‘black’ women’s labour was cheaper and their migrant and undocumented status facilitated the work arrangements. Although Deolinda is a Portuguese citizen born in Santiago, her employer never gave her a contract during three years of work. Every week Deolinda had to carry out more tasks in the household:

“I was dusting, cleaning the entire kitchen and the toilet, helping with the cooking, and ironing. Sometimes there were so many clothes that I only finished at 10 pm. If I wanted to stay in bed a bit longer the next day the mistress would shout for me at 7 am to hurry up and prepare breakfast for the whole family. That’s how my life used to be then…”

Non-existent Portuguese legislation concerning domestic work in the 1970s facilitated emerging structures of exploitation with long working hours, no contracts and obviously no legal rights. These working conditions without any legal contract continued for years.

An anthropological study on this subject was carried out by Kesha Fikes (2009) in 1990s about Cape Verdean ‘peixeiras’ (fishsellers) who sold fish in the streets of Lisbon (mainly in the Cais do Sodré area). She evaluates the controversial debate about what racism looks and feels like in contemporary Portuguese society. The ethnographic focus was an ‘illegal’ fish market that employed both Portuguese and Cape Verdean women. As this way of selling fish was increasingly criminalized by the Portuguese government because of the sanitary risks it implied, they shifted trade and sought work in low-wage jobs such as maids, nannies or cleaners in the city’s homes and businesses. The former fishsellers experienced a ‘rationalization’ of their low-wage working place, as Portuguese women left vacancies because they tried to find occupations in less-stigmatized professions. Fikes confirmed that these Cape Verdean women were disempowered vis-à-vis a drastic reduction in their income and estrangement from mainstream society with which they could no longer interact as self-functioning entrepreneurs. She also described the “distant, yet polished” interactions, in which former colonizers and colonized “perform” normality as a strategy of coexistence. However,
some of Fikes’ conclusions are debatable, when compared to Portuguese critique. She does not mention the causes and consequences of Cape Verdiean immigration to São Tomé (2009: x) in the island of São Vicente due to the famine in 1864 (Carreira, 1982: 104). Their experience of “exploitation, brutality and hunger in São Tomé have left deeply ingrained marks…” (Beja-Horta, 2000: 152). There is even a saying among Cape Verdeans when someone is obliged to do something against his will: “Tudo é melhor que São Tomé, terra de castigo” (Anything is better than São Tomé, land of punishment). Furthermore, there is a misrepresentation of the world of domestic services in Fikes’ assertion that cleaning is the only work Cape Verdiean women are 'allowed' to do, because these jobs were also performed by Portuguese and other migrant groups (Fikes, 2009: 129). Obviously, Cape Verdiean women are not the only workers in the cleaning business, which does not mean that this area is not generally associated with African women, but they were mostly suffering from discriminative attitudes.

Nevertheless, the discrimination suffered by Deolinda during the three years in Algês was the source of her motivation to achieve some independence and mobility: “I suffered a lot and am aware now of how much I was exploited, but I always believed that, if God helped me, I could have a life of my own and support my family economically”. She experienced unfair treatment from her employer who made her work overtime without monetary compensation and used often derogatory expressions that consequently made her feel an outsider in a strange country:

“I still have ‘scars’ (metaphorically speaking) from the time when I was a teenager. I even dream of it. The separation from my family was the hardest thing. The ‘saudades’ (longings), the loneliness, the language, everything was new to me…
The first job I had in a house in Algês taught me a lesson. I will never let someone treat me this way again. I was sometimes called ‘pretinha’ (little black girl) and when they had visitors, I had to put white gloves on, not to touch the tablecloths and the plates with my bare hands. They thought I could make them dirty… I took it as mistrust and because I was ‘black’…”

Deolinda’s employer defined her through ‘race’; the diminutive ‘pretinha’ (little black girl) does not necessarily turn the expression into a nice word. Preta has always been considered

61 The word ‘race’ and comparable terms in other languages do not appear before the seventeenth century. The precursors to the racial ideology in the eighteenth century were Carolus Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, and the Comte de Buffon who classified all flora and fauna, including humans in a framework based on morphology and complexity. They were classified into subspecies on the basis of geography, skin colour, and physical traits (Banton, 1998: Chapter 2). In the mid-nineteenth century Charles Darwin (1859)
a pejorative word in the Portuguese language; its meaning is defined by the intentionality of the speaker. Gradually, it became unacceptable and was replaced by expressions such as negro, minória étnica or pessoa de cór (black, ethnic minority, coloured person) as more politically correct labels for people of African origin.

Hostile and discriminative behaviours are generally directed at the supposed manifestations of ‘otherness’ (Hirschman, 2004: 388). With her Cape Verdean upbringing Deolinda was not like the Portuguese, because she had not been socialized into their culture although they spoke the same language. This ‘stigma’ also affects the descendants of ‘others’ who must face and live with the widespread conviction that they are not able to socialize into the culture of the host country.

Discrimination of ‘blacks’ in Portugal became more apparent in the 1990s when followers of an extreme right movement started fights with African immigrants in Lisbon. Racist attacks of extreme violence happened. The worst was the murder of a Cape Verdean man, Alcino Monteiro, in 1995 by members of a Skinhead Movement and the National Action Movement (MAS) in the centre of Lisbon (Bairro Alto). His death led to the organization of the first demonstration against racism with an overwhelming participation of African and Portuguese citizens. They were supported by immigrant associations and political parties, condemning the incident. For the first time in Portugal, Africans took to the streets to claim justice. This has been one the most important collective and public protests in the Portuguese anti-racist and immigrant associative movement.

---

presented his study on the origins of species differentiation in response to environmental changes. According to his theory, race had evolved into separate subspecies over time. These interpretations and theories about the origins of human diversity were rooted in the reality of growing European military, economic and political dominance (Adas, 1989).

62 In 1969 Portuguese State Television (RTP) showed an advert by the firm of Couto for a line of hair products with the purpose to darken white hair. The text of the voice-off was the following: um preto com cabeleira loura ou um branco com carapinha não é natural, o que é natural é usar o cabelo que é seu. Restaurador Olex (a black guy with a blond wig or a white guy with corkscrew-hair aren’t natural, what is natural is using your own hair. Restaurador Olex. This advert provoked controversy due to the use of the word ‘preto’, but still continued to be shown on RTP for more than a year. Only in 2005 was production of Olex stopped for health risks provoked by the use of lead acetate in its composition.

63 This word was used in Portugal during the sixteenth century in slave registries or for places such as neighbourhoods associated with ‘blacks’, both enslaved or free, like Rua do Poço dos Negros (Street of the Pond of the Blacks) which still exists in Lisbon - an old street in an old area of São Bento.

64 On 10 June 1995, followers of the same movement murdered the Cape Verdean Alcino Monteiro in Lisbon’s Bairro Alto.

65 The Skinhead Movement and the National Action Movement were banned for their fascist ideology by the Portuguese Constitution.

66 His killing provoked a massive debate in Portugal. According to a research conducted by the Universidade Católica Portuguesa this subject appeared in 61 articles in the media.
In the same year, publication of the book *Preto no Branco* (‘Black in White’) by N’Ganga (1995), a university student and association activist from Angola, caused discussion of colonial relationships and their connections with interethnic relations in Portuguese society. This book’s critical approach represents the political attitudes of the young generation of Africans, as N’Ganga affirmed: “The real purpose of the process of miscegenation […] was […] to build an obstacle that would not allow the awakening of a black consciousness” (N’Ganga, 1995: 86). He claims that the second generation of Africans did not want to assimilate to ‘white’ norms, as colonialism had forced their parents to. They assumed their ‘blackness’ as a right and as an essential element of their identity as citizens. This statement had a great impact and provoked public discussions in the media, which improved the visibility of migrant associations and also of the ‘differences’ between first and second generation African immigrants in Portugal.

SOS Racismo had already documented the activities of skinhead groups in Portugal linked to the Movimento de Acção National (Movement of National Action), an extreme right-wing group with connections to similar organizations in other countries. On 26 May 1993 the Secretário de Estado para a Juventude (Secretary of State for Youth), Miguel Costa, stated “I must say that in Portugal this problem of intolerance, xenophobia and racism is fortunately less prevalent than in other countries. First of all, and as everyone knows, there has been a very clear policy of proximity between races and cultures since the time of Afonso de Albuquerque (a naval officer and the second Governor of India in the sixteenth century)”.

Here, this statement enters into a dialogue with Lusotropicalism logic by attributing anti-racist practices to the Portuguese since colonial times. The discourse of Lusotropicalism would become Portugal’s ideological justification for maintaining and continuing to enforce its colonial mission (Castelo, 1998). In an emblematic speech made during the celebration of 506 years since Cape Verde’s discovery by the President of the Liga de Amigos de Cabo-Verde, (League of Friends of Cape Verde), Aguinaldo Veiga, a Cape Verdean who collaborated with the *Estado Novo*, Lusotropicalism was associated with the Cape Verdean people emphasizing peaceful coexistence in the colonial empire, Christianity and ethnic

---

67 SOS Racismo was a Non Governmental Organization which drew attention to discriminatory behaviour against migrants in Portugal for 21 years.

68 “Devo dizer, contudo, que em Portugal este problema de intolerância, de xenofobia e de racismo felizmente tem uma expressão menos grave do que noutros países. Em primeiro lugar, porque todos sabemos que desde o tempo de Afonso de Albuquerque houve uma política muito clara de aproximação de raças e culturas”.

69 Lusotropicalismo (Lusotropicalism) is a term introduced by Gilberto Freyre in 1951 in a speech in Goa and appeared two years later in his book *Aventura e Rotina e um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguesas*. It is a Brazilian narrative celebrating the practice of racial-cultural intimacy among the Portuguese and colonized Africans.
conviviality: “… the human mould from which emerged the Cape Verdean people, today proclaimed as the most perfect human and social synthesis of Lusotropicalism in the world and the most concrete expression of tranquility and ethnic conviviality in peace and according to Christianity, represents a unique formula for a plan of peace in the world” (Veiga, 1966: 13). At the same conference, Álvaro Rego, the Portuguese speaker identified himself as a Cape Verdean to enhance the mutual feeling of cohesion: “I did it, as if I was a real Cape Verdean. It was no longer a question of humour: If the Cape Verdeans were Portuguese, and I was Portuguese … I was also somehow Cape Verdean!” (Rego, 1966: 26).

Racial differences have been a primordial source of identity and intergroup antagonism from the earliest times to the present, with ancient hatreds, exploitation, and discrimination being among the common patterns. There has never been any “credible justification for assuming that physical markers, such as skin colour, can be considered as ascriptive characteristics that universally predict socio-cultural characteristics” (Hirschman, 2004: 410). It was only in 1999 that the laws and social policies in Portugal prohibited discrimination in the exercise of rights based on race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin. However, reality showed a continuing infringement of rights related to racial discrimination of ethnic groups, even after legislation criminalized these acts.

Ferreira Family – Josefina and Alfredo’s life narratives are comparable with the migratory experience of other early settlers such as returning Portuguese emigrants from the former colonies, mainly from Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique. Some had lived a hard life in São Vicente, an island with scanty vegetation and partly unproductive. Alfredo resumed it in

---

70 Boletim Cultural (1966), Número Comemorativo do 506º Aniversário do Achamento das Ilhas de Cabo Verde, Liga dos Amigos de Cabo-Verde: Luanda, Angola. Agualdo Carvalho da Veiga was born in Santiago in 1916. As a lawyer, he collaborated with Salazar’s regime; worked in Guiné as President of the Municipality of Bissau, in Angola as Vogal do Concelho Economic (Economic Council), in Cape Verde as Secretary of the Governor of Cape Verde and in Portugal during the Estado Novo legislation-period of the Estado Novo in 1969: “o quadro humano de que surgiu o povo caboverdiano, hoje proclamado como a mais perfeita síntese humana e social do lusotropicalismo no mundo e a mais concreta expressão da tranquilidade e da convivência étnica na paz e na ordem do Cristianismo, fórmula talvez única para um esquema de paz no mundo.”

71 Álvaro Rego presented the following theme ‘Cabo-Verde, província mais genuinamente Portuguesa do Portugal actual’ (‘Cape Verde, the most genuine Portuguese province of Portugal at present’), “… Fi-lo como se fora um cabooverdeano genuíno. Já não se tratava duma questão de humor: Se os caboaverdeanos eram Portugueses, e eu era portugês… eu era de certo modo caboaverdeano!”

two words: “vida nhanida”\textsuperscript{73} (life of misery). In Cape Verde the word ‘nhanida’ has the sense of life of hardship. Carreira resumed the hardship of living on the islands in one sentence: “everything in these islands combines to impose on man a hard, difficult and wretched way of life” (1982: 15). For farmers, the frequent droughts\textsuperscript{74}, resulting from irregular or scanty rainfall in the 1970s, diminished the supply of basic foodstuffs and caused famine and poverty in many families. As Josefina remembered “there was not a drop of rain for more than four years and food was difficult to get in the local market”. According to Carreira, “the circumstances of life in the islands forced people into work which tied them to the soil, but in times of crisis they had nothing to do or eat” (1982: 176).

Influence exercised by relatives in Cape Verde on those who emigrated to Portugal, determine the decision of other family members to leave São Vicente. In Alfredo’s case it was a hard and sudden decision, but for the majority of migrants with relatives already living in Portugal, the project to migrate was planned for months as it involved financial resources and work prospects, as Alfredo remembers:

“I could have stayed, but my brother told me every week that he had a job waiting for me and the money was good. I thought about it for months and suddenly I wanted to leave as soon as possible. With my brother’s money I bought the ticket, but could only pay him back six months after I arrived in Portugal. I did not know what awaited me here.”

Alfredo’s economic expectation made him imagine and idealize a stable life in Portugal. His brother’s network in Lisbon could provide him with enough money to migrate and work as soon as he arrived.

**The Impact on Arrival in Cova da Moura**

Alfredo explained that he “experienced a prosperous life on the mainland where the demand for work on construction sites was high”. Immediately after arriving in Portugal, Josefina and Alfredo got accommodation in a relative’s shack in Cova da Moura where they stayed for six months. One week after their arrival, Alfredo started a job on the building site close to the neighbourhood where his cousin already worked. Josefina got a small job of 16 hours a week in a cleaning firm substituting a neighbour. Her first cleaning work was in a bank chain, 

\textsuperscript{73} A Creole Word derived from *nhani*, meaning suffering or misery.

\textsuperscript{74} The Cape Verde archipelago was drought and famine prone from 1875-1876, 1883-1886, 1889-1890, 1896-1904, 1918-1921, 1939-1943, 1945-1948. In the years from 1903 to 1948 more than 80,000 deaths occurred (cf. Carreira, 1982: 16). Until 1975 droughts continued to be frequent and prolonged.
which had to be done before the opening hour of the bank’s branches in Lisbon at 8.30 am. She worked in a team with other Cape Verdean women from different islands. Their tasks included cleaning windows, floors, desks and toilets. Each of them had their own space to clean, and they had to do it quickly before the bank employees arrived. The team had good interaction which often provoked cheerfulness and laughter, as Josefina remembers:

“It was a good time, because we were like sisters. We often had a good laugh. If one of my colleagues was irritated, I knew that this feeling had nothing to do with us. Life is just like that … The problem was the relation with the supervisor, Dina, an Angolan woman from Nova Lisboa. She didn’t speak our Crioulo, and of course that’s our language. She got mad at us, because she couldn’t understand what we were talking about. And if something went wrong, she reported it to the boss and the person involved would lose the job within a few days. Later, she did the same thing to me, she was a devil....”

For Josefina, the bank job was perfect; not very physically demanding and an opportunity for comic relief with colleagues she liked. These interactions relied on moral ideals of solidarity between Cape Verdeans from different islands. Although Josefina had just a temporary verbal work contract for three months, the good relationship between colleagues was so rewarding that she considered doing this precarious work for a long time. However, some weeks after the incident with her Angolan supervisor, Josefina stopped cleaning the bank and her group of colleagues was also dispersed, working for different firms. As for Dina, Josefina suggested that “she thinks she is something special, because she comes from a rich country, Virgin Mary has mercy on them”. Indeed, Angola held a privileged space in the former Portuguese territories in Africa due to its valuable raw materials, such as diamonds and oil. Presumably, the high esteem of the colonial power could also be reflected in the perception and attitudes of the colonized, even towards each other. An illustrative quotation from Aguinaldo Veiga, for example, compares Angola to a ‘giant’75. Josefina’s slight prejudice against Angolans extended to her neighbour Paula, born in Bié, Angola.

One day when I was visiting her, her neighbour Paula came to Josefina’s house to divide the payment of electricity bills (only one account for several households). Overhearing the conversation, I realized that Josefina intended to prove to me that she was right in her reasoning. She whispered to me “Paula sounds like Dina”. Obviously, the use of Crioulo by

---

75 As Veiga mentioned “... enxertar no corpo gigante da nossa Angola, as artérias de comunicação vitais ao progresso e ao desenvolvimento económico e social do gigante” (“... implanting in the giant body of our Angola, the arteries of communication vital for progress and social and economic development of the giant (Angola)”) (Veiga, 1966: 14).
the Cape Verdean employees constituted a marker of difference and belonging. Possibly, Dina as an Angolan had felt intentionally excluded or discriminated by the Cape Verdeans and decided to demonstrate her power and higher status in the firm.

Discrimination seems to affect different African ethnic groups and nationalities. From his arrival, Alfredo was subjected to bad working conditions, which he commented sadly: “We (the Africans) did the heavy work. If the boss called us, he didn’t call our name, just ‘ó preto, vem aqui’ (hey, black guy, come here)”. They were not only discriminated as ‘black Africans’, but also exploited by their employer. Alfredo received lower wages than the minimum wage stipulated by the state, allegedly because of his low productivity: “I always did my best and I know that I was working harder than the Portuguese that were there”. Aware of his undocumented status, the employer knew that Alfredo could neither complain to unions nor to other official institutions.

A member of the Lisbon Construction Workers Union (SCL) described how the Cape Verdean workers were treated in the 1970s:

“The Cape Verdeans were often subject to exploitation, there is no doubt about it. They didn’t speak Portuguese and they were fooled by employers without scruples. At the end of the month when they wanted to have their accounts in order, employers often pretended not to have the financial means to pay them. Sometimes the Cape Verdeans didn’t even have enough money to eat, but the employers didn’t care... They often disregarded the workers’ rights. The Union tried to intervene but not in an official way, because they were ‘illegal’ in Portugal.”


“We were always surrounded by Cape Verdeans. But with the arrival in Cova da Moura some notions of unfairness appeared. I am not referring to the other residents, with whom we got along, but to the people outside the neighbourhood ... To those, we were just work force without needs, feelings, nothing... I heard comments on the bus, like as “go to your country (Cape Verde)” or ‘what are you doing here (Portugal), you are just taking the jobs of Portuguese who could do it much better”. How do you feel, when you just try to make an honest living in a different country and are confronted every day with racists remarks... When I was pregnant and needed to take the bus no one offered me a seat, although it was reserved for the handicapped and pregnant
women … when there was a free seat, I didn’t even sit down, fearing to hear more comments.”

“Skin color and other attributes of physical appearance were used as identifiers for discriminatory treatment and group identity” (Hirschman, 2004: 399). After 1974 open racism was condemned in Portugal, although there were many cases of ‘subtle’ or ‘hidden’ racism, as Josefina expressed it. Casual observation of physical appearance was sufficient to provoke derogatory comments while Josefina was doing her work:

“When I arrived in Portugal, I did not realize how bad it really was. I was in Cova da Moura and only left the neighbourhood when the bus picked us up for work. But I’ll never forget that one day when we were doing our cleaning job in a bank; an employee arrived early and saw us cleaning his desk. He pushed us away and said: “If you don’t have anything better to do than disturb people, why don’t you do it in your own country” (she had tears in her eyes). This situation made me feel that I could never belong here. I was ‘black and a Cape Verdean’, so I should go back to Cape Verde. But life teaches me to overcome such comments and reactions, but I become more defensive and still after thirty years I don’t feel like you (Portuguese).”

These difficulties, as stated above, lead to what appears to be disharmonious coexistence of cultures and therefore in these cases the target family members take refuge in their own communities, avoiding an encounter of cultures that could lead to full social and economic integration. Isolation or segregation contribute to a lack of knowledge about what the ‘others’ are, and to the creation of prejudices and stereotypes which replace the mutual confidence that comes from socializing, cooperation and mutual knowledge. Alfredo observed:

“For us (first generation of immigrants) it was more difficult to interact with the Portuguese. We didn’t feel at ease, we used to live on our own and with our people, and we had our own habits. Either the Portuguese attacked us or just ignored us. Actually, the Portuguese were not interested in us, in our way of life. For the younger ones it’s different, they open up a bit, there is more acceptance and tolerance, but there are still problems.”

If ethnic and cultural isolation is often part of a strategy of self-protection and self-preservation of a group’s identity, it can also have negative effects, which may lead to self-exclusion and displays of aggressive behaviour against other groups. This attitude was reflected in several statements by teenagers in the neighbourhood. Adelino, born and resident “forever, until I die” in Cova da Moura affirmed angrily:

“Outside ‘Cova’ I keep hearing stupid observations all the time. If I react in an aggressive way, it is the consequence of the bad behaviour of others and it is just a normal thing to do. I am not an apologist of turning the other cheek, I despise them all (the natives)…”

112
The phenomenon described above was novel in modern Portuguese history and mainly restricted to immigrants of African origin; however, it may be comparable to what happened to Jewish minorities in Portugal during the Middle Ages\textsuperscript{76}.

Before the 1960s, there were relatively few Africans, mainly students, official colonial members permanently residing on the mainland. For the Portuguese, the customs and habits of their countries of origin, then Portuguese colonies were somewhat exotic, but during the long colonial history much had been absorbed by Portuguese society. This does not mean that Africans were integrated, without difficulties. Racism\textsuperscript{77} is still prevalent in Portuguese society against ethnic groups, including the Cape Verdean community. Especially the residents of Cova da Moura continue to be targeted as a whole, because of their physical / geographical separation.

In the specific case of Cape Verdeans, the first generation of immigrants until 1975 were not considered immigrants, as they came from a Portuguese colonial territory. There was a \textit{modus vivendi} that could be defined as mutual acceptance, especially when economic, social and cultural differences were not highlighted. If Cape Verdeans had a low social status, they were as Josefin point out just ‘invisible’, just “the workforce”. However, the invisible nature of Cape Verdean ethnicity is a phenomenon which Deirdre Meintel (1984) called ‘double invisibility’, because the continuing obscurity of Cape Verdeans parallels their historical lack of recognition within the colonial empire. At a national level, they also suffered from a ‘double invisibility’ as ‘blacks’ and as ‘black foreigners’.

This ‘invisibility’ of being ignored or unaccounted for except as mere workforce can hardly be justified, given the increase in numbers of Cape Verdeans and their community within the greater Lisbon area. They are physically present, but for the main population they remain invisible at the same time. Their presence is simultaneously growing not only among the

\textsuperscript{76} The belief that social and cultural differences between groups are inherited and immutable is an idea that emerged as a result of three transformations: European, including Portuguese, colonialism in the nineteenth century; the slavery of millions of Africans included natives of the Portuguese colonies in Africa and the development of Social Darwinism with the theory of European superiority that also became dominant in the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{77} It first appeared in 1907 in the \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} as racialism - “belief in the superiority of a particular race”. Cf. Miles, R. (1989), \textit{Racism}, Rutledge, p. 42. Racism as such appears in the writings of Frederick Hertz as early as the 1920s. It is a structure of belief that the ‘other community’ is inherently inferior and lacks the capacity to create a society comparable to one’s own.
Portuguese population, but even in the social, economic and cultural manifestations of music and gastronomy depicted by the media. Cape Verdean food has become a common staple for many Lisboans and connoisseurs of exotic foods as is the music of the late Cesária Évora, Tito Paris, Bonga, Lura, Nancy Vieira and Sara Tavares with their melancholic style similar to Fado.

V.3.2 Migration Experiences

This section will focus on what migration experiences are in the words of some Cape Verdean family members. From early ‘forced’ migration to escape poverty to a later stage when they provided for the family in the host country and at home. Institutional help facilitated integration of the new settlers in Cova da Moura.

First Generation

**Sousa Family** – When Lourenço arrived in Portugal he already knew where to stay and had work. As already mentioned, he heard through a cousin that it was relatively easy to get work on building sites in Portugal. A continuous flow of information between the relatives in Cape Verde and the migrants already settled in Cova da Moura provided valuable contacts and the help Lourenço needed when he arrived alone. Family and neighbourhood networks proved to be an important element of adaptation in the first period of migration. These networks also facilitated the possibility for other members of their family and friends to join the Sousas in Portugal. Judite affirmed that: “it’s like a chain; we have to support each other, no matter the difficulties”. In return, they offered accommodation to others who arrived in Portugal and also helped them out financially when necessary. For Judite, the obligation to help the family back home, especially her elderly parents, was strongly felt.

It became obvious in the interviews that Judite’s feelings of guilt for not having been present when her mother died were very strong. Although she had helped her mother, Judite’s family in Santo Antão would still criticize her on the basis of being female which meant a particular obligation to family, and at the same time being the oldest sister who could migrate and hence leave the mother behind. In an informal conversation she remembers:
“After our arrival other members of the family came to Cova da Moura. We also got all the information from a cousin. They all settled in the same street making things easier for all of us. Some came alone; others with children, but when they arrived, everyone found shelter in someone’s house. There were times, when five or six people slept on the floor of one small bedroom. But that is the life of a migrant, a life of sharing. I helped my mother, who was ill, to have a more comfortable life in Santo Antão until she died. Now (in 2009), I help my father and a cousin who have money problems. Our obligation is to help those who need it; God will recognize our effort one day....”

Characteristically, this help which extends to all Cape Verdean migrants also has to do with the degree to which they send remittances to their families. Although the sending of remittances to families allows households to secure basic needs and cope with the economic crisis, income fluctuations accentuate the problem. Achieving a steady flow of money is therefore one of the most important ways for households to reduce their vulnerability. Every month after Judite’s arrival in Portugal in 1976, she sent 7, 5 € to 10 € (1500$00 to 2000$00 Escudos) from a salary of 78 € (15 600$00 Escudos) to her older brother who was in charge of their parents’ finances and welfare. These remittances allowed her brother to get a cousin to help the parents in their house, allowing them to improve their life substantially in Santo Antão. With this money, her mother could have medical help and medicine to treat her disease. The regular flow of these ‘traditional’ remittances seems to have ebbed or even ceased among members of the first generation.

Second Generation

The second generation is more focused on their own lives and projects, according to Francisca’s comment:

“I have too much trouble getting by with my children. I cannot support or help my family in Cape Verde. My mother always did, but I need help myself. I know that my family (mother and brothers) were always there for me, but I think that life changes. It is not being ungrateful, but life in Santo Antão is better now; they don’t need so much support as before.”

Obviously, Francisca’s difficulties in getting by and her responsibility towards her two children without the support of the fathers, has influenced her tendency towards a more individualistic attitude. Concomitantly, Francisca’s lack of employment and the worsening economic situation in Portugal are reasons for not helping her family in Cape Verde. The

---

78 In São Vicente I was told by old and young residents in rural areas that receiving family remittances are a normal supportive attitude, a duty towards those relatives who had not had the chance to migrate to another country.
mental preparation for sacrifice, in the first generation, has diminished in the second generation of the target families. However, Francisca’s loyalty to her family was never in question. While she openly acknowledges the help and support they need, she is unable to contribute. As limited as her income is, she shows up with her children at family gatherings for festive occasions and calls Judite in Santo Antão on a weekly basis, indicating Francisca’s continuous emotional although not financial commitment.

**First Generation**

**Costa Family** – The impact that a large city in a different country with a different language had on Deolinda left some ‘scars’ upon her, even after living in Portugal for years: “I had a hard life, but this belongs to the past”. However, after working for three years in Algés, she thought: “It’s time to leave; I’ll go some place where I can find another job”.

When she knew that she could find the same kind of work somewhere else, she left Algés and went to the Algarve where new hotels were opening. In a small hotel in Portimão she was employed as a domestic. Deolinda was living in a small room just across from her place of work, which was convenient, because sometimes she would start at 6 am. On different days she would finish at 2 am, as she was working shifts. Her contact with her employer, a Portuguese woman, was limited. Deolinda knew what to do; most of their communication took place via telephone calls: “Algarve means holidays and a good time to the Portuguese. For me it was work, low salary and isolation”. The other five employees were poor Portuguese women near retirement age whose wages probably resembled Deolinda’s as these women needed to do other cleaning jobs in different households. Her income was not enough and she got another job in a café nearby, where she met Alcino. They had a son, Rui:

> “During the first year things went fine. Afterwards, Alcino just wanted to go back to his family and didn’t care for his son, I never spoke to him anymore, I don’t know if he is dead or alive.”

Alcino decided to go back to Cape Verde and Deolinda decided to move to Lisbon with Rui. Deolinda had a friend in Cova da Moura and through her she immediately found a job as a cook in the neighbourhood: “It was the first job I really liked. Not only the people, but the whole neighbourhood”. Deolinda rented the first floor of a house in Rua Direita and decided to stay:
“Without connections in Lisbon, it would have been impossible to survive here with my son. I didn’t have money, so if I hadn’t found a job immediately, I’d have been ruined, not only me but Rui, too. Fortunately, the neighbours helped me even without knowing me. It’s like it's part of my memories of Santiago.”

Deolinda told me that Cova da Moura was the first place where she felt really happy. She got to know everyone in a short time and contrary to the discrimination she had suffered before, she could count on the solidarity of her neighbours: “suddenly almost everyone helps everyone and was ‘black’ like me”. Cova da Moura was for her the place where she found real friends and support: “This place has good honest people, especially the old people like me (she is 48 years old)”.

It was also there she met the father of Luisa and Dália: “a violent man, always suspicious”. The neighbourhood social network can leak secrets about the life of migrants in Portugal, and consequently give them and their families a bad reputation in their place of origin, as Deolinda confirmed:

“My husband was always jealous without reason. When he heard that some other men were betrayed, he would come home and be violent against us. When he was working far from home, he had people spying on me to know all my movements … sometimes he knew what I was doing before I did. Those were difficult times that ended in divorce.”

Apparently, the mere suspicion of Deolinda’s infidelity was the motive for much of the common domestic violence she and the children suffered. Obviously, it led to the relationship’s instability (word spread to Santiago) and consequently to separation. Nevertheless, Deolinda stayed in the same house in Cova da Moura for more than two decades: “Although I’m not living there anymore it will always be my house and Cova da Moura my neighbourhood”.

First Generation

Ferreira Family – Josefina felt ‘at home’ in Cova da Moura. The couple was surrounded by family members living close by. Just like themselves, they had recently arrived from São Vicente. There is a difficult balance between the economic benefits of migration to a host country and the emotional costs identified as the loss of contact with one’s kin. This idea was expressed by Josefina as “the main difficulties” which she identified as “the need to earn money and leave your loved ones behind”: “God knows when or if I will ever see them
again”. The concept of ‘emotional labour’ was introduced by Hochschild (1975) referring to the use of emotions in an organizational and private setting. This notion can be applied to this family, because it is emotional labour that allows the maintenance of close kin connection spread over various countries during long periods of time. The term has been used in the literature on household and domestic workers (Constable, 1997, Parrenas, 2001, Sorensen, 2002), describing the intimate negotiation with family members left behind. The emphasis on the difficult balance between the economic benefits of migration and its emotional costs includes the act of sending remittances, ‘overcompensate’ (Parrenas, 2001: 323) for the physical absence at a psychological level, in order to rid their conscience of a sense of guilt, as Josefina confirmed:

“What I want is that all the members of my family can live a life without worries. They are far from me and that is already distressing for them, for me and for my husband. Despite our weekly phone calls their presence is important for me. My children are in Switzerland. I see them three times a year, are they well? You may say what you want on the phone, but if you talk face to face it’s a different thing, but ‘sodad’ (longing, homesickness)... What keeps me going is the relationship with our neighbourhood; there is mutual help, because everyone here has the same problems ...”

‘Sodad’ (saudade) is also an expression repeatedly used by Josefina – a compensation for harsh reality; although in Cova da Moura she could reproduce the same rituals she had in Cape Verde. For the Cape Verdeans ‘sodad’ 79 is the ‘national emotion’ (Akesson, 2004: 44). This strong feeling is associated with separation from loved ones, an almost traumatic experience of the initial separation, which slowly diminishes, leaving its somewhat nostalgic leitmotiv in Cape Verdean musical and literary culture 80. In colonial times, this recurrent term was already mentioned with positive connotations and later used to distinguish Cape Verdean ‘feeling’ from other mentalities: “With the epoch of Infante D. Henrique another dimension was added to Lusitanian history: the ‘saudade’” (Veiga, 1966:12) 81. As Josefina mentioned later “we are used to this separation, it is the Cape Veredean destiny”. This sense of fatalism

79 In Portugal, the expression ‘saudade’ is associated with the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa who portrayed Portugal as a nation, destined to depart and discover other countries.
80 Cf. Cesária Evora’s ‘national anthem’ entitled ‘Sodade’, which was curiously enough first popularized on the album Angola 74 (Bonga, 1974).
81 “Com a época do Infante D. Henrique foi acrescentada mais uma dimensão à história lusíada: a da saudade” (Veiga, 1966: 12).
can be linked to what is taught by the Catholic Church. For many Cape Verdeans living in the neighbourhood may be linked to this fatalistic faith, but it lies also in its support, morally as well as economically. In Josefina’s particular case in Cova da Moura, she can speak the same Crioulo with her relatives and neighbours, as their circle of friends often originated from the same islands. She can find the same ingredients to prepare cachupa as in Cape Verde and she can buy ‘grogue’ of Santo Antão in the grocery next door. She can buy the CDs of mornas or kuduro in the local record shop, celebrate the festive dates of Cape Verde and even listen to Sunday mass in Crioulo:

“When I arrived in the ‘bairro’, I couldn’t express myself in ‘mais ou menos português’ (acceptable Portuguese language). I wanted to do exactly the same things I used to do in São Vicente, even though it was not the same. In the ‘bairro’ I could buy like I used to buy in Cape Verde. Even the mass in the church was in Crioulo - a blessing; I could understand everything the priest said. It was not the same, but it was a bit of the island in our ‘bairro’... and the ‘sodad’ for my mother and neighbours ... those were difficult times. We had to leave but the ‘sodad’ remains.”

The hostility of the migratory experience that Josefina explained was also aggravated by cultural differences, language difficulties and a non-understanding of the organization of the host society. Their scarce free time was spent mainly inside the neighbourhood even to go shopping, while the outside area was reserved for work and to go to church.

The priest of Damaia Church has accompanied the Cape Verdean community of Cova da Moura for more than thirty years. He is apprehensive about the monetary situation and tried to receive funding from welfare - until now unsuccessfully. His mission is to “give moral support to these humble and struggling people”. He was the confidant of many and noticed that the faith is growing in the younger generations, contrary to the tendency in other parishes. His assumption is that in these “difficult times, young people realize that materialism is not everything and hopefully turn to more spiritual matters”.

**Second Generation**

The Catholic Church provides assistance to families in precarious situations and its nursery school offers free school attendance and meals to children until the age of five. Some

---

82 The Census of 2011 published by INE (Instituto nacional de Estatística/National Institute of Statistics) registered that 25 806 (73,62%) of Cape Verdean citizens living in Portugal were Catholics.
members of the second generation have benefited from the facilities, like Albertino’s son, who has attended this play-school since he turned one year old. His mother Marisa expressed her fear that this service may come to an end soon, due to the critical economic situation, since the church budget is mainly based on donations from private firms:

“It is a very good nursery school, and the teachers are very aware of the economic difficulties that we face at the moment. They even give second hand clothes to children that cannot afford to buy new ones. And the food is very good, too. We are very worried about the possibility of closing the school, because I am working the whole day - where would I leave Pedro? I could not pay a private play-school and Moinho da Juventude is full…”

The importance of the Catholic Church, ranging from spiritual to social activities, helped integration in the new neighbourhood. Before the emergence of the associations, it provided the only support for many immigrants that could not afford to live in Portugal. In times of general economic crisis, these activities are again of major importance in the neighbourhood, because government subsidies have been reduced and private contributions are not enough to maintain the social services provided for the residents of Cova da Moura.

V.3.3 Government Policies regarding Legalization and Family Reunification

The population of Cova da Moura consisted in the 1980s of Portuguese and African citizens, many of whose descendents were born in Portugal. 72% of the residents were foreign citizens and two thirds of them were Cape Verdians. In this section, I explain how the new laws and policies concerning immigration, introduced by the Portuguese State, changed the status of almost all members of the target families and many other immigrants who arrived in Portugal after the 1980s.

Immigration and nationality laws explicitly pointed to the existence of new communities and consequently to new social categories to which these immigrants pertained. These laws limited claims to Portuguese citizenship by former colonial African citizens and their descendents in the Diaspora. This process started after the Revolution (25 April 1974) in Portugal and the ensuing decolonization, in order to close off the possibilities of Portuguese nationality for non-Portuguese and their descendents from Africa.
The new constitution of 1975 preserved the old law of 1959 that granted immediate Portuguese citizenship to all people who were born in the Portuguese empire. The citizenship law (Decree-Law 305A/1975) that revoked Portuguese nationality status from former Portuguese African citizens did not define the terms of nationality under which Africans would become nationals of their new nation states. Furthermore, the law (Decree-Law 308-A-75 of 24 July) withdraws Portuguese nationality from many Portuguese citizens born in the ex-African colonies, creating uncertainties in a substantial number of Cape Verdeans who claimed Portuguese citizenship.

In 1981, there were 27 000 people from the PALOPS (Países Africanos de Língua Portuguesa, Portuguese Speaking African Countries) living in Portugal, representing 45% of the foreign population and considered legal residents (Baganha, 2005: 29). The nationality and immigration laws of 1981 (article nº 1, Law 37/81 of 3 October 1981) defined who was, or was not, entitled to Portuguese nationality and determined the acquirement of Portuguese citizenship for Africans born in former colonies. Consequently, the implications of this new law affected the life trajectories of all members of the target families, as Alfredo complained: “to be ‘illegal’ put us at the mercy of people with good or bad intentions”. This law determined that all citizens born in the newly independent African countries were considered foreigners in Portugal. In addition, the descendents of Africans born in Portugal would not be recognized as Portuguese citizens unless their parents had been legally working and residing in the country for a minimum of six consecutive years as documented citizens. It thus excluded most members of the target families born (or not) in Portugal from acquiring Portuguese citizenship.

Whoever intended to immigrate in Portugal after 1981 had to apply for a visa at the Portuguese embassy in the country of origin to get permission to enter. With laws concerning deportation, residency and work visas, also passed in 1981 (Law nº 37/81 of 3 October) and 1982 (Decree-Law nº 322/82 of 12 August), a legal framework emerged that jeopardized the rights and political claims of undocumented migrants. A member of ‘SOS Racismo’ explained: “many migrants did not meet these requirements or could not prove their employment or residency status for six consecutive years”. Such laws threatened the citizenship of many second generation Africans who were born in Portugal.

In order to regulate immigration the Portuguese authorities denied automatic Portuguese
citizenship to those who were born in the former African colonies whose parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents had not been born in Portugal or who until the Revolution in 1974 and had not been living for more than five years in Portugal. These measures provoked a massive wave of undocumented migrants in Portugal.

Josefina, Judite, Alfredo and Lourenço’s common experience was that all of them arrived in Portugal with temporary visas and overstayed the period allowed, as Alfredo explained:

“When I came here I had a short-term visa. When the visa expired I had neither time nor money to renew it. I was always afraid; when I saw a policeman, I started panicking. I could not return to São Vicente, I had my life here ... my family, everything. Even so, I remained Cape Verdean.”

In the case of the Cape Verdean families in this study, being undocumented while working and residing in Portugal was tolerated as long as they did not get into trouble with the police. However, the fear of being found out by the authorities increased the partly self-inflicted isolation of many of the residents of Cova da Moura.

In order to obtain legal status and residence in Portugal the Sousas applied in the 1980s for a ‘residence visa’ which was the first necessary step for the subsequent possibility of receiving a ‘residence permit’. For the ‘residence visa’ to be granted, they had to comply with two main conditions: means of subsistence and accommodation. To obtain this, it was enough to have a work contract or the written promise of a work contract. To legally remain in Portugal with a ‘permit to stay’, they had to renew it for a maximum period of five years. As neither Judite nor Lourenço had any written contract, they consequently could not prove their means of subsistence and accommodation, because their house was not legally registered. Since they could not comply with these requirements the ‘residence visa’ was denied. Judite explained how it was impossible for her to ‘legalize’ her situation:

“I came to Portugal with a temporary visa. To renew it, I would have had to spend 280500 (1,40 Euro) and this was too expensive for me at the beginning of my stay here. I did not care, and I was not aware of the consequences. No one from Cova da Moura was ever afraid of being deported. I don’t know anyone who actually was, although I knew of this possibility... Only in the 1990s there was a legal possibility, but I didn’t apply, because I was afraid of being sent out of the country, and at that time our life began to be more stable. I still couldn’t apply, because everything - house, work, even the family - was undocumented.”
Like Judite, the majority of Cape Verdeans who lived in Cova da Moura and wanted to stay in Portugal were undocumented due to their visas having expired, and the possibility to apply to regularize their status as foreign citizens in Portugal was non-existent as so many lived precarious lives as undocumented citizens.

The Nationality Law of 1993 (Decree-Law nº 59/93 of 3rd March) deals with granting, acquisition and loss of Portuguese nationality, as well as registering, proving and contesting nationality. Portuguese nationality was granted to citizens born in Portuguese territory, who were children of foreign nationals. They should express their wish to be Portuguese and have one parent who had legally resided in Portugal for at least five years. Since 1994, the law has required that such residence be “de jure”, meaning that the applicant should be a legal resident. Meeting this criterion requires a simple declaration to obtain Portuguese nationality. However, as most of the first generation Cape Verden immigrants were undocumented, they were not able to apply for legal status. Children born after this law kept their parents’ nationality. This applied to most of the second generation members of the target families who could not apply, because their parents were not legally living in the country, and thus they remained Cape Verden.

After implementation of the changed Portuguese Nationality Law, one year after its approval the new criterion applied was the *jus sanguinis*, which determines that nationality depends on one of the progenitors. It also defines that children of foreigners born in Portugal are considered Portuguese, if their parents have had a valid residence permit for more than six years for citizens of Portuguese speaking countries and for others ten years.

Being a foreigner created some constraints even for the second generation, as Francisca confirmed:

“I like and I don’t mind being Cape Verden, although I was born in Cape Verde and came to Portugal at three months [of age]. Even though I don’t have my status legalized, it would mean spending too much money and time in the Cape Verden Embassy to get it. So it’s a problem. I can’t get a work contract. Nevertheless, I can get free welfare for me and my children and education for the kids, even being ‘illegal’ in this country. Another problem is that I don’t have a passport and Paula [her daughter] is in London, which means that I can’t see her…”

For Francisca, the requirements to get valid documentation as a Cape Verden national were too expensive and time-consuming. Similar complaints were expressed by many in the
neighbourhood. Apparently being an undocumented citizen does not have any major consequences, as long as no official documents are needed.

Francisca, as an undocumented citizen, was admitted to school when she was six years old. The Portuguese education system offers “Primary school which is universal, compulsory and free”. Portuguese law does not deny attendance at state schools to children without legal status: “I went to school, but I didn’t have my nationality up to date. I was neither Cape Verdean, nor Portuguese, and this was the case of the majority of my classmates at the school in Cova da Moura.” The same applied when she needed to go to a public hospital - she was entitled to general health care.

Being undocumented in Portugal made several members of the target families invent new strategies to fulfil their dreams by circumventing the obstacles of immigration laws. The example of the Sousas shows that, despite the difficulties in obtaining legal status as immigrants in Portugal, it was not impossible to reunite the family. Portuguese legislation allows those with a ‘residence’ and ‘short term visa’ permit for at least one year to invite their kin: any legal immigrant “has the right to bring his family together by having those members of his family who are outside Portugal join him, provided that they have lived with him in another country or are financially dependent on him” (Decree-Law 4/2001 of 10th January). However, if a family member’s current situation is not ‘legal’, he or she will have to pay a fine to be eligible for family reunification. Lourenço’s case illustrates the difficulties of the process. After having stayed and worked in Portugal for one year as an undocumented Cape Verdean citizen. He applied to legalize his situation and be reunited with Judite and Daniel. Previously, he had asked for a ‘short term visa’ permit for himself. Before he knew the answer, he asked for a ‘temporary visa’ – one year of permanence (renewable) for his family members. That was the only way to achieve family reunification. For the following reasons, he gave up:

“I had already some sort of steady job on the building site, but no contract. I had already built a shack in Cova da Moura, but not legalized it. It was time to bring Judite

---

83 It spans nine years and is divided into three cycles: the first is four years, the second two years and the third three years.

84 Family members eligible for reunification are: spouses; under-aged sons/daughters and children adopted by the immigrant or his/ her spouse (under 18 years old); first degree ancestors of both the immigrant and his/ her spouse (but only when they are economically dependent on the immigrant or his/her spouse); and under-aged brothers/sisters under the custody of the immigrant residing in Portugal (cf.: Law 23/2007 of 4 July 2007, art. 98 nº1).
here. The process was denied, because my temporary tourist visa from Cape Verde was already expired, anyway, it needed too many papers and too much money. They come anyway ‘illegally’, as Cape Verdeans.”

To apply for family reunification, Lourenço had to prove that he could provide financial and housing conditions to receive family members and he had no documents that confirmed these conditions. No objective criteria were defined for these financial and housing assessments, but since he was living in an ‘illegal’ house, working without a contract, with an expired visa, he could not fulfill these requirements.

The Serviços de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) (Service for Foreigners and Borders)\textsuperscript{85}, dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, approves this process which takes a legal period of nine months to assess and answer. This period is extended in most cases to one or two years simply because of the backlog of requests. Consequently some of the most important documents required have expiry dates that are usually exceeded.

To enter Portugal in the 1980s, Albertino, a cousin from Josefina, had a shot term visa (for three months) issued by the Portuguese embassy in Cape Verde. He wanted to remain in Portugal even after the validity of his visa had expired. To apply for an extension of his visa he had to prove that he had a valid working contract and as that was not the case he had to pay a considerable amount of money. This is how Albertino reflected:

“I went to Portugal with a visa. A month before the trip I got my three-month ‘tourist visa’. I did not know if I would stay in Portugal or not, or go to another country. After the visa expired, I never had time or money to renew it, and I became an ‘illegal’ worker. I told my wife that she was going to Portugal as soon as possible. I had always heard that wages were much better here and I was young and eager to build a better future for me and my family…. I told my family I was going to send them money and soon bring more family members and my brother also … Yes, I was easily employed but sometimes I did not receive money for my work and could not complain to anyone. I was ‘illegal’ here. Then I survived on ‘biscates’ (odd jobs on the side) but I

\textsuperscript{85} The Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) is a security service under the Ministério da Administração Interna (Ministry of Home Affairs), with administrative autonomy and is part of the internal security policy of the country. The mission of this service is to implement the Portuguese policy for immigration and asylum in agreement with the provisions of the Constitution and the Law, and the Government’s guidelines. The objectives of this service are to control the movement of persons at borders, the permanence and activities of foreigners in Portugal, as well as examining, promoting, co-ordinating and executing measures and actions related to these activities and to migratory movements.
always had work … I never thought that later, having paid no income tax, I'd have no social rights”.

Albertino reported that his decision to migrate was motivated by the possibility to overstay in Europe and get steady work in another job other than working in the fields in São Vicente. Like so many others who left the country, he overstayed in foreign destinations and tried a new line of work which he hoped would provide a steady income every month.

In the Town Hall of Amadora, the person responsible for regularization processes recalled how hard it was for the immigrants that arrived in Cova da Moura:

“The family reunification process is very slow and causes a lot of suffering for the different parties involved. Usually, the father emigrates and has to wait for his legalization process to be concluded, as only legal immigrants can apply for the family reunification process and only after staying legally in Portugal for at least one year. Moreover, it is necessary to prove that the immigrant has financial and housing conditions to receive the family members. The average waiting time for the actual authorization for family reunification is in most cases almost two years. So, together with the first year that the immigrant has to wait to apply for the process, the average waiting time to bring family members to Portugal is actually around three years. All these aspects increase the number of family members entering Portugal through more informal processes, and leads to a high number of immigrants living and working illegally.”

That was the case of Deolinda’s mother, Sílvia, who arrived in Portugal from Santiago in the late 1990s after her daughter had applied for family reunification. After Sílvia’s husband had died, she decided to move to Cova da Moura to help Deolinda raise her two daughters Dália and Luisa. She applied for a ‘temporary’ residence permit (for two years / renewable), in order to obtain the same rights as defined by law for foreign residents. According to Deolinda, who had Portuguese nationality (as she came to Portugal when Cape Verde was still a Portuguese colony), the process took a long time and some of the documents expired. She tried a second time and somehow the application was ultimately successful:

“My mother (Sílvia) came to Portugal to help me. Since she is a widow she applied for a temporary permit. It was difficult because it took a long time to get an answer and in the meantime the documents from Cape Verde expired and I had to prove that I could support my mother financially. This was another problem, because I earned the minimum wage and my two daughters were teenagers and studying at home. But finally, after three years she got her permit.”
Only three years later did Deolinda’s mother receive a residence permit that made her eligible for social and welfare benefits. The legalization procedure in Portugal was a long process, with bureaucratic constraints. The inefficiency of the institution that deals with foreigners' cases created extra difficulties for immigrants so that many eventually gave up their regularization process. This fact has resulted in an increase in numbers of undocumented immigrants, as well as family reunification difficulties. This last aspect has consequences in terms of the number of women and children living undocumented, waiting to solve their legalization process, as some of them have joined their family in Portugal through an informal family reunification process.

The difficulty in getting a work contract in domestic services, construction and fishing, limited the eligibility to apply for a legal residence permit in Portugal. This impediment obviously restricts the possibility of obtaining the necessary authorization for family reunification for Cape Verdean immigrants and the process causes a cyclical situation leading to further illegal immigration.

There were two amnesty periods, in 1992 (Decree-Law 212/92 of 12 October) and in 1996 (Law nº 50/96 of 24 May). During the first period, 6778 Cape Verdeans obtained Portuguese nationality and during the second, 6872 legalized their status (SOS Racismo, 2002: 158-170). According to a member of SOS Racismo, “these measures aimed to obtain correct numbers of the undocumented migrant labour force that was estimated to be much greater than the legal resident population”. None of the target family members were eligible. In 2001, an extraordinary amnesty law (Decree-Law 4/2001 of 10 January) authorized residence in Portugal for one year, renewable for further periods; 6073 Cape Verdeans were eligible.

By 2006 (Decree-Law nº 237A /2006 of 14 December), the vast majority of the target families' members were able to obtain Portuguese nationality, since they were born in Portugal as children of foreign parents who had lived in Portugal for more than five years. This was possible through implementation of the new criterion of _ius soli_, contrary to the law of 1981 (Law nº 37/1981 of 3 October) that emphasized _ius sanguini_. A further premise for acquisition of the nationality, important for several members of the target families was that a minor who had completed the first grade of primary school in Portugal was eligible. This law had a great impact in facilitating the acquisition of Portuguese nationality especially for second and third generation immigrants.