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

Valadas Casimiro, E.M.

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VII. Stage III - Adaptation and Accommodation

VII.1 Social Integration/ Relationships among Neighbours

In this section, behavioural expectations and the relationship between family members and neighbours in Cova da Moura are analyzed. Is solidarity restricted to the first generation? The first generation could rely on neighbours who helped each other on almost all occasions, but the second generation's situation is different. Judite's appeal is based on the assumption of a 'Cape Verdean nature', rather than on adaptation to social circumstances: "The residents of this neighbourhood are known for their solidarity, that's how we are. And that's how it should remain".

Almost all those interviewed in Cova da Moura confirmed that they highly valued strong social relations with neighbours and other family members and had clear views on what this type of behaviour requires. Deolinda mentioned: "good relations mean that neighbours assist each other in their daily life, they look after older people and children; they give them meals and pick them up from school. Even in times of sickness, accidents, burglaries, death and any other emergencies".

The physical closeness of Cape Verdean neighbours in the host country makes them part of the family. Neighbours are supposed to "look out for each other", an old resident told me. Only this kind of relationship enabled Judite to organize her work and simultaneously raise her children without a husband:

"I left home at 5.30 am every morning. The children were still in bed; my cousin who lived next door went to work at the same time, so the two neighbours that lived opposite would come to our house at 8 am to give breakfast to Daniel, Martin and Francisca. The children stayed outside playing almost all day, knowing that Anabela (the neighbour) was always at home and would look after them if they needed something. She gave them the lunch I had already prepared the night before and dinner too. When it grew dark they would go to her house or stay at home and she would take care of them."

Organization of the children's daily routine was only possible because Anabela was not working and willing to look after them. The lack of nursery schools in the neighbourhood in the 1970s and Judite's long working hours made this kind of supervision indispensable. Only in the 1980s were the Clube Desportivo da Cova da Moura and Moinho da Juventude

Associations founded to channel the children's activities, and the Primary School B1 da Cova da Moura opened in 1988.

However, only with the family's permission are neighbours allowed to discipline a child. Judite described how this kind of informal neighbourly support-system is now slowly disappearing since she arrived in Cova da Moura in the 1970s:

“My neighbours were part of my family. They helped me to raise my children...they looked after them. This was the normal relationship between neighbours. Everyone needed the help of everybody else. Now it is different...look at Francisca, she does not ask the neighbours for help and does not go to their house for a chat, too much gossip, she dislikes it... You know, now the children are at school all day and neighbours are only called in emergencies.”

It seems that relationships in the neighbourhood are changing, as can be concluded from Francisca's expectations of her neighbours, who were viewed with certain mistrust, while members of the first generation still preserve the same conviviality as before. Good relations mean that neighbours are able to trust each other and do not “tell the life of others to everyone”, as Deolinda says. Gossip is not fostered since there is a close dependency upon each other. Such relationships imply that money can be borrowed, food can be asked for, houses or cars can be repaired, and children can be taken care of. Inevitably, and contrary to Judite's opinion expressed above, such a caring relationship also means that people get to know about each others' lives and acquire a right to make comments on and interfere in their lives.

Second Generation

Obviously, the relationships with neighbours must have changed from the first to the second generation. While the first generation could expect social and economic ‘family-like’ sharing, as Judite mentioned, the second generation has privileged relationships with neighbours reduced to extreme situations. What has remained of the old support relationships is emergency care. In a recorded conversation, Francisca complained about the disappearing sense of unity and trust and the increase of gossip, carelessness and mistrust, especially among young people, who seem to be more self-aware and self-centered, emphasizing their individuality. As a result of these changes, many residents and also some members of the target families preferred to ‘stick to themselves’ and close family. Francisca told me that she

happily greets her neighbours in the street, but does not get too involved, since she expects it to cause gossip and problems:

“Yes my neighbours are OK. I greet them when I see them in the street, but this is as far as I go. I go home and get on with my own life alone, with the help of my mother, my aunt and my brothers. If they invite me and my children to a party I will go, but not always, it depends.... If they need help, I will try to help them, as I did before. But I do not go to their house and spend much time with them just talking. You know, in Cova da Moura there is a lot of gossip, jealousy, envy and news travels fast, which only causes problems. They tell their own version of a story or may accuse you of bad behaviour or something else. No, I'd rather keep to myself”.

Francisca's statement represents the widespread attitude of the second generation, which is not immune to the growing influence of globalization and its levelling effects. The receptiveness of this second generation to publicity, consumerism and middle class values propagated by the media undermines the traditional ethics of their parents.

However, a leading member of the Clube Desportivo e Social da Cova da Moura Association pointed out an internal factor that may have caused these changing relations between neighbours. They are related to the composition of the community. First of all, he mentioned the arrival of “new people” (drug dealers and drug addicts) since 2005 in the area, especially in the main street, Rua Direita. In the time I spent there during my field work I witnessed how several addicts, mainly male, met in the main street in daytime, buying and selling drugs. In the Lisbon of the 1990s, there used to be a shanty community called Casal Ventoso, where cocaine, heroin and other prohibited substances were trafficked (cf. Chaves, 1999, Vasconcelos, 2003). When Casal Ventoso was demolished to be rebuilt, addicts and drug dealers moved to other areas and some of them went to Cova da Moura.

According to this member of the Association, the drug dealers are outsiders who use Cova da Moura as a smuggling area: “these intruders show a behaviour that possibly exerts a negative influence on the teenagers and gives a bad name to the whole neighbourhood”. An official organization, ‘Portas Abertas’, recently established in the neighbourhood, advising and helping users of hard drugs, has already detected several cases among young residents. “Outsiders coming into the community” are also blamed for the changes in the traditional support system between neighbours which diminish active participation in community life. Apart from that, people's lives have not only become economically more difficult, but also fragmented. As a result, community life has lost importance and relevance for many residents. The same member confirmed this development:

“It is a problem at the moment (with the drug smuggling). We cannot relax in our own house, people are afraid. Of course many people benefit from it, but it is bad for the kids and a bad example. The people here are honest and work hard. Sometimes we are afraid at night and friendship is not the same as some years ago when anyone could go to anyone else’s house at any time, if they needed something. Now, there is no time and no motivation, it is a different neighbourhood”.

It is hard to say whether the quality of social relationships in the community has decreased or whether this is a perception similar to the idea of the elderly that “some years ago everything was better”. However, it is a fact that crime rates have increased 8,3%⁹⁹ and fragmentation in terms of family units has grown. The perceptions of what people can expect from their neighbours and the extent to which they can trust them has changed. The second generation members feel that they can expect neighbours to help them, but only in emergencies. The former level of social relationships and exchange seems to have become more restricted due to mistrust, gossip and differences in values and attitudes, as mentioned by two families. Daniel felt that the “relationship between neighbours has changed, as has the neighbourhood over time. From very united to everybody for themselves. It has something to do with the hardships of life. Of course, if help is needed they are there, but not like before”. Fragmented relations within the community and increasing insecurity definitively affect the life of the residents in Cova da Moura.

VII.2 The Changes in Family Organization

In this section, the focus will be on the changes in family organization and conjugal relationships in two generations of the target families.

First Generation

The role of the three women of the first generation of the target families as wives, mothers and breadwinners was essential to keep the family united. Alleged male violence and unreliability in the first generation and their irresponsibility in the second generation was present, but Cape Verdean woman considered this behaviour as traditionally and culturally conditioned.

⁹⁹ Polícia de Segurança Pública, Damaia, 2012.

“The ideal of family unity is characterized by mutual attachment, regular social contacts and a reciprocal flow of material and nonmaterial benefits” (Akesson, 2002:113). But family dynamics change over time with migration and through generations. There were important changes going on in the family organization of different generations and in the conjugal relationships of the target group. All members of the first generation (aged over 50) of the three families were married; in two families more than once. For the first generation of Cape Verdeans that arrived in Portugal in the 1970s, the dominating norm was to marry and have a lifelong relationship¹⁰⁰. The idea of the nuclear family was adopted from the Portuguese model based on the Catholic religion (Carreira, 1984). Despite this family orientation, extramarital relations were very common. The man was considered head of the household and provider of the main source of income, usually through local work in fishing, agriculture, construction or by improving the living conditions of his family through emigration. Even now, the image of a ‘responsible father and good provider’ contributes to a man’s reputation in the neighbourhood and also among his male friends, as Lourenço stated:

“I may spend a lot of time with my friends in the bar around the corner, but I always send money from where I am, to help my family survive. I worked a lot, sometimes overtime, so that they had enough to live. Relationships come and go, but no one can say that I didn’t care for my children.”

However, this version of Lourenço was called into question by Judite, who claimed that her husband would only send money once, while being at sea for four months, and not enough to maintain the household: “It was a bit of money for us and the rest was for him to hang around drinking ... you know how men are”. Judite had to work long hours to pay her expenses and support her children.

In a long-term relationship, a partner willing to provide for the family is one of the most important factors. But Deolinda blamed the fathers of her children for economic neglect, maltreatment and infidelity: “My first husband gave me money when he felt like it, but we had to eat every day and pay the rent every month. When he had money he had other ways to spend it”. During my interviews with the residents of Cova da Moura, I was told that many Cape Verdean men maintain sexual relations with more than one partner at the same time. Some women said – and not disapprovingly: “they are natural ‘konkistadores’ (conquerors)”.

¹⁰⁰ The Census of 2011 published by INE (Instituto nacional de Estatística/National Institute of Statistics) registered 7079 (18,2%) of married Cape Verdean citizens living in Portugal.

Apparently, this attitude is considered a ‘cultural aspect of being a Cape Verdean man’. Deolinda’s husband Justino could be unfaithful without any constraint¹⁰¹ as she testified:

“My husband usually went to the cafés in Rua Direita until late at night. Sometimes I had to get him - so drunk he was that he could not walk anymore. I knew that he wasn’t faithful, but we (Cape Verdean women) are used to this. Men always jump from bird to bird...but they return to the nest. Women stay at home.”

This behaviour was accepted among the first generation females of the target families, who explained to me that “they did the same in Cape Verde - my father and probably my grandfather”¹⁰². Deolinda’s acceptance of her husband’s infidelity is blamed on the attitude of ‘Cape Verdean men’, but at the same time she considers him responsible, because he returns home to his wife despite his infidelity. On the other hand, it is socially unacceptable if women maintain a relationship with more than one man at the same time. Justino, for example, would never accept the same behaviour from Deolinda: “No Cape Verdean man could stand disloyalty from his wife. I would leave her immediately”. A husband’s loss of control over his wife appears to be interpreted as a sign of weakened masculinity. However, it is not at all uncommon for female members of the target families to experience a number of conjugal relationships and have children with more than one man during their lifetime. Judite had her son Daniel before she married Lourenço but there would be harsh criticism if she maintained other extra-conjugal relationships. The mere suspicion of female infidelity was the cause of domestic violence experienced by several female members of the target family, as Judite admitted: “Lourenço was sometimes violent just because he heard a comment from his pals. It was unbearable”. These situations led to separation and later to the divorce of the couple.

Second Generation

In the second generation (aged over 21) only Daniel and Martin are married. In this age group, only Francisca is single¹⁰³; Albertino, José and Rui are living in *de facto* union¹⁰⁴. The

¹⁰¹ In his book *Cabo Verde: Aspectos Sociais: Secas e Fomes do Século XX* (1984), António Carreira shows that these relationships have been common from the time Cape Verde was a Portuguese territory and the Portuguese slave-owners considered female slaves as their propriety.

¹⁰² Andrade confirmed in his book the “widespread occurrence of male extramarital relationships in Cape-Verde” (Andrade, 1996: 47).

¹⁰³ The Census of 2011 published by Instituto Nacional de Estatística/INE (National Institute of Statistics) registered 29 974 (77,06%) of single Cape Verdean citizens living in Portugal.

slightly younger Cristina and Carla (16-18 years) are single. Among the second generation, most of the members do not consider marriage in the near future, which corroborates Akesson's conclusions: "These facts and convictions seem to illustrate the weakening of the institution of marriage, which is linked to an increasing instability in the relationships between men and women" (Akesson, 2009: 387).

Male irresponsibility was identified as one of the main causes for not getting married, as the parents did. Francisca never considered this option, even having three children with different fathers:

"I never wanted to get married, because I experienced my parents' relationship ... even after having a child at an early age. Now... it's OK to have boyfriends, but marrying involves a lot more responsibilities, and I am not willing to suffer from it. Men just can't be trusted."

The traditional and cultural aspects of men's behaviour evoked by the first generation do not seem to fit in with the image and gender expectations of the second generation. Francisca just wanted to escape from commitments and responsibilities and protect herself from future problems after her experience of an early pregnancy. Early pregnancies are common in Cova da Moura. Sexual life is said to begin around the age of 13. There are so many cases of teenage pregnancies in the neighbourhood that the Dr. Pedro D'Orey da Cunha school and the Moinho da Juventude Association organize debates to inform about how to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Often the pregnancies are intentional, even if the girls are in their early teens, as in the case of Marlene:

"I had my first baby at 14. I was at school and I liked a classmate who was also my neighbour. I wanted the child, because I liked him and also, because I was treated like a woman in the neighbourhood. When you have a child your image changes. People take you more seriously and have more consideration for you. My mother accepted it well, and I stayed at home and didn't go to school any more. Rui continued to go to school and stayed with his mother. I had to find work, because a child needs a lot of things and the father was not working. But the money had to come in, somehow. I live in my mother's house with Carlota and my brothers. My relationship with Carlota's father did not last long, we drifted apart, and each of us has their own life."

A similar picture was transmitted by Francisca. She intentionally had her first child, Paula, even knowing that neither she nor the father could provide for the family. Referring to her role as a mother in the neighbourhood, Francisca remembers being seen in a different way by her peers: "more consideration and respect". She gave birth to Paula at the age of 15 and in

¹⁰⁴ The Census of 2011 published by Instituto Nacional de Estatística/INE (National Institute of Statistics) registered 7 578 Cape Verdean citizens living in *de facto* union in Portugal.

this period the perception of others has major importance for any young person's personality. Francisca and Marlene had to leave school during pregnancy. Marlene's schooling is less than compulsory education and the financial responsibility for Carlota made her go to work at the age of 14 as a kitchen assistant for 200 € a month (the minimum working age in Portugal is 16). Receiving less than the minimum wage (480 €), she continued living with her mother and her baby, while her boyfriend stayed with his kin, because they could not afford to set up a separate household. This physical separation was one of the reasons for dissolving the conjugal relation.

These transitory relationships are typical for the young people of the neighbourhood: 66% of the couples (aged 16-25) who lived together had more than two relationships and 82% do not intend to get married¹⁰⁵.

Among the second generation, marriage has become uncommon and lifelong relationships are rare in Cova da Moura. The relatively high numbers of divorces among Cape Verdeans in Portugal (cf. target families) coincides with the instability of the country's economic situation. Consequently, women usually raise their children alone often without emotional and economic support from the father. As a result, bonds between mother and children are much stronger than between children and father.

VII.2.1 Francisca's Case

This is certainly the case of Francisca: she is a good-looking, cheerful, single 32-year-old who expelled her from their house in Cova da Moura and she went to live with her cousins nearby. When she got pregnant she decided to leave school and work as a housekeeper: "At that time, it was just too much pressure and I decided not to go to school any more. I didn't like it too much, anyway. My boyfriend didn't want me to go to school also; that's life ...".

After the birth of her daughter, her boyfriend was sentenced to prison for drug smuggling and risked being sent back to Angola (he was an undocumented Angolan). After his time in jail, he somehow managed to get to London where he has relatives. His daughter Paula accompanied him, with Francisca's agreement, to live with him and the relatives, as Francisca justified: "I wouldn't have let Paula go, if I hadn't known that she would be well treated. I

¹⁰⁵ Moinho da Juventude, 2011.

still think it was the best thing to do, even if my mother was against it.” Indeed, Judite had offered to raise Paula, but respected Francisca’s decision. She still feels bad about it: “I would have liked to raise this child. I still regret it after ten years, but we will have her back one day”. Five years later she got pregnant again with a Cape Verdean boyfriend but the father never recognized the daughter Ana as his own, and this situation had to be resolved in court. Without money to raise her second daughter Ana, as again the father did not contribute, she returned to the house in Cova da Moura to live with her father Lourenço, who had already divorced Judite. Her mother was already living in Cacém. She was ‘forced’ to go back to Cova da Moura due to her desperate financial situation. The relationship with her father was very bad and sometimes even violent. She moved to a friend’s house and got pregnant with a Portuguese boyfriend. This relationship lasted two months and the father of her child Gabriel never recognized him as his son, and again this situation is still to be resolved in court. Once again, Gabriel’s father never contributed to his son’s expenses.

After Lourenço’s death, Francisca, for economic reasons returned to Cova da Moura where she lived with her children Ana and Gabriel, and her aunt Maria who was recovering from surgery. After the birth of the second child, Francisca received support from the Portuguese Welfare system¹⁰⁶ and also from her family to cover monthly expenses. Both associations of Cova da Moura provided the necessary care for Francisca’s children. Her daughter Ana attended extra-curricular classes after primary school in Clube Desportivo da Cova da Moura, where she does her homework and has computing classes. Gabriel is in the nursery school in Moinho da Juventude. Francisca recognizes her family’s support, but her precarious economic situation does not allow her to move away from Cova da Moura:

“I would not do it (her life) any other way. I love my children, I could not live without them and I have help from the whole family, especially from my mother and now from my aunt Maria. It doesn’t matter, if the fathers don’t help. I don’t need them to contribute, I can manage by myself. The state contributes for the kids and for me and that’s OK. Anyway, I couldn’t pay the expenses of the house, even if it only cost 50 €. The benefits I get and the salary I earn are no longer enough, so I had to move to Cova da Moura when my father died. If I could change, I would not be here, but I have no other possibility. Lately, we rearranged the house a bit, but we could not do much more ... The children are here at school and at Moinho (Association) and if I moved somewhere else, I could not pay”.

¹⁰⁶ Rendimento Social de Reinserção/RSI (Social Integration Benefits), these benefits are meant for people who lack sufficient economic means to provide their essential needs and have minors who are economically dependent on them.

Francisca is a very lively woman who only seems to see the bright side of life. She performs the role of mother the only breadwinner, but attended only nine years of Basic School education, which implies hardly any job opportunities besides working as a servant or in a restaurant. The minimum wage (in 2012, 480€) usually paid for these occupations would not be enough for household expenses, including herself and her two children. In her statement, she pointed out three important aspects. Firstly, she would still have all of her children even knowing beforehand that she could not expect any support from the fathers: “my children are the most precious thing that happened in my life and men come and go”. Her lack of confidence in her partners, who did not assume responsibility for their children, did not deter her from becoming a mother.

Secondly, she states that family members (on her mother’s side) were more trustworthy than her partners. She could always rely on her family’s emotional and economic support.

Thirdly, since she got Portuguese nationality in 2010, the Portuguese state services replaced the father’s obligation to provide for a single unemployed mother with children. She receives benefits from the welfare system and her status as a Foreign National, allowed her to visit her daughter Paula, whom she had not seen for the past six years, in London.

As with Judite, Deolinda, Francisca and Marlene, many relationships between women and men in Cova da Moura are very transitory. None of these conjugal relations lasted longer than a few years, and sometimes only a few months, because of mutual accusations of mistreatment and infidelity. Childbirth was probably the strategy for securing support and to create a sense of obligation in their partners, which in the end was not successful. However, all these women continued to show strength by raising their children as single mothers, enjoying everyday life and hoping for a better future.

VII.3 Maintenance of Transnational Networks

Being a transnational migrant involves a reconfiguration of existing relationships with family and friends. In this section, I demonstrate the permanent investment in maintaining transnational contacts with parts of the family left behind and friends living in different corners of the world by phone, letters and more recently, by internet.

The experience of a transnational migrant is conceptualized through lasting contacts and frequent visits to their home country. The Sousa family is an example of this process. Judite used to go every year to Santo Antão to see her father and brothers and to personally oversee the progress in rebuilding her house in Berlin. To have one's own house has strong economic, social and symbolic significance in Cape Verde (Akesson, 2009: 389). Months in advance, the visit is carefully prepared by Judite in Lisbon and by her brother Justino in Santo Antão: "It's so expensive and I haven't much time. There are always so many things to deal with back home (in Cape Verde). When I'm not there, my brother takes over, but I like to see how the work is done with my own eyes". Judite instructed Justino and her father how to proceed with the construction of her house. Whenever she could afford it, she would send her brother a sum of money and detailed instructions about the next step in the building process, as she told me:

"If my brother and father had not supervised the construction of my house, it would have been impossible for me to do it. No one can make sure that the work is well done, if you are not present. It took me years of saving and it was built bit by bit, from time to time. My brother also helped at weekends and my father too. Even now that we are living there, as you see, it is far from finished. It is an important step for me, because I can soon fulfill my dream of having a small restaurant in the basement of the house. I can do my cooking and earn some money from it. This year (2010) I can celebrate Christmas here with many relatives, my sons, grand-children and cousins that come sometimes from very far to be with us."

The brother supervised not only the construction but also paid the builders after the work was done. The details of the reconstruction of her house were discussed on the telephone. The contacts among the different elements of the network are maintained by Judite by indirect means of communication (phone calls, letters) and directly (visits): "I don't know how to use a computer. That's for the younger generation". When Judite arrived in Santo Antão, usually some other relatives living abroad would be also present for a family gathering. These reunions between dispersed relatives are of great importance, because they become a celebration of family cohesion, as Judite told me:

"It's a big party. We grill chicken and pork; make a big pan of cachupa in the garden of my father's house. Whoever shows up brings something. In the end there is enough for almost the whole neighbourhood."

The Sousas establish and maintain several familial, economic, social, and organizational ties that extend frontiers and interconnect the local and the global. This corresponds to what Glick-Schiller and her colleagues (1992) defined as transmigrant, "the contemporary migration flows, since migrants maintain various sets of relations with the society of origin, in addition to those kept with the destination society" Glick-Schiller, 1992: 645). Maintaining

such ties allows Judite to keep participating in family decisions, to build her own house and to set up a future business in Santo Antão.

Second Generation Networks

Members of the second generation also maintained close links with the scattered family, emotionally and sometimes financially. Many relatives are not located in their country of origin but dispersed in transnational space, including family members holding different nationalities. With international migration, as Sorensen and Olwig (2002) observed, “the family structure easily becomes exposed to traumas of deterritorialization as family members pool and negotiate their mutual understanding and aspirations in spatially fractured arrangements” (Sorensen and Olwig, 2002: 34), but it does not necessarily end up in separation, as the Ferreira family’s transnational experience illustrates.

VII.3.1 Albertino’s Case

Albertino is a good-humoured, 29-year-old man. He told me over and over how much he loved Cova da Moura, where he grew up and where he has his family and friends. When I got to know him, he had arrived from Geneva.

He completed the twelve years of secondary school and worked in various unskilled jobs in Portugal, but after the birth of his second child the money was not enough to cover all the expenses. For almost a year he had tried unsuccessfully to get a job in the Cova da Moura area. In 2009 he decided to move to Switzerland where his brother Felizmino had already lived for two years, working in a restaurant that belonged to a Cape Verdean from São Vicente.

When Albertino first arrived in Geneva he immediately got a job at the weekends in the same restaurant as his brother. After two weeks he got a second job as a mechanic through the cousin with whom he lived. His two sons live with their mothers in Cova da Moura, and therefore his life is divided between two countries, Switzerland (economically) and Portugal (emotionally):

“I had to go where there was a job. My girlfriend stayed in Cova da Moura. She doesn’t want to go. Anyway, I live with my cousins in a small room, and it would be difficult with two more kids... The rest of the time I work in two jobs. I come home (to Cova da Moura) often, every two months, because the low-cost tickets are so cheap... I pay 48 € to go from Geneva to Lisbon and back. I speak with Jocelina (his girlfriend) through Skype every day and I phone my parents once a week and to São Vicente once a month. This way, I can send enough money to her, the kids and sometimes to my parents.”

Comparable to the case of Albertino, in one way or another, most members of the target families miss their relatives and communicate with their brothers, sisters and parents in Cape Verde or in Europe, which makes them feel that they are still part of the family. The expression *‘ta dá notisia’* (to send news) was often used when they were telling me about a close relative who lived in another country. It appears that migration does not mean a break with the past at all, but rather the continuation of family life just in another place - one that incorporates and transcends dual national boundaries.

The sense of loyalty to their families and calling their home countries seems a basic need and structuring ritual in their lives. During recent years, use of the telephone¹⁰⁷, letters and more recently e-mails or Skype has greatly increased and stimulated interaction between immigrants and their relatives. These communication practices of a transnational character keep the family informed and united. It was interesting to learn who in the target families would use each of the various means of communication. For the first generation, the telephone is the most important means of communication. Phone calls make direct two-way communication possible, and especially, do not require an ability to write. Furthermore, in Cape Verde, as in many other developing countries, access to telephones has increased considerably during recent decades¹⁰⁸. I realized that the telephone was generally used to contact Cape Verde, while the internet was mainly used by the second generation to keep in contact with Cape Verde, Europe and the U.S. Deolinda, for example, keeps in touch with her daughters in Luxemburg (Luisa) and Boston (Dália) by internet, relying on the expertise of her daughters Carla and Cristina in Portugal: “I don’t know how to use the internet. But with my daughters’ help, I can see my other daughters and grandchildren on the screen ... that’s modernity”. On the other hand, Luisa communicates by Skype with Dália almost on a daily basis to update transnational connections. Most Cape Verdeans cannot afford to make

¹⁰⁷ There are two calling shops, one in the main street and another one on the way into Cova da Moura and every time I passed by, they were crowded.

¹⁰⁸ According to the World Bank (2008) there are more than 300 fixed line and mobile phone subscribers per 1.000 people.

international calls from their islands, which implies that the migrants are the ones who establish the contact. “If a call came from Cape Verde, it would be worrying”, Deolinda told me. As we have seen, contacts were usually established with relatives to let them know what developments and changes had occurred in Portugal and to get news about the lives of those who stayed on the islands. Maintaining a continuous flow of information and emotional links is also important for business reasons.

VII.4 Transnational Lives and Remittances

According to Grillo and Mazzucato (2008) there are three main areas in which kinship and family relations can be directly affected by transnational migration: the separation of family members, gender relations, and the role of non-kin relationships. In this section migrants’ priorities are reflected through the life histories of some members of the second generation of target families: maintaining ties with their home country, peers and families; strong feelings towards the family and the responsibilities attached to it.

In research on migration dealing with movements from South America to the US, the expression ‘transnational social fields’¹⁰⁹ is used as an analytical concept (cf. Glick Schiller et al., 1992, 1995, Mahler, 1998 and Levitt, 2001). These fields link sending countries such as Cape Verde to receiving countries such as Portugal, The Netherlands, US, France or others. They also create contacts between people in their home country and abroad.

High expectations from family members can play a decisive role in the Diaspora, and leaving one’s own kin could be part of the motivation when choosing to migrate. “If you come from a migrant family, immigration is not considered a bad thing. It is normal. We are here or somewhere else, but always together”, said Paulina, the niece of Josefina, some weeks before she left for The Netherlands.

Recently, studies have emerged in the field of transnational families and child well-being. Indeed, as Glick mentioned in her review of research on immigrant families, “[r]esearchers have become increasingly aware of the bi-national realms in which many immigrant families operate and the strategies they employ” (Glick, 2010: 507). The family understood the

¹⁰⁹ These ‘fields’ were described by Levitt (2001), who explores how villagers from the Dominican Republic create a transnational community with former residents of that village who emigrated to Boston in the US. Between these two locations, an organized communal exchange takes place through many institutions: Catholic Church, Associations and even a political party.

migration of their female kin to ensure better opportunities for their children and as another strategy to fulfill the role as breadwinner that should, according to their notion, normally be fulfilled by the father of her children.

As a single mother, one of Paulina's main motives for emigrating to The Netherlands was to assure a better education for her two sons. She left her two sons, one aged three and the other aged five, with her mother-in-law in Cova da Moura. Through a cousin, Paulina managed to get a job in an old people's home in Rotterdam. She will live there, with food included, and has been promised a salary of 2400 € per month. Paulina intends to send 1600 € for the monthly expenses of her children and visit her sons twice a year in her holidays. At the same time, she wants to save as much as she can to go back to Cova da Moura as quickly as possible: "There was no other way out. My children need me, but I see them every day by Skype. You know how it is, I have to give them a good education and later they will be proud of me. Even if I have to work ten hours a day; it's for them that I'm doing this." For Paulina, being a 'good mother' means going abroad to earn and send back money to the family in Portugal, maintaining daily contact with her children and mother-in-law. Her main objective was to earn enough money to provide a better education for her sons, a precondition to get a good job and have an easier life in the future.

Child fostering provides strong and long-lasting transnational ties. Refusal by Paulina's mother-in-law to provide a home for her grandsons would have been considered disloyal. In return, Paulina is supposed to send her mother enough money, otherwise she would be considered an irresponsible mother and discredited in the neighbourhood.

Deolinda's daughters, Dália and Luisa, emigrated decades ago. Their decision to live permanently abroad did not cut the links with their kin in Portugal or Cape Verde. They experience a transnational family life, hold different nationalities, but maintain emotional as well as financial links with their kin in Portugal and Cape Verde. Dália, who acquired both Cape Verdean and American citizenship, and her husband, live in Boston, U.S. For them, distance and dispersal cannot destroy a sense of collective unity with family members in Portugal (her mother and sisters) and in Santiago (his mother and family). Dália helped Deolinda and her sisters in Portugal monetarily and Luís supported his father and brothers in Cape Verde. Luisa, who had Cape Verdean and Luxembourg citizenship and lives in France, remits from Luxembourg to Portugal. She is also willing to support her sister Carla by

housing her for three years, if she decides to do a course of professional studies in Luxembourg or in France.

Although born in Cova da Moura, both are emotionally attached to their Cape Verdean island. Dália contacted me by e-mail and reported that:

“Although living in Boston, I never lost contact with my mother in Portugal and my sisters. I am always aware of what happens in Portugal and in Cape Verde by television (RTP-international) and (RTP-Africa). I would like to visit my relatives, but with the children this costs too much money, the plane and all. But on Skype we spend hours on the net and it feels like I am there (in Cova da Moura). Of course, Cova da Moura is my favourite place. It’s where I was born, but here (in the US), I realized that we needed more than being in a isolated neighbourhood.”

Their current family relations appear as ‘harmonious’ as in a conventional ‘un-dislocated’ family. Nevertheless, they confirmed that the place in which they were born and grew up (Cova da Moura) does not provide economic stability and a good environment for family life. Therefore, returning is out of the question.

The following description captures some of the patterns of remittances, reflecting the structure of the kinship. In Maria’s case, remittances were directly sent to those who ‘deserved’ and ‘needed’ them. She has been married to Renato for decades in Santo Antão. As previously reported, she came to Portugal for medical reasons, staying for one and a half years. Before she left the island she took care of her old father. Her sister and cousin replaced Maria in this duty, but she felt the obligation to send back money every month, because she could not be there to look after him. She felt guilty about not being there in case he needed something: “Every day my sister takes care of my father and my niece prepares his food. As I cannot be there, I send money almost every month to help with the expenses.” However, Maria does not seem to feel obliged to provide extra money for her husband who takes care of their children (five children and another one adopted from a neighbour¹¹⁰). She is convinced that since she was ill they will be able to look after themselves:

“I have to get better from my illness. My children know how to take care of themselves, now. The older ones take care of the younger ones and my husband looks after them, he can manage. I am more worried about my father. He is now an old man

¹¹⁰ *‘Pais de criação’* raise someone else’s child (usually from very poor families) without getting any monetary support and without being considered legally adoptive parents. It is a rather widespread practice in Santo Antão.

(68 years old) and is starting to become ill.... I cannot send him money regularly, because I don't have enough for myself. If I can save some, even if it is only 20 €, I send it to him.”

As Maria's family substituted her in her 'duty' to take care of her father, she feels obliged to send part of her income to him. The 40 € previously mentioned comes from her monthly pension of 240 € paid by the *Segurança Social* (Portuguese Welfare). As confirmed in Maria and Judite's statements, these remittances had a positive impact on the father's economic and social situation: "It's not much but gives relief and helps a lot with all the expenses". He can pay her niece that looks after him and does not have to do odd jobs on the side ('biscates'). Maria claimed that the reason for not sending money to her husband is her lack of trust. She assumes he will not spend the money on necessary expenses for the household, but primarily on personal consumption, such as *grogue* (national drink) and beer. She mentioned that "if he sees money, he disappears for the next days, but the children still need to have someone at home with them". It seems obvious to Maria that her husband is unfit to administer any money she might send. After she had returned to Santo Antão, I visited Maria in her house. Renato was also present and as the conversation flowed, he showed his disappointment about Maria's lack of financial support for him: "She forgot about me, she sent me 'nada' (nothing)". The word 'nada' could imply that she does not live up to his expectations. Maria immediately replied: "You know why I didn't". In 2010 she had obtained medical authorization from the Lisbon hospital to return to Santo Antão, as she was considered cured.

The regularity with which remittances are sent to relatives from the host country shows the importance and the high degree of reliability of this mutual help system and the density of social networks. Carling (2004), estimates that in Santo Antão the proportion of households receiving remittances is between one third and two thirds. They have become an institutionalized part of their livelihoods. In the three families, sending monthly remittances, mainly to their elderly or ill parents in Cape Verde, improved their living standards. The remittances sent by international migrants are perceived to enhance the development prospects of low and middle-income economies, maintain their macroeconomic stability, mitigate the impact of exogenous shocks and reduce poverty. According to research on Santo Antão carried out by Akesson (2009) "nearly everyone has a close relative abroad, and the majority of households had received money from a migrant at least once in the previous 12 months" (2009: 382).

Cape Verde is one of the top recipients of remittances, receiving high inflows compared to other small island economies that depend heavily on this form of financial support, for example, the Dominican Republic. In a comparative study about Mexico and the Dominican Republic, Massey and Sana (2005) discuss the connection between variations in family composition and the receiving of remittances. The outcome shows that in Mexico remittances are more directed to the migrant’s nuclear family, while the Dominicans regularly send small amounts of remittances to different households that need this support for their survival – a situation similar to that of Santo Antão.

However, it is difficult to estimate the value of the migrants’ remittances; it is considered to be very significant and even constitutes, as in the case of Cape Verde, an important part of the gross national product of the migrants’ countries of origin. In Figure IV, the biggest share of remittances to Cape Verde comes from Portugal (30,4%), despite the country’s recession.

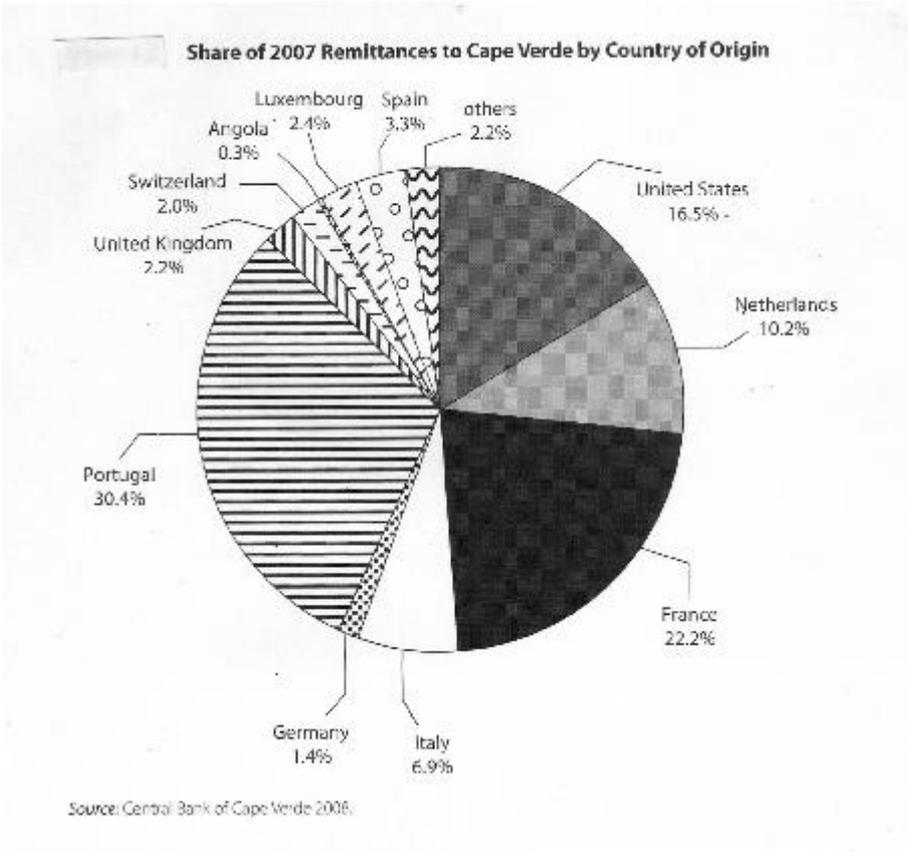


Figure 19: Remittances to Cape Verde by Country of Origin (2007)
(Central Bank of Cape Verde, 2008)

Although, remittance inflows reached 122 million euros in 2008, they appear to have declined to 114 million euros in 2009 and to 111 million euros in 2010 because of the effect of the global financial crisis on Cape Verdean migrants' employment and income (World Bank report, 2011). The World Bank report (2011), regarding remittances, mentions that around two thirds of Cape Verdean families receive money from abroad—the highest proportions coming (in order of percentage) from Portugal, France, the United States, and The Netherlands. Although remittances have been declining as a share of total foreign financing - from 46 percent in 1995 to 19 percent in 2007 (IMF 2008)¹¹¹, they still play an important role in the financial balance of Cape Verde.

¹¹¹ In 1980 those transfers represented 86% of the GNP; in 2000 they only represented 25% as mentioned by Reis (2002: 3) in 'Ilhas de Lusofonia' in the VII Congress Luso-Afro-Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais.