

Chapter 6

The African ‘Other’ in the Cape Verde Islands

Interaction, Integration and the Forging of an Immigration Policy

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Why Cape Verde?

Irregular immigration and its root causes have become a political concern in the Cape Verde Islands. One might be inclined to ask why migrants come. The simple answer is that they come because the islands are there. It is a matter of geography. After 9/11, the paradigm of migration shifted, not only in North America but also, crucially, in Europe. Through a wide array of bilateral and multilateral agreements, individual European Union countries and the EU as a whole have managed to export their own migratory pressures to a belt of buffer nations in their immediate (and remote) vicinity: countries like Morocco, Libya, Turkey and, more recently, Mauritania and the Cape Verde Islands.

Europe’s increasingly securitized and externalized immigration policies, along with the consequent pushing of its southernmost border farther south to North Africa, have caused trans-Saharan migration routes and networks to gradually shift westwards towards Morocco and Algeria, then southwards to the Western Sahara and Mauritania, and increasingly also to the Cape Verde Islands. Continental African migrants are today a conspicuous sight in Cape Verde’s main urban and tourist areas, part of a fluid ethnoscape facilitated by a new geopolitical nexus encompassing West Africa, the Mediterranean and the Maghreb, and perhaps justifying the assertion that Europe’s de facto southern borders have now been pushed to Africa, making Cape Verde (among other countries) a rather incomplete proxy to – and a tool of – its own extemporaneous immigration policies.

This chapter attempts to map out a pivotal contemporary moment in national discourse as the country changes from being a net exporter of migrants to a net receiver, or at least a trans-shipment centre for transit migrants. Many among them indeed enter the country legally under existing open-borders agreements

within the regional body ECOWAS.¹ Unable to reach Europe from the islands, however, a majority eventually overstay their legal welcome. Thus becoming irregular aliens *after* entering the country, they are locked into a permanent state of legal limbo, informal incorporation and a bare life of sorts.

Some choose to return home, while some cannot. The remaining ratio constitutes a group of increasingly disenfranchised denizens who are effectively – albeit inadvertently – challenging national self-concepts and even the idea of a unique 'Capeverdeanness' (Marcelino 2009: 56–62). The confluence of the socioeconomic and ethno-racial dimensions is, this chapter argues, a primary reason for exclusion. Exclusion, however, will not prevent destitute but entrepreneurial foreigners (particularly not those from nearby nations) from entering the country, legally or illegally, and thereafter asserting their own identities, engaging in a fluid renegotiation of what becomes an ongoing hybridization of themselves and of Capeverdeanness itself. Once they are in the islands, the integration process is already underway. Cecil Foster notes that

each time an immigrant arrives ... at least two things happen: [first] [s] he seeks to re-open and even restructure the compact that is the existing social order. Consensus, no matter how long it had taken to achieve, is threatened. And if there are many of them and the state is truly democratic, the new arrivals should be able to undo, rewrite, to change the constitution and the social order. ... Second, the immigrant revitalizes older communities within the state by daily reinserting them into a Diaspora of some kind, so that links with a motherland or fatherland that might atrophy with time are constantly renewed and re-freshened. ... So through immigration, [national identity] is always in the state of becoming [and] the culture statewide is never settled. (Foster 2010)

This chapter attempts to debunk some of the myths related to Cape Verde's 'traditional' racial blindness,² and to what could be termed 'hybridism' (Marcelino 2009: 61) or an ideology of migration and innate tolerance and hospitality (*morabeza*) that often appears to be used in key Cape Verdean opinion-making circles as a justification to deny the existence of any racist undertones in current events in the islands while still enabling or excusing racialized discourses on 'otherness', 'invasion', and 'crime'. These challenges strengthen the vitality of the Cape Verdean case study as a liminal and transitional space where the dynamics and interconnectedness of migration, economic development and economic aspirations, integration, exclusion and xenophobia are representative of the struggles elsewhere in the world. In the words of Jason DeParle (2007) 'the intensity of the national experience makes this barren archipelago the Galapagos of migration, a microcosm of the forces straining ... politics and remaking societies across the globe.'

Debunking Migrant Typologies

Discussing migrant integration in Cape Verde requires the definition of a theoretical framework of migrant categories to explain why migrants elicit one reaction over another. It is paramount to underline that despite the existence of informally organized – and only insufficiently studied – cooperation circles among sub-Saharan migrants in Cape Verde, this remains an inchoately connected transnational community immersed in what Pedro Góis (2005) characterized as the practice of ‘low intensity transnationalism’ and Gina Sánchez Gibau (2008: 260–65) called a ‘dispersed nation’ and a ‘fractured diaspora’. In other words, this community is an ensemble of various diasporic nodes closely knit with their respective home communities, bound by a migration project represented by one of their own, and interacting across its different nodes – perhaps a friend or relative in Rome, Paris, or Madrid – but with limited access to and contact with the host communities. The latter characteristic reduces the potential for integration, inclusion and vertical mobility, curbing the ability for upwards movement through hierarchies and statuses.

Of course this does not mean that social ascension is not an objective of sub-Saharan migrants. Indeed, social prestige is an often overlooked but increasingly salient and significant force in perpetuating migration. ‘Social prestige’ in sending communities is a significant component of increasing aspirations to migrate, while ‘social expectations’ function as one of the most cited reasons to maintain one’s migration and continue one’s journey, geographically and socially, usually across several years in transit. As migratory routes and strategies for reaching their destinations become increasingly complex and costly, migration pressure may decline in sending communities. However, the one-dimensional presumption of exclusively economic reasons for the departure/arrival of labour migrants is insufficient to describe a complex portfolio of motivations and aspirations. Further, this assumption obfuscates the finding that, *grosso modo*, those who migrate are not the poorest of the poor (e.g. Nieswand 2011), as it often fails to consider ‘social meanings’ of migration that go well beyond economic motivations.³ This is perhaps not lost on Cape Verdeans, who are newly a host community and still a nation of migrants that continues to export its own (albeit to a lesser extent). The motivations of sub-Saharan migrants are thus easier to grasp and identify with. The hardship of the migratory experience is a common ordeal understood by locals, who often have friends and relatives abroad and are therefore acquainted with unspoken but easily comprehended narratives of sacrifice and endurance.

A certain level of understanding should not, however, be mistaken with the unconditional acceptance of the migrants’ presence. Sub-Saharans in Cape Verde are often exposed to a paradox of cooperation and competition with locals. This nexus of solidarity and animosity, collaboration and competition, inclusion and

exclusion urges a closer look at the typologies of migrants arriving in Cape Verde. It is apparent, for instance, that there is an almost complete absence of a discourse on refuge. Formally and informally, everyone is branded as an economic migrant and thus assumed to be in the country illegally.⁴ This lack of understanding of the realities affecting those who factually are already part of the national ethnoscape is indicative of the level of formal disengagement still existing in the country at the levels of policy and the public. The absence of a public discourse on refuge and asylum to counterbalance that of simple migration is perhaps attributable to the country's geographic isolation, but the same does not apply to categorizations of 'clandestine', 'undocumented', 'irregular' and 'illegal' immigrants. Cape Verdeans themselves have rarely abandoned the country in these latter circumstances, but they certainly have an understanding of their tremendous liminality. Why, then, the hesitation? Might it be related to the stress induced by a transformation from a net sender to a net receiver?

The Migration Dilemma: From Emigration to Immigration

How do microstates respond to migration? How do they address and cope with the complex effects of migration on development, and how do they address the multiple consequences of immigration, economic struggles and identity? These are some of the dilemmas facing the tiny insular republic of Cape Verde. These questions, already deeply embedded in Cape Verdean history, came into sharper focus in 1991, when the archipelago was among the encouraging cluster of sub-Saharan African nations holding free elections for the first time. A new government was elected on a platform that promised to push through a series of democratizing bills and introduce neoliberal economic reforms conducive to a business-friendly environment. Over the following decade, direct foreign investment and development aid packages poured in – at first from Europe, the United States and supranational organizations, and later from China, Japan, Brazil and even Angola – often branded as technical cooperation packages. Twenty years later the quality of the country's democracy compares favourably with that of most of its African peers, and a sizeable section of the population has been lifted out of the most abject poverty and is living comfortably by regional standards, with a substantially higher yearly income per capita (see e.g. Economist Intelligence Unit 2008; Afrobarometer 2004).

Whereas neoliberal economic reforms modelled after Europe's effectively brought about immediate economic growth, they also partially alienated the social democracy drive of the early years of independence under the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (Davidson 1989: 127–201). Chronically high unemployment levels associated with rural poverty continue to be the archipelago's Achilles' heel, disproportionately affecting the country's peasant majority. Unequal income distribution has become increasingly apparent, even conspicu-

ous, in the suburbs of Cape Verde's main urban areas in the last few years (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2006). These examples of uneven development are reinforced by the booming tourism and real estate industries, which feed an economy with above-average growth rates – even at a time of global economic crisis – affording the impression that in this little nation, life is indeed slowly becoming easier than in many of the neighbouring countries.

Indeed, it is not simply institutional partners that are complimentary about the stability and unlikely success of this tiny nation. The narrative has also been fed to, or picked up and widely disseminated by, European and world media. Among migrant networks in West Africa, word seems to have spread that Cape Verde is a desirable temporary destination, or perhaps a preferable transit option in the long journey north, at a time when the Mediterranean border, staunchly patrolled by FRONTEX and other European outfits, is slowly closing, increasingly militarized and openly hostile. Consequently, besides enduring the growing pains that attend any major economic restructuring, Cape Verde has had to learn how to cope with a fast inflow of migrants, many of them waiting to set off to the Canaries. Some have now waited so long that they might eventually be accommodating to a quasi-permanent state of temporary settlement.

Many Cape Verdeans see the newcomers as living off *expedientes* or shady business, whether it is street selling (a contentious image issue in tourist-rich islands), sex work or worse. These have become stereotypes by which African migrants are identified, and a narrative that is often reproduced across all levels of society, though few Cape Verdeans encounter any migrants beyond the occasional bargaining with them in the market or the street. In reality, many West African migrants sell commodities. Others market African cultural goods to Cape Verdeans and tourists alike in the streets of Praia (Santiago) and Mindelo (São Vicente) and in the sandy hotspots of Sal and Boa Vista Islands, and many others work across a wide spectrum of economic activities. Despite their different characteristics, none of the islands has a simple path to recognition or any easy route towards integration.

Senegalese migrants might occupy an ever-so-slightly advantageous position in Cape Verde. Some were or are frontrunners of the successful Senegalese merchant diaspora, who have become de facto cultural brokers between the two neighbouring countries. Still others work in menial or occasional jobs in construction or cleaning, and in an array of other activities in the informal sector. Most of these jobs are precarious and quickly vanish in a weak economy, either because a large construction project is halted, or because a cleaning job previously held by an African woman is suddenly given to an unemployed Cape Verdean, upholding long-standing ties of solidarity. Covert and even overt xenophobia (with clear ethnic contours) aimed at mainland Africans is on the rise and is perhaps, as Bruce Baker posits, a notorious exception to Cape Verde's apparent ethnic harmony (Baker 2006: 503–4). Interestingly, among educated or affluent

Africans with access to visible financial resources, the path to acceptance as a 'worthy' member of society seems to be eased. These generally enter with higher social positions and are gradually integrated into local social networks. This applies to Angolans, for example, who share a common language and colonial past with Cape Verdeans and often arrive as skilled professionals. It does not, however, extend to Bissauans, whose country shares similar ethnic markers and even a former political union with Cape Verde. In this case, the ethno-racial indicator seems to play a strong role in determining the speed and level of acceptance and integration,⁵ but this role is a function of the socioeconomic indicator.

There seems to be little correlation between Cape Verde's migratory narrative – an ideology of migration so central to the social fabric that it has become the national community's central grammar (e.g. Carling and Åkesson 2009) – and its receptivity and tolerance towards immigrants. The country's fabled hospitality towards strangers and foreigners, called *morabeza*, appears to be reserved for selected groups of people, reifying the idea that migrants' physical appearance and perceived social class, entrance status and socioeconomic entry level are key indicators in defining ethnic integration, reflecting a kind of *migrant pedigree* attributed to them and begetting different degrees of receptivity.

This fundamental discrepancy – between an ongoing renegotiation of national and ethnic identities on the one hand and the processes of material inclusion and exclusion on the other – highlights Cape Verde's interest as a case study. Unlike other newcomers to the islands, Africans force the debate on identity – on what Cape Verde is and what it is not. Although Europeans carry the cultural load of a colonial past and have imported gentrification and 'space war' issues to all four islands mentioned above – Santiago, São Vicente, Sal and Boa Vista –, their presence is equally aspirational, pushing the envelope of self-identification with European habits and European economic success that have historically stomped Africanity out of the equation, at the symbolic level at least. Evidence suggests that, while quintessentially syncretic as a society, Cape Verdeans might tacitly regard their country as 'more civilized' than others on the mainland. The dimensions of this understanding are political, economic and social, but undoubtedly carry an ethno-racial undertone as well. Thus the European component of migrant stock is seen as familiar while the inflow of African migrants is seen as alien.

Ghettos of Difference, Illegality and (Not Much) Understanding

The task of stopping undocumented immigration in Cape Verde will not be easier – or cheaper, for that matter – than it is in Europe, even when new resources are regularly added to the arsenal accessible to the state. It is, however, a fundamental predicament. At this juncture, Cape Verdean society is deeply divided between pan-African ideals of solidarity and somewhat understandable but unjustified apprehension.

Although the powerful imagery of rickety boats loaded with frightened, exhausted faces is as pervasive in local popular discourse as it is on international media, this is certainly not the only, and possibly not the most common, method of accessing the islands. Boats have, however, been intercepted or known to arrive at the islands of Sal, Boa Vista, and Maio (the three closest to the continent), while others are reported to have landed at São Vicente – the main transit hub for migrants attempting to reach the Canaries – and at the largely inaccessible and recessed Santo Antão.

The desperation and bravery of these voyages does not go unnoticed by the average Cape Verdean. In almost every interview conducted in the streets of Mindelo, the country’s second largest city, Cape Verdeans of both genders, young and old, employed and unemployed, showed that they understood why African migrants seek the islands, as epitomized in this interviewee’s empathetic statement: ‘Their countries are in constant disarray, and that’s why they come to Cape Verde. We’re not rich, but at least life is peaceful here’. Yet because Africans follow the same internal migration routes that Cape Verdeans do, pressure inevitably falls on the same locations (see Figure 6.1).

Boa Vista is a prime example of the dire consequences of these unregulated flows and of the lack of preparation of local authorities. On this island, paradisiacal luxury hotels and affluent residential developments are surrounded by

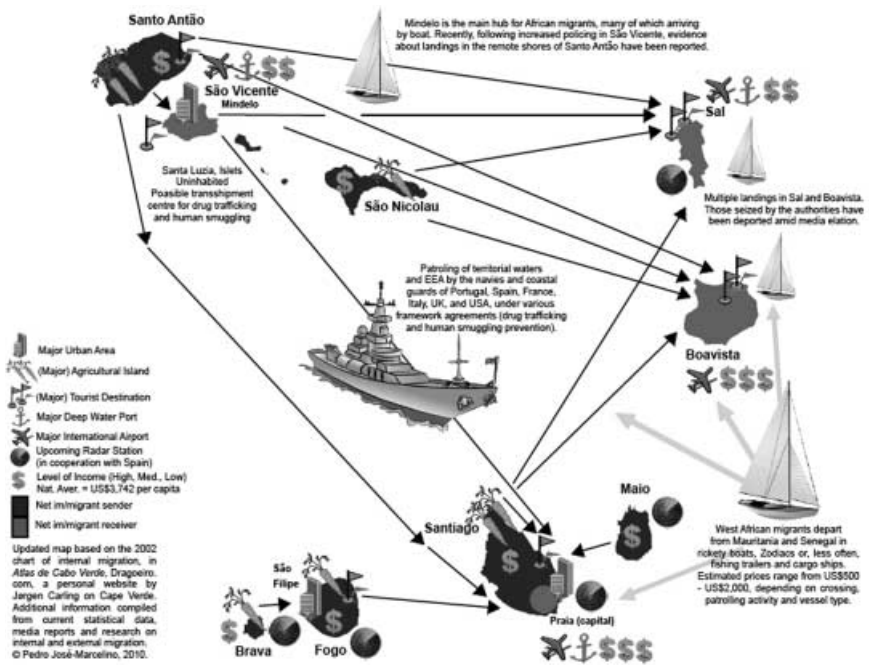


Figure 6.1. (1) Internal migration routes and internal migration incentives; (2) irregular migration ship/zodiac routes from West Africa.

pristine sand dunes peppered with date trees. Once paraded as the country's crown jewel, Boa Vista today boasts one of the highest costs of living in the country – fuelled by its tourism industry⁶ – and is beginning to exhibit 'unexpected' symptoms of social conflict. Nowhere in the archipelago is the disparity between rich and poor as shocking as in this large, sparsely populated island. Almost every African who has landed, directly or indirectly, at Boa Vista has ended up segregated in the outlying shantytown of Barraca (which means 'shanty'). Official estimates in 2008 put the local population at over 3,000 and growing daily, but the actual number was thought to be closer to 4,000–4,500, mostly African migrants of undefined provenance and rural islanders from Santiago. In February 2010 a study ordered by the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning and conducted by the Cape Verdean consultancy firm AfroSondagem and the Laboratory for Civil Engineering revealed that the number of inhabitants was probably just around 2,800, dispelling fears that the migrant population was about to outnumber locals. Still, faced with few possibilities, the community is rife with unemployment, malnourishment, infectious diseases, alcoholism, drug abuse and drug trafficking, as well as petty and violent criminality. Worryingly, and predictably, as the economic crisis settled in, violent criminality overflowed the boundaries of this isolated ghetto into the island's main urban centre, the small town of Sal-Rei, 'risking', according to local inhabitants, 'spoiling Boa Vista's positive image and damaging its tourism potential' (Frederico 2010). Municipal authorities confess to not having the capability to resolve this urban time bomb – a flagship case of immigration mismanagement. Meanwhile, much of the public discourse on Barraca to date seems to revolve around the consequences of negative projections to the exterior rather than focus on ongoing integration and exclusion processes.

All African, But Not So Fast: Contrasting Voices of Acceptance

Since accurate figures on legal and illegal migrants are hard to obtain, it might be productive to step back from these limitations and observe the phenomenon from a different vantage point to gain a better comparative understanding of the social landscape. The probabilistic framework I am thus proposing is admittedly based on a combination of partial statistical information, empirical observation and soft data from different sources and time periods. This data, though surely stronger for some issues than for others, is sufficiently compelling to put forward a tentative model. It does not constitute any type of definitive conclusion on the subject but rather serves as a preliminary graphic layout of these early findings, intended to open up the debate on an issue that has not been adequately explored in this context. The model will require further proofing pending the availability of solid data, whether absolute numbers or feasible and methodologically sound statistical projections. Considering the attention both the Cape Verdean govern-

ment and the EU are now affording to the issue of immigration, greater precision is expected and necessary from the extensive Population Census 2010, with results available later in the year.

The integration/exclusion model (see Figure 6.2) suggests that there is a correlation between migrants' occupation – or stereotyped (perceived) occupation – and nationality/ethnicity, and the level of acceptance, interaction, and tolerance of migrants in Cape Verdean society. The central part of the chart indicates the history of the community in Cape Verde, its main (perceived) occupation(s) and the relative social standing associated with it. The column on the right indicates different levels of integration in the Cape Verdean social fabric. This is a fluid continuum, variable across communities, even within each of them, and possibly across time periods, as there are always individuals who do not fit a model, and must therefore be assumed to be exceptions that confirm the rule.

Following this model, some patterns emerge: positive perceptions of non-European foreigners appear to be stronger for communities that either are very small and thus not noticeable (e.g. Cubans) or have a long history of interaction and settlement in Cape Verde (e.g. Lebanese). Ethnicity does not seem to deter integration, although the case of continental African migrants appears to be an exception. Still, newcomers with a high professional status or substantial capital might be directly inducted into higher levels of acceptance, regardless of their ethnicity (e.g. Angolans). Education can, in fact, trump race, as the significance of 'black' and 'white' in Creole as social rather than racial tropes suggests. Those coming from some Portuguese-speaking nations appear to have easier access to a 'fast-track' integration process. Hence, Angolans (despite their ethnicity) are fairly well integrated. Conversely, other African migrants – Bissauans perhaps excluded – generally have little personal contact with Cape Verdeans beyond simple interaction in a commercial setting. This establishes a strong nexus between their ethnicity and the petty occupations many take up while waiting for an opportunity to move towards Europe.

Models based on interaction and occupation are not new, but they have not, to my knowledge, been applied to the Cape Verde case study. John W. Berry (2005) discusses social and psychological acculturation and the different ways in which a group of newcomers negotiate their inclusion according to the nature of the migrant community's relationship with the host community (he calls these 'acculturation strategies') (see also Berry 2010). More recently, Dennis Cordell (2008) discussed the paradoxes of the incorporation of Nigerians in the United States, resorting to a list of descriptors that include status, education, income and employment as relevant in the process of social exclusion.

While Berry selects a vocabulary related to 'acculturation stress', Alejandro Portes (1995: 1–39) refers to categories of 'hostile', 'non-hostile' and 'poorly integrated' interaction. Tony Richmond (1994: 117–20) attempts a similar diagram of incorporation in his book *Global Apartheid*, proposing an operational

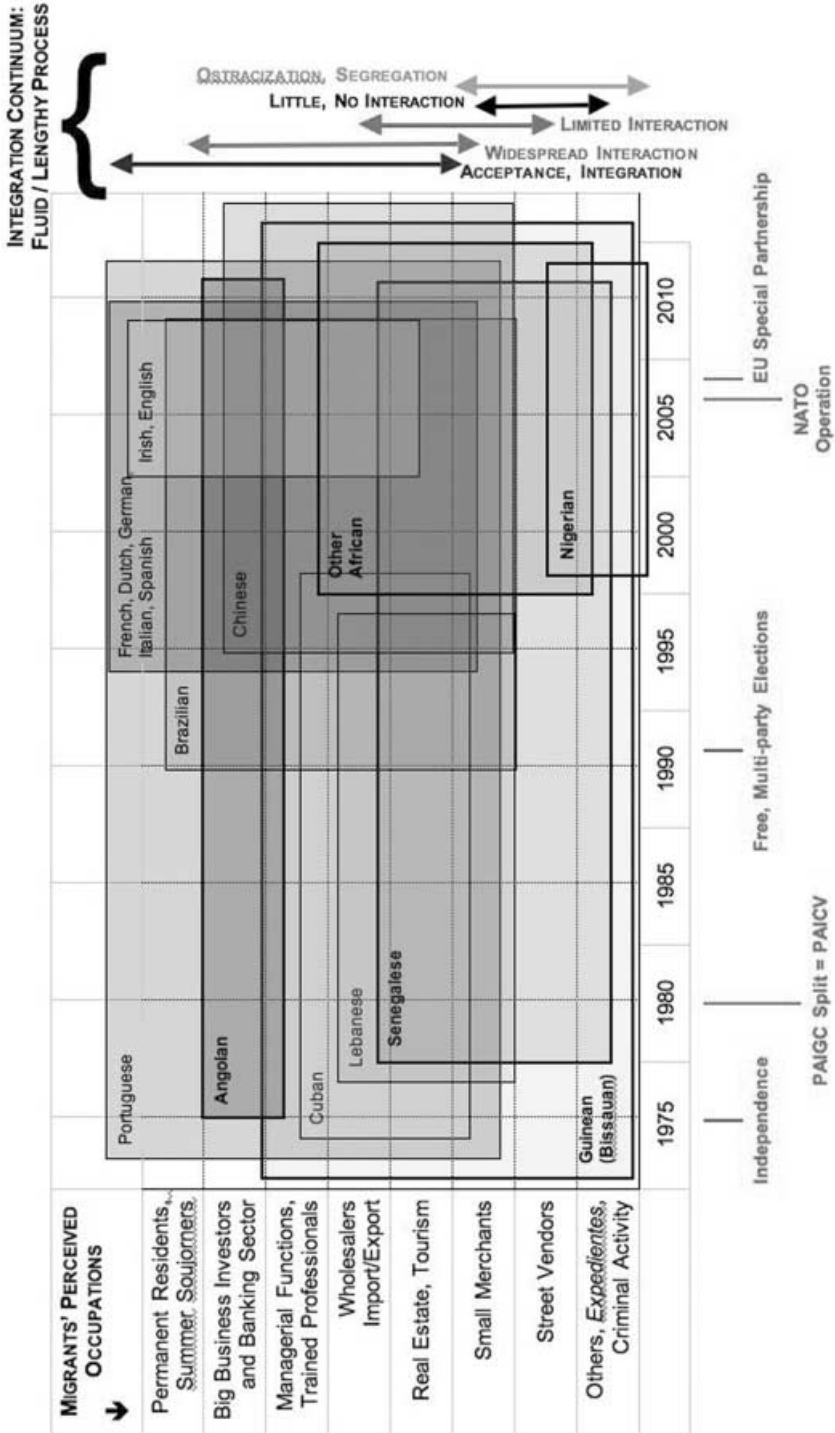


Figure 6.2. Tentative inclusion/exclusion model: (1) perceived professional activity, ethnicity and class; (2) level of integration in host society.

model of migration and occupational status. This builds on John Porter's (1965: 68–91) earlier work on immigrants in post-World War II Canada, where he proposed the categories of 'behavioural assimilation' and 'structural assimilation', speaking of a correlation between ethnicity, entrance status, occupational roles and segregation. The present model instead puts forward a tentative vocabulary that might be more suitable to the Cape Verdean case: acceptance/integration; widespread interaction; limited interaction; no interaction/ostracism.

In explaining this model, the particular case of Nigerians requires special mention. While most African migrants are subject to overt or covert discrimination in some fashion, public opinion on the subject appears to be disproportionately negative towards Nigerian nationals. Not only did this initial study find an abnormal reaction to the presence of Nigerians, their perceived dishonesty and their insinuated lack of a moral compass (Nigerians are often referred to as 'traffickers', 'smugglers' and 'criminals', as happens in much of Africa), but it also worryingly confirmed the findings of broader studies about Nigerian immigrant communities in both South Africa and the United States (Cordell 2008). Public perception thus currently appears to place Nigerians at the bottom of the migrant hierarchy.

Senegal is the closest continental neighbour, and Guinea-Bissau an old political ally in the independence struggle, so unsurprisingly Senegalese and Bissauans are by far the largest foreign communities currently present in the country.⁷ Although the phrases *those Senegalese* and *those Mandjako(s)*⁸ are occasionally used pejoratively to refer to Africans in general – including Senegalese and Bissauans – a special acceptance seems to be reserved for these two national groups, particularly when compared to others, especially Nigerians. The following abundantly demonstrate this:

We don't get much with Nigerians in our land. They do not work and only bring trouble. We should definitely revise the [protocol for the] free movement of people within ECOWAS. The best would be to sign a protocol with Guinea Bissau and Senegal, with whom we have a common past, and get rid of those Nigerians.⁹

Fifteen out of ten Nigerians living here are traffickers. We usually generalize and call the continental migrants Mandjakos, but the truth is that those Nigerians have nothing to do with the Bissauans or even the Senegalese. Those coming from Nigeria are here with the express intent of developing the powerful Nigerian mafia.¹⁰

A woman from Mali, a man from Nigeria, others from Ghana, and elsewhere in ECOWAS, are caught every day in Cape Verde and taken to court for criminal acts. Is it not time to opt out of that treaty and forbid the entrance of these Muslim, criminal strangers...?¹¹

If Nigerians [denounce criminal elements within their national community] they will all end up in jail. Amokaki denounces Ammuneke, Ammuneke denounces Yekkiki, Yekkiki denounces Amokaki and so on. We would need a (really) big jail for Nigerians alone.¹²

Interestingly, Senegalese interviewees in the streets of Praia and Mindelo cautiously detached themselves from Nigerian migrants in their own statements, claiming that they 'look for confusion' and thus Senegalese must not be seen as socializing with them. When asked about criminality among the African community, a male Senegalese interviewee in Mindelo vehemently stated that 'Senegalese are different from Nigerians', making sure this separation was clear to the author/interviewer.

It is difficult to speculate on the reasons for these and many similar comments. Regional grievances, such as Nigeria's size, affluence and political and economic dominance in Upper Guinea, as well as its proactive intervention in political affairs across the region, could perhaps explain some suspiciousness towards Nigerian nationals, transplanted to a new geography. Yet the scope of these comments suggests that Senegalese either genuinely assume that Nigerians in Cape Verde are involved in informal and illegal activities, or simply that they understand and have appropriated the mistrust for Nigerians among Cape Verdeans. If the latter is true, then this eagerness to adapt and conform to the host society's rules would appear to be happening in the interest of self-preservation. I suggest both aspects, and possibly more, play a role.

Assembling a collection of ideas that capture common perceptions of and suspicions about continental African migrants in Cape Verde becomes a revealing exercise, once underlying assumptions have been teased out. Three key issues stood out in interviews with Cape Verdeans on possible reasons for these negative perceptions: language barriers, extreme cultural differences and the vast increase in urban criminality (particularly in Praia and Mindelo but also, as noted before, in Boa Vista). These arguments can be deconstructed fairly simply. First, although language is factually a communication barrier with some Africans, many urban Cape Verdeans speak enough French or English to ensure that minimal exchanges happen. Moreover, the fact that a migrant learns the language of the host does not automatically open the door to integration. Second, many cultural traits are indeed profoundly different – despite the proximity, they are mostly new to a majority of Cape Verdeans, which could explain a skewed perception based on lack of contact and knowledge. Finally, although criminality rates are certainly rapidly increasing, there seems to be little to no correlation between crime and foreign population. Still, whenever the media run a story on a drug bust involving an African, the discourse on online comment boards quickly veers towards the xenophobic, often ignoring the case at hand and generalizing to other cases and the African community at large.

Some Cape Verdeans, however, have started to react against this situation, broadening the debate on identity, pan-Africanism, immigration and criminality, as the following statements show:

Foreigners in Cape Verde must be counted ... identified [and] remain in Cape Verde following the approval of immigration authorities. ... If we start marginalizing foreign residents like this, we will aggravate the situation.¹³

It's high time Cape Verdean people stopped with these racist comments. Those of us who live abroad feel discrimination in our skin, [but] I am proud of my colour. This is what is happening to our African brothers in Cape Verde. ... Why would a people who suffered and suffers so much discrimination discriminate against its own brothers?¹⁴

What's this [behaviour] all about? Why assume that every Nigerian is a trafficker? We should not be closing our eyes to what is in front of us: we have youth delinquents that need to be punished. Let's not pretend it's not there just because the victim is Nigerian and the perpetrator Cape Verdean.¹⁵

These statements in online comment boards were, with few exceptions, matched by statements heard in interviews in several cities in Cape Verde, particularly among younger citizens. Older Cape Verdeans seemed less inclined to support the presence of continental African immigrants, but this study was not broad enough to extrapolate to the generality of the national population. It is likely, I argue, that the dominant, agglutinating nature of a Creole culture that has assimilated and synthesized others in the past simply met, in Upper Guinea Africans, an obstacle that it cannot quite cope with or process in the way it was used to doing. Lacking recent experience in dealing with large migrant groups from Africa, it is possible that Cape Verdeans are simply at a loss. Perhaps time will settle the dust – or perhaps not.

Conclusions

Cape Verde's identity and sovereignty challenges are currently introducing a unique precedent in its history. Social issues resulting from irregular immigration and the pressure of being at the forefront of the 'new' European border reflect symptoms parallel to those in southern European countries in the context of similar transformations in the 1970s and 1980s. This chapter concludes that the increasingly extemporaneous nature of European external policy not only constitutes a reassembly and reconstruction of the whole Mediterranean region, technically testing the extension of its borders towards the western edge of the

African continent, but is also simultaneously transferring many of the political predicaments and social disturbances of the borderland to buffer countries such as Cape Verde.

In assigning the security of its own territorial waters to foreign powers, Cape Verde is complying with a foreign immigration policy in which it has no say. However, it is also, perhaps strategically, ensuring a direct line of contact with EU. Given that it has been involuntarily transformed into a buffer zone, one could also cynically suggest that local authorities might take a veiled interest in maintaining a semi-continuous stream of migrants, a *sine qua non* condition to guaranteeing the continuation and reinforcement of its close connection and indispensability to the EU, particularly its southern states. At a time of substantial difficulties with border and visa control enforcements, it remains unknown what the future of Cape Verde's engagement with ECOWAS and the EU will be, and how will the two interact. Geopolitically, the West African coast between Morocco and the Cape Verde islands might now be understood as an extension of the Mediterranean Sea directly under the EU's sphere of influence. Cape Verde's recently announced state-of-the-art radar system, financed by Spain and geographically oriented to protect its interests, seems to suggest as much.

A crucial need, however, subsists: regularizing and integrating resident migrants is an urgent matter requiring policymaking that tackles questions of inclusion and exclusion as well as social issues exported by Europe's external policy and proxy maritime borderland in Cape Verdean waters. Internally, the problem lies in maintaining social peace at a time when the country has started to feel the pinch of fast economic development unaccompanied by a gradual shoring up of social democracy.

The ongoing ghettoization of continental African migrancy in Cape Verde, as exemplified by the shantytown of Barraca, follows multiple processes of gentrification, differentiation and exclusion that constrain individuals' mental transition from self-declared 'understanding' to 'tolerance' or 'acceptance'.¹⁶ Pinpointing where Cape Verdeans' feelings about immigration truly lie is a challenge, without a wide-scope opinion survey. Still, the available data might permit one to conjecture, after Arjun Appadurai, that the answer might lie somewhere between the two linked co-factors of globalization and extreme resentment of minorities. I argue that two fears might join this line of thought within a common nexus: the fear of *dilution of identity*, and the fear of *socioeconomic subalternization and loss*.

Appadurai (2006: 83) notes that 'majorities can always be mobilized to think that they are in danger of becoming *minor* (culturally or numerically) and to fear that minorities, conversely, can easily become major.' The fear of dilution of identity illustrated by this statement is perhaps equally compounded by current events across Europe and on Cape Verde's own shores, where the occasional boatload of undocumented migrants moors, building on ideas of 'invasion by boat'. At the other end of the spectrum, and consistent with Appadurai's thought

that ‘globalization intensifies the possibility of this volatile morphing’ (Appadurai 2006: 83), the fear of socioeconomic loss is clearly intersected by multiple variables, namely the growing difficulty of emigrating *from* Cape Verde, associated with the global economic crisis and the general aggravation of the cost of living in the country. Appadurai perhaps captures it best when he implies that the root of the tension ‘has much to do with the strange inner reciprocity of the categories of “majority” and “minority” in liberal social thought, which produces what Appadurai (2006: 8) calls the *anxiety of incompleteness*.

Perhaps there is, then, an ongoing dialogue between sociocultural and socioeconomic factors, although the threat of raw xenophobia and possibly even discrimination based on ethno-racial identities cannot be discounted as contributors to this debate.¹⁷ Here we are reminded of how the overall fabric of a society suffers long-term effects from a type of colonialism that Ashis Nandy has claimed colonizes the mind (Nandy 2006: xi), as well as spatiality, discrimination and structures of inequality, through forms of segregation. The Nigerian scholar Claude Aké notes that ‘it is one of the problems of the state-building project in multinational societies of Africa that in seeking to integrate it has instead produced disintegration’ by creating a ‘multiplicity of interpretative communities which, despite their subordination to central power, remain sharply and consciously differentiated by their cognitive maps, political practice and political morality’ (Aké 1995: 72).

In this manner, arguably, the ghettos described earlier become as normalized as they are feared. The ghetto, wrote Albert Memmi (2006: 84), ‘is both a rejection and a reaction to rejections, real or imagined, by the others. [It] supports and feeds the separation, but it is also its expression’. In extreme cases, fear might give way to the infamous suggestion that a form of segregation should be safeguarded. This is perhaps the case with the recently circulated idea that the shantytown of Barraca in Boa Vista ought to be fenced off – allegedly following suggestions by the residents themselves (see e.g. Frederico 2008).

Considering these acute tensions, the fast-changing ethnoscape of the country probably justifies more aggressive measures to strengthen social justice. It also requires that the official approach to immigration move forward from its current single focus on Cape Verdeans living overseas to proactively develop a comprehensive and sovereign immigration policy. What the current context does not justify, however, are the exaggerated discourses of ‘invasion’, criminality and dilution of identity advanced by the media, articulated even by influential political and academic figures, and reproduced by many ordinary Cape Verdeans. This discourse currently seems to apply exclusively to African migrants (Angolans excepted), while Chinese, Europeans and even Brazilians are all generally seen as bringing technical and economic advantages to the country. This murky cocktail of ethno-racial and socioeconomic reasons suggests a hybrid type of discrimination that, being thus far unaddressed by the Cape Verdean government, is easily

finding resonance among Cape Verdean people based on the 'fear of invasion'. Appadurai (2006) dubs this 'the fear of small numbers' – the majority's irrational fear of becoming subjugated by a diminutive minority.

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Notes

1. This contribution is based on a paper presented at the Upper Guinea Conference, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, in Halle, Germany. As of 2010 the Cape Verdean government has – predictably – rethought the immigration, resettlement and free movement of people clauses in the guiding ECOWAS agreements, and eschewed the possibility of integrating the advance group of countries using the new ECOWAS biometric passports (backed by Ghana and set to gradually replace individual member states' national passports). Interestingly, this policy-based distancing happened despite the current government's pan-African stance and its continued involvement in regional politics (as epitomized by President Pedro Pires' intervention in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis in late 2010).
2. The subject of an idealized racial blindness in the Cape Verde islands has been explored in Deirdre Meintel's (1984) work. She previously touched upon the subject in earlier works, including Meintel Machado (1981).
3. For a full set of studies on motivations for migration, refer to the joint project *EUM-AGINE: Imagining Europe from the Outside*, run by the Centre of Sociological Research (CSR) in Ternopil, Ukraine; the Centre for Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and the International Migration Institute (IMI), both in Oxford, United Kingdom; the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in Norway; Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey; Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD) in Senegal; Université Mohammed V-Agdal in Rabat, Morocco; and the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies (Ce-MIS) in Antwerp, Belgium. Also see www.eumagine.org.
4. It should be noted that Cape Verde's immigration law was finally passed in 2012, as was a national strategy on migration. These have established themselves as core documents among a portfolio that includes limited mobility treaties with both the EU and ECOWAS. The category of asylum continues to be unregulated by internal laws. No refugees are registered as such in official national statistics, although the country has on occasion agreed to receive individuals with sensitive politics (i.e. people accused of Basque

- terrorism and former Guantanamo prisoners), in ad hoc negotiations. Temporary (or circular) migration of West Africans is theoretically possible in light of the ECOWAS agreements, and business/investment travel or migration is facilitated by specific regulations. For lower-income migrants, opportunities to enter the country legally are scarce.
5. For a complete discussion of the ethnic and racial dimensions of migration in Cape Verde, see especially Marcelino (2013).
 6. The country's first five-star hotel, a 750-room mammoth, opened on the island in January 2011.
 7. Independence leader Amílcar Cabral was a Bissau-Guinean of Cape Verdean stock.
 8. Referred to indistinctively of the specificity of this mainland ethnic group.
 9. Reader comment (Acut) published in an online forum following the publication of an article about two Nigerian citizens detained in Sal Island for dealing crack (1 April 2009), in *A Semana Online* (www.asemana.publ.cv).
 10. Reader comment (Mandjako Criolo), in *A Semana Online*, 01 April 2009.
 11. Reader comment (Miss Universo), published in an online forum following the publication of an article about a Malian woman apprehended while trafficking cocaine (26 February 2010), in *A Semana Online*.
 12. Reader comment (CEDEAonde, or roughly 'ECOwhat'), published in an online forum following the publication of an article on the arrest and trial in the Sal of the Nigerian national Onochie Francis Obaziek for drug traffic (10 March 2010), in *A Semana Online*.
 13. Reader comment (Pedro António), published in an online forum, following the publication of an article about two Nigerian citizens detained in Sal Island for dealing crack (1 April 2009). It is worth noting that all the positive comments are signed by readers identified with a full name, rather than the anonymous, sheltering nickname that is generally the case with negative comments.
 14. Reader comment (Madil), published in an online forum, following the publication of an article on a robbery in Sal (19 February 2010), in *A Semana Online*.
 15. Reader comment (Aramis), in *A Semana Online*.
 16. Though clearly not a feature unique to Cape Verde, this is as relevant as it is prolific. For other cases, see e.g. Min Sook Lee's film *El Contrato* (www.nfb.ca/film/el_contrato), a 2003 short documentary on Mexican contract workers in Canada, where southern Ontario employers and residents employ similarly suggestive vocabulary, such as: 'I understand ... but,' or 'I know they're human too, and I'm not racist or anything, but...'
 17. Ultimately, such 'colonial racism' could be a sad remnant of Cape Verde's past and its very prominent postcolonial present, as Franz Fanon (2006) implied about the typical post-colony, albeit in another geographical context that nonetheless shares the postcolonial creolized subject with Cape Verde. On the issue of migrant 'invasion' or 'flood', see De Haas (2008).

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