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Identities economy and development in contemporary Cape Verdean migratory movement:¹ the primacy of the gender

Les dades recollides en el projecte «Cap Verd arreu del món», encara vigent, confirmen el lloc central de les dones a les xarxes internacionals de comerç que representen una de les principals adaptacions dels capverdians a les condicions globals. Aquest rol provoca canvis d'identitat –juntament amb l'àmbit migratori on es desenvolupa tot aquest comerç–, que afecten la manera com es viuen i es pensen els vincles familiar i nacional (*Caboverdianidade*). Al seu torn, aquests canvis identitaris podrien tenir repercussions sobre la mateixa conformació i funcionament de les xarxes que els han originat.

PARAULES CLAU: migracions, globalització, comerç, gènere, dones, «rabidantes», Cap Verd.

The discussion presented in this paper is based on data recollected in the Cape Verdean Diaspora in Portugal, in Rome, Italy and, in an exploratory way, on the American continent (USA and Brazil). The target population is made up of people of Cape-Verdean origin who have either had or still have some role and/or information as to the commercial movement of goods and people to and from Cape Verde and who maintain regular contact with their country of origin.²

A case study on informal international trading in Cape Verde –undertaken between 1999 and 2000– discusses new forms of globalisation based on the economic activities of informal entrepreneurs called «*rabidantes*», (Grassi 2002 and 2003). This study suggests there is a link between the problematic of the entrepreneur within the informal context and the question of gender as a necessary analytical category to understanding the dynamics of the real market in Cape Verde. They are mostly women who manage international commercial activities in a manner that highlights the relevance of kinship links. The «*rabidantes*» of Santiago Island participate in the economic development of the country through commercial networks even while their business activities remain statistically invisible. Actually, they structure very complex networks that promote contact with different cultures and countries (buying in European countries, the USA, Brazil and selling in Cape Verde); their activities seem mostly organised around kinship structures in the traditional diaspora countries. It is a true flow of peoples maintaining continuous contacts between different countries where some often resolve to remain and seek employment mostly in informal social, religious or ethnic networks. Studying the Cape Verdean diaspora in a comparative approach can help to understand and to question the economic and non-economic effects of transnational migrant networks and their global impact.

The capital accumulation of the activity of *rabidantes* is both monetary (normally used for providing educational access for younger members of the kinship group) and social. From a theoretical point of view, this strand of the discussion around informality in economics,

fosters a better understanding of the real market and the significance of the words in a post colonial approach, but without reducing the social processes to a question of semiotics (Parry, 1994: 12; Abrahamsen 2003: 192).

Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, the need to move the methodological frameworks used in mainstream economics forward will be stressed.

The perspective that economics does not contain the instruments that might favour socially responsible research relates to the neo-classical approach that ignores the history of economics and strips any relationship with the other social sciences from its theoretical framework. In reality, whenever research focuses on concrete problems (poverty, unemployment, international trade, monetary policy, migratory patterns, the new economy, ecology, etc) the theoretical tools (mathematical models restrictively applied in order to find extreme local and general points) that constitute the orthodox theoretical approach should only be used where relevant to the problems under analysis and not as ends in themselves.

In reality, the informal economy frequently represents one of the new forms of economic growth that poorer and immigrant communities may take recourse to. It is accepted that the informal economy is currently on the rise not only in developing countries but also in Portugal and other European countries. In migratory contexts informal economic activities are normally perceived as illegal –contributing to the marginalization of the actors involved.

Informal economy, culture and identities

At the micro level, it is possible to understand how contact between differing societies does not take place without conflict. On the contrary, it creates new problems and brings back tensions once thought disappeared. It is important to assume this for a better

understanding of the multiple forms in which globalisation takes effect and influences differing countries with differing levels of development.

While cultural diversity represents a significant opportunity for coming into contact with all kinds of differing aspects, in practice, this is simultaneously blocked by prejudice and poorly defined concepts that contribute to prevailing perspectives across host cities in terms of comparisons between the respective immigrant countries of origin. Furthermore, within such a context, development is understood primarily as accessing material resources, that is only one of the aspects involved.³

Thus, immigrants are popularly attributed responsibility for problems affecting the host country economy such as shortages in resources, habitation, public services, etc. This all contributes to the frustration expressed in xenophobic ideas in which, for example, discussions on employment rapidly take on racial connotations assuming an individual's skin colour is capable of providing an explanation for underlying economic trends that are far better explained in political economy textbooks.

It is in this context that identities like gender, «race» and nationality, became relevant to understand how informal activities are processed at the level of individuals, family, ethnic group or as Barth (1969:31) stated in the management of the multiple forms of «self» in relationships between people at the emotional, cultural and spiritual levels that influence such exchanges. In short, this is the level that most interests citizens because the quality of relationships that can be engaged in, be they in the public or private sphere, at work or in social relations within the group belonged to, determines our sense of contentment, satisfaction and recognition in either sphere. Besides, this is the level at which identities are constructed and complemented by contact with others. Such a level also inherently influences both the macro and the medium level.

In a multicultural context –such as the migratory one– culture is a very important factor acting in different ways according to the level of interaction within the different groups. When the level of interaction is low, cultural differences tend to be better defined and intercultural relations more stable in the sense that people accept the differences as innate (Vermeulen Hans and Govers Cora 2004:13).

In the case of the Cape Verdean diaspora, on the contrary, the importance of the kinship connection for commercial activities seems to reinforce the national identity.

It seems necessary to understand culture not in terms of simple «sharing» but rather in the «organisation of diversity». This additionally creates a need to re-question and re-think the very notion of «society». Where cultures are not –and they are not– homogeneous, how can we expect people to share an idea of that culture or an image of themselves? People differ in how they conceive the ethnic community.

For Cape Verdean people interviewed in diaspora countries (Portugal, Italy and USA) this question is translated into a strong self-defined sense of national identity, the so-called «*Caboverdianidade*». Here are some definitions from people interviewed:

(...) «Caboverdianidade»... is those things I can say, that come out spontaneously and I have to say in our way.... It can't be the way others do...

(...) it's being able to eat *cachupa*, listening to Cape Verdean music, going to meet up with other Cape Verdeans, those things that Cape Verdeans do, that bring people here, like you, to talk about Cape Verdean realities

(...) it's part of my identity. I was born in Cape Verde, I grew up in Cape Verde, I feel emotionally connected to Cape Verde and losing everything Cape Verdean culture has given me would be a bit like losing, ah... my mother or something, very, very important to me. This is without and certainly not closing the doors on the Italian culture around me. I try to understand ever better Italian culture, Italian society

(...) it's like a mother; it's something that... is connected to people. I could not ever renounce Cape Verdean nationality because *capeverdiandade* is in my blood....

... «Caboverdianidade» is a concept that we are all trying to understand more about what it means and the way of being Cape Verdean. It is shown in the food, in the dancing, in the thoughts, the attitudes.... In its positive and negative points. We'll try and get rid of the negatives but I like this and do not want to lose it.

«Caboverdianidade».... Cape Verdean knows...

The consciousness of being Cape Verdean in diaspora contexts and the concept of a «distant homeland» are important for constructing and maintaining the national identity and reinventing the nation. These are highly pertinent issues given that emigrant remittances represent the single largest source of revenue to the Cape Verde state budget.

The data collected in interviews with Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon also reveal a certain interaction between gender, «race» and national identity and the respective class that sometimes is expressed in terms of individual purchasing power. The differentiation between individual purchasing power and the appearance of conflict is clearly portrayed in the interviews.

Inside the household (interviewed in Portugal):

(...) ... when there is money along comes all that greed. You see I get along very well with my brothers and sisters. That is why it is better that I keep them separate because money destroys everything, if you get my meaning?

Inside the neighbourhood where they live and work:

(...) there are episodes of racism, intolerance, aren't there? Personally, I can say there have always been those little things, but I have to move on because those people who have that attitude make me sad. They make me sad when I meet people who've grown up and still got racist attitudes. I say they reached a certain age and have learned almost nothing about life. Yesterday, a woman told me that the things I sell were dirty because I touched them with my black Cape Verdean hands... it's a shame.

The Cape Verdean identity is felt in different ways by different diaspora generations. All interviewees referred to the importance of their sense of being Cape Verdean while stating they felt a right to citizenship in their host countries. Among immigrants in Pawtucket, for example, it seems such identity «contagion» has become a source of great concern to Cape Verdean elites in the diaspora regarding the most recent generations. Some of the young born to also US born Cape Verdean parents termed how the sense of Cape Verdean as a national value came about as an identity construction made at the political level by the national elites in the diaspora. Furthermore, use seems to be made of the

racial question to foster discourse on nationality and citizenship. Interviews with young persons of Cape Verdean origin confirm that the most important tension exists around the racial issue. All the young interviewed expressed the identity of a «black American» and refer to the importance of being recognised as such prior to being considered Cape Verdean.

In terms of the theoretical discussion about ethnic identity, in the opinion of Verdery (1991), in the majority of cases, by seeking to impose that which is «common», the nation state renders ethnic differences visible. The political objectives surrounding cultural homogenisation are not complemented by the cultural division of labour. Modern and post-modern states seem well able and motivated to respond to such inequality and more able to tolerate ethno-cultural differences (Vermeulen and Govers 2004:16). The constitution of all democratic states promotes difference while rejecting distinctions made in terms of gender, «race» and ethnicity.

That political discourse frequently incorporates a new and self-fulfilling truth resulting in great responsibility for any social scientist in approaching the relationship between academic concepts and common sense. We are all involved, as far as that responsibility is concerned, when seeking, and based on the notion of economy connected ethnicity, to indicate a certain type of economy, business person or form of trade.

So, constructing the informal economy problematic is substantially an epistemological problem with important social repercussions and interrelates both to the state's decision making capacity and the political *tout court*. It becomes a political question that requires openness to a complex discourse, to other disciplines and analytical categories and non-orthodox economics methodologies.

Economy, global development and migratory dynamics

In line with other authors, the adoption of a substantive definition of economy as the «*provisioning of society*» (which includes production, change and consumption), instead of other «formal» definitions, enables a better application to multicultural contexts (Smith, 2004:2). And even while this result in certain ambiguities (Wilk 1996:28-34), it is starting from this simple definition that generates a clearer understanding as to why macroeconomic models and mainstream methodology do not help in understanding the epistemological implications of the multicultural contexts of real economic informal dynamics. Furthermore, the specificity of the economic exchange of commodities raises some important questions about its meaning and its contribution in terms of development (Babou 2002; Mafeje and Radwan 1996). Furthermore, scientific production in social sciences, when referring to trans migratory and multicultural contexts, brings uncertainty to the different points of view based on which strictly disciplinary approaches can generate only limited understandings of reality.

Considering the social sciences as a whole, it may be stated that something broader is happening and

impacting globally on the academic world and its intellectual integrity. Authors such as Tony Lawson (1997), Geoff Hodgson (2004), Bruce Caldwell (1982) and so forth, attribute this state of affairs to the competitive processes of contemporary capitalism, the intensity of growth and the growing complexity of specialisation. This rationale may be thus summarised: capitalism produces boundary less products, technology and desires and depends on a growing variety of highly able specialists while simultaneously ensuring de-qualification takes place in certain sectors. The overall labour force is divided into one class of qualified professionals and another class of unqualified workers. The level of qualifications in the former class rises in line with the complexity of society and its organisations. Such a process necessarily bears consequences for contemporary universities. Companies demand qualified labour and have exported into the academic world demands belonging to the business sector.

The multicultural contexts of current society require the observation of economic behaviour in a range of contexts and from such observations it is possible to embark on a philosophical and epistemological debate on the appropriateness of theories to practice. Whether or not a theory is appropriate to a particular set of circumstances broadly depends on the assumptions and ability for that theory to stand up to a sharp, realistic contrast provided by the ideas, needs and concerns prevailing in that particular context.

In short, it may be stated that in the field of economics there has to be an understanding of economic and social actors who do not display rational behaviour seeking to maximise utility as wished for by mainstream economics. Rather, such economic behaviour is determined by other causes such as instinct, habit, gender and other social factors contributing to each actor's behaviour. Furthermore, such economic activities, along with other social phenomena, are embedded in the culture and social, political and institutional value systems that influence the behaviour of actors in order to undermine, create or impose collective identities that in turn impact on economic behaviours. In my doctoral and master's theses, it was, for example, in using gender as an analytical category that enabled an effective portrayal of exchange relations in Cape Verde (2003) and Angola (1996). And it is in this sense that research on economic behaviour should be guided by the concept that meanings attributed to identity are always unstable and constantly interacting with difference and the supplementary meanings that emerge and subvert efforts to create fixed and stable worlds. And thus dialogue between economics and sociology is rendered easy, opportune and necessary for the understanding of social and economic factors and to monitor perceived processes of institutional evolution.

Furthermore, economic reality is dynamic and rarely static. This ensures the need to understand the how and why of such aspects, depending on their respective time and space, and thereby attributing major importance to the historical process.

From the epistemological perspective, the dichotomy between positivist economics and normative economics, used since the times of J.S. Mill, has now become problematic. The discourse needs to focus on the apparent sophistication of mathematical tools that,

judging from the Nobel prizes awarded, seeks to create the impression that economics has become a science as exact as 21st century particle physics.

For this and much that falls beyond the scope of this paper, I wish to highlight the need to intensify the debate on theoretical aspects of economics within a context of crisis for the social sciences. This in turn involves questioning, for example, the manner in which economics, like the other sciences, is composed of socially constructed «scientific» components. The conviction remains that knowledge of the social construct of economic science within an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue is a good strategy for scientific change in academic terms and, given their intrinsic connection, in real terms.

Furthermore, economics, within its historic framework, may remind politicians that the discipline was born out of ethics and that social problems generating applied policies should be approached taking into account ethical values and social responsibility based on principles of equity. It is in such a theoretical context that it is important to ground reflections on gender and economy.

It is thus that the informal economy concept, transferred to cities with resident Cape Verde diaspora communities, emerges translated into negative expressions when referring to the economic activities undertaken by immigrants within that diaspora context, normally classified by physical characteristics such as gender and skin colour.

Interviews in Portugal:

... I think that here, even with Portuguese nationality, whatever that is, we will always be immigrants. My job is always considered as for blacks. Black labour....women job.....

In Lisbon, things are different. There are racial tensions that are already being felt, aren't they? If a Ukrainian woman sold what I sell it wouldn't be the work for blacks (...) They're better treated, have got schooling and all that (...).

(..) He [the son] already feels really Cape Verdean, you see? Because there is always that difference, I don't know exactly what, between blacks and whites. He started very early understanding that he is not Portuguese (...) they mock him saying: «your mother sells things to the blacks....»

«Engendering» Transnationalism in the Cape Verdean Diaspora

The theoretical structure to this study of the Cape Verdean diaspora is, for reasons of context, connected to the theme of migrations and related to that of transnationalism⁴ understood as the movement of people, goods, information, ideas and assets that seems to structure the modern world (Keohane e Nye 1971:3). Transnationalism is a concept economists and sociologists in the main part relate to the macro analysis of the transnational financial interactions and companies, the most glaring expression of current economic globalisation (Sklair 1995, Castells 1996, Dicken et al., 2001, Yeung 2000). From a theoretical point of view, as Vertovec (2003: 1-2) points out, transnationalism seems to be found everywhere, at least in the social sciences.

The role of the Cape Verdean diaspora falls within the scope of transnationalism carried out by non-institutional actors and organised in family networks and dispersed communities (Portes 2001: 243-260). The multiculturalism accompanying this current migratory movement is a longstanding phenomenon that falls within the movement of people and goods in a globalised world. This irreversible trend has to be studied as a *transitory* phenomenon leading towards a cosmopolitan society that guarantees full citizenship to all inhabitants whatever the nationality in order to render obsolete categories of analysis such as «immigrant». Should this not happen, the risk is run of rhetorical manipulation of this phenomenon, as indeed happened in the later stages of the Portuguese colonial era (Vale de Almeida 2004:89). The importance of highlighting the trans-territoriality of this phenomenon should begin by abandoning conceptual categories defined by geographical or identity criteria or indeed by academic field, which no longer bear analytical relevance in the modern world.

The last ten years have seen a deluge of publications in differing disciplinary fields dealing approaching the theme with distinct or overlapping perspectives. Studying Cape Verdean informal trading networks in the diaspora took my theoretical path in the direction of the sociology of migrations where interest in the theme of transnationalism continues to grow. The sociology of migrations does in fact seem to provide a theoretical response to a perceivable shortcoming of economic theory in its analysis of migration within the context of globalisation and its consequent international division of labour. The theme, in fact, represents the concern of governments in differing countries around the world at the lack of regulation of a phenomenon that is changing the nature of the main global cities in terms of urban structures, national policies and economic internationalisation (cf Sassen 200, 2001). Furthermore, the activities of individuals, groups and organisations in the current world are taking on ever more numerous and varied forms.

In the specific case of Cape Verdeans in contact with the global informal economy, it seems such activities structure the organisation of networks primarily around kinship and with clear gender characteristics as has been born out by information collected in interviews in Lisbon:

My brother is also a trader in Cape Verde, but he works for another person. He works for a Portuguese person, you see? He could very easily do this but I do not want to lose my brother, you understand? That's why it's better this way. We get on so well, so very well, we're so similar that I do not get my brothers involved in my business activities.

That's why I do this with someone new. I have already tried differently even getting my cousin involved but I could see it was not going to work out... I stopped it halfway so as not to lose the friendship. I stopped it in the middle.

(...) I talked to him: «you are my brother, it's not right to do this type of thing. What they pay is for you. You've got to earn but what I have here is not mine any more».

But to get my brothers involved in this, I won't. Because I know that I'm going to lose a brother.

The interviews and life histories collected in Portugal and Italy suggest that the informal trading networks are established around the world by immigrants and migrants of Cape Verdean origin with all those interviewees

wed testifying to their existence to a greater or lesser extent.

Furthermore, almost all those interviewed responded that they had no connection with the trade in question when asked directly confirming the importance of the negative connotation the term «rabadante» holds in the collective Cape Verdean imaginary. This question is dealt with more broadly in the aforementioned study on rabadante trading networks (Grassi 2002 and 2003). In fact, and simultaneously, the life stories detail the existence of a constant movement of goods between the aforementioned states and Cape Verde within the diaspora context generally, but not exclusively, along kinship lines. Specifically, such networks seem to be the «implicit» manner by which people leaving Cape Verde in a more or less definitive sense are able to complement and/or generate the necessary income needed to manage their own lives in host countries and family members remaining in Cape Verde. The interviews also reveal a generalised lack of awareness of the economic importance of such activities both in terms of the livelihoods of those involved and in terms of participation in the real global economy. The «rabadantes» in their narratives of journeys indicated that despite helping kin and other Cape Verde community members in countries being visited in order to acquire goods, they consider the sale in Portugal of goods they have acquired in Brazil and sold wholesale for retail in Portugal, for example as a genuine «retail» activity. They simply serve to provide «help» to kin who, particularly in Portugal, may be experiencing worse financial situations than they faced in Cape Verde due to host country economic difficulties.

From the interviews held in Portugal with a contractually employed domestic worker and with the father of a son in regular employment: she first explains how she can help her mother to pay for the house being built in Cape Verde:

My sisters help me a lot, many times I go because she tells me to. One does not have the head for that kind of thing, but the other... doesn't like that type of thing. I go frequently if necessary. If there is something that can be sold, she phones me: [own name], come on over, there something that I think is worth selling», so I go over to take a look.

And furthermore:

(...) They're a week in Brazil, after they come to Portugal, then it's onto France because they've gone from France-Brazil, Brazil-Portugal and many times, they then go to Cape Verde. But not always to Cape Verde, that's probably every two or three trips... Cape Verde, it is more France-Brazil, France-Brazil-Portugal

There are people who do this. They do this, come here because they have no family as such. Ah, look, they come directly into my neighbourhood and that's when I do my buying, throughout about a week or two and then they go back again.

(...) Goods? Yes, generally... and now for Christmas there certainly is. The people come here to buy a lot of things and they even take a type of container. Everything they can get inside it they take there. You know perfectly that there are difficulties there just as here so everything they can get is sent. The problem is getting the container but as soon as you get one you can fill it. They put everything in and it all goes there, particularly second hand things, second hand. I know about this. But some of the new things, stay with me and I sell them here. Look, I've got a good cream for your hands. Don't you want some? I'll make you a good price...

And furthermore in Rome:

As she went to Cape Verde in May [referring to a boutique store owner, a female trader based in Rome] I said to her: «look, take me to the airport and I'll give you some of my stuff and you sell them here and then when you get back you pay me» I couldn't deal with her [a distant cousin] because she bought from the Chinese and the Chinese are not scared because they have a licence to sell retail but in Praça Vitória they sell wholesale..... Now, they know me and I can also buy to give to her to sell but you have to be careful... I don't want her coming with me to buy from the Chinese....

The Cape Verde diaspora has long been established and highlights that the colonial problem has yet to be resolved. That is why the informal transnational trading networks should be understood as a post-colonial phenomenon in terms of how they are loaded with identity meanings constantly undergoing redefinition involving their ideologies, interpretations and analogies that are lacking, for example, in the new migratory influxes into Portugal (Vale de Almeida, 2004). It is against such a landscape that social norms governing the relationships of sharing and solidarity between individuals should be reconsidered. They take on a higher profile in precarious situations when the individuals are forced to depend on their connections with others. In summary, people are forced to obey the norms of reciprocity due to their own very precarious position that normally extends not only to their employment situation but to all aspects of life in the diaspora.

For Cape Verde, emigration is a structural economic problem but it is also, as seen, an identity question linked to the importance taken on by the Cape Verdean diaspora in building and maintaining national identity and in redefining the nation.

Transmigratory networks of Cape Verdeans around the world represent part of a far broader movement of people, goods and information that typifies current globalised capitalism. The economic characteristics presented in terms of managing trade and business seem related to those personal and negotiated relationships that are established by transnational business operations. This is in many aspects a «gendered» context exemplified, in this research, by Capeverdean women. Work by Morgan (2001), among others, has proved able to provide important insights into how to better structure research into international and transmigratory economics.

In general, in the literature influenced by the political economy of transmigration (Faist 2000; Poros 2001, Riccio 1999, Portes, 1995), there always emerges a phenomenon explained in terms of a reaction to global capitalism. What happens in reality is a constant process of network building but where the actual practices vary from situation to situation (Schweitzer 1997, Massey, 1999). Thus, it may be stated that Cape Verdean transmigration seems to reconcile divisions and enable multiple levels of belonging. If, on the one hand, they weaken the «nation state», on the other, they also serve as the most effective way of keeping alive the national construction process in the younger generations. However, data also suggests that there is a tendency for the bond with the country of origin to weaken with those born and raised in the diaspora seeing Cape Verde as increasingly mythical and distant.

Thus does the object of study undergo transformation seeming to escape from its original limitations given how individual behaviour observed within the net-

works is best explained through taking into account fundamental questions of citizen rights and human rights in a broad sense. At the macro level, and taking into account the cause/effect relationship between the international division of labour and the migratory flows that some authors place within the context of the current liberal framework (Gambino 2003:36-100), the migratory flows caused by the international division of labour ensure that the question of the rights of universal citizenship in defence of individuals takes centre stage. This becomes particularly the case as individual rights are offended every time that reference is made to «us» and to «others» and whenever migrants are classified according to criteria –ethnic, gender, ethnic or geographic– ensuring they are sectioned off into ghettos. In this case, what is under discussion in the symbolic placing of the ghetto is the role of words that «look down» the informal business activities making up part of transnationalism and its global networks.

Many authors believe that the *social network* represents an advantageous point from which to observe pluricultural contexts in order to identify new organisational logics to human activity and in the work to operationalise such concepts (Rogers e Vertovec 1995; Portes 1995; Castells 1996; Mitchell 1974;). Furthermore, this analytical category becomes still more effective when using life histories that best enable the exploration of the individual within the networks (Massey et al. 1999; Dicken et al. 2001). The option to collect data through interviews involving the drawing up of life histories demonstrates its epistemological logic in how the host migratory contexts are the locations for the reformulation of identity and symbolic and cultural exchanges, which also emerges in economic acts. They are individual translations of the social and cultural complexity to which individuals belong (Mitchell 1974). This complexity would certainly not be thoroughly analysed through the use of the social network category in a determinist manner, such as the exclusive collection of sophisticated mathematics, graphs and tables (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

Cape Verdean networks are above all family based and follow the concept of the extended family beyond that common to European nuclear families resulting in the majority of authors referring to community. Blood ties in the diaspora are not always the most important factor for the management of solidarity and mutual help. Furthermore, and according to many authors, the Cape Verdean family structure is matriarchal with the women being the adults responsible for decisions and the survival of the family unit (Meintel 1984: 112; Couto 2002:135; Grassi 2002: 163). This Cape Verdean family social structure influences the economic dynamics and their forms.⁵

Trade networks in the diaspora, such as the *Rabidantes* in Cape Verde, are headed by women confirming the identity specificity of this context. For example, from interview in Lisbon:

It's the women... because women like to do that kind of thing more...

It's this. Cape Verdean men don't like it very much... they don't want to get involved with women's things. They want to do whatever they appeals to them, not being there and getting involved, not missing out on doing things. And very often the women do not even bother to go and ask their opinion.

I never say anything because I think that they are not, I think that they don't, well, I don't think they have the head for buying and selling.

The majority, the men don't leave here to go and buy in Brazil. Not them. The only thing they're able to buy is women. In any case, it's a bit difficult going to buy. They pretty much always buy here or maybe when they're selling something, practically always or very often, it's not theirs. They're working for those women who are always travelling and they are practically always the youths who are studying. Those who study at night, during the day, they've got nothing to do and so those ones are here selling.

No, it's easier for a woman to do this because at the customs it's pretty much all men and when they're women, well, she goes there to get something cleared but if it's a woman working there, it's no, no...

Furthermore, from the macro economic point of view, it should be highlighted how individual behaviour observed inside the networks cannot be seen as separate from the broader scope of international migrations of our current world. That is how this «new» international division of labour, now is being redesigned by the hegemonies, citizen rights, in addition to human rights, also have other unexpected implications. These may be in terms of identity –the importance of the Cape Verdean diaspora in the construction and maintenance of the national identity and reinventing the nation is consensual across much of the literature– or in terms of new and emerging social phenomena such as «new» types of informal economy, including within it illegal and criminal activities (Williams e Vlassis 2001).

Solidarity or methodological individualism?

The informal activities observed in the diaspora seem to undermine the sense of solidarity in that there seems to me an entropic movement towards methodological individualism in observed human relations which emerge transversally across the ethnographic research thus far carried out. People in these contexts relate feelings of distrust in the relationships inside the community that seems exacerbated by their economic activities.

... I know many of them but I don't trust, sometimes, in any of them.

I know them very well. I go to their house and they come to mine... and many of them are neighbours in Cape Verde, some of us all studied together even if they're practically all a bit older than myself but not by much, five years, two years or three years older. But I simply cannot...

But I cannot go to Brazil with any of them as the only person I trust to go with me to Brazil would be my sister. I don't trust anyone to go to Brazil with unless it was for holidays rather than going shopping...

Very often, when I don't have and there's a friend of mine who does, I help her selling, do you understand? I help in selling but I have to be paid. I don't have and I don't give anything for free.

There are many times when some of my friends have something to sell. I help them selling. In exchange, they help me selling mine. We make a swap in which I don't take any of mine because she is going to sell mine or I am going to sell hers... but only her... I don't trust in anyone else...

It's that. I buy from a friend who's always going to Brazil... but only from her... the others can't be trusted...

This lack of trust seems to induce changes to humanist values such as solidarity. The data also show that solidarity has its own gender characteristics given that in the majority of cases where solidarity is encountered (or explored) there are grounds for exploring the desire for protection connected to gender.

But not only gender is important. Interviews carried out with elite Cape Verdean (im)migrants, usually holding dual nationality, and (im)migrants from lower social classes and with a weaker position in the host society demonstrate the need to redirect critical perspectives on the dynamics of power underlying education and the definition of cultures in addition to that expressed by economic actions.

Fear and a lack of trust in human relationships in the contexts observed also appear between the diaspora's generational groups. For example, interviews with Cape Verdeans in Lisbon, Rome and Pawtucket refer to a clear weakening of kinship solidarity so celebrated in the common discourse about Cape Verdeans. There is, on the contrary, a tendency for people to favour individualist dynamics or those limited to the nuclear family (in the European sense of the term). Support from those family members who have been in the country for longer towards people arriving in Lisbon for motives of health, tourism or business, for example, seems to be ever less of a reality. This factor obviously changes in accordance with the socio-economic individual characteristics just as there are differences in terms of gender, age and migratory history, with the particular host context proving of particular relevance. For example, if we take the case of migration by members of the economic, political and intellectual elites for the purpose of acquiring goods and consumer items, we may identify that the social class becomes the analytical category that best defines the dynamics observed. Interviews in Lisbon, as well as Pawtucket (USA) and Rome of members of these elite tell of a clear dispersion and weakening at the parental level of solidarity that all declare still exists in their places of origin.

Besides, interviews carried out with Cape Verdeans immigrants living in Greater Lisbon also demonstrate a similar lack of parental support within Cape Verdean families. This is sensitive with the gender of family members, with women, frequently single mothers, experiencing precarious and lowly paid jobs, the most exposed. Life histories show several cases of young girls who have been in Portugal for some years after having left Cape Verde to join some kin member –normally a woman– to go to school and take a diploma. Once here, they become a «help» to that family member that brought them frequently taking over care of children and carrying out domestic tasks. In various cases, the reason for leaving Cape Verde –education– is not achieved and the young females end up seeking whatever means to achieve their own independence. The most serious situations are found in the poorest families. In such cases, the weakening of kinship ties recounted by, for example, Cape Verdean women becomes even clearer given that interviews with poorer immigrants with a less stable footing in host society demonstrated the existence of a growing economic and social phenomenon that should be taken as a feature of the informal economy. However, due to legislation on immigration, it is rather considered part of the illegal economy. That is, the existence of «white»

or sham marriages which many young and not so young women of the Cape Verdean community in Lisbon, with the right to reside in the country, make in exchange for a sum of money. Such findings demonstrate the practice is on the rise nationally and across various immigrant communities, including Cape Verdean women and particularly among poorer members given their weak earning capacity and lack of both family support and meaningful integration into the host society. They end up agreeing to take part in the transnational networks that organise weddings with foreigners who wish to gain entry into the European Union. The weddings I was told of in Lisbon had mostly taken place in other EU countries where the legislation is more favourable to reuniting familiar members. Specifically, those interviewed belonged to a wedding ring operating out of London.

There is and certainly should be a degree of concern as to the risks of women undertaking such types of business. There are in fact suspicions –testified to by the Immigration Services and other women support organisations– that this practice may be opening up the opportunity for the trafficking of human beings. In fact, according to collected data, human traffickers are part of dynamics such as «white» marriages as a first step towards identifying and targeting individual women.

The data collected thus far in Portugal indicates that there are worrying levels of incidence in this aspect of the criminal economy (trafficking in human beings and/or in indentured labour), representing a trend undergoing rapid expansion and deserving of better study and understanding in order to be able to establish mechanisms providing for the social integration of victims. Once again, it is important to stress the analytical category of gender in order to gain a better understanding of these phenomena taking place within diaspora communities.

It is important to underline that it may be possible to describe, within the observed host environments and within the observed population, the emergence of new identities connected to trade (including illegal activities) and the market that deals such value as necessary due to the competition imposed by the model.

To be continued...

This paper is an early systematization of the data collected in the ongoing project «Cape Verde around the world» still in progress at Institute of Social Sciences in Lisbon. This is the reason it would be too ambitious to reach major conclusions or attempt to generalise. The ethnographical data collected contains much more information than is submitted for discussion here. However, opinions expressed in this paper have only been possible following the option to personally carry out both all the interviews and the fieldwork in the respective countries of the diaspora as a methodological choice. The theoretical object might be identified in the field by the need generated to «jump» between theories, disciplines and methodologies in a multidisciplinary approach. All this has been complemented with an extensive revision of the literature across the different social sciences involved in this approach.

Furthermore, during the year of 2006 a survey has been applied to people of capeverdean origin, living in Lisbon. The results are now been processed and organized in an extensive publication. This survey aims at collecting some quantitative data in a well known context –in an ethnographic sense– mostly on the social capital structure inside the social network explored by informal transnational activities.

1. An earlier and quite different version of this article has been published in the *Working Papers* of the Institute of Social Sciences – University of Lisbon (2005).
2. All the empirical data have been collected in the context of the project «Cape Verde around the World» (Institute of Social Sciences- University of Lisbon) under my own coordination.
3. For further discussion about the complexity of the concept of development, see Grassi (2003: 35-97).
4. For a discussion on the evolution of this concept and its key authors, see Vertovec 2003.
5. On the question of the influence played by social relationships in economic behaviour, see Leibenstein, 1968; Polanyi 1957; Granovetter 1985 and 1992, Portes 1995). On the same question, but with a particular emphasis on gender relations in the informal sector in Cape Verde, see Grassi (2003).

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