

**Place Matters:**  
**Behind neighbourhood lines**

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by

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## **Abstract**

Flows of transnational movements and communications continue to grow in the world today, whilst simultaneously the importance of physical proximity, mobility restrictions and spatial attachments continue to persist, even for mobile populations themselves. The fact that circulation and immobility are both enmeshed in migrants' life experiences creates challenges for analysis of how people relate to local places, and how 'place' can be theorised in the social sciences. This problematic lies at the heart of my research, which examines how second-generation Cape Verdean migrants rehoused in Topia (pseudonym), an urban council estate near Lisbon (Portugal), constitute and relate to their 'neighbourhood' as a meaningful place.

Based on fourteen months of participant observation in 2010-2011, complemented by life stories and institutional interviews, this research focuses on how Topia and its boundaries are socially forged by neighbourhood residents, visitors and the wider society, and what complex meanings and effects these demarcation lines have for Topia's inhabitants. I discuss local neighbour relations, morals and cultural habits; identity categories, mobility patterns and territorial practices; and attitudes towards work, money, time and government, to show how all these elements forge multiple oppositional boundaries between the neighbourhood and outside society, furthering the social and spatial exclusion of its population.

This comprehensive urban ethnography challenges the 'transnational' orientation of current migration studies by highlighting the social significance of territory, proximity and spatial segregation in the lives of migrant dwellers. With the case study of Topia, I aim to show how addressing 'place' through a focus on 'boundary-making' (defined in complex and processual terms) is able to incorporate flux and immobility, and combine different scales of analysis (local, national and transnational), in a bottom-up ethnographic approach which views place as it is (re)produced through people's situated practices, ties, discourses and understandings.

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## **Introduction: Topia – the place**

*'I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space'* (Foucault 1986, 23)

It is your first time walking up the road. In broad day light, you are taking in the surroundings. This is clearly a residential area, with unremarkable housing blocks over you on both sides. A few stores punctuate the landscape here and there, bus stops, a school. Cars pass by on occasion. Some people walk up and down the street, carrying shopping bags or speeding to catch the bus. You keep walking up the same road, but further ahead you realise you have arrived at a different place. You feel the subtle changes in scenery as you slide across inconspicuous boundaries into a new estate, buildings in front of you all resembling one another. Around you things are quiet. A vague smell of grilling comes and goes. Buildings are relatively new, but not that well preserved. They get slightly dirtier as you go up the road, and you can see the paint shedding at places. Some building doors are missing, some have broken locks. These architectural differences set the ground for more evident changes in the human landscape. People here also look different from surrounding estates: most of them are black. Halfway up the road, you hear them speaking a foreign language. Some walk up or down the road, many sit or stand chatting, idling. People greet each other as they pass. Strong-rhythmic music pours out the occasional window. Loud shouting reaches you from a flat above. Male groups gather in street corners and cafés. Their heads turn to watch you walk up. They gaze directly at you. Their eyes seem to convey words – you can almost hear them: 'This is our territory, you are trespassing. Who the hell are you?'

### **1. Scope and relevance of the research**

Graeber (2001, 50-52) identified a basic philosophical controversy at the root of Western thought: between viewing objects as ontologically static and objective (after Parmenides) or essentially fluid and dynamic (inspired by Heraclitus). This tension has emerged time and again over diverse academic matters.<sup>1</sup> Without definitive answers, it has recently re-emerged around the issue of 'place' in social science (Geschiere and Meyer 1998). Traditionally viewed as confined geographic wholes, 'places' have been taken for granted in anthropology as the 'natural' units of culture, challenged by increasing global-

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, in anthropology, over social change (e.g. Leach 2004; Metcalf 2001).

scale human mobility and cultural hybridity. Scholars of different fields have engaged with this predicament, trying to reconcile stasis with fluidity, without satisfactory solutions. In this thesis, I will focus on 'boundary-making' (e.g. Barth 1969; Pellow 1996) to illuminate the social production of 'place' by second-generation Cape Verdeans relocated from squatter settlements to Topia (pseudonym), a council estate in a satellite city of Lisbon, Portugal.<sup>2</sup> I will focus on boundary-making to illustrate, with one ethnographic case study, how 'place' and people's relations to it can be productively grasped through the social processes that *demarcate it*, as (re)produced in agents' practices, meanings and priorities. Approaching place-making through boundary-making can escape the pitfalls of recent proposals for place analysis (section 2.3 below), whilst capturing how people act, cope and resist, often under difficult circumstances, before complex structural and cultural demands, both local and global. Bridging the gap between the two poles – static *and* fluid (Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Leach 2004, 15) – focusing on how 'place' is dynamically produced can elucidate the interplays of structure and agency in local settings: what people can change, what they must endure, and how they reproduce the world.

In the following chapters, I will examine the processes that demarcated and reproduced Topia – not the physical estate but the social neighbourhood (*bairro*) – as a significant place, including social and spatial practices, meanings and narratives, at local and supra-local levels: municipal, national and transnational. My ethnographic focus on place-making and its importance in Topia stands to challenge a transnationalist overstatement of mobility and cultural 'de-territorialisation' (Appadurai 2008; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Conversely, I will show that the routines, identities and social relations of second-generation Cape Verdeans were inextricably bound to territorial claims and segregation. I will examine the invisible lines people drew around Topia, as continuous social productions involving culture, language and 'race' (Wade 2012), socio-economic position, institutional action, morality and sociality, embodiment, symbolism and space – with far-reaching consequences for its inhabitants. These lines expressed distinctive social patterns, rules and moral codes, attitudes to time, money and the future; and they shaped relationships of suspicion, resistance and symbolic opposition to white Portuguese society.

Through this analysis, I hope to contribute to discussions of place-making in anthropological and interdisciplinary studies of migration and globalisation (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). I will offer one empirically-grounded answer to the question: 'how can we think about – that is conceptualize – “place” in these

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<sup>2</sup> By 'second-generation Cape Verdeans' I mean people born of Cape Verdean immigrant parents and raised from birth or early age in Portugal. In some chapters I refer more broadly to 'second-generation residents' meaning all children from migrant parents (including from rural Portugal) and raised in the Lisbon area.

global times?' (Massey 1995, 45). My focus on place-making has yielded a comprehensive ethnography of life in Topia, grounded on fourteen months of participant observation complemented by life-story interviews. I hope this account will enrich existing ethnographies of transnationalism;<sup>3</sup> 'emplacement' among migrants and displaced people;<sup>4</sup> urban segregation and exclusion,<sup>5</sup> especially among second generations;<sup>6</sup> as well as, more specifically, Portuguese urban rehousing,<sup>7</sup> and identity-building among Cape Verdeans in Portugal.<sup>8</sup> I will also add to a long-standing tradition of ethnographies of poor urban settings,<sup>9</sup> highlighting the rarely explored perspective of female inhabitants.

At a local level, this study will further the knowledge of Topia. Built in 1999, Topia has been focus to several publications, academic and technical. However, the list lacks extensive ethnographic contributions. To date, available publications are: a geographic study (comparing estates around Lisbon and Washington as to geographic and social integration) [\*]; two sociological studies based on qualitative interviews, examining factors of social exclusion [\*] and youth 'ethnic belonging' [\*]; a demographic report on the main shanty towns represented in Topia [\*];<sup>10</sup> progress reports of a development project [\*]; an M.A. architectural dissertation about residents' participation in a set of films [\*]; and finally, an article about Cape Verdean rap, partly based on research in Topia [\*]. Excluding the two latter works, which involved short-term ethnography, previous studies of the neighbourhood have lacked direct anthropological input, and none so far have benefited from long-term fieldwork, a gap this thesis fills.

The remainder of this introduction is divided into three parts. Part 2 will review relevant literature on place, tracing anthropology's engagement with urban space (section 2.1), transnationalism (2.2) and current approaches to place (2.3), to finally explain my own focus on boundary production (2.4) and define key terms (2.5). Part 3 will present the ethnographic setting: Topia, including its physical characterisation (section 3.1), history (3.2), demographic profile of residents (3.3) and dynamics of street occupation (3.4). Finally, part 4 will outline the structure and argument of the chapters to follow.

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\* Bracketed asterisks[\*] stand in place of references which have been removed from this version of the thesis due to restricted content (for including the real name of the estate and/or municipality).

<sup>3</sup> Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Vertovec 2007; Appadurai 1995; Kearney 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Englund 2002; Brun 2001; Fortier 1999; Appadurai 1998; Lovell 1998; Malkki 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Carr 2009; Wacquant 2007; Erdentug and Colombijn 2002; Caldeira 1996; Bourgois 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson and Crul 2007; Eckstein 2002; Zhou 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Gonçalves and Pinto 2001; Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001; Pinto and Gonçalves 2000; Guerra 1994; Freitas 1994; Abrantes 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Fikes 2009; Góis 2008; Batalha 2008, 2004a; Horta 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Bourgois 2003; Anderson 1990; Liebow 1967; Horton 1967; Whyte 1943.

<sup>10</sup> I will use 'shanty town' and 'slum' interchangeably in the thesis to mean squatter settlement, and 'shanty' for the shack-type dwellings common in said settlements.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Engaging with urban space**

My focus on an urban residential unit, a 'neighbourhood', follows a long legacy of ethnographies of urban sites (cf. Donner and De Neve 2006; Freidenberg 1995; Eames and Goode 1977; Fox 1977). My thesis deals with the same problematic at the root of these studies: understanding the relationship between 'people' and urban 'places' (Brun 2001).

This question has been approached differently over time. Classical sociologists of the late nineteenth century (notably Tönnies and Simmel) were concerned with the disruptive effects of urbanization on 'traditional' community life, and posited a basic dichotomy between social ties in rural/traditional settings as opposed to urban/modern ones: closeness, solidarity and cohesion were linked to rural community life; against urban alienation, transiency, individualism and instrumental relations (Silvano 2001). This dichotomy influenced later generations of researchers, including anthropologists. The Chicago School of Urban Sociology (1920s to 1940s) adopted that same rural-urban dichotomy to posit an urban 'culture' or 'way of life', and took the city as a 'laboratory' to study social disruptions and adjustment to city life in bounded communities (Wirth 2002; Low 1999, 1996). Chicago sociologists viewed urban space from an 'ecological' perspective, divided into bounded socio-occupational 'niches' (according to land prices and rents), each with its own culture and world view (ibid.). Around the same time (1930s to 1960s), a series of 'community studies' introduced long-term fieldwork to research on urban settings, inspiring classic ethnographies like Whyte (1943) and Liebow (1967), and more recently works like Anderson (1990) and Bourgois (2003).

Massive urbanisation in the 1960s and 1970s carried forward the interest in how rural ties translated to city life (Foster and Kemper 1988). The label 'urban anthropology' was forged as a distinctive sub-field, primarily concerned with social process and change in city settings (Eames and Goode 1977, 13). Interest in political economy from the 1970s encouraged research on the local effects of macro-structural forces, highlighting class inequality and marginalisation caused by global industrial capitalism (Low 1999, 1996). Projects of urban planning also fostered research about power, knowledge and conflict between local and state actors (ibid.). Earlier ecological approaches to culture (in bounded urban 'niches') gave way to a focus on cultural mobility, encouraging multi-sited ethnography and laying the groundwork for later transnational perspectives. Urban sites were no longer 'niches', but 'nodes' in wider economic and political networks (Angelini 2009). And from the 1990s, urban anthropologists have increasingly emphasised mobility

within and between cities, focusing on transnational flows (e.g. Hannerz 1996; Kearney 1995). They have come to reject 'territory' as the natural unit of culture to highlight instead diffuse networks of unbounded connections, in a rhetoric of globalisation and its 'indeterminate' local effects – including on ethnicity, religion, culture, architecture and planning, power, surveillance and resistance (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Eade and Mele 2002; Smith 2002; Low 1999, 1996).

Despite muddles and controversies in delimiting 'urban' anthropology as a field, anthropology has offered distinctive contributions to urban studies, through its tradition of in-depth ethnography (Fox 1977, 1-2; Eames and Goode 1977, 62-67). Long-term participant observation has enriched accounts of urban life, while awareness of cultural diversity has countered the bias to take Western cities as prototypes of cities worldwide (Davis and Santamaría 2009). Choosing 'urban communities' as study units has also produced methodological lessons. Residential sites can readily appear as 'natural units', close in size and apparent confinement to the proverbial 'villages' studied by anthropologists (Eames and Goode 1977, 264). They are easy to 'romanticise' as homogeneous isolates, ignoring internal diversity and 'exclusionary' powers to instead emphasise unity and belonging (Geschiere and Jackson 2006; Lovell 1998, 4-5). These concerns have strengthened the call, across disciplines, to investigate the relations between specific people and local places. Multidisciplinary urban studies no longer presume to represent 'the urban', but only its particular and local 'lived stories' (Westwood and Williams 1997, 5-6).

However, while the benefits of long-term ethnography have contributed methodological clarity to urban research, on a conceptual level the discussion about place has reached an impasse. The constructivist legacy of Durkheim and Mauss, who early on established space as a basic 'category of understanding' granting order to the world (Durkheim 1995, 8, 145-149; Silvano 2001, 7-12), along with the pervasive influence of the Chicago School's ecological perspective, might help explain why space was for so long viewed in simplistic terms, as a discrete physical container for social relations or a 'neutral grid' where culture, history and society come to be 'inscribed' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 7; Rodman 1992, 640-641). In fact, decades passed before constructivist views were challenged by more practice-based perspectives (Jiménez 2003, 139), namely on spatial aspects of power and resistance (Foucault 2008, 1980; Lefebvre 1991; Certeau 1984). Interest in political economy from the 1970s sparked new understandings of space as an ambiguous, indeterminate, fluid and negotiated process (Erdentug and Colombijn 2002, 8; Ward 2003, 81-82), inspiring a 'spatial turn' in the social sciences which led to abundant

research on space.<sup>11</sup> With intensified global flows of people and transactions, from the 1990s studies of migration and globalisation have shunned views of social life as anchored in delimited places or nations, favouring 'transnational' movements and unbounded connections (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1993). This gradual shift, over generations of urban researchers, from taking places as 'bounded niches' to viewing them as fluid processes has now reached an unprofitable extreme whereby 'place' itself has become a problematic term, laden with undesirable connotations, difficult to define and conceptualise. Anthropologists' commitment to look at spatial processes as 'unbounded' has created an analytical 'conundrum', compromising the ability to engage with 'place' in fruitful ways (Englund 2002, 262).

## **2.2 Transnationalism and its discontents**

The recent shift to a transnational perspective followed changes in both the academia and the world. On the one hand, scholars came to criticise a simplistic view of global space as divided into centres and peripheries with definite boundaries. They chose to look at space as multidimensional, with national borders continuously penetrated by human, cultural and economic flows (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1996, 1995; Kearney 1995). On the other hand, space and time have been perceptibly 'compressed' thanks to new options of transport and communication, which continue to expand global transactions and human mobility (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Castells 2004; Harvey 1997, 267). This global complexity created new challenges for analysis, answered by interdisciplinary studies of 'transnationalism': a term forged to lift analysis above national borders, following a 'global' discourse of circulation, fluidity, hybridity and interconnection of people and things moving and mingling across borders (e.g. Tsing 2008; Vertovec 2007; Hannerz 1996; Kearney 1995; Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1993).

Within this multidisciplinary field, anthropology has been forced to revisit concepts of culture, ethnicity, and identity, coming to adopt the 'deterritorialisation' of culture as a key premise (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Appadurai 2008; Kearney 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). In a mobile world, culture can no longer be attached to borders, moving continuously across them to form 'diasporas' and multicultural settings (Vertovec 2007; Brubaker 2005). And different aspects of culture (technological, financial, ideological) are seen as 'disjunct', travelling autonomously across the globe (Appadurai 2008). Researchers have therefore dropped cultures and identities as spatially delimited entities, to look at

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<sup>11</sup> Warf and Arias 2009, 9-10; Thrift 2006, 139; Cresswell 2004, 125-138; Jiménez 2003, 138; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 1; Brun 2001, 16; Levinson 1996, 354.

local responses to these complex global configurations (Vertovec 2007; Gupta and Ferguson 1992).<sup>12</sup> Thus trapped 'between a rock and a non-place' (Weiner 2002), a disciplinary focus on the local *vis-à-vis* a multidisciplinary emphasis on the global, anthropologists' recent challenge has been to rearticulate the two levels in balanced and useful ways: rejecting direct ties between culture and space, while still respecting people's attachments, imaginations and interactions with places (Turton 2005, 259). The poles of an old debate – fluidity and stasis – have been recast anew, calling for reconciliation.

Despite useful insights, transnationalism has received repeated criticism, not least within anthropology. If assumptions of bounded cultures served colonial interests, distancing 'us' from 'Others' (Fabian 1983), transnational emphasis on mobility, flux and the 'global' now reproduce capitalist financial discourses (Ho 2008; Maurer 2000). Questioning nations as 'natural places' by stressing instead global flows leads to another kind of reification: economic and political factors are now taken as primary and 'objective' (Brun 2001, 18; Metcalf 2001, 167-169). The focus 'above and beyond nations' steers attention away, for example, from restrictive border policies, or the role of nation-states in migrants' imagination (Englund 2002, 265-266; Malkki 1997).

As a concept, transnationalism is also overly encompassing and abstract (Kirby 2009), begging investigation of what scales actually matter for local agents (Tsing 2008; Olwig 2003; Vertovec 1999). Emphasis on mobility and rootlessness has been exaggerated, disregarding the fact that global flows, now magnified by technology, are hardly new (colonialism being a case in point), and have always coexisted with more circumscribed lives (Weiner 2002, 21; Foner 2002; Metcalf 2001, 169-171). Stress on deterritorialisation ignores abundant evidence of the enduring (even growing) importance of 'place', proximity and demarcation in the world: the territorial attachments of displaced peoples (Brun 2001; Malkki 1997); the anchoring of collective memory in places (Connerton 2009); the 'defensive and reactionary responses' to global fragmentation, including nationalisms, 'sanitized "heritages"', antagonism to 'outsiders' and systematic ethnic violence (Massey 1997, 321; Appadurai 1998); the marginalisation of groups unable to migrate or access global opportunities (Madanipour 2011; Castells 2004); the primacy of face-to-face interactions (Mok and Wellman 2007; Boden and Molotch 1994); even the role of immobile infrastructures for global circulation (Harvey 1985, 149).

No discussion of identity, culture or migration can ignore globalist concerns. But

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<sup>12</sup> The 'novelty' of rejecting fixed territorial definitions of culture has been exaggerated (Brubaker 2005, 7-10). Different anthropological studies have in the past stressed contextual and variable configurations of social organisation and classification (e.g. Mauss and Beuchat 1904-05; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Leach 1940; Lévi-Strauss 1963; Bourdieu 1979, 133-153; Fox 1980; Barnes and Coppet 1985), and even of spatial boundaries themselves (Kuper 1972).

the shortcomings listed above evince an important conceptual gap: even when transnationalism considers 'place' in the analysis, it only defines it in negative terms – what it is *not* (bounded, static, etc.). Anthropologists and other scholars have struggled to fill this gap and reconcile 'local' with 'global' concerns. But how can 'place' be conceptualised in a world viewed primarily as global? Although the term can have undesirable connotations, place metaphors seem 'nearly impossible' to do without (Metcalf 2001, 166): a concept of 'place' (or similar) is both necessary *and* empirically inadequate. This tension has caused a basic analytical question to persist: how can we rethink place in a world so evidently marked by flux, transience and disjuncture?

### 2.3 Place matters: alternative approaches and their problems

From the 1990s, that question has occupied scholars of different disciplines (including anthropology, sociology, geography).<sup>13</sup> They have proposed different answers, usually of three main types:<sup>14</sup> 1) privileging 'affect', imagination and knowledge of places;<sup>15</sup> 2) phenomenological and practice-based approaches;<sup>16</sup> 3) attempts at combining local and global meanings.<sup>17</sup> Each approach has merits and limitations. The first defines place as a real or imagined location, the object of personal feelings, images and knowledge – manifest in narratives, names, myth and ritual, memory, longing and emotion (Navaro-Yashin 2009; Tyrell 2006; Lovell 1998). These are important aspects of place, often neglected by transnationalism. But these approaches carry constructivist undertones, implying a mental or emotional reality 'constructed' by 'spectators' tacitly separated from the history and practices of place-making (Englund 2002, 267; Lefebvre 1991, 7).

The second approach rejects constructivism to emphasise embodiment and experience (Jiménez 2003, 139-140; Englund 2002, 276; Ingold 1995). Place is seen as an event-like production, an 'emerging property of social relationships' and agency (Jiménez 2003, 140-142). No longer a location or construction, it merges with experience itself. The 'experience-near' focus of these perspectives disregards the more enduring products of imagination and memory, and the attachments they provoke (Ward 2003, 84). Moreover, when place-making becomes synonymous with experience and sociality, the concept is obliterated. If *everything* is 'emplaced experience', what to look for or leave out?

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<sup>13</sup> Donner and De Neve 2006, 2, 4; Turton 2005, 259; Castells 2004, 83; Ward 2003, 92; Englund 2002, 262; Brun 2001, 18; Massey 1995, 46; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 20.

<sup>14</sup> This is a simplified division, several authors fit more than one approach. I mean only to clarify the limitations of each approach.

<sup>15</sup> Navaro-Yashin 2009; Tyrell 2006; Fortier 1999; Lovell 1998; Anderson 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Thornton 2008; Thrift 2006; Jiménez 2003; Englund 2002; Casey 1996; Ingold 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Ward 2003; Brun 2001; Appadurai 1995; Harvey 1993; Rodman 1992; Massey 1997.

A third approach has aimed at a synthesis of different dimensions of 'place' without using the concept, shunning its problematic associations. Ranging from full theoretical proposals (e.g. Massey 1997; Appadurai 1995), to vaguer advice of what to include or avoid (e.g. Harvey 1993; Rodman 1992), these proposals carry diverse kinds of problems. Some replace 'place' with a different spatial concept: 'locality' (Appadurai 1995), 'home' (Ward 2003), 'space of places' (Castells 2004), not visibly advancing the debate. Others suggest rows of spatial dimensions to consider: personal views and meanings, identity and gender, inequalities of power, knowledge and resistance, bodily senses, experiences, memories, narratives, material landmarks, global connections (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Feld and Basso 1996; Rodman 1992). Granted, some of these aspects are often overlooked. But such proposals are hardly operational: they amount to mnemonic lists, things not to forget. Finally, efforts to redefine 'place' in 'global' terms also fall into difficulties: if places are located constellations in networks of social relations (Massey 1997), what is specific about them?

#### **2.4 Place-making as boundary-making**

Through a comprehensive empirical account of Topia, I hope to contribute to these debates. Without ignoring translocal scales and ties, I challenge transnationalism's taken-for-granted dismissal of how place and place boundaries matter in people's lives. In the case of Topia, the way the estate was planned and managed, used, patrolled and 'colonized' by residents (Appadurai 1995),<sup>18</sup> portrayed by media and represented in discourse shaped people's experiences and identities. Residents' relations with the 'neighbourhood' (*bairro*) conditioned who its inhabitants were, their 'cognitive, social and identity maps' (Horta 2000, 16-17), and how they related to wider society. As suggested, current alternatives to transnationalism are ill-equipped to address these spatial dynamics without obliterating place. Towards a more operational answer, I will demonstrate how 'place' can be usefully approached in terms of the multiple processual boundaries that demarcate it. Through a focus on social boundaries and their production, I will examine people's relations to place in one setting.

The idea of boundary is hardly new. In common usage, it is a logical feature of mathematical sets and enclosed territories, or figuratively anything with a limit. As an analytical focus, it is also well established, namely after Barth's (1969) seminal introduction on the analysis of ethnic boundaries (also Cohen 2001, 2000). The concept

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<sup>18</sup> I.e. seized from others (namely authorities and outsiders), through a (hostile) assertion of power over it (Appadurai 1995, 208-209).

has also been applied to spatial contexts, to analyse the relations between spatial configurations and social organisation (e.g. Pellow 1996). In contrast, in contemporary studies of transnational migration and place, boundaries have been dismissed as 'not necessary' (Massey 1997, 322), even non-existent (Thrift 2006, 140), in the name of acknowledging fluidity and transience. But this rejection betrays a basic misunderstanding of boundaries: as fixed impervious entities (Kirby 2009, 5-10).

Assumptions that boundaries are stable or impervious have been directly countered in anthropology. Barth himself concluded that ethnic boundaries 'persist despite a flow of personnel across them', through 'mobility, contact and information', 'changing participation and membership' and the 'often vitally important social relations' maintained across them (Barth 1969, 9-10, 21).<sup>19</sup> Barth contradicted ideas of 'isolation' and 'stasis' (Cohen 1978, 386), acknowledging boundaries' dependency on agents' 'continual expression and validation', and their 'varying amount and forms of content', calling for analysis of what 'actors themselves regard as significant' (Barth 1969, 10-15, 21). He basically spoke to the same concerns involved in studies of place: to overcome 'primordialist' assumptions of tangible, enclosed, objective entities (Eriksen 1991, 128). More recently, Pellow's (1996) edited volume also came to emphasise the contested, 'ambiguous' and 'multidimensional' nature of boundaries in spatial contexts (Rodman and Cooper 1996; Lawrence 1996).

Regrettably, the awareness that boundaries are far from steady neutral demarcation lines has not been applied to current debates about place and transnationalism.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, ideas of space as a 'neutral grip' and ready correspondences between social groups and "their" territories' have been criticised as anthropology's well-established 'disciplinary assumptions' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Malkki 1997). But if the complexity and dynamism of boundary creation is taken seriously (its situational, relational and contextual production at multiple levels), then it becomes a simple and operational empirical focus to grasp processes of place-making and people's complex relations to place. 'Place' (even more than ethnic group) logically entails boundaries or limits (in a broad sense) to avoid obliterating it under 'experience' or 'social relations' (section 2.3). As a process 'integrally tied to the creation, maintenance, transformation, and definition of society and societal relations' (Pellow 1996, 3), boundary-making is a fertile way to conceptualise place in a world marked by flux. It can grasp the intersection of juridical or administrative demarcations with individuals' practices and movements, cultural meanings, values and discourses about place, and how they change over time

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<sup>19</sup> Without focusing explicitly on 'boundaries', previous studies of ethnicity and group relations had shown the same (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1940; Leach 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. footnote 12.

(Lawrence 1996; Rodman and Cooper 1996).

The fact that 'boundary' is an old familiar concept does not refute its heuristic value for current theory. To quote Bender (2006, 310):

We should be suspicious of the contemporary passion – institutional and personal – for theoretical innovation, for discarding and moving on. We might note how snugly this practice fits within a wider set of present-day political, economic and social relationships. It might be more useful to recognize and contextualize the swing of the theoretical pendulum, and to consider how, when it swings back, it incorporates, but also transforms, earlier conceptualizations.

In this spirit, I will refer to boundaries in a complex, multiple and processual sense (Cohen 2000, 3), informed by current debates and globalist anxieties as well as attention to the practised, embodied and experiential aspects of social productions. While boundaries serve to delineate 'what is in and what is out, who is a member and who is not, what has status and what does not, who is high and who is low' (Pellow 1996, 1), boundaries are 'ambivalent' constructions, at once divisions between what lies within and beyond them, and a relevant 'point of contact' with the outside (Licari 2011, 49). Their nature is 'porous, diffuse, nonlinear' and 'elastic', making for a 'sievelike quality of places' (ibid., 55; Casey 1996, 42-44). Besides being 'multidimensional' (Lawrence 1996), boundaries are also, to borrow Appadurai's (2008) wording, 'disjunct' and incongruous: different lines of demarcation (administrative, social, cognitive) can coexist without coinciding. Finally, boundaries have the 'essential trait' of 'gathering' and 'holding' ideas, memories, emotions and histories together, giving agents some impression of coherence and 'perduringness' (Casey 1996, 24-26; cf. Connerton 2009). Their 'retentive' tendency can account for transient and fluid experiences alongside stable attachments and imagination. They also have the inverse ability to keep things 'out' (Casey 1996, 25), which entails considerable 'power': to separate 'insiders' from 'outsiders' (Massey 1995, 69). Over one particular ethnographic account, I will illustrate how focusing on boundaries – in an 'ambivalent', 'porous', 'diffuse', 'disjunct' and 'retentive' sense – allows capturing the richness and complexity of the embodied social practices, meanings and narratives involved in the constitution and reproduction of place.

## **2.5 Terminology matters**

'Space', 'place' and 'territory' are ambiguous and overlapping terms. They are words

'wrapped in common sense' (Cresswell 2004, 1), and their meaning 'too often seems to go without saying' (Rodman 1992, 640). Since I employ these concepts repeatedly in the thesis, a clarification is in order. Considering the literature reviewed, 'space' is taken not as an abstract or material entity but an inextricably social achievement, accomplished 'in the specific context of a set of practices' in agents' 'day-to-day activities' (Moore 1996, 125; Certeau 1984). 'Territory', in the Topia context, resembles what Goffman (1971) called a 'preserve', a spatial 'field of things' to which residents held a 'claim', an 'entitlement to possess, control, use', and whose boundaries were 'ordinarily patrolled and defended' against 'intruders' (ibid., 51-52, 74-75). Finally, 'place' is seen as a meaningful spatial unit, as experienced and reproduced by agents in complex social processes of boundary-making, of incorporation and exclusion at different levels. These definitions are provisional and open-ended. They stand to facilitate investigation of their meanings in specific contexts. That will be my project in this thesis, in the context of Topia.

### **3. Topia: the place**

#### **3.1 Physical layout**

Topia is a relatively small council estate, with 700 households. It was built in 1999 to rehouse families formerly living in shanty towns, when the local municipal council decided to tear them down.<sup>21</sup> The estate consists of parallel rows of buildings, in white and faded pink, facing each other on the left of a road moving uphill (Fig. 1).<sup>22</sup> A smaller road borders the estate on its left, running alongside patches of public ground seized by residents to cultivate vegetable gardens, which during my fieldwork (2010-2011) stretched all the way down to a nearby highway. Narrow streets set off from the main road to the left, separating the building blocks. Streets allowing traffic alternate with others which do not. Buildings stand in sets of four, forming longitudinal blocks. They are four-storeys high, with two to four flats per floor. Each block is cross-cut at ground level by a tunnel with a stair passage. These stairways connect side streets, cutting through buildings to form a trail of under-passages parallel to the main road (Fig. 1). The main road continues up and downhill from the estate, connecting further down with some main arteries in the Município.<sup>23</sup> Compared to other suburban residential estates, there is nothing peculiar about the plan or architecture of Topia.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Council' will refer to the municipal council (*câmara municipal*), except when distinguishing 'municipal' from 'parish' council.

<sup>22</sup> I have changed descriptive details to ensure place anonymity.

<sup>23</sup> The name of the city is also concealed for ethical reasons (see chapter 1). I will refer to it as 'Município'.

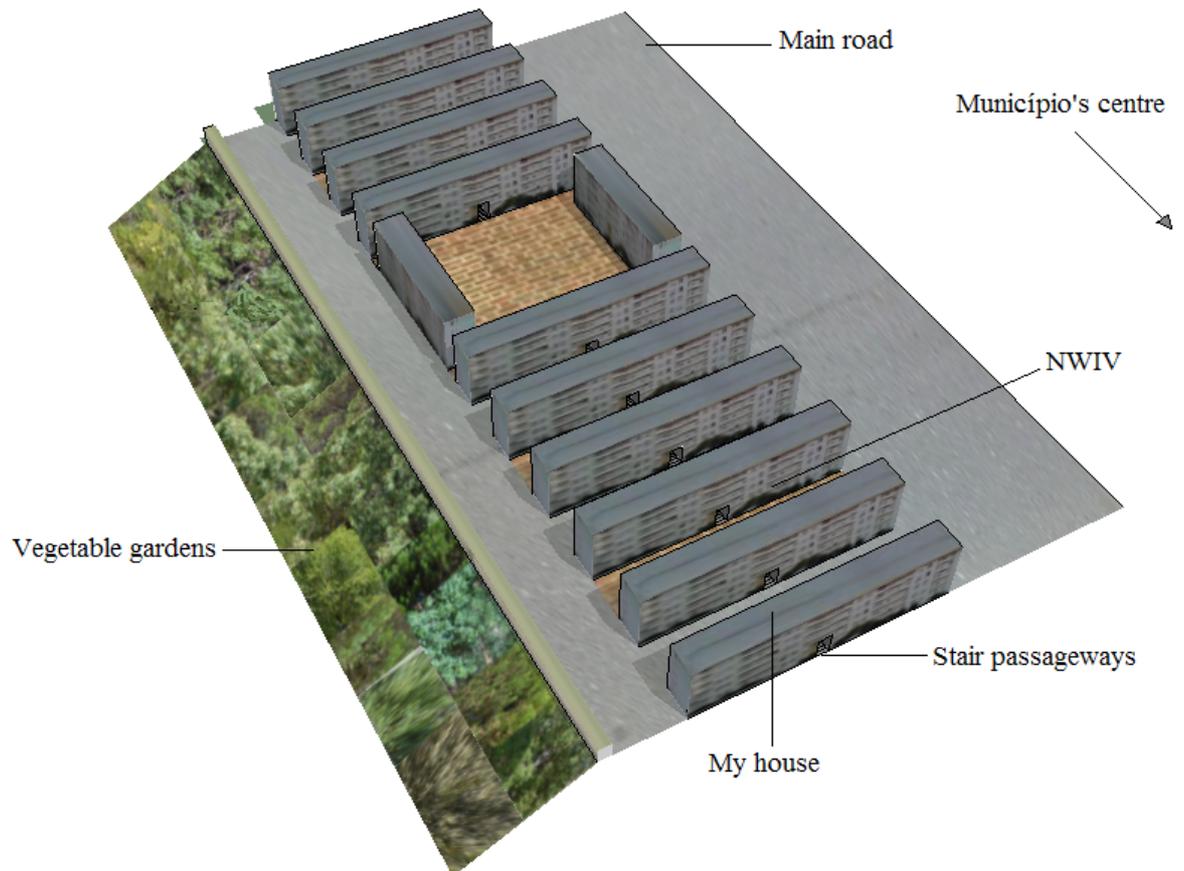


Fig. 1: Sketch plan of Topia

At the time of my fieldwork, neighbourhood life extended into the surrounding city. Close by were bus stops, supermarkets, a shopping centre, all-purpose bazaars, local kindergartens, schools, an elderly day-care centre, a church, a police station and the seat of the parish council. The area where most shanty towns once stood was reachable by bus, the Município's centre was another short bus-ride away, and from there the capital (Lisbon) was easily reached by train. Topia was not an isolated island or 'ghetto'. It connected physically and socially with its urban surroundings. Its inhabitants relied on commerce, jobs, institutions, even leisure and social ties outside its borders. In turn, some outsiders came in to work, use local commerce or institutions, visit friends or family.

However, Topia also possessed a social life of its own, with meaningful codes, local knowledge, reciprocity networks, shared rules and expectations about social interaction. Despite its uniform physical plan, the neighbourhood was a complex space, rich with internal diversity, both in street occupation and socio-cultural life. I spent fourteen months trying to grasp the invisible rules and lines guiding local behaviour. I secured a house in the outer rim of the estate and volunteered twice a week at a local NGO, 'NWIV', one street up from my house (Fig. 1).<sup>24</sup> Although I spent over a year in Topia, met many people and

<sup>24</sup> I will use NWIV (standing for the 'NGO-Where-I-Volunteered') as a pseudonym.

witnessed many changes over my time there, walking up the main road always felt like crossing into a distinct place.

## 3.2 History

### 3.2.1 Labourers, returnees and families: Cape Verdean immigration to Portugal

Though being a relatively recent development, Topia has a long history behind it, interlocked with the history of the surrounding city. The Município is a small satellite city of Lisbon, under a thirty-minute train ride from the capital. From the eighteenth century, the Município progressively developed from an area of agricultural fields and country houses into a heavily populated industrial hub, which reached 'municipality' status in the 1970s. The building of rail and highway connections to Lisbon and the concentration of industrial (especially metalworking) facilities attracted flows of settlers and workers from diverse origins, including Lisbon,<sup>25</sup> the north and south of Portugal and former African colonies – mainly Cape Verde. Cape Verdean migrants and their descendants formed roughly two thirds of the population rehoused in Topia.<sup>26</sup> The origins of the estate are therefore entwined with the wider history of Cape Verdean migration to the Município.

Cape Verde is a group of ten islands and several smaller islets off the coast of Senegal. The archipelago was uninhabited when first discovered by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, who colonised it with a small elite of white settlers and contingents of slaves brought from mainland African colonies. The history, demographics and dynamics of Cape Verdean society have been shaped by 'insularity' and 'drought' (AHN 1998, 36). Since discovery and settlement, Cape Verde has been marked by cyclical droughts and famines due to an arid climate and inhospitable soils, fostering emigration as an important livelihood strategy (AHN 1998, 41, 69-78; Åkesson 2004).

Emigration from Cape Verde began in the late eighteenth century, first to the United States and later to South America, mainland Africa and Europe (ibid., 73-77; Batalha 2004a, 36-40). During labour shortages, the Portuguese colonial government also assigned Cape Verdean labourers (*contratados*) to work under contract on the plantations of São Tomé (and later Angola and Mozambique) under slavery-like conditions (AHN 1998, 73;

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<sup>25</sup> According to municipal data, 44% of the Município's population between 1973 and 1981 came from the Lisbon district [\*].

<sup>26</sup> Batalha (2004a, 2008) rejected the idea of *one* Cape Verdean 'community' in Portugal, proposing two broad sub-groups, distinguished by class, education and residence: a minority colonial 'elite' (educated and well integrated); and a socially visible majority of labour migrants and their children (ethnically and territorially segregated, with low education and wages, negatively portrayed by the media) (ibid.). This thesis refers only to members of the latter group.

Åkesson 2004, 34). Emigration to Portugal occurred from as early as the 1930s (AHN 1998, 77), gaining significance from the 1960s. It can be divided into three main periods: before Cape Verdean independence (1960s); following independence (in 1975); and more recent labour migration (from the 1980s) (Góis 2008, 12-18). Economic, ecological and political factors made Portugal an attraction pole for Cape Verdean labourers before independence. Consecutive droughts and famines left a bleak economic situation in the islands. Simultaneously, growing industrialisation, urbanisation and economic growth in Portugal in the 1960s sustained a sequence of construction projects, especially around Lisbon (Batalha 2004a, 133-136).<sup>27</sup> The massive departure of Portuguese labourers to more industrialised European nations during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1933-1974) had left a shortage of labour in the metropolis (ibid., 87-88, 133-134). From the mid-1960s, Cape Verdean immigrants were called in by construction firms (and later word of mouth) to occupy the place vacated by unskilled Portuguese emigrants in the labour market (ibid.; Batalha 2008, 30-32; Grassi 2007a, 31). Most came from the rural Santiago island, forming an illiterate, unqualified, cheap labour supply (Batalha 2004a, 131).

Following Portugal's anti-dictatorship revolution in 1974, political independence was recognised to the former colonies, creating a 'second' wave of Cape Verdean immigration (Góis 2008, 13). Large contingents of so-called 'returnees' (*retornados*) to the former metropolis included: former colonial administrative staff; Cape Verdeans of Portuguese ancestry (some able to keep Portuguese citizenship after independence); and Cape Verdean contracted labourers to São Tomé (*contratados*) (ibid., 14-15). Their reasons for migration at this time were diverse, including disagreement with the new (socialist) government in Cape Verde,<sup>28</sup> political pressure to leave (for previous collaboration with colonialism), or fears of political instability (Batalha 2004a, 89).

In the 1980s, the inflow of Cape Verdean labourers to Portugal (partly interrupted by independence) was restored and consolidated. During this stage, many settled workers also sent for their families to join them (Góis 2008, 16). They came to concentrate around the capital, in the same areas where their countrymen had already settled in previous years, benefiting from their support networks and cultural affinities (ibid., 14-15). One of the cities affected by these large incoming contingents of Cape Verdeans was the Município.

### ***3.2.2 'An open wound in our social fabric': the housing problem in the Município***

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<sup>27</sup> Following Portugal's membership of EFTA (European Free Trade Association) from 1959.

<sup>28</sup> Under the (then) PAIGC, African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (later PAICV).

Immigration contributed to the demographic boom in the Município between the 1950s and 1980s. Besides Cape Verde, immigrants arrived from other former African colonies (Angola, Guinea-Bissau, S. Tome and Principe, Mozambique). In 2001, Africans accounted for 82% of foreign city residents [\*].<sup>29</sup> Incomers from Brazil and Eastern Europe joined later [\*]. This dramatic growth caused serious housing shortages. Tall buildings in crowded estates replaced farms and detached houses, forming the structure of a suburban 'dormitory' [\*]. Although the population has slightly decreased from the 1990s (Figs. 2 and 3), the number of foreign Município residents increased by 133.6% in that decade [\*].<sup>30</sup> Due to the Município's small area, its population density remains several times that of Greater Lisbon (INE 2012a, 19), and one of the highest in the country.

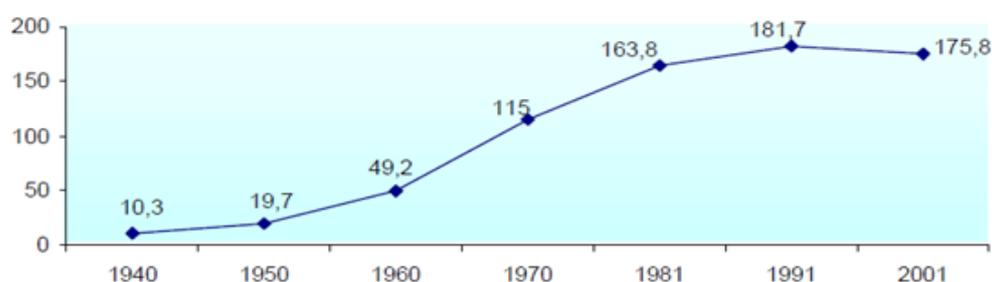


Fig. 2: Município's population (in thousands), 1940 to 2001. Source: Council (based on 2001 data from INE - National Institute of Statistics).

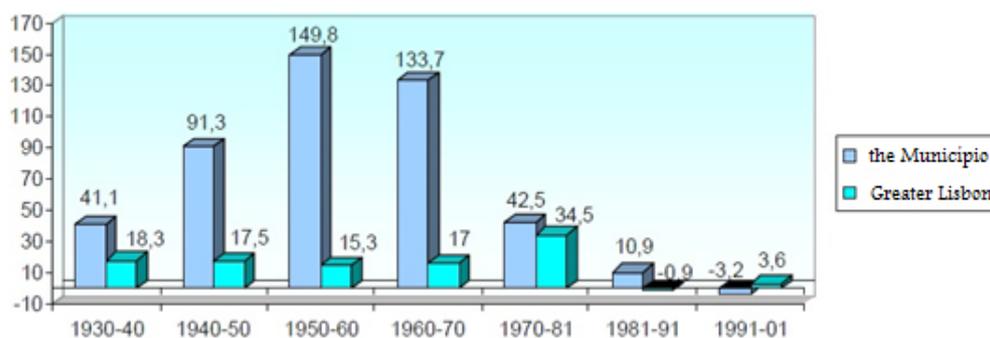


Fig. 3: Population growth (%) in the Município, compared to Greater Lisbon, 1930 to 2001. Source: Council (based on 2001 data from INE).

In the process, due to small income, cultural-linguistic affinities, friendship networks and racism, Cape Verdeans mostly settled together in shanty towns (*bairros de barracas*), building their own houses [\*]. These settlements rose on public or unused ground, out of materials from construction sites where Cape Verdeans worked. Despite being illegal, these slums were 'tolerated' by authorities and quickly spread [\*]. By the early 1990s, there were over thirty shanty settlements of different sizes scattered across the

<sup>29</sup> Down to 55% in 2006, including 46% of Cape Verdeans [\*].

<sup>30</sup> All statistics about the Município have been kindly provided by the council.

Município. But the situation began to change.

The 1980s marked Portugal's accession to the European Economic Community, and later (1996) the European Union. This brought profound changes to the economy, social values and discourses (cf. Fikes 2009). Poverty, exclusion and racism became visible in the media and academic press, pushing public debate and policy. And Europe provided funding, experience and regulation in these matters. In 1991 the National Programme Against Poverty (*Programa Nacional de Luta contra a Pobreza*) was launched in Portugal, fostering local development projects (Law-Decree 163/93, May 7). In 1987, the related Medium-Term Intervention Programme (PIMP – *Programa de Intervenção a Médio-Prazo*) had set off to eradicate shanties and build new dwellings, prioritising quantity over social integration.<sup>31</sup> But PIMP was unable to solve the housing situation, prompting another government initiative in 1993: the Special Rehousing Programme (PER – *Programa Especial de Realojamento*), which evinced authorities' 'profound determination to eliminate social situations of housing degradation', to be achieved through

an enlarged programme of social insertion of the communities involved, aiming to create the conditions for a full integration of these populations into the community and to fight problems of crime, prostitution and drug addiction, among others, which social exclusion, caused by the lack of dignified housing conditions, has abandoned them to. (Law-Decree 163/93, May 7, 2381, my translation)

The phrasing of the decree illustrated the humanitarian concerns prominent at the time. Another passage described targeted shanties as 'an open wound in our social fabric' (ibid.). The programme aimed to 'definitely eradicate existing shanties in the municipalities of the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Oporto, through the rehousing [*realojamento*] in dignified dwellings of the families residing therein' (ibid., Art. 1, line 2).<sup>32</sup> This socio-political endeavour was co-funded by the government and councils involved, the latter responsible for making the comprehensive socio-economic characterisation of shanties and its dwellers in order to plan alternative housing structures. The PER survey was conducted in 1993, resulting in new settlements being planned and built – still an ongoing process. After 2003, the focus shifted from building to rehabilitating old dwellings for rehousing (Law-Decree 271/2003, October 28).

In the Município, one of the cities involved in the programme, a total of 4855

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<sup>31</sup> Law-Decree 226/87, June 6.

<sup>32</sup> Expansion of urban centres towards peripheries also contributed to slums' social visibility (Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 176-177).

shanties were included in the 1993 survey, totalling 21362 individuals and 6138 households.<sup>33</sup> Following the PER, other programmes were implemented in the Município, offering PER-surveyed families different housing solutions: at a national level, PER-Families (which helped families to purchase a house funding up to 60% of its cost);<sup>34</sup> locally, the Programme of Assistance to Self-Rehousing (PAAR – *Programa de Apoio ao Auto-Realojamento*) and the Return Programme (PR – *Programa Retorno*) gave surveyed households 20% of the cost of a rehousing dwelling, provided they used it for alternative accommodation (PAAR) or to return to their home country (PR).

A 2010 updated municipal survey indicated that 2957 PER-surveyed households had benefited from either of the housing solutions, and 2224 households had either been excluded from the programme or received compensation for their shanty, bringing the number 'solved cases' up to 5181 (77.79%) and leaving 1496 households (22.41%) to handle. But unexpected problems increased this figure: due to financial constraints, 40% of the original shanties were not demolished after families were relocated, and some (409) were re-occupied by newcomer families (outside the scope of PER). Several families have also grown in size since 1993 (making their planned dwelling unsuitable), and more immigrants have arrived to the country and settled in shanties (albeit temporarily). The problem is therefore an ongoing one, with solutions devised to fit a shifting reality.

### **3.3 Topia: the people**

Topia was the first estate built in the Município under the PER, with 700 dwellings. At the time of my fieldwork, 493 households from 22 different slums and dispersed locations in the city were relocated to Topia. The council let the properties to each family at designated prices, termed 'supported rent' (*renda apoiada*, based on dwelling type, household size and income). Therefore same-size flats might pay different rents, ranging from a small percentage of the minimum wage to the 'technical price' (based on actual property value). Rent could temporarily lower due to reduced family income, and the household could be pressured to move to a smaller flat if their size decreased. Matters relating to rent and properties were managed by the council's local housing office, with a team of three social workers (plus a secretary and security guard), each assigned their lot of households. Most families moved to Topia between 2001 and 2005, but new ones are brought in whenever properties vacate (for different reasons), adding to the dynamic life of the estate. The council claimed to consider individuals' preferences about keeping their

<sup>33</sup> Data kindly provided by the council.

<sup>34</sup> Law-Decree 79/96, July 20 and Law-Decree 271/2003.

next-door neighbours, allowing some shanty neighbours to remain the same after the resettlement.

The population rehoused in Topia was overall deprived, with low rates of employment, precarious and poorly paid jobs [\*], fostering a rich informal economy in the neighbourhood [\*]. Schooling rates were also low, with high levels of failure and dropout. These and other social problems warranted the presence of several institutions in the estate, apart from the housing office. NWIV, where I volunteered, offered help in writing CVs and applying for jobs and training; the use of computers with internet (also available at the local library); IT and 'entrepreneurship' training; homework tutoring and leisure activities for teenagers; awareness-raising about sexual and reproductive health. The local library intermittently hosted literacy classes for adults. A Cape Verdean cultural association housed a 'citizenship office' to help with documents and bureaucracy, also advertising job and training offers. The parish council offered childcare during school holidays and periodic field trips. A recreational centre offered theatre classes for children, and another one helped to organise sporadic neighbourhood celebrations. Working with public and private sponsors, the local school promoted football coaching (including other sports and activities) to improve students' attendance and progress. The ecclesiastical parish also offered job-seeking appointments, and more direct aid through the Food Bank (which assisted five families in Topia during my fieldwork).<sup>35</sup>

Most people rehoused in Topia had Cape Verdean ancestry, over three generations (Cape Verdean immigrants, their children and grandchildren born in Portugal).<sup>36</sup> The rehoused population was very young (Fig. 4), with 43.11% under twenty-four years old in 2010. Since Cape Verdean immigration peaked decades ago, most tenants (1101) were born in Portugal (against only 393 born abroad) and held Portuguese citizenship. Nearly a third of rehoused tenants (402) were already born in the Município.

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<sup>35</sup> I will refer to the civil parish (*freguesia*) as simply 'parish', distinguished from the 'ecclesiastical parish'.

<sup>36</sup> Some already had infant great-grandchildren.

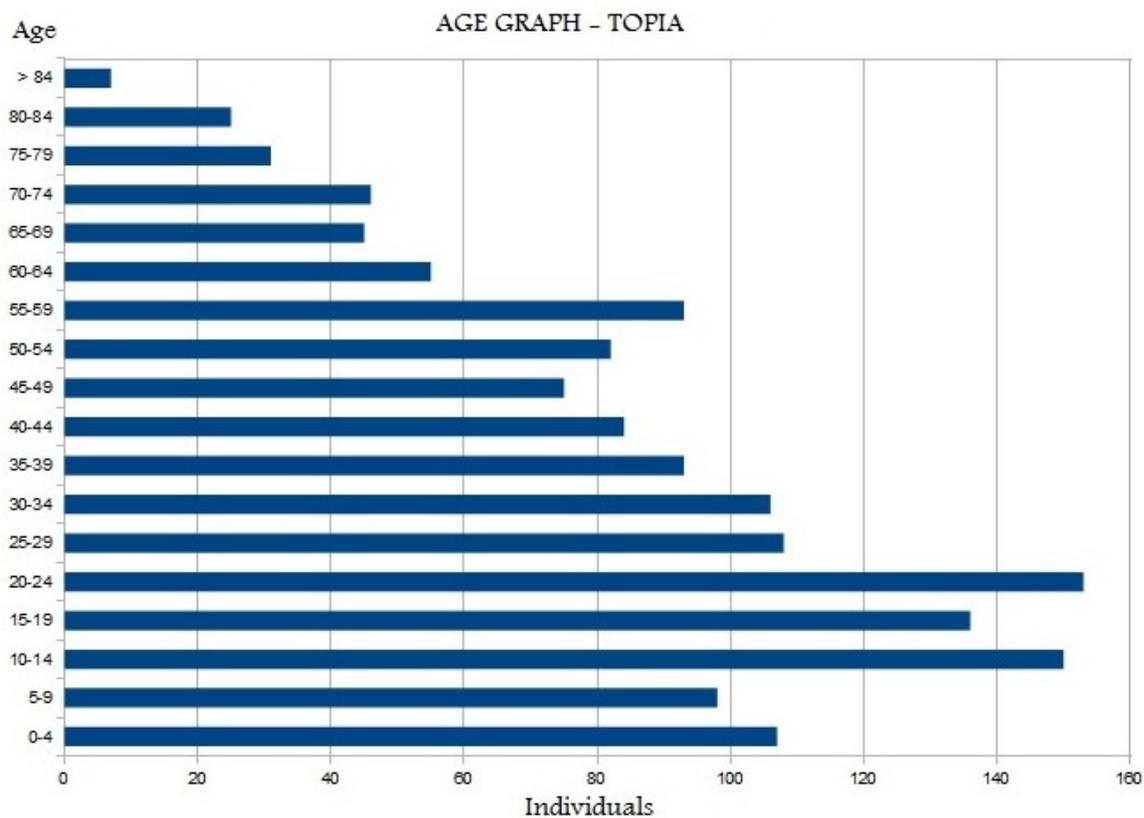


Fig. 4: Topia's age graph (divided in five-year clusters). Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

Nevertheless, Cape Verde still held second place as country of birth and citizenship, with roughly 18% of tenants born there, and 68.5% of all foreign births (Table 1):

COUNTRY	BIRTH	CITIZENSHIP
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>1277</b>
<b>Cape Verde</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>177</b>
S. Tome and Principe	74	25
Angola	26	5
Guinea-Bissau	8	2
Mozambique	3	2
Brazil	4	3
Moldavia	3	3
France	3	0
Spain	2	0
Argentina	1	0

Table 1: Countries of birth and citizenship of rehoused tenants in Topia. Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

Demographic data collected in 1999 (when Topia was built) in four Cape Verdean slums in Greater Lisbon produced similar conclusions, suggesting an earlier Cape Verdean

settlement in shanty towns in the 1970s and 1980s, with younger generations being born in Portugal (ULHT and GEOIDEIA 2000, 40-42, 111-114).

Fieldwork constraints (chapter 1) focused my observation more closely on specific age-groups and networks of interaction: Cape Verdeans, second-generation residents and women (Callaway 1992). Although Cape Verdeans formed the majority population, strongly shaping Topia's street life and routines, tenants also originated from other African countries: S. Tome, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique (Table 1). Another significant group descended from white Portuguese rural migrants (mainly from the north), who migrated to the Lisbon area and settled in the shanty towns around the same time. They were mostly middle-aged or elderly at the time of my fieldwork, with their children and grandchildren already born near Lisbon. Although their presence was also felt on the streets, the sights, sounds and tastes of Cape Verdean culture dominated neighbourhood routines: in language (Creole), music and dance (mainly *funaná*), food (typical dishes like *katxupa* or bean stew),<sup>37</sup> vegetable gardens, rituals and other aspects of sociability (chapter 4). Through coexistence, exchanges, mixed unions and children, aspects of this culture influenced the routines of most participants in neighbourhood life.

Aside from rehousing flats, over thirty properties on ground floors and basements were attributed to institutions and commerce (only some of which were in use during my fieldwork). A few cafés and grocers supplied the estate, alongside the row of institutions presented above. A separate slice of buildings had been reserved for sale (at relatively low costs) to municipal staff and other outsiders. Although some people who bought them were former shanty residents with enough money (who chose to buy rather than rent), many buyers were urban dwellers from elsewhere (white Portuguese and otherwise) who lived in the estate but took no part in neighbourhood life. The council's intention was to mix up demographics to avoid isolating former slum-dwellers: 'to prevent them forming a ghetto' was a rationale mentioned a few times. As some of these flats failed to sell, twenty left-over ones were used to rehouse new (non-PER) shanty-dwelling families. Because the flats intended for sale were in specified blocks, this later rehousing created eleven 'mixed' buildings (of owners and tenants) across four streets, against buyers' expectations of living separately from the rehoused population (Fig. 7). But the mix did not prevent an important cognitive distinction between (rehoused) tenants and (outsider) buyers.

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<sup>37</sup> I use the writing conventions of ALUPEC for Creole transcriptions (Lang 2002, XXVI-VII).

### 3.4 Street occupation

#### 3.4.1 *Topia 'proper': rehousing versus purchase*

Topia had a busy street life. People of all ages used outdoor space and appropriated it, in a sense, as their own. Neighbour interactions occurred in specific spots. Space was occupied and codified in particular ways (Giddens 1985), which deserve some contextualisation. An evident spatial division in Topia demarcated the streets of rehousing/tenancy from those of purchase/ownership, roughly fitting a upper-lower division in the estate (Fig. 5). Owned houses were concentrated on a few streets on the lower edge of the estate (where my house was) and an enclosed square half-way up the road. These areas were quieter, with few people socialising outdoors (except for a local café) and few house owners taking part in neighbourhood life. Conversely, in tenancy areas higher up the road people gathered at favoured spots on street corners, benches and building entrances.

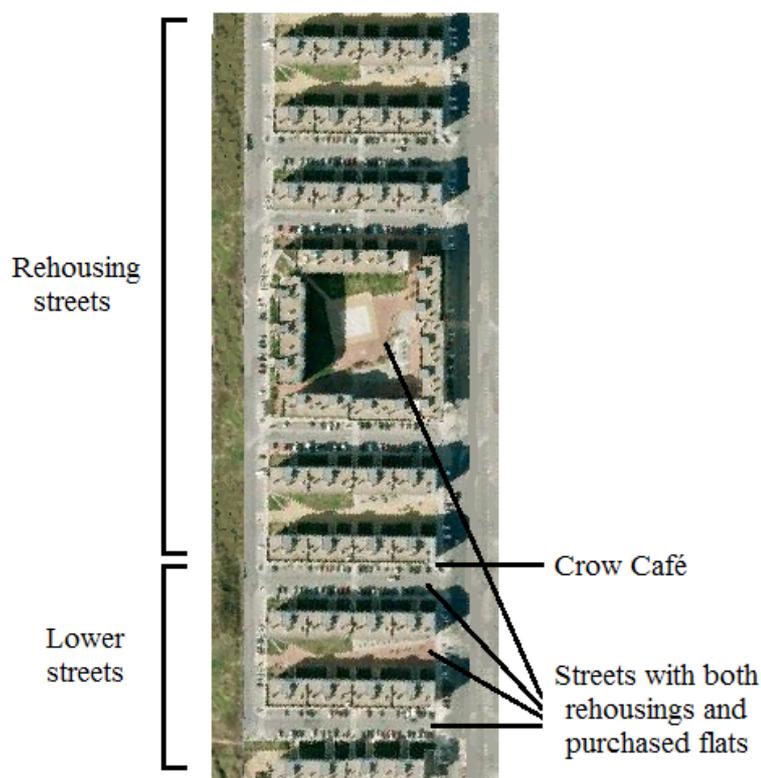


Fig. 5: Plan of street division: upper rehousing streets, informally viewed as Topia 'proper' (areas of PER rehousing, mostly in 2001-2005); versus lower streets, excluded from neighbourhood life (flats purchased from 2002, mixed with non-PER rehusings from 2004). Photo: Google Maps, 2012.

Contrast was also visible in the condition of buildings. Rehousing blocks showed lower financial investment and worse preservation: building doors had few glass panels left

(Fig. 6) (most had been replaced with metal sheets), locks were damaged, some doors had been ripped from the hinges; stair walls were filthy with brownish drips (Fig. 7); post boxes had been altered to make openings smaller (to prevent stealing of welfare checks); more rubbish was visible on the ground outside.<sup>38</sup>

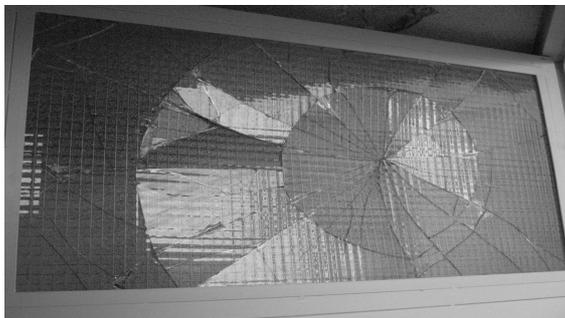


Fig. 6: Recently replaced window on the door of a rehousing building.

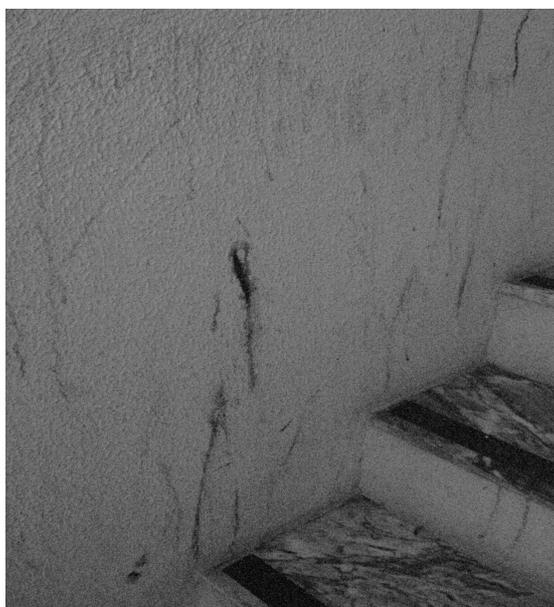


Fig. 7: Stained walls of stairs inside a rehousing building.

The upper-lower contrast was also pervasive in discourse. News and gossip circulating in the upper area more hardly reached lower streets, and the contrary was also true. After living in Topia for seven months, a Cape Verdean man from an upper street was still surprised to see me exit my building. A young man in my street (a non-PER rehousing) complained that his friends living higher up regularly reminded him that he 'lived on the border [*fronteira*] of Topia', and that Topia only 'properly' (*mesmo*) spanned from Crow

<sup>38</sup> On a subsequent visit to Topia in 2013, some building doors had been fixed by the council, around the same time it decided, informants told me, to raise rent amounts. However, these repairs were short-lasting, as some months later the same doors had again been damaged.

Café (pseudonym), in the first all-rehousing block, to the top (Fig. 5). I asked why: 'Some older people told me these [lower] streets are newer, in the beginning there was only from Crow's to the top.' Although the estate had in fact been completed when the first families were rehoused, buyers in lower streets started moving in slightly later (2002), and new (non-PER) rehousing into unsold properties only occurred from 2004. This time interval reinforced, in symbolic narrative terms ('in the beginning there was only...'), the perceived contrast between former shanty-dwellers and outside buyers (Cohen 2001, 13-15).

Although rehoused tenants were clear about official estate borders, there was a tacit consensus about these implicit neighbourhood boundaries: the neighbourhood 'proper' (where people knew each other from the shanties and socialised closely) was identified with the upper rehousing area.<sup>39</sup> This cognitive division was shared by residents in both areas, although different evaluations existed about which was better. A female owner (also former shanty-dweller) in a lower street illustrated this in an interview when asked about what she liked and disliked about Topia:

Down here, maybe you've noticed, there's better organising. People who've bought have organised into a home-owners association [*condominio*]. And every month we pay our fees. ... And whenever something needs fixing it gets done. ... I'd like all the people to organise, where they live, and stop vandalising the buildings like that. You can tell the big difference between buildings where people have bought and people who're rehoused. ... 'Cause people who bought try to preserve. And rehoused people, maybe they don't care about it maybe [pause] they need to realise the house is their own. No one from the council's gonna come tell them 'Look, you can't throw your rubbish down here.' ... Walls look like they've been cooking on the stairs. ... For example when I go up there I see those doors pulled out. ... (Ana: What about the things you like best about Topia?) The things I like best? [she smiled] Down here we've got very nice peace and quiet. It's the quiet I like.

This clear cognitive and practical division delineated the boundaries of Topia 'proper': the social neighbourhood. The posited contrast between rehoused shanty-dwellers and flat buyers, and the differing degrees of their participation in neighbourhood life led me to focus solely on the former group: residents of Topia proper. For that reason, references throughout the thesis to 'residents', 'people from Topia' and similar phrasings should be understood in this context.

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<sup>39</sup> I use 'proper' (*mesmo*) as a proximate translation of an array of meanings (interpersonal, cognitive, symbolic) that conjoined to demarcate the perceived meaningful space of neighbour interaction (the rehousing area) from the wider architectural estate.

### 3.4.2 On the streets: 'They're geckos!'

For rehoused residents, Topia was more than the architectural estate. It meant primarily the social neighbourhood – filled with human activity, neighbour interaction, cultural practices, social and symbolic meanings. Although buildings were identical, space was not homogeneous, but rather continually codified through human use. Different spots – street corners, cafés, vegetable gardens – were linked to different uses, groups, memories and meanings. There were clear 'heterogeneities' in neighbourhood space (Raposo 2007, 158), adding to the 'contextuality of social life' (Giddens 1985, 283). Aside from the prominent upper-lower distinction, street occupation was also 'regionalised' (to borrow Giddens' term) by age, gender, house proximity and former slum membership (ibid., 272-282). I will explore these spatial 'heterogeneities' to convey how residents appropriated Topia streets through specific uses and meanings, making a strictly speaking 'public' space their own (chapter 7).

Children from four or five years old spent much time outdoors outside school hours. They played football, catch, hide-and-seek, occasionally rode bikes or roller-skates, ate candy from the local grocer. They gathered in streets closed to traffic and did not stray far from their building. As a result, playmates were often children of similar ages from the same or adjacent streets. As they grew up, young people from late teens to early twenties, especially males,<sup>40</sup> made their own hub on a few street corners high up the road. Its surroundings were informally known as 'the sun', because that was literally where people were: out in the sun. 'The sun' comprised a stretch of pavement by the main road, from where it was easy to survey who circulated up and down the road. It also featured a short wall around an empty flowerbed, where young people sat daily, chatting and watching others pass by. They gathered in the afternoon and stayed on and off until early dawn.<sup>41</sup> Members shifted through the day, left and came back. Being out 'in the sun' was a favourite activity, and in winter streets and gathering hubs grew empty because of cold, rain and shorter days. People accurately predicted that when the sun returned, so would street dwellers: 'They're geckos!' (*São lagartixas!*), an informant mocked. As a favoured place – sunny, with a wall to sit on and full view over the main road – the sun was shared with other groups during the day: unemployed women sat chatting or waiting for children to return from school; middle-aged and elder neighbours came to gossip and enjoy the sun. Different groups occupied different portions of space, seldom mingling. When all good

<sup>40</sup> Girls were usually busy with house chores or childcare.

<sup>41</sup> Causing repeated complaints from neighbours about noise.

spots were taken, people sat across the road or outside their own building. Building entrances were preferred by elderly women, who settled there during quiet hours to avoid walking far.

Another street corner was particularly important among young men: outside Crow Café, on the first all-rehousing street (Fig 5). A crowd of males in their twenties and thirties gathered there daily, mostly former dwellers of the same shanty town (a major one represented in Topia). Some were unemployed, others worked nights or had the day off. They showed up from 10 or 11 a.m. and rotated until night, sometimes after the café had closed. They greeted and chatted to friends, drank beer, smoked, sold cigarettes and drugs, played games and scrutinised people and cars on the main the road.

First generations showed distinct social and spatial preferences. Some first-generation Cape Verdeans made vegetable gardens in unused patches of ground around Topia. Arched backs and ploughing hoes were common sights in early mornings and late afternoons in summer, or whenever the weather suited. Gardens were spaces of limited interaction, with one to two people working each plot, amid occasional requests for tools. When wishing to socialise, migrant men frequented Club café off the main road (Fig. 8), attracted by cheap beer, cards and board games. Open from morning until night, many retired men (and some middle-aged women who enjoyed drinking) spent much of their day there, drinking and playing. The café entrance was another hot spot. First-generation men gathered smoking and chatting, watching the road and looking for chances to nag others for beer (chapter 3). A group of four female food vendors set up business there every afternoon, making it a popular place for women, men and children coming to buy food. When the vendors temporarily changed location in the middle of my fieldwork, a new hub formed on another street corner by the main road (Fig. 8), selling a range of fried and grilled meats, sweets and drinks. They attracted a small crowd around them in afternoons, including idle neighbours from adjacent streets who came to pass the time (chapter 9). One of the vendors, Nívea, was the focus of another important interaction hub: the 'lunch place' (chapter 2). For the circle of neighbours who met there daily, it was more than a convenient location at the back of a building for Nívea to fry meat outdoors (Fig. 8). Although located on the street, it became a private spot for gossip and food sharing among a small neighbour circle. Regulars built an improvised shelter around it and recalled spending Christmas and New Year's there (before the council tore it down).

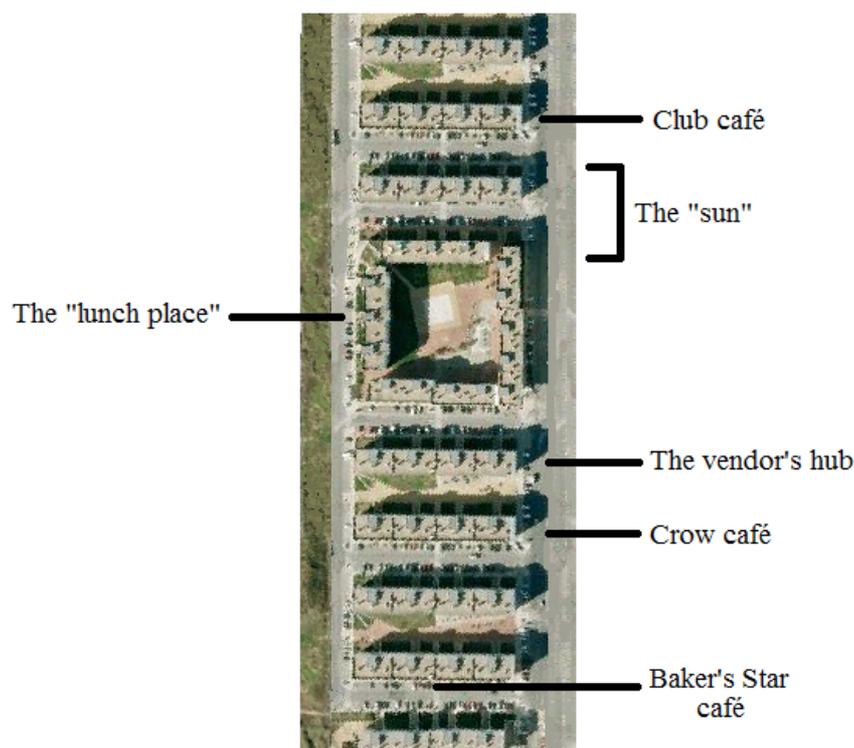


Fig. 8: Plan of Topia's streets with main street corners.

Women, especially Cape Verdean, did not participate as actively in street life. Gender roles determined that women, especially with partners and children, should not hang around other men nor frequent cafés. The few women who did so, usually middle-aged and single, gained a bad reputation for it. Proper women's routines should revolve around work (to provide for children), house chores and childcare. For those working full-time, this meant little time to spare. Women gathered to socialise, but usually did it at home, visiting others, or sitting by their building entrances. Unemployed women, on the other hand, had a stronger presence on the street. 'Baker's Star', a café in one of the lower streets (Fig. 8), was a usual meeting point for some of them in the morning. A group of unemployed middle-aged white women locally known as 'the gossips' (chapter 3) also gathered every afternoon at the end of their street, close to the main road, while retired white women met for coffee at quiet hours in Crow Café. The vendors also attracted some idle female neighbours around them. But male-dominated environments – Club and Crow cafés, and the street corners near them – were mostly avoided by women wishing to guard their reputation.

Besides gender and age factors, adults tended to socialise more closely within their former shanty town. Residents reiterated in interviews that their closest friends were people they grew up with in the shanties. Because some neighbours were kept after the

rehousing, and because people tended to gather near their own buildings, street occupation also followed the lines of former slum membership. Carlos, an Angolan interviewee, made this pattern clear:

If you look at the groups that form here, they're groups of people who came from down there. (Ana: Down there you mean groups that came from each shanty town?) Huh huh. ... What organises people is what they have in common. And what people have in common here is that they came from the same neighbourhood [*bairro*]. So for example here, ... if you go to the street above this one, you'll see most people there are from [slum A]. But you walk up to the next street, you'll see many people, they're from [slum B]. If you go further up there, they're people from [slum A]. ...

It was unsurprising to find interactions shaped by age, gender, street proximity or previous ties. More interesting was that people chose to gather in street corners instead of the spots designed for outdoor socialising. Social integration concerns in rehousing (section 3.2) determined the estate should include, according to the council's website, 'sociocultural, sporting and educational equipments' such as benches, picnic tables, a football court and a playground (Abrantes 1994, 51) – many of which had been broken or to some degree vandalised. At the time of my fieldwork, the 'playground' remained only as the informal name for the square where it once stood; benches and tables were seldom used except by elders and children; the court, regularly used by boys to play football, became much less popular after the goal posts were broken and removed. Each spot in Topia was appropriated by residents in personalised ways, ascribed specific uses and meanings, including different from those it was planned for. Corners and spots were taken over by different groups and used for favourite activities (cooking, eating, drinking, smoking, trading, gossiping, ploughing, even celebrating Christmas), sometimes acting upon the material setting (vandalising 'sociocultural' equipments, cultivating empty ground, building a shelter) to transform it to their purposes. Through everyday practices, selective uses and occupation, residents divided and appropriated the space of Topia as their own. The main aspects and implications of their relationship to this place – the 'neighbourhood' (*bairro*) – will be examined over the following chapters.

#### **4. Chapter outline**

The plan of the thesis reflects my empirical focus on place matters. I have used significant spots and places in Topia as thematic heuristics to divide the ethnographic

chapters. For their local prominence and role in interaction, I found it interesting to organise discussion around these places. Besides the estate itself, introduced in this chapter, I have included: the 'lunch place', the 'building', the 'vegetable garden', the 'neighbourhood', the 'car', the 'party hall', the 'police station', the 'street corner', and the 'NGO' as useful pegs. They have been used only as heuristic motifs, organising devices and stimulating focal points, 'good to think with' (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 128), rather than the focus of chapters. Each of these places will be pretext to explore a different kind of boundary around the neighbourhood, adding to the general picture of what processes of demarcation, inclusion and exclusion reproduced Topia and social life inside it. I have included my own house as a significant place, roughly at the border between inside and outside. As the setting from where my engagement with Topia began, it made sense to start the discussion there. Chapter 1, 'My house', will focus on the long and arduous progress of my penetration of neighbourhood lines, reflecting on methodology, my perceived status in Topia, informants' reactions to me, fieldwork constraints and limitations.

Ethnographic chapters have been organised into three parts, followed by a conclusion summarising the implications of the research. Part I will explore place-making 'inside' Topia, examining social ties, exchanges, narratives and cultural habits, which together made for the distinctive feel of neighbourhood life. The account will begin in chapter 2 ('The lunch place'), introducing favour requests and local assistance codes to describe how dense neighbour sociality and intimate routines, manifested in exclusive greeting codes and 'relatedness' idioms, produced Topia as a familiar and socially exclusive place. Discussion of neighbour requests will continue into chapter 3 ('The building') to foreground the other side of assistance networks: failed expectations of generosity, resulting tension and conflict. These failures supported nostalgic narratives of 'shanty' life as opposed to 'building' life, portrayed as dangerous and lonely. Chapter 4 ('The vegetable garden') will explore prominent aspects of Cape Verdean culture: language and names, religious rites and ritual kinship, food, music and dance. I will describe how these elements were selectively appropriated by second generations as 'tradition', reproducing Topia as a Cape Verdean 'community of practice' (Wenger 2006).

Part II will highlight interactions, practices and cognitions centring around the lines demarcating the neighbourhood from the outside. It will focus on identity, connections to other migrant settlements and territorial dynamics of exclusion. Chapter 5 ('The neighbourhood') will analyse ethnicity discourses among second-generation Cape Verdeans. I will set aside a transnationalist reading to argue that young Cape Verdeans' identity-building conflated racial, cultural and residential markers, appropriating meanings

and categories imposed by the state, media and wider society in a 'looping effect' (Hacking 2006) that cast Topia in 'opposition' to outside Portuguese society. Chapter 6 ('The car') will address residents' movements beyond Topia, highlighting local mobility constraints and people's response 'tactics' (Certeau 1984), which contributed to connect Topia with other significant places in the Município: the area of the old shanties and other migrant settlements. I will show how spatial routines and experiences produced these places as a translocal web of familiar places cohering symbolically against 'non-places' beyond (Augé 1995). Chapter 7 ('The party hall') will address social dynamics of Cape Verdean parties, including interactions around food and *funaná* dancing. I will address the contrast between territoriality and exclusion of outsiders on the streets, where active mechanisms of boundary control and gate-keeping defended the neighbourhood; as opposed to the unrestrained fun and inclusion at parties, where even unfamiliar guests were invited to join in.

Part III will look closely at residents' interactions with the socio-economic and institutional structures of outside society, the implications and relations of power involved. I will examine residents' attitudes to time and planning, money, work and idleness, and their resistance to institutional 'pedagogy' and government control. Chapter 8 ('The police station') will explore residents' relationships with police, social workers and NGOs as feared agents of control and the object of residents' constant watchfulness. I will argue that Topia's space worked to homogenise residents and outsiders as dangerous in each other's eyes: residents became potential law offenders; white outsiders became potential undercover agents. Fear and resistance on both sides contributed to Topia's 'territorial stigmatisation' and demarcation as a dangerous place (Wacquant 2007). Chapter 9 ('The street corner') will address work, leisure, welfare and income. I will draw on Bauman's (1998) posited moral shift from 'production' to 'consumption' to account for distinctive generational views on work, income and idleness in Topia. I will underscore the role of money and second generations' livelihood choices (combining welfare with illicit work) in producing a threefold social exclusion of Topia: as a place of defective consumers, undeserving idlers and feared outlaws. Finally, chapter 10 ('The NGO') will examine residents' distinctive attitudes to time: delays and unfulfilled plans, cyclical spending, disinvestment in schooling and abstract views of the future. I will eschew 'culture-of-poverty' explanations and borrow from Bourdieu (1979), Scott (1976) and Gell (1996) to argue that residents' attitudes to time did not follow a 'present-time orientation', rather the uncertainty of Topia routines reproduced a particular kind of 'present space-time': deprived and unstable, foreclosing directed pathways to a desirable future.

The multiple boundaries of Topia and the social practices that reproduced them will build a comprehensive picture of neighbourhood life. With this extensive account, I will highlight how Topia, whilst integrated in the Município, the nation and a shifting transnational globe, was produced as a meaningful place in its own right. Social, cultural and cognitive processes demarcated inside from outside. And inconspicuous physical borders belied distinctive codes, expectations, experiences and behaviours – giving rise to that initial sensation, when walking up the main road, of having set foot in a different place; of having crossed some significant line.

## 1. My house: 'See you later officer!'

I was interviewing a fifty-eight-year-old Cape Verdean woman at her house one Saturday afternoon. We were interrupted by a visit from her *compadre* (her god-daughter's father). I turned off the recorder and eased my way into their conversation. We soon heard the key to the door. The woman's son (early twenties) dropped by with a friend. As he opened the door and saw me on the sofa, he let slip an angry exclamation. He looked somewhat familiar, I had probably seen him around the neighbourhood. But I did not recall us interacting before. His reaction got me worried he had heard something about me and resented me for some reason. He greeted his mother and her *compadre*. His mother introduced me: 'This is Ana.' Etiquette stipulated he should greet me. He seemed displeased and confused, and grumbled: 'Well, I'll greet her then...' He kissed me on the cheek. His friend rushed him on, they had come to fetch something and go out again. But he lingered for a while, watching us, before walking reluctantly to his bedroom. I had the impression he stood listening in on our conversation, so I tried to steer the topic away from personal questions. After some time he joined us, looking amused. He confessed he had thought I was a new police officer he had seen around the police station lately. 'You kind of look like her. She's white. And the hair. But no...' His mother assured him I was not, we were just 'doing an assignment' (*a fazer um trabalho*). She signalled the recorder. I feared this would increase his suspicion... But he laughed off his mistake, admitting in Creole he had even tried to ask the *compadre* discretely who I was. She reprimanded him to 'speak Portuguese' in my presence. They were surprised when I assured I could roughly understand Creole. The son finally left, still smiling and teasing me at the door: 'See you later officer!'

Ethnographic fieldwork happens in situated encounters between the researcher and other agents. Local circumstances, individual features and background (like ethnicity, gender, age, language, class), cultural models and assumptions on both sides shape social exchanges and their implications. A complex interplay of social, cultural, personal and environmental factors thus constrain data 'production' and analysis (Cohen et al. 1984). This makes reflexivity a central methodological task (Davies 1999). In this chapter I will reflect on the main ethnographic constraints and shortcomings of my research in Topia. I will begin by situating the conditions and methods of fieldwork: the practical 'where', 'when', 'what' and 'why' of the research (part 1), and significantly the 'how': matters of access (part 2), methods (part 3) and writing-up (part 4). Finally, I will discuss some implications of my choice of methods, prominent silences and limitations (part 5).

## 1. Where, when, what, why: research setting and research questions

### 1.1 Where and when: my house

After a few preliminary visits to Topia in 2010 (visiting local institutions and a neighbourhood party), I started proper fieldwork in September of 2010. I began institutional interviews with the parish council, and tried to secure accommodation inside the neighbourhood. The housing office made it clear I could not occupy any of the spare flats reserved for rehousing. I could ask the council for formal authorisation to stay with a family in Topia who might agree to take me in. This proved a difficult mission, as I did not know anybody in Topia at the time. I asked elders on the streets, I knocked on doors, I left notes with my contact information. Expectedly, all this failed. At the time I was unaware of the suspicion raised by white young women knocking on doors (chapter 8). I also asked local NGO workers for help finding a family willing to let their room or flat. As this also failed, I tried my luck with the flats allocated for sale in the lower streets of Topia. I left 'room wanted' ads in every postbox, without any reply. Seeing several houses 'for sale' around Topia, I turned to local estate agencies and called the numbers on every ad. Owners were interested in nothing short of selling. Finally, I was lucky with the owner of a house on the very brim of the estate: he agreed to let his house to me until he managed to sell it, while I privately rooted he would not find anybody for at least a year. Thanks to the real estate crisis and Topia's bad reputation (chapter 8), I could remain there until the end of my fieldwork in November 2011. On the first of October 2010, I moved into my new house in Topia with my partner.<sup>42</sup>

By living in the estate, I hoped to be granted neighbour status before becoming a 'researcher'. With that in mind, I delayed asking for interviews or telling people about my work for a few months, in an effort to build connections and make myself known first through a less threatening lens. Living in Topia indeed brought countless advantages: more observation time in the estate, at every hour of the day; being around for unexpected events and impromptu invitations, which were frequent (chapter 10); having my house close by to take notes or fetch the recorder for unplanned interviews; having people over, which helped to build trust with closer informants and create some reciprocal invitations. However, given the clear division between rehousing and ownership areas in the estate

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<sup>42</sup> Like me, from a white literate middle-class background. Although he seldom interacted with informants (living in the edge of the estate, he could move easily without entering the neighbourhood), he shaped how informants saw me: confirming my identity as white outsider and ascribing me 'married' status in the eyes of women (implications are discussed below). On rarer occasions when he escorted me about Topia, people reacted with the same hostile scrutiny gazes displayed towards any white outsider (chapter 7).

(introduction), not living in a rehousing flat denied me full neighbour status. Living on the edge of Topia meant that most people did not even know I lived there. And those who did never introduced me that way to others. Whenever I mentioned living in Topia, people showed surprise and asked exactly where my house was. Their interest abated when they realised I lived in the lower streets, in one of the houses for sale. While living in the estate increased my access to local life and made building ties easier over time, it did not change my outsider status. In time, living at the edge of the estate was decisive in another way. It helped shape a central focus of my research: what lines were locally drawn between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

## **1.2 What and why: research questions**

My early research interest was in life stories. I planned to collect informants' life narratives and examine the role of cultural models of story-telling (Linde 1993), personhood (Rose 1998; Mauss 1985; La Fontaine 1985), and 'lives' (Bourdieu 1997; Langness and Frank 1995) on how individuals structured their tales (Ochs and Capps 1996; Freeman 1993). My plan to live in Topia would allow a holistic perspective over people's routines and local models of personhood, to frame informants' stories. However, once in the field two things became clear: 1) long detailed life narratives were difficult to obtain; and 2) life in Topia showed more interesting and pressing topics to pursue. In most interviews, people had trouble finding where to begin or what to include, and repeatedly asked for specific questions. Most tales I collected were short, and follow-up questions did not expand them greatly. On the other hand, my interactions in the neighbourhood unveiled a series of other poignant questions. Informants' concerns and categories progressively redefined my research interests (Macdonald 2001, 78). Our interactions introduced me to the dynamics of neighbour relations, requests and assistance. The balancing of neighbourly generosity with self-seeking claims soon caught my attention, for the duplicitous strategies it created, and the spatial idiom it was expressed in (chapter 3). Gradual access to street and family life, culture, and people's movements beyond the estate brought my focus upon the distinctiveness of life in Topia, its relations to other migrant settlements and especially to Portuguese society. The experience of volunteering at NWIV strengthened my belief that relationships between residents and outsiders were central for grasping local meanings, discourses and practices. My initial impression of a neighbourhood hostile to my penetration crystallised over time into the notion of an essential division between insiders and outsiders. Division criteria involved a complex intertwining of things: family ties and

neighbourly codes, language, culture and skin colour, distinctive morals and economic values, a shared resistance to authorities and outsiders' discrimination, and the central link between where informants lived and who they were. These complex demarcation lines defined the meanings and implications the neighbourhood assumed in people's lives. This progressive realisation refocused my research interests from life stories to the production of place and boundaries in Topia. This refocus was also affected by field constraints. My limited access to people's homes determined my early attention, first and foremost, to outdoor interactions: street life and neighbour relations. Residents I followed and who became my main informants were initially people who hung out on the streets and were free during the day (mostly unemployed and retired). They invited research on topics like neighbourly codes, street-corner behaviours, unemployment and idleness (rather than, for example, childcare, the family or domestic life). Privileged access to street life significantly shaped the scope of the thesis.

## **2. How: Access**

### **2.1 Obstacles and fear**

The reasons behind my research shift were the same that made it so difficult. Penetrating the neighbourhood was a hard task, methodologically and personally. People's suspicion of me as a social worker (or police officer) and their tactics for excluding me: using Creole, withholding information, ignoring my contributions to the conversation, eyeing me in threatening ways, scrutinising my movements in the estate – created obstacles to direct probing, not to mention personal discouragement and emotional distress. I was additionally constrained by fear. Topia was a relatively quiet environment – far from the assault-laden, gunshot-filled setting described for example by Bourgois (2003) in East Harlem. Aside from verbal harassment from men on the streets and occasional quarrels breaking out, I felt safe moving in Topia during the day. But the night was a different matter. The very first night I went out, hanging out at the lunch place with a few residents, I witnessed a distressing scene: a middle-aged woman arrived drunk and tried to force her husband (disabled from an accident) to return home with her, turning against me and another woman for allegedly being prostitutes and stealing her husband away. The dramatic tension of the incident (which included the wife hitting the husband with his own crutches and throwing his hat and gloves in the fire) was not as distressing as others' reactions, seemingly little affected by it, commenting on the woman's behaviour as a normal, albeit annoying part of routine.

Something adding to my early insecurities were the regular visits of Santos, a thirty-eight-year-old Cape Verdean man, to my house. He often arrived at night, drunk, and made himself at home in my house even when encouraged to leave. He asked for drinks, borrowed DVDs (which he didn't return), asked for small change and shared musings about disconnected topics, including my work, his life experiences as former drug dealer, mystical beliefs about himself, God and fate. Amidst his reveries, he asked inappropriate personal questions mixed with cryptic philosophical ones.<sup>43</sup> We began hiding the alcohol after some nightly visits, and a particularly invasive one left me afraid to open the door. His former standing as a dealer and his friendship with people (men) I could not hope to access otherwise made him at once interesting and dangerous, and his presence in the field was always a distressing one. Other incidents increased my sense of insecurity, although I did not suffer their direct effects: my partner being mugged at night returning from work; a knife fight breaking out on the street above my house; gunshots fired while I walked home from an informants' house. Feelings of insecurity added to the other practical and personal obstacles, whose implications will be examined in later sections.

## **2.2 Progress: gateways into neighbourhood life**

People's hostility and resistance to my probing made my initial progress slow. Walking alone up and down the road, sitting by myself at the café or shopping at the local grocery store allowed little meaningful observation or rapport-building. Instead, I focused my attention on two goals. One was getting clearance from local institutions to conduct interviews, obtain statistics and other data. One institution presented an important gateway into some aspects of life in Topia. Lost in the early and unproductive stages of fieldwork, I began volunteering at NWIV, a local NGO, two half-days a week. NWIV was located in one of the lower streets of Topia, and provided varied services: assistance with job and training applications; help with paperwork; free IT courses; internet access; homework tutoring and leisure activities for teenagers aged eleven to eighteen. This decision was very fruitful. On the one hand, it allowed observation of teenagers' attitudes towards school and leisure, adults' behaviours regarding work and training, and it provided me with interview contacts. In time, NWIV also granted some access to the local school, following a class of girls in a professional course. On the other hand, NWIV and its institutional partners gave some perspective on how institutional workers approached Topia, its residents and local intervention. My link to NWIV also had implications in how residents saw me. In the early

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<sup>43</sup> In his contradictions and mystical dispositions, he reminded me of Crapanzano's (1985) Tuhami.

stages of fieldwork, it provided an easy explanation for my presence in Topia. In a place where being idle was seen negatively (chapter 9) and the idea of a full-time adult student difficult to grasp, working at NWIV gave me an intelligible occupation in people's eyes. In turn, the role of 'NGO worker' became part of my identity in the estate. Regrettably, people consistently introduced me to others as 'working' rather than 'living' in Topia. Despite my best efforts to deny any allegiance to institutions, volunteering at NWIV raised people's suspicion about my work.

Access difficulties convinced me to recruit a field assistant. This proved complicated. I had the perfect candidate: Eva, a bright, relatively literate unemployed Cape Verdean who had worked before as cultural mediator for a municipal project. Although she turned out to be a useful informant, my plan to work with her soon fell through: after agreeing to help me, she never showed up for our meetings nor answered the phone. I attempted to recruit others (also former mediators) as assistants, but they all refused. In the end, people's suspicion of my work made me abandon the idea of an assistant and seek other ways to build trust and rapport.

Over time, I found different gateways into neighbourhood life. I began occasionally buying food from the vendors. One evening I met Ivone there, a white middle-aged unemployed woman, who introduced me to the lunch place. Ivone and Nívea (one of the vendors) warranted my presence there and on some of the street corners, providing close access to the universe of neighbour ties and morals. At the same time, I began having breakfast at Baker's Star café every morning, initially with my partner, later with a NWIV colleague, and over time, through my relationship with Eva, with female regulars. These women opened up multiple topics of enquiry. Their talks reflected local discourses and beliefs about work and welfare, transport, children, relationships, race, and life in the old shanties.

After some months in the field, I also began searching for somebody to introduce me to vegetable gardens. My first few attempts were unsuccessful. People frowned or looked away, probing why I wanted to learn or making up excuses. After several refusals Domingas, a middle-aged Cape Verdean immigrant, married and mother of four, finally accepted me as her helper in the garden, and extended that to her house chores. This furthered my grasp of neighbour ties and assistance, namely in the context of first generations' values and discourses.

My gradual friendship with three Cape Verdean women my age, Diana, Fabi and Leandra, was crucial to the research. Access to their homes advanced my understanding of household chores, childcare and family life. Fabi and especially Diana introduced me to a

group of Cape Verdean women from other settlements, and into the dynamics of parties, mobility and transport beyond Topia (chapter 6). These connections allowed me to slowly expand my network of acquaintances and reduce some of people's suspicion towards me. Leandra was kind enough to ask her family to shelter and assist me during my trip to Santiago (Cape Verde) in October 2011, which enabled first-hand experience of local (*badiu*) culture and a deeper understanding of transnational ties. The kindness of Leandra and her family ensured I was welcomed to three different homes during my stay (in Praia, Ribeira da Barca, Assomada and Tarrafal), and assisted in my research in each place. I travelled alone, which made me a messenger between Leandra and her family – carrying gifts, photographs and messages both ways – and gave me direct experience of transnational family connections. My stay also resulted in six interviews with local ritual experts on topics of witchcraft and ritual (appendix B), as well as interviews and data collection about gender, childcare and education from institutions and research centres in the island.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, life-story interviews with Topia residents proved an invaluable source of information. Despite my research shift away from life narratives, these were illuminating of people's views about the estate and the old shanties, about ties to Cape Verde and cultural identity, individuals' work attitudes, dreams and plans for the future.

### **3. How: Methods**

#### **3.1 Participant observation**

Participant observation has become the primary and nearly defining methodology of anthropological work (Cohen et al. 1984, 217; Davies 1999, 67; Watson 1999). It authorises anthropologists' activities in a twofold way. By integrating the poles of 'observing' and 'participating', it defines field 'experience' as: 1) a reliable source of (observed) information; and 2) a means of accessing it (through participation) (Cohen et al. 1984, 217-222). Participant observation was my main methodological approach in Topia. Strong obstacles to direct probing or questioning determined that, other than interviews, official statistics and documents, observing and participating in local life were the essential tools at my disposal (Okely 1983, 44-45). While the futility of asking questions was limiting (not to mention frustrating), participant observation led me beyond questioning, surpassing conventional discourse to grasp subjects' beliefs and practices in context

<sup>44</sup> OMCV (Organisation of the Women of Cape Verde), ICCA (Cape Verdean Institute of Children and Adolescents), ICIEG (Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity), INE (Cape Verdean National Institute of Statistics), Assomada's S.O.S. Children's Village and CIGEF-UniCV (Research Centre on Gender and Family of the University of Cape Verde).

(Macdonald 2001). It allowed grasping people's views and behaviours holistically and 'intensively' (Crang and Cook 2007, 37; Macdonald 2001, 78; Davies 1999, 69).

This intensive experience required daily note-taking (Cohen et al. 1984, 278-292). But in Topia, writing or carrying pen and paper was associated with information-gathering techniques by social workers (chapter 8). In order to distance myself from them and not increase suspicion, I nearly always wrote my notes at home (the exception was NWIV). This determined that all my notes were recorded from memory, and that observation was centred on trying to memorise all I could.

### ***3.1.1. Language***

The 'total experience' of immersion in the field also required language training (Okely 1992, 8). Lessons in *badiu* Creole (spoken in Topia) were hard to find. I was lucky that the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences (FCSH-UNL) experimented with its first intensive course in Creole over the autumn term, shortly after I arrived in the field. Although more focused on linguistics, it gave some understanding of sentence structure, grammar and basic conversation, and was a helpful starting point. By the time I travelled to Cape Verde my command of Creole was fair – enough to get by on and conduct interviews with institutions and local inhabitants, although still requiring help deciphering parts of informants' speech. Limited comprehension of the language greatly hindered my research in Topia. My low proficiency in it and the fact that most residents spoke fluent Portuguese discouraged me from speaking it. My decision was also moved by fear of increasing suspicion and confusion: a Creole-speaking white outsider was an odd sight (as suggested in my opening example). Although this decision did not bring me closer to an 'insider' position, it often proved useful. Although I mentioned to my informants that I could partially understand Creole, not speaking it kept my understanding of it less conspicuous, and could sometimes mitigate people's attempts to exclude me from conversation.

### **3.2 Life stories**

Alongside participant observation, I used in-depth life-story interviews as a way to gain insight into the local context and people's views of the neighbourhood (appendix A). Interviews frequently complement participant observation to elicit information on particular topics (Bernard 2006). Broadly 'learning through conversations' and seeking informants' personal versions and voices, they are primary components of ethnography

(Crang and Cook 2007, 60-61). My choice to use life-story interviews followed a long tradition in anthropology. Life stories have been used to address variegated topics (Plummer 2001, 399-400), from approaches to 'culture', 'change' and 'deviance' as illustrated in individual lives, to social processes and the life-cycle (Reed-Danahay 2001, 408; Langness and Frank 1995). In the field of migration research, life-story approaches have witnessed a recent 'revival' (Brettell 2003, 27-32). The reason is their potential to articulate different levels of analysis while remaining grounded on migrants' situated lives. Life stories can capture how broad forces and frameworks (national, local or familiar) influence people's ideas, decisions and behaviours in practice (ibid.). In this sense they resemble participant observation: they allow a holistic perspective on a local setting.

I collected fifty-one life stories among Topia residents, using a semi-structured in-depth interview profile (Schensul and LeCompte 2012, 174-183; Bernard 2006, 156-158; Davies 1999, 95). The initial purpose of these interviews was different from the one they came to fulfil. I originally planned to foreground life stories and use participant observation as a secondary tool to understand the context behind people's narratives. As it happened, the two methods switched roles: given my research interests and the difficulty of finding interview subjects, participant observation became the core of my ethnography while interviews filled a more secondary part. Although these life stories were initially collected with a different goal in mind, their merits and (unanticipated) usefulness in my research warrant discussion here. Just as with participant observation, the situated interactions of interviewer and respondent require examining the constraints and implications of the exchange (Davies 1999, 94-116). This is especially important in life-story interviews. Their personal and sensitive contents demand delicate identity and relationship management (Crang and Cook 2007, 62; Cohen et al. 1984, 229-230), as well as especially open and attentive postures (Hollway and Jefferson 1997).

### ***3.2.1 Contacts***

It was complicated getting my closer informants to grant me interviews. Many refused under different pretexts ('I don't like talking about my life', 'I'm not good at that sort of thing', 'My life is too long to tell'), while others agreed but then failed to show up and kept postponing it under different excuses (chapter 9). Only twelve out of the fifty-one interviews happened with informants I was previously acquainted to. All other contacts were made through informants or institutions as mediators. This of course had implications on the interview itself.

People referred to me through others accepted to participate in the interview for different reasons. Some were doing a favour for a friend, others felt somewhat indebted to the mediating institution. In any case, several informants mentioned at the start wanting to 'get it over with'. In the case of the housing office, several people also assumed I was a fellow social worker assessing their level of deprivation, and shaped their tale accordingly. In one particular case, when a woman was finally convinced, half-way through our interview, that I was indeed not a social worker, she ended it on the pretext of a headache.

### ***3.2.2 Setting***

Getting interview contacts through mediators meant there was no previous rapport with respondents, which had consequences (Bernard 2006, 210; Cohen et al. 1984, 232). One was the choice of setting for the interview. I gave people the choice of place (within contexts quiet enough to record the session). I hoped this could help them feel more comfortable during the exchange. Options were usually limited to their house, my house, or the institution which mediated our contact. I encouraged people to speak in their own homes. This served to gain a sense of context – where and how they lived, with what means and with whom – and to assure they felt more in control and less defensive. Luckily, I could conduct most interviews in people's homes, which provided me with richer data than I would have obtained otherwise (as my opening example in the chapter illustrates). But this was not always the case. Five people chose to have the interview at my house, most respondents referred by NWIV chose to have the interview there, the same happening with two informants at the housing office and the cultural association. In all these cases, I sensed a tacit assumption that the interaction was set in my space and my terms (seeing as I was identified with the institution). Moreover, the physical layout of institutional offices embodied a clear power division: behind the desk usually sat an authority figure with access to resources and some control over residents' lives; in front of the desk sat the plaintive individual, subject to that power (Moffatt 1999, 225). I feared the asymmetry embedded in these spaces would threaten rapport-building. But to my surprise, with few exceptions the respondents who appeared more sincere and open in their narratives – who spoke for longer, shared deeper thoughts and experiences, including sensitive ones, cried even – were precisely those who: 1) had no previous relationship with me; 2) carried out the interview at an institution.

### ***3.2.3 Reciprocity***

Irrespective of people's original reasons to grant me interviews, I felt an ethical responsibility to somehow reciprocate (Sluka and Robben 2012, 21-23). This went beyond minimising the inconveniences of the interview, accommodating people's schedules and choice of setting. I felt that giving me their time, patience and in some cases sharing delicate experiences with me placed me in their debt (ibid., 22). This concerned more than local codes of social reciprocity. It spoke of my own assumptions about fieldwork, about having less to offer than expectedly to receive. My decision to volunteer at NWIV was a first measure to help exorcise my presumed (future) indebtedness to informants. But over time, my perception of these issues changed. As I entered into personal relationships of mutual requests with close informants – Diana, Fabi, Leandra, Ivone, Domingas, even Santos, and others (and by extension their family members and friends) – I felt my fieldwork interactions become more symmetrical. The people I met showed less restraint in asking me for favours than I did to them. But I still struggled with reciprocity towards those interview subjects (a majority) to whom I had no prior tie, especially those sharing sensitive information with me. I was glad when several of them confessed the interview had been a pleasant experience or an emotional release, allowing them to reminisce, reflect on their lives, vent their frustrations. But not everyone gave me their assurance. I shared my phone number with some, offered my service when they might need it. Eventually, this anxiety abated. I came to view these exchanges as primarily social interactions, rather than the economic transactions I presumed before.

My need to 'compensate' informants for their effort belied a rationalistic model of exchange. And my role as researcher was the source of my ethical liability: I hardly felt obligated to acquaintances I met outside fieldwork, even if our exchanges were asymmetrical. I might share more; they might share more. But 'compensating' an unequal interaction did not cross my mind outside Topia. In time, I accepted that being an ethnographer did not prevent me from interacting with informants above all as a social actor or neighbour. Residents behaved towards me in varied and complex ways: asking or refusing things, allowing or excluding me, being kind, inconsiderate, aggressive. These disparate relations did not entail stringent calculation of costs or benefits for the parties involved. Admittedly I wanted something from them. But it was often the case people wanted something from me: Domingas got my help with house and garden chores; an informant demanded payment for an interview; others made use of my computer or literacy skills, my phone credit, my money, or simply my company. Regarding reciprocity, the

British Association of Social Anthropologists suggests it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to assure there is 'no economic exploitation' of informants, giving them 'fair return' for their services (ASA 1999, 4). In my mind, granting an interview was a service they performed for me, because I received something useful out of it. However, as my field stay progressed, I realised individuals often got 'something useful' out of interacting with me too. Without abandoning my heartfelt gratitude to the people who helped me (or other ethical responsibilities, like protecting their information), I dropped my prior rationalistic model of transaction to face interactions with informants as foremost situated encounters between individuals.

### ***3.2.4 Language and recording***

Other factors affected interview experiences and what I gained from them. Language was one of them. I used Portuguese in all life-story interviews, which allowed me better control in the phrasing of questions, and especially better understanding of informants' speech. But in the case of Cape Verdean informants, I missed a chance to present myself in a more familiar way (which I compensated by emphasising I was very interested in Cape Verdean culture).

Another choice which created distance between respondents and I was the use of audio recording. The virtues of recording interviews are widely advised in methods' textbooks (cf. Bernard 2006, 227; Davies 1999, 114). It allows information (including 'apparently meaningless phrases, repetitions, sublinguistic verbalizations, pauses and silences' [ibid.]) to be preserved and accessed, well beyond the limits of memory or note-taking. And it leaves the researcher free to focus on the ongoing interaction, to look respondents in the eye and pay attention to verbal cues, reactions and themes. I also used a notebook to jot down follow-up questions as they arose. Both recording and note-taking were very useful during and after interviews. But these tools underscored the formal and utilitarian aspects of the exchange. Unlike a friendly chat, recorded interviews have clear purposes, duration and topics to cover – people know the researcher is 'shopping for information' and 'there is no point in trying to hide this' (Bernard 2006, 215). These are asymmetrical exchanges, with respondents mainly expected to share and speak, and interviewers to ask and listen. Because these assumptions are usually clear, the costs of making them more visible by recording were smaller than the benefits. The recorder was more noticeable in the beginning of interviews, when it was turned on. A few people commented that it looked like a 'journalist's' recorder. But over the exchange and rapport-

building, people often seemed to forget it. As the interview went on, people progressively relaxed, looking me in the eye rather than glancing at the device. That being said, several informants seemed to decide from the onset that they would only convey superficial information – usually the same people who told me beforehand that I could include their real names: 'I've nothing to hide' (and then over shallow and bland accounts, ensured that was true). I made an effort to reduce the awkwardness of the recording by mentioning it upfront when asking for interviews. I expected people in Topia to be reluctant about being recorded (even interviewed for that matter), so I preferred that they come in prepared, to avoid on-site refusals over the surprise of being audio-taped.

### ***3.2.5 Method***

Another way to remove some anxiety from the interview was to take some time explaining my purpose, expectations and anonymity concerns. Many informants admitted they did not know exactly what to do. I explained the broad purpose of the research, what the interview would consist of, stressing the recordings were only for me and that people might interrupt it at will. I clarified I would not use people's real names or other identifying details. This was decisive for some informants: 'As long as you don't put my name down...'. I tried to follow the approach described by Hollway and Jefferson (1997) for eliciting life narratives with minimal anxiety for subjects. They summarised their 'biographical-interpretive' method in four steps: 'use open-ended not closed questions, elicit stories, avoid "why" questions, and follow up using respondents' ordering/phrasing' (ibid., 60n2). The method begins with an open-ended request for a life story, taking notes on follow up themes to probe into later (ibid.). I strived to keep a posture of 'attentive listening' (ibid., 60), with occasional 'uh-huh probes' to build empathy and keep the narrative flowing (Bernard 2006, 219). In follow-up questions I was mindful of Hollway and Jefferson's (1997, 60) advice to pick up on themes in respondents' original order and phrasing. Afterwards I followed a list with pre-set questions (appendix A), sorted roughly from concrete to abstract, to begin with more trivial, less demanding contents (Schensul and LeCompte 2012, 182). Following a semi-structured profile, the phrasing, order and inclusion of these pre-set topics or introduction of new ones were adjusted to the interaction (Davies 1999, 95). But despite my best efforts to follow textbook procedures – to obtain carefully informed consent, build empathy, present research in a non-threatening way, elicit long accounts, and so forth – most uninterrupted narratives I collected were (with important exceptions) under thirty minutes long, and followed by informants'

requests for specific instructions: 'I don't know what else to say, you should ask questions.'

I did not follow textbook advice regarding transcription. I had planned to transcribe all interviews integrally, which I started doing in the field (in order to adjust research themes and interview questions). But when my topic steered away from life stories, I decided that was an unnecessary time-consuming effort. Instead, I used field notes about the interviews, along with my own 'head notes' (Sanjek 1990, 92-94), to decide which accounts spoke relevantly to the topics I wanted to analyse. In writing-up, I made direct and selective transcriptions of pertinent parts of informants' accounts. While I arguably overlooked much data, this strategy was decisive in managing time constraints.

### **3.3 Other interviews**

#### ***3.3.1 Institutions***

I conducted semi-structured interviews in two other contexts. One was with institutional representatives: the president and a social worker from the parish council; representatives of four divisions of the council involved in the rehousing and management of the estate, and two of the social workers from the housing office; the director of the local ecclesiastic parish centre; the former monitor of a local leisure project for teenagers; two workers from the cultural association; the presidents of both local recreational centres. I also attended a group meeting with representatives from NWIV, the cultural association, the school, a football coaching project and local medical services. Unfortunately, my attempts to interview police officers with some connection to the estate proved unsuccessful.

With the exception of the housing office, I chose not to record these interviews. Because my intention was to collect practical rather than personal information (what services were offered and how they worked) I felt that taking notes was enough, and that a recorder might prevent workers from speaking freely about contradictions or problems they identified. This proved accurate when one worker at the housing office admitted, on a particular topic: 'The recorder is on so I'll say no more.' Para-verbal information (tones, pauses and so on) were unimportant in these cases, nor did I expect the formality or interruptions of note-taking to seriously constrain the exchange. That being said, I tried to move beyond conventional discourse to probe into more concrete dynamics. I made an effort to build rapport with representatives and make our exchange more informal. This made some workers more relaxed and willing to share their personal experiences and views. Power asymmetries between us made me overly grateful to these institutions for

allowing the interview and granting me their time. I was much more aware of time being a scarce resource in these cases. These underlying asymmetries and my felt indebtedness placed me in awkward positions of double engagement when residents asked me to use connections with institutions on their behalf.

I also conducted interviews with institutional representatives in Cape Verde, most in Praia and Assomada. I was interested in traditional gender roles, childcare and education in Santiago. My purpose was to gather quantitative and qualitative data about these matters and others identified by institutions in the field. I had slightly different topics for each institution, depending on their area of intervention. Unlike life stories, I only defined broad themes and let workers speak freely, probing into interesting topics as they arose. Overall I focused on workers' experiences about: family and gender roles in Santiago; domestic violence and masculinity; childcare, children's roles in the family and traditional views on schooling; and issues identified by institutions, namely linked to teenage pregnancy, school failure and 'unstructured' families.<sup>45</sup>

I chose not to record these interviews for the reasons mentioned earlier: for impersonal information note-taking was enough, whereas recording might unnecessarily strain the interaction. Practical constraints (unreliable power supply, several interviews in the same day) also made recording more complicated. I conducted these interviews in Creole, since Portuguese was rarely used. That helped me to establish proximity (nearly all workers praised the fact I could speak it) and to present my research more competently. A decisive factor in obtaining friendly and productive interviews was my gateway into these institutions. I counted on the help of many people during my stay in Praia, including Leandra's relatives and the husband of a researcher I had met in Portugal. Leandra's sister-in-law was my most valuable helper in the city. Besides patiently guiding me around the city, she happened to have a friend in each of the institutions I had planned to interview.<sup>46</sup>

### ***3.3.2 Ritual experts***

I also used semi-structured interviews to probe into Cape Verdean rituals and spiritual beliefs. Even though witchcraft, evil eye and protective charms were pervasive in Cape Verdeans' lives in Topia (especially among older generations), residents were very unwilling to talk to me about them (chapter 3). Towards the end of my fieldwork, I finally interviewed a locally recognised expert on the subject. A deeply religious and devoted man, David was a middle-aged Cape Verdean immigrant who was called to different

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<sup>45</sup> These were particularly interesting since they mirrored perceptions and complaints of Topia institutions.

<sup>46</sup> The density of Cape Verdean acquaintance networks was striking (chapter 6).

settlements to help on matters of spiritual healing and ritual ceremonies. He used to live in the shanty towns and occasionally came to Topia to visit his brother. Upon Fabi's request, he kindly granted me an interview at his brother's house. I was wary of addressing sensitive topics like witchcraft in the interview, especially with the recorder on, but he answered all my questions (appendix B), took his time explaining details and even showed me some of the books he learned from. Unlike other residents, he was not fearful of showing his knowledge (I suppose because his reputation as a healer was well established). Aside from David, I interviewed two Cape Verdean elders recently immigrated to Portugal to live with relatives in Topia. I met with them together in the house of a neighbour who mediated contact between us, and unlike all other interviews in Topia, I used Creole (since neither of them spoke Portuguese). These interviews in Topia were complemented by six semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable informants in rural Cape Verde.<sup>47</sup> These were recorded and conducted in Creole, with the invaluable help Leandra sister, who became my close friend.

#### 4. Writing-up

When attending a seminar on academic writing at Brunel University, something the speaker said stuck to my mind: she argued all researchers were 'professional writers' (cf. Clifford 1986). She meant that the value of research, in any field, depended on it being adequately conveyed (mainly through writing) by the researcher to the wider community. This especially applies to ethnography. The term itself (*ethnography*) denotes it (Atkinson 1992, 5): writing pervades every phase of gathering and analysing data, rather than neutrally 'reporting' it (Sanjek 1990). Analysis and writing are hard to differentiate. Field research and the continual interpretation of findings develop and crystallise in the process of writing and rewriting field notes and texts. In this sense ethnography is composed of, and through, different 'levels of textualisation' (Crang and Cook 2007, 152). As a textually mediated 'means of representing' cultural phenomena (Van Maanen 1988, 7), it is affected by multiple constraints (personal, institutional, historical and political), significantly narrative and rhetorical ones. These determine systematic exclusions and inescapable partiality in the written product (Clifford 1986; Van Maanen 1988; Atkinson 1992). The pervasive presence of 'analysis' is overlooked when writing is assumed as a transparent means of conveying data (Crang and Cook 2007). This omits authors' role as 'narrative

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<sup>47</sup> A middle-aged specialist on *faze kriston* ceremonies (see chapter 4), a traditional midwife, a healer, a woman locally known as a sorcerer (*kordera*) (i.e. doing harmful magic on clients' demand), and two other elderly women recognised as knowledgeable of these topics.

agents', giving rise to 'authoritative' accounts (ibid., 163, 167). Assumptions and claims to textual authority should be destabilised and texts rendered 'vulnerable' to the scrutiny of their limits (ibid.). In that process, the choices and determinants of ethnographic writing must be, as in other methods, the object of reflection.

My stay in Topia, including the topic I ended up focusing on, were decisively shaped by my position in the field. All anthropologists are to an extent outsiders striving for an 'insider' perspective. But focusing closely, in my case, on how distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside' were produced, my role as an outsider became more than a fieldwork constraint. In a way it became a research focus in itself: a first-hand experience of being an 'outsider' in Topia. Omitting or diluting that from the ethnography would convey an inaccurate image of an external subject studying an autonomous object. I tried to avoid that by choosing a more 'autoethnographic' style of writing (Crang and Cook 2007, 167-168). By that I mean accounting for my engagement with subjects, my presence, agency and voice in data 'production' (Cohen et al. 1984). I have tried to put this in practice when presenting case material, through the use of 'I', through making clear my relation with informants and considering what I felt and thought in fieldwork interactions, both at the time and in retrospect. This personal inflection will serve a double purpose: besides defying illusions of authority in the text by stressing my place in data production; it also means to better engage with the reader as 'active participant', encouraged to share the field experience and reinterpret its findings (Clifford 1986, 175).

Another choice I made in writing-up was to avoid the 'ethnographic present' (Davies 1999, 156; Fabian 1983, 80-86). The rhetorical use of the present in ethnography promotes a 'timeless' portrait, a 'still frame' of an unhistorical community, downplaying the situated nature of fieldwork (ibid.; Westwood and Williams 1997, 6). Despite the apparent idleness (chapter 9), the purported 'present-orientation' (chapter 10) or the restricted physical and social mobility of Topia residents (chapter 6), it was clear to me the estate was a dynamic setting where change was continual: people moved out and newcomers moved in, people were arrested or released, found new partners and had children, grew older and shifted roles and places on the streets, emigrated, lost jobs and gained new occupations; in the meantime more shanties were demolished, local projects finished, institutional rules and actors changed. Brief subsequent visits to the field in 2012 and 2013 confirmed to me just how quickly life in Topia could change (amplified by the ongoing financial crisis and government cutbacks). Using the present tense would have conveyed the opposite idea, congealing a series of situated values and behaviours as fixed traits of the place or the people. My rhetorical use of the past tense will underscore that data resulted from

contingent observations situated in time.

## **5. Silences and limitations**

### **5.1 Suspicion and time**

My position in the field and people's reactions to me importantly shaped what I did and observed. Being a young, white, middle-class, literate, female outsider (living with a partner of similar background), interpreted in light of residents' racial representations, gender models and responses to literate whites (namely institutional workers) determined significant silences and limitations in my account. My profile fitted that of a social worker (or police officer). Beyond being a white outsider, this 'institutional'-like profile enhanced residents' suspicion and their resistance to my seeming attempts to lecture or advise them (chapter 8). Their resistance motivated frequent efforts to ignore or exclude me from conversation, to avoid my interviews and broadly my questions, to lie or mislead me. This hindered rapport-building, and determined I must learn mainly through watching and listening rather than asking. Fieldwork was mainly grounded on observing ongoing conversations and interactions, with limited opportunity to focus topics on what I wished to explore. While this certainly had advantages – it refocused my research on what seemed relevant in the field rather than pre-decided topics – it also had clear disadvantages. When I identified interesting events or themes to probe, I met with limited cooperation from informants. This meant that research progress was slow, because it relied on fortuitous opportunities to observe relevant exchanges. For funding and other constraints, I limited my stay in the field to fourteen months (extended from my initially plan of twelve). The curve of my research progress – from painfully slow in the first four or five months, to hectic in the last couple of months – suggested that more continued time in Topia would have produced increasingly interesting data. The suspicion I aroused required a long time of continued interaction to overcome mistrust and build rapport (cf. Bourgois 2003; Sluka 2012). Participant observation shifted not only my research questions, but also the roles I assumed in the field (Crang and Cook 2007, 40-48; Ardener, Goward and Sarsby 1984, 108-115; Cohen et al. 1984, 252): from NGO worker to regular presence (at Baker's Star café, the lunch place, the vendors' hub), to a partner in favour requests, to neighbour, in some cases friend. On a subsequent visit to Topia in 2013, I was very proud to be introduced by one of the vendors as 'our friend from the neighbourhood' (*nos amiga di bairu*). But although I achieved some level of rapport with a close group of informants over fourteen months, I strongly felt that more time (years) living in the field would allow

for much richer information to arise (e.g. Baumann 1996; Anderson 1990). In this environment where building rapport was so valuable (as people continually hid information and refused probing) and so difficult to obtain, 'time' was an essential asset. Time of participation and presence – 'being there' (Macdonald 2001; Watson 1999) – would allow getting progressively closer to that 'insider' perspective I found so determinant in Topia (Okely 1983, 44-45).

## **5.2 Gender and age**

Among other conspicuous traits, gender importantly conditioned people's direct responses to me: Cape Verdean men often harassed me on the street (calling me, hissing, or crossing more serious limits), while women were constantly mindful that my 'husband' might be waiting for me at home, making sure I had 'taken care of dinner' and that I would not leave him alone, afraid he would get 'angry'. Although this sometimes provided a good excuse when I wanted to go home, at other times it cut my observation short.

But gender was more decisive in another way. It determined that my access was partly restricted to women's perspectives (Callaway 1992). It is fair to say that through interviews, the lunch place, the vendor's hub, parties, a few occasions at the café and some relatives of my main informants, as well as Santos and another close male informant named José (a white deaf and mute elder), I gained some chances to observe male behaviour. However, I rarely interacted directly with adult men in Topia. Except for interviews, I hardly spoke or remained with them alone. I did not witness their conversations or behaviours among their peers, and I was not familiar with the type of relationships, practices or beliefs they maintained. I never accompanied a man alone outside of Topia, and the few men who set foot in my house (aside from Santos and José) came along with women. This seriously constrained my research. Although much information can be gathered through interviews, second-hand accounts, observing mixed-gender interactions or watching male behaviours from afar, the fact that I did not directly observe intra-male interactions was limiting. Among other things, I suspect that it downplayed the importance of hierarchy in the neighbourhood. Aside from gender and age asymmetries, the social world I observed was dominated largely by horizontal neighbour relations and exchanges. This absence of significant hierarchical ties can be considered odd and unexpected. My privileging of female perspectives might help account for this silence from my data, as well as for my attention to assistance practices and generosity discourses, since women were the most active agents in neighbour requests (cf. Weeks 2012b, 7;

Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 422; Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 114). For the same reason, other topics could not be fully explored, including: the nature and extent of illegal trade (significantly in drugs) and substance addiction in Topia; the detailed rules and consequences of local male codes of respect (chapter 8), so scrupulously described e.g. in Bourgois (2003); male views on romantic relationships, fatherhood or domestic life. These silences, shaped by my field position and access, will be re-addressed in the conclusion.

Attempts to overcome these obstacles proved unsuccessful. My relationship with Santos led me no closer to accessing his peer group (despite his empty promises). Nor did my attempts to hire a male assistant – who bluntly informed me that someone like me (a white literate woman) would 'never' be tolerated in Topia's male circles. The threatening or predatory gazes readily enacted whenever I ventured alone into Crow or Club cafés (where men gathered daily), further confirmed his idea, limiting my observation of these settings to occasions when I might accompany José, Ivone or few other women who frequented them. I tried to gain access to men's perspectives through other ways. The lunch place was a rich source of data, as men and women gathered daily to chat and share food. But I was advised by Ivone, José and others to stay there for only as long as women were also present (which again mostly limited observation to mixed-gender interactions). I also tried to gain access to young males' views through other sources. A former leisure monitor of a group of young men kindly allowed me to attend a meeting with them and explain my work. But my attempts to follow up on that first contact met with the men's avoidance. By chance, the cousin of a Cape Verdean friend I knew outside of fieldwork also played football with some of these young men. Through him, I was able to meet with one of the men, Chico, to propose organising a football match. This plan also fell through, as Chico after that kept me at bay. Despite my best efforts and others' kind attempts to help me, I never succeeded in gaining access or acceptance into any group of male peers. Although admittedly a limitation, the female-centred perspective of this thesis carries its own merits, especially considering that most available ethnographies of settings like Topia have privileged a male viewpoint (e.g. Bourgois 2003; Anderson 1990; Liebow 1967).

Age determined similar constraints, which I will return to in the conclusion. Access and interaction were easier with informants my own age, which corresponded mainly to second generations of migrants (roughly in their twenties and thirties). Although interactions with Domingas, Nívea, José and others allowed contact with first-generation residents and NWIV did the same for teenagers, I observed more closely and frequently second generations. Their perspective also shaped the scope and focus of the thesis. It highlighted themes of ethnicity-building and selective learning of Cape Verdean culture

(chapter 4); inter-neighbourhood ties and party routines (chapters 6 and 7); even resistance to neighbours' abusive requests (chapter 3). As protagonists of an oppositional stance towards outsiders, second generations ultimately guided my interest into the processes of social and symbolic demarcation of Topia against the outside.

Ethnicity also contributed to ethnographic partiality (Clifford 1986). For access constraints, my account privileged Cape Verdeans: forming a majority among residents, they dominated the groups I interacted with. My ethnography of Topia privileged certain voices (female, second-generation, Cape Verdean) over others (Rodman 1992; Appadurai 1988, 16-17; Clifford 1986, 6-7). In the end, my ambitiously framed focus on a residential unit – a neighbourhood of roughly 1500 people – remained inescapably tied to the accounts and practices of a group of key informants within it. The obvious 'heterogeneity of forms' in local life precludes any misguided claims to represent a homogeneous setting (Raposo 2007, 174, my translation). Even so, how can the following chapters, grounded on a limited sample of voices, be said to provide an ethnographic rendering of neighbourhood life? I am convinced that they can – provided these limitations and their implications have been acknowledged (my purpose in this chapter).

Although my account privileged particular groups, this focus was by no means exclusive. Interviews were conducted with people of diverse profiles (of age, gender and ethnicity) and different interactions on the streets, institutions and in people's homes afforded observing male, white, first and third-generation residents. While access constraints (especially to men) impeded my research of particular topics, I do not think it prevented a holistic grasp of neighbourhood social dynamics and important principles guiding local life. The situated voices and perspectives I underscored were not marginal ones. In my perception, they reflected common practices and beliefs, pressing concerns and current discourses in Topia. While they were not representative of all residents, these voices were loud and clear enough to translate important local patterns and suggest factors shaping many (probably most) residents' experiences. The situated nature of the ethnographic production is unquestionable (as pointed out throughout this chapter). To challenge the usefulness of ethnography on that basis is to jeopardise the entire anthropological project.

### **5.3 Ethics and anonymity**

Residents seemed obsessed with keeping their lives and information private: partly from neighbours, sometimes seen as gossiping, envious and harmful agents (chapter 3);

and mainly from authorities, perceived to hold control over their lives (chapter 8). I have discussed at length the obstacles this created for me and my research. To the people who did agree to help me, granting me their narratives and answering my follow-up questions, I was able to explain in detail what the interviews were for and how I would use that information – i.e. to obtain 'informed consent' (ASA 1999, 3). However, as pointed out above, most of my research was based on watching and listening to ongoing interactions, which I then registered in field notes. Naturally, informed consent was not negotiated in these observations. In an estate with roughly 1500 rehoused residents, many people I observed did not even know who I was, let alone that I was researching them. People's unwillingness to answer questions or share information about their lives left me very mindful about betraying, not their trust (which I often lacked), but everything they seemingly held confidential. The 'locally defined “private space”' of Topia informants extended, as argued in the following chapters, to the public space of street interactions (ASA 1999, 4). Informants' 'private space' seemed to comprise much of what I heard and observed. For that reason, I chose not only to employ the usual pseudonyms and disguise individuals' personal details, but also not to disclose the name of the estate, to protect residents' acute concerns about confidentiality and privacy, and wary of the potentially negative consequences of doing otherwise (cf. Greenberg 2012; Scheper-Hughes 2012). This also entailed hiding the name of the city (as revealing it would make obvious the identity of the estate), and affected my description of physical markers, transportation routes and times, and some spatial features. Since my thesis importantly addresses matters of space, these changes need to be noted. Although I disguised conspicuous spatial details (much as I did with individuals' identities), I made an effort to include all information relevant to the topics I address and the points I try to make. In the end, I hope that hiding the real name of 'Topia' (as those of its inhabitants) will not make the ethnography or overall argument any less compelling or relevant.

**Part I – Inside: Neighbours, morals and  
culture**

## **2. The Lunch Place: 'We must be for each other'**

Topia was not an isolated village or ghetto in the Município. Residents travelled out to work, shop, meet others; institutions and public transport served the estate daily; outsiders circulated on the main road, and some visited institutions or friends in Topia. Nevertheless, there was a distinctive feel of intimacy and familiarity in Topia, where residents greeted each other on the street, kept ties of mutual assistance, located neighbours through idioms of kinship and co-residence. Although this close-knit neighbourliness must not be overemphasised, nor should conflict be disregarded (chapter 3), this intricate sociality and proximity were prominent parts of Topia life, and important ones, I will suggest, in demarcating the neighbourhood as a space of intimate and exclusive interaction.

In this chapter, I will argue that mutual requests and moral discourses about generosity came together, against a backdrop of material deprivation, to build a sense of intimacy and belonging among rehoused residents, contributing to reproduce Topia as a tightly knit familiar place. I will look at municipal data on income and employment to help contextualise Topia as a relatively deprived setting (section 1), to then focus on the habit of neighbour requests (for favours, errands and odd jobs) (section 2.1). This practice will be interpreted not in terms of 'exchange' principles, but as embedded social practices of asking and responding to others' requests (2.2). This will afford separate discussion, over this chapter and the next, of requests which were answered (this chapter) and avoided (chapter 3), considering their sanctions and effects on neighbour sociality. This chapter will suggest that granting requests fostered informal networks of reciprocity and interdependency, encouraged by strong expectations of neighbourly generosity and assistance (2.3) – especially in illness and death (2.4) – aimed at relieving felt material hardship. These ties of neighbourly support were reinforced by other ties, mapped through social coordinates based on kinship and house location, and emphasised through 'relatedness' idioms (Carsten 1995): ritual and fictive kinship, shared occupation and co-residence (3.1). A compelling greeting etiquette also asserted residents' exclusive (and exclusionary) membership of the neighbourhood (3.2). Finally, intimate habits (e.g. leaving one's home in pyjamas) illustrated that distinctive feel of familiarity (3.3). I will argue that these codes and practices of interdependency, moral obligation, relatedness and intimacy reproduced an atmosphere of close and intense sociality among co-residents – part of what made the physical estate into an interconnected and meaningful social place: the 'neighbourhood'.

## 1. Material scarcity and unemployment

During my time in Topia, I stumbled across some pricey commodities: expensive cars, plasma TVs, game consoles, laptops. These were however marginal cases, contrasting with the majority of people living in modest to destitute conditions. The 2010 municipal survey included 453 (roughly 90% of) tenancy households relocated to Topia, gathering information on the large majority (1494) of rehoused dwellers. According to the survey, a large proportion of residents were not employed. Together, the 'unemployed', 'housewives' and 'students' represented nearly 50% of respondents, 60% when including the 150 individuals with no occupation (Table 2).<sup>48</sup> The 'unemployed' alone amounted to 23% of respondents. Excluding students, retired, pensioners, prisoners, and people in neither category, the figure for unemployment rose to an impressive 45%: over four times the national unemployment rate for 2010 (11%) (INE 2012b, 5).<sup>49</sup>

Income was also low in Topia. According to the same survey, most salaries ranged between €200 and €500 (not above the 2010 minimum salary: €475), and welfare income was even lower (Table 3). Additionally, most residents had no declared source of income.<sup>50</sup>

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION	INDIVIDUALS
Unemployed	345
Housewife	32
Student	377
Disabled to work	23
Retired	180
Pensioner	5
Military	6
Self employed	0
Employed	359
Odd jobs	17
In prison	15
None	135
<b>Total surveyed</b>	<b>1494</b>

Table 2: Employment situation among rehoused tenants in Topia. Source: Municipal survey, 2010.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Mostly children below school age. No occupational categories overlap.

<sup>49</sup> Unemployment rates divide the number of unemployed individuals by the size of the labour force. Lacking the figure for the labour force in Topia in 2010, I have divided the 'unemployed' by the sum of 'unemployed', 'housewives', 'military', 'employed' and 'odd jobs' (i.e. roughly the population able to work). Although only a rough estimation, it suggests the severity of the unemployment situation.

<sup>50</sup> Data for unemployment and income should be read with caution, since they often leave out informal trade and unreported work (chapter 9).

<sup>51</sup> The low figure for self-employment can be explained by a combination of factors. On the one hand, as

WORK INCOME €	INDIVIDUALS	WELFARE INCOME €	INDIVIDUALS
100 - 200	27	100 - 200	42
201 - 300	116	201 - 300	16
301 - 400	104	301 - 400	26
401 - 500	156	401 - 500	9
501 - 600	91	501 - 600	11
601 - 700	60	601 - 700	3
701 - 800	30	701 - 800	3
801 - 900	18	801 - 900	1
901 - 1000	3	901 - 1000	2
1001 - 1500	8	1001 - 1500	0
1501 - 2000	2	1501 - 2000	0
> 2000	0	> 2000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>No Income</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>No Income</b>	<b>1381</b>

Table 3: Monthly income, from work and welfare, of people rehoused in Topia (excluding forty-five people on unemployment benefits).<sup>52</sup> Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

These data painted a scenario of pronounced scarcity, which necessarily strained daily routines. Material struggle has been aggravated by the recent financial crisis. As mentioned in the introduction, construction work has been the main occupation of Cape Verdean immigrant men since the times of colonialism, when the first waves of Cape Verdeans entered the metropolis attracted by the shortage of labour in construction projects around Lisbon (Batalha 2008, 30-33). With low qualifications required, and offers advertised through personal networks, it remained a 'traditional' occupation for Cape Verdean immigrants, despite more recent competition from other immigrants (namely Eastern European and Brazilian men) (ibid., 35).<sup>53</sup> In the 2010 survey, approximately 40% of adult men (including unemployed) defined as their 'profession' a construction-related function (Table 5, chapter 9).

From 2008, the 'subprime' crash and the financial crisis that followed have hindered construction work in Portugal, reducing jobs in the sector. The Annual Report of the

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examined by Oliveira (2008), Cape Verdean migrants in Portugal overall show low entrepreneurship (due to illiteracy and difficulties in accessing financial capital, along with mainly informal strategies of insertion in the job market). On the other hand, as further discussed in chapter 9, second generations in Topia tried to combine unreported work with welfare aid, which meant keeping informal activities secret.

<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, municipal data divided unemployment from other benefits, and did not include data on the former.

<sup>53</sup> The case was different for Cape Verdean men born in Portugal, who preferred less straining jobs, albeit also unqualified. Examples during my fieldwork included: drivers and truck unloaders, public rubbish collectors, security guards, supermarket employees.

Construction Sector in Portugal for 2011, points to a decrease of 8,7% in sector workers (42100 individuals) between 2010 and 2011 alone (Gil 2012, 11). Nearly all men I interviewed had been involved in construction work and complained about the current difficulty of finding jobs. For a largely unqualified labour force (Table 4), especially over a certain age, a shortage of construction jobs meant, in practice, joblessness. A few first-generation immigrants I interviewed were currently on unemployment benefits after having been laid off from construction jobs, and had no idea of what to do once the benefits expired. One unemployed worker eventually committed suicide during my fieldwork.

SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS	INDIVIDUALS
None	193
Reading and Writing	111
Year 4	387
Year 6	350
Year 9	186
Years 10 or 11	44
<b>Year 12 (compulsory education)</b>	<b>70</b>
Professional course	3
University Degree	2
No answer	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>1359</b>

Table 4: School qualifications of residents born after 2004 (> six years old). Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

Although these statistics should be read with caution, and even if a few residents were relatively well off (Table 3 pointed to ten people earning over €1000/month), all official indicators depict a scenario of scarcity and relative hardship in Topia. As described in the introduction, several institutions serviced Topia and worked to mitigate social and material needs. But aside from social security – in the form of unemployment benefits (45 cases) and welfare allowances to 113 families (Table 3) – many residents showed difficulty or resistance to using institutional resources (chapters 8 to 10). Limited knowledge or literacy, mistrust of white outsiders, and a sense of complicity among rehoused residents made family and neighbours the preferred source of material support. Many daily needs were addressed this way, resorting to relatives and neighbours to borrow items and ask for favours (Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001, 100).

A case in point was the daily gathering of a circle of neighbours at a spot behind a block of buildings and away from public gaze, where one of the vendors, Nívea, fried pork

rinds to sell in the afternoon. She made the fire between eleven and noon and set over it an old battered pot of oil. A few neighbours (including herself) often brought over portions of bread, cheap wine, chicken or fish to grill, and the food was shared around. Some destitute residents hung about to see what they could get, often in exchange for simple errands. From 11 a.m. some of them hung about, eagerly waiting for Nívea. This habit helped coin the name 'lunch place' (*sítio dos almoços*), sometimes used informally within this network to refer to the spot (Fig. 8, introduction). Faced with material scarcity, local social networks became residents' richest available resource (Fukui 1993). As Weeks (2012a, 24, 29) concluded on first-generation Cape Verdeans around Lisbon, these ties 'help offset to a certain degree the precariousness of unemployment and life at the margins' (also CNRM 2002b, 45).<sup>54</sup>

## 2. Reciprocity

### 2.1. Favours, errands, odd jobs: repertoire of neighbour requests

Neighbour relations in Topia rested crucially on requesting and granting favours. Most visits and phone calls I witnessed had the purpose of asking or responding to favours. Individuals usually relied on relatives and close neighbours, mainly from the same former slum (continuing previous support habits). Although the population relocated in Topia originated from twenty-three slums and other dispersed shanties across the Município, three of those neighbouring slums accounted alone for 78% of Topia households in 2010. A history of physical proximity contributed to the sense of long-term familiarity in Topia. Residents' interactions happened primarily with those who lived nearby, and as some interviews revealed, changes in residence (to distant settlements) often resulted in diminished contact (cf. CNRM 2002b, 42-43).

The importance of proximity and co-residence for the maintenance of assistance and exchange ties has been found in different contexts.<sup>55</sup> Rosas (2001, 43) argued that 'The physical neighborhood, especially in poor communities, plays a fundamental role so that mutual help and exchange relationships can exist.' Despite technological advances in communications and transport, the importance of proximity for assistance practices was apparent in Topia, especially for everyday services and requests. In some cases, co-residence and geographic proximity assumed roles close to or more preponderant than

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<sup>54</sup> The link between reciprocal practices and the alleviation of poverty is well known (Befu 1977, 275), and assistance networks have been a solid institution in rural Santiago (Couto 2001). In cities, factors such as loss of trust, smaller families, or less free time have been found to make them less effective for survival among the poor (Rosas 2001, 45-53). See Grassi (2007a, 51-52) for a critique.

<sup>55</sup> Doreian and Conti 2012; Mok and Wellman 2007; Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 423; CNRM 2002b, 42-45; Rosas 2001; Young and Willmott 1957, 66-67.

kinship in defining ties of mutual help (CNRM 2002b, 43-44). But usually kinship combined with proximity, often over a long time, to make neighbour assistance networks 'more continuously effective' (Young and Willmott 1957, 91), whereby each 'exchange strengthens the bond and makes further exchanges more likely' (Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 423). Faced with daily needs and few material resources to address them, neighbour support assumed a central role in residents' lives.

Requests extended to many domains and took manifold forms, depending on social distance, moral sanctions, available resources and circumstances of the interaction (Sahlins 1972). People relied on occasional requests, like borrowing everyday items (ploughing tools, kitchen utensils, hair-styling devices and products, clothes, make-up, DVDs, travel cards, mobile phones, more rarely money),<sup>56</sup> requesting food supplies (seasoning, water, vegetables from the gardens), cigarettes, among other things.<sup>57</sup> Neighbours' social resources (their contacts and networks) were also used, for example for finding work (Weeks 2012a, 51-57). Some things could easily be asked of strangers (e.g. a cigarette), others required higher levels of trust (like a travel card or money). Neighbours also relied on each other's services: from styling one's hair, tending to children or picking them up from school, to grabbing a lift in someone's car, etc. Services like these were essential for routine tasks. But they were not stable or permanently available, always subject to neighbours' presence, willingness and other constraints. They made for an unpredictable and unstable platform of support (chapter 10), compounded by the overlap in personal networks (which increased individual delays or unavailability due to prior engagements with others) (Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 406; Bloch 1973).

Neighbour requests also entailed running errands (e.g. picking up groceries from the store, fetching someone at home, delivering messages) or performing odd jobs. In mapping out the 'repertoire' of local forms of giving (Davis 1996), I have found it helpful to make a provisional distinction between favours, errands and odd jobs. Favours such as borrowing items were granted under a broad rationale of neighbourly assistance. They were widely asked, and although people might try to avoid giving (chapter 3), there was a moral compulsion and expectation of non-refusal among relatives and close neighbours (Bloch 1973, 79-80). The following example will illustrate this sense of obligation (cf. section 2.3). Nívea (a middle-aged Cape Verdean mother of three) had a three-year old daughter at home. When the girl developed a rash on her scalp, Nívea asked Ivone, a neighbour on her street, for the special shampoo Ivone had used once for a similar

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<sup>56</sup> Many residents shared the same network and tariff (called '*moche*'), which allowed free calls and texts among subscribers. So borrowing someone's phone often carried no cost (when calling other subscribers).

<sup>57</sup> These examples refer mainly to women's requests.

condition. Ivone argued the shampoo was for adults only, but Nívea insisted she go get it anyway. Ivone signalled me to follow her home. Once there, she complained the bottle had cost her '€26!' and she knew for a fact it was unsuitable for children. But she would still give it to Nívea: 'So she doesn't say I didn't want to give it to her...' Back on the street, Nívea examined the bottle and kept it, while Ivone said nothing. Although the shampoo had been expensive and Ivone was certain it would not help the child, she did not refuse Nívea's request because that would break their bond of expected neighbourly assistance.

On the contrary, both errands and odd jobs entailed some type of payment. The difference between these types of requests was circumstantial, dependent on social distance, trust and intimacy between the neighbours involved (Bloch 1973). A woman might ask a friend to braid her hair as a favour, while having to pay someone else for the same service. Errands were often asked of neighbourhood children if any were around. Up to a certain age (puberty for boys, later for girls) they did not expect anything in return. On one occasion in Domingas' garden, she realised she needed a large knife to cut some shoots. The man on an adjacent plot did not have one, so Domingas looked around and saw a teenage girl (about thirteen) riding a bike a hundred meters away. Without knowing her name, she shouted indistinctly ('Hey! Come here!'), making the girl approach. Domingas instructed her to go knock on a specific building and floor to ask for the knife. 'Do you know Sandra, the woman there?' The girl shook her head. 'That's OK, just tell her it's for Domingas.' The girl returned with the knife. Domingas complimented her: 'You're a good girl' – adding she must 'Beware of boys: they say they'll marry you but they won't!' The girl rode away. It was common to see children running up or down the street, climbing stairs and knocking on doors to ask for something or someone, or deliver messages on behalf of others. When no children were present, these things were asked of people who either owed one a favour or were somehow lower in social hierarchy: a niece/nephew, a daughter-in-law, or somebody particularly destitute who could benefit from a small reward for the task. The latter became usual choices for errands in specific neighbour circles. At the lunch place for example, a couple of unemployed men who had little to bring to the food share were regularly recruited to fetch groceries, wine or juice for the others, gaining part in the meal in return.

When the people requesting and running the errand were not related (as in the latter example), it was usual to offer small tokens in return: a beer, some food, a cigarette or something else appropriate in context. If this was an odd favour between distant individuals (as often happened to me), the requester might explicitly offer a gift as payment. But whereas social distance might demand more immediate and rigorous settling

of debt, closeness led to continual and looser requesting and giving over time (Weeks 2012a, 25; Bloch 1973).

Although errands could involve some payment expectation, they also included elements of neighbourly assistance. Cláudia, a disabled white elder, had trouble walking and rarely left the house. She relied on a younger male black neighbour to fetch her groceries and sometimes pastries from the café. In return, she gave him some money for beer. As he came up the stairs one afternoon, I heard him complain to a neighbour he had travelled to a café outside Topia because Baker's Star had run out of Cláudia's favourite pastries. He went the extra mile though he would not get direct return for it. On the contrary, odd jobs were business transactions and demanded proper payment. But the way business was dealt with among neighbours still showed signs of trust and familiarity absent from transactions with strangers. On one occasion, I walked back with Domingas to her house. Just as we walked in a neighbour of hers was leaving and we crossed paths at the door. Domingas greeted him, they exchanged small talk and he left. When we entered the kitchen to start cooking, Domingas saw her cupboard had been repaired. She realised this had been the reason behind the man's visit, as she had asked him to fix it some time ago. She ran to the window and then out the door to try to catch up and pay him for the job. He had left. She came back complaining he should have told her. Trust and familiarity between them meant the man was not compelled to demand immediate payment, nor to let her know he was doing the repair that day.

All sorts of services could be obtained in Topia: from babysitting, house cleaning and ironing, through hair styling or tattooing, to home repairs, electric and cable connections, filling in tax returns, and many others. They had a price (usually lower than charged outside of Topia), and they could be occasional (like repairs) or regular (like cleaning, often paid by the month). Different neighbours could negotiate and pay different amounts, depending on the relationship between the parties. Ivone once made me a proposition. She was getting another tattoo from a neighbour and wanted me to join her: 'They're €20 each but he gets me €5. I can ask him to do the same for you. Shush', she looked around: 'He doesn't want me to tell anyone.'

## **2.2 Requests: nurturing networks of neighbour assistance**

Following Mauss's (1970) classical essay, 'exchange' has been the focus of wide discussion in social science.<sup>58</sup> The variety of studies on exchange has created problems in

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<sup>58</sup> E.g. Sahlins (1972), Bloch (1973), Bourdieu (1979, 95-132), Appadurai (1986), Strathern (1992), Davis (1992), and more recently Graeber (2001).

defining the term, namely in reconciling altruism, self-interest and coercion without falling into dichotomies of reciprocity/gift versus market transactions (Davis 1992, 23-27; Bloch and Parry 1989, 23-30; Befu 1977, 257-259). I will not attempt here to lay out Topia's rules of 'exchange', as taken-for-granted 'vice-versa movements' of gifts and counter-gifts (Sahlins 1972, 193). Instead, I will highlight the (*one-sided*) situated practices of requests and favours I observed, and relate them to their visible social sanctions and effects. I will place emphasis on the contextual acts of 'requesting' and answering requests, refusing a presumption that gifts were usually returned, or motivated by expectations of said return. I adopt here Bloch's point that individuals' motivations are to be distinguished from the perceived consequences of their actions (Bloch 1973, 75-76). The fact that giving can yield later profit or return should not mean viewing that profit as the giver's underlying motive. Likewise, the fact that lasting social relationships usually involve requests in both directions over time does not mean that each act of giving or requesting should be best interpreted as part of a 'pair' of gift and counter-gift, assumed as the appropriate unit of analysis. Sahlins (1972) hinted at this in his typology of forms of reciprocity – even while arguing the opposite. Sahlins described reciprocity as a 'continuum of forms' and delimited its poles: on the one extreme, acts of “sharing”, “hospitality”, “free gift”, “help”, and “generosity” (so-called 'generalised reciprocity'); on the other, acts of 'haggling', 'barter', 'gambling' or 'theft' ('negative reciprocity') (ibid., 188-195). Calling any of these acts an 'exchange' would be odd and contradictory, since they are by definition one-sided. But even after Sahlins defined the mid-point between them as 'balanced exchange', the essence of 'direct exchange' (ibid., 194-195), he admitted that close, morally sanctioned kinds of social ties usually foster asymmetrical rather than 'balanced' returns: imbalance makes for long-lasting bonds; while symmetry, finishing the transaction, annihilates them (ibid., 208, 223).

It could be tempting to look at neighbour requests in Topia (for favours, errands and odd jobs) as different kinds of reciprocal exchange as defined by Sahlins (respectively 'generalised', 'negative' and 'balanced' types). But instead of positing the natural unity of separate acts of assistance between two people over time, I found it more productive to look at single situated acts of request and their responses – giving or refusing – along with the discourses that sustained them and local social consequences. The following sections will address the complex of practices, discourses and interactions centred around *granting* requests, highlighting how they were nurtured by, and in turn strengthened codes and networks of neighbour generosity, relatedness and mutual assistance, helping to demarcate the neighbourhood as a space of social familiarity and mutual reliance. The next chapter, in

contrast, will examine local strategies and narratives linked with *refusing* neighbours' requests, and how they fostered mutual suspicion and the interruption of neighbourly ties, contributing to images of Topia as a socially dangerous and lonely space. This approach will illuminate the co-existence and daily reproduction of two apparently contradictory sets of values and behaviours in the neighbourhood (of solidarity and individualism).

As illustrated by Ivone's example with the shampoo bottle, neighbours' requests were usually granted under a broad concern of keeping interpersonal bonds of trust and support in the long term. This did not imply a demand for direct reciprocation, as much as a demand that one's requests not be denied. Expectedly, the strength of this demand reflected in each case the relationship and social distance between the parties involved (Sahlins 1972, 191, 202). The obligation to grant favours was directly tied to morality (Bloch 1973), shared ideas of social roles and ties, namely of kinship and co-residence (section 3.1). This explains that people who asked favours of distant others, with whom no meaningful relationship existed, could express the need to reciprocate in more direct ways.

Expectations about errands also depended on social distance and ties. Errands could be rewarded with small returns (food, wine, change) or a reward even demanded for it, and in that sense considered fair payment for the errand. Other times return was not expected and did not take place, especially to individuals of lower social status (children, siblings' children, children-in-law). In either case, errands were hardly asked of distant others, and more often relied on a continuing relationship, usually one which defined individuals' mutual status as unequal. Requests for odd jobs, on the other hand, came with a negotiated price and the demand for proper payment. Nevertheless, the process of price negotiation (as with Ivone's tattoos), the flexibility of conditions and payment (like with Domingas' cupboards), and the possibility of bonuses (as with Cláudia's pastries) were defined specifically for each case, according to the type of relationship and circumstances of the interaction.

Some favours were paid for; some errands had no return; odd jobs demanded different prices of different people, and might allow delayed payment – each type of answered request combined elements of all three forms of exchange defined by Sahlins (1972). Granted requests included aspects of generosity (contra Weeks 2012b, 5), moral obligation and personal consideration, which tailored the interaction to the individuals involved and which fed from and into their long-term tie as neighbours or kin. Each act was a social practice, and should be seen as 'embedded' in the wider moral and symbolic order, taking account of 'power, symbol, convention, etiquette, ritual, role and status' (Davis 1992, 7-8). The relationship 'exert[ed] governance' over each material interaction,

constraining it in light of the social, moral and residential distance between individuals, and other circumstances (Sahlins 1972, 186, 196-223). Generosity, convention and social investment made for flexible, contextual and highly personal patterns of giving in Topia, mixing different motivations and variables beyond simply 'economic' or 'moral' ones (Weeks 2012a, 37; Bloch and Parry 1989, 9).

More abstractly, the configuration of these interactions can be best described as 'informal networks' or 'blurred borders', made up of 'close relatives, neighbors, and friends, that through the mutual exchange of goods and services, interweave and nurture their links' (Rosas 2001, 42). The idea of social 'networks' became popular in anthropology after the work of John Barnes in the 1950s, as a reaction to the perceived limitations of structural-functional approaches (Mitchell 1974, 280-181). 'Network' evolved from a simple 'metaphor' of how social relations were seen to 'ramify' through a society, to an analytical statement about the influence of that ramification (its shape or structure) on actors' behaviours (ibid., 280). Network-related concepts and variables multiplied (ibid., 288-295), leading to a confusion between the issues and the methods to study them (Sanjek 1974, 588-593). Network-based approaches never achieved full status as 'network theory', since: no clear set of propositions guided the analysis (Mitchell 1974, 281-284); the level of detail required in the data was difficult to achieve (ibid., 295); and criteria for delimiting networks were usually ambiguous (Sanjek 1974, 594). Instead, I use the term 'network' in its original 'metaphorical' sense, to convey simply that in Topia each resident interacted 'simultaneously with a large number of people', who were in turn interconnected (often through kinship) in such a way that 'each of the relatives in a person's family of origin is a link with yet another family, and so on in a widening network' (Young and Willmott 1957, 91; Befu 1977, 276). I employ 'networks' therefore not as an 'approach' or method, but an 'orienting statement' (Mitchell 1974, 282): that enduring ties of assistance were maintained between widely interconnected neighbours (Weeks 2012a, 23).

Over time, granting neighbours' requests cultivated local networks of assistance. Under this reciprocal logic, what was 'exchanged', as it were, was not a borrowed hair dryer for the use of a mobile phone, a message delivered for a beer, or a home repair for some money, but essentially the mutual commitment to attend to the other's requests: the compulsion to grant favours, to say yes when asked (even if unwillingly, as Ivone did to Nívea). In the face of material hardship, this 'reciprocity' of granted requests worked as a 'central linking element' in Topia (Weeks 2012a, 42, 44). It sustained long-term ties grounded on everyday hardship and, as argued next, sanctioned by moral expectations of neighbourly generosity.

### 2.3 'Go take some onions': expectations of generosity

Although some services had a price, there was a strong emphasis, especially among Cape Verdeans, on sharing and showing generosity. Under certain circumstances, sharing with neighbours was a moral compulsion, part of local etiquette. Circumstances included, as examined above, granting direct requests: saying yes to a relative or neighbour. But giving did not require prior requesting, namely in two situations: when sharing food, and when sharing abundant resources.

Food had a special role in giving. Generosity was expected in distributing it to neighbours, and its failures were strongly condemned (Sahlins 1972, 215-7). When eating in front of others, especially inside one's own house, it was usual to offer food very insistently. I found myself many times in the situation of being full and still having trouble refusing. Informants explained that people should never be asked, but always directly invited to share the food: 'You never say "would you like", "would you like" is for dogs [*queres' é para o cão*], it's rude!' Amália, a white middle-aged woman married to a Cape Verdean man, continued: 'In the Cape Verdean race [cf. chapter 5] you don't ask people if they want it, you just set the plate in front of them.' When entering a Cape Verdean household in Topia as a guest, a usual part of being greeted by women was being asked 'Have you eaten?' or merely instructed to 'Go eat', pointed towards the kitchen or table. Parties and celebrations were quintessential occasions for offering food and drinks, and it was common to be handed a full plate on arrival (chapter 7). On the contrary, in unfamiliar contexts (e.g. when interviewing people I was unacquainted with), hosts often offered nothing, as no prior relationship (and therefore no moral obligation) was involved. To the other extreme, among very familiar individuals food and drinks could simply be taken without being offered.

Generosity was also due when sharing with neighbours what one had in surplus (Sahlins 1972, 211). This was the case with garden vegetables after harvesting. Produce was offered to the people in one's close network of assistance, or those who had helped to grow or prepare the vegetables (often both coincided). At certain times in the year, neighbours gathered to handle full bags of harvested goods. They sat together around a table, cloth or wheel cart and spent hours removing peas or beans from their pods. When finished, garden owners distributed portions to their helpers. They also offered them to visiting neighbours – 'Go take some onions' – or carried a bag over to their house. This kind of generosity was received matter-of-factly, without expansive gratitude gestures

(often not even a 'thank you'). As seen above, it was embedded in lasting relationships of similar acts.

The same happened with buying people drinks or giving them cigarettes. When getting paid or coming across some money (or a cigarette pack), neighbours were expected to share it.<sup>59</sup> Around the end of the month (when they got paid), a group of mothers from Topia often met for breakfast at a café, each taking turns paying for the table. Things happened spontaneously: when the bill came someone reached for a €20 note. Nobody insisted on paying nor expressed a thank-you. They simply left and expected someone else to grab the bill the next day. One morning I talked about finances with one of these women, mother of two, who struggled to pay her bills and always arrived mid-month with her bank account empty. I had helped her with a plan to manage her money and make it last through the month. That day she confessed she had failed to keep the plan: she had taken €20 from the bank to pay for breakfast. 'It was my turn', she explained. I asked how she knew that: 'All the others have already paid.' This was both a generous gesture, a moral obligation, and fulfilling her part in the circle of sharing at the café (chapter 10). Another example illustrated the compulsion of sharing and the weight of neighbours' expectations. Crow café had a couple of slot machines that worked with 50-cent coins and delivered prizes up to €100. A young man once won €5. Wishing to tease him, Ivone informed the group of men standing outside the café that he had won €100. The man was visibly nervous and upset with her: 'Now they think I won all that money!' Ivone spent a while apologising and reassuring him she had clarified the truth. Her choice of a joke and his reaction were telling of the implicit expectation among the men that, having come into all that money, he should somehow share it (which he could not afford). There were similar expectations around neighbours' birthdays, when they were called on to be generous. If they did not organise a party to invite others, they should at least buy neighbours a drink. This presumption was manifest: 'Your birthday's tomorrow? You must buy me a beer!' – was a common reminder around the special day.

Like expectations to answer requests, demands to share food or abundance with others were stronger within the family and same former slum, where people shared 'the associations of a lifetime in common' (Young and Willmott 1957, 82). But the needs and wants of daily life gradually widened those ties to other circles of neighbours (from different shanty towns), their families and networks. These opened new possibilities for requests, even if more distant and conditional ones, grounded on more direct returns rather than moral etiquette (Bloch 1973, 79-81).

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<sup>59</sup> The next chapter will discuss what happened when these expectations were deemed excessive.

## 2.4 'We must be for each other': support in illness and death

Expectations of solidarity were strongly manifested in situations of illness and death, especially for Cape Verdeans. People visited close neighbours (and their family members) if they were hospitalised, and mobilised to offer assistance in the form of items, services or money when needed. When José, a mute white elder felt dizzy and nauseous one morning, and with his partner (in a different building) still asleep, he managed to come out onto the street and simply stood waiting by the door for help, unable to walk by himself. Neighbours from adjoining buildings took notice and called an ambulance, before running to wake his partner up, who was eager to escort him in the ambulance. This was against ambulance rules (only patients and paramedics were allowed in), and his partner had no money for transport to the hospital. Without prompting, Adelaide, a female white elder from José's building, gave his partner money for the bus. She faced me with a sad smile and a shrug: 'We must be for each other...' (*Temos de ser uns para os outros...*)

When somebody died, especially in Cape Verdean families, a wide network of relatives, friends and neighbours mobilised to pay their respects to the family. Keeping to Cape Verdean death rites (chapter 4), the family left the door to their house open for a week (Mendes 2003, 122-124; Esteves and Caldeira 2001, 108). During that time, people came to express grief and pray for the deceased's soul. The first time I learned somebody had died in Topia, Eva described the precepts to follow: the family would keep the door open and 'the people who know them, people from the neighbourhood' (*as pessoas do bairro*) should go by every day, whenever they had time, to be with the family. Although her reference to 'people from the neighbourhood' applied better to the former slums, less so to Topia as a whole (where many people were acquainted for a shorter time), the obligation existed among any close neighbours. A few days after the demise, I met Luzia (a white unemployed middle-aged woman) at Baker's Star and she brought up the topic. She complained she was exhausted from spending the night with the grieving family at their house. I asked if she was related to them. 'No, but I'm from the neighbourhood [Topia], *it's the same thing*: I have to be there.'

Solidarity to the bereaved family went beyond sharing their grief. It extended to assisting them with practical chores (chapter 4). An important one was preparing the food to serve to visitors during that time (Weeks 2012a, 17). A woman described it thus in an interview: 'In a neighbourhood it's good because for Cape Verdeans, when someone dies, for seven days they [the family] will have support [*acompanhamento*] from female

neighbours. You make your dinner quickly because you have to go to [their] house.' Close neighbours were expected to mobilise to help the family. They cooked traditional Cape Verdean dishes, lent pots and bowls, helped serve the food and wash up, so the family could feed their visitors for the seven days. Fabi, a twenty-seven-year-old Cape Verdean mother of two, criticised one family for 'breaking' cultural precepts by preparing the food for visitors: '[A family member] was in the kitchen, she's not supposed to be there. It should be the neighbours cooking for them. If there's no food, then they shouldn't serve it.'

The funeral itself was another key moment to strengthen ties. The largest contingent of visitors arrived on the day of the funeral, from the Município, other cities or even abroad. After the funeral people came back to the family house, where newcomers paid their respects to family members. The family then served them a hearty Cape Verdean meal. The support of female neighbours was paramount on that day. The amount of food and drinks served escalated, as did the amount of help required to prepare and serve it.<sup>60</sup> Solidarity and assistance ties were thereby reaffirmed: both with the neighbours who shared the burden of feeding visitors, and with the visitors who shared the family's grief. Acquaintances living far away, who could not make it to the funeral or the seven days of grief, were expected to visit during the first month after the passing, especially on the one-month requiem service. For that reason, the family should stay home on weekends during that month in order to receive guests. On the day of the requiem, visitors were again offered a traditional meal, once again mobilising the family's support networks. In Cape Verdean culture, death and the obligations around it become important catalysts of neighbour and family sociality. In the words of one informant: 'In this [death], we are *very very tight*' (*unidos*).

Neighbours also helped with other practical tasks. When another woman died in Topia, I came by the family house on the day of the vigil (*velório*).<sup>61</sup> I found the door open even though no family members were in. Three female neighbours were in the kitchen and some visitors sat in the living room. Diana, a twenty-six-year-old Cape Verdean mother of three (and one of my key informants) explained that visitors would likely show up, so the house must remain open. To allow it, neighbours stayed behind with the children (who were spared these rituals) so the immediate family could attend the vigil.

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<sup>60</sup> After the only funeral I attended during fieldwork, the tables of food were set up outside the building because they were too long to fit in the house. The queue of people waiting to pay the family condolences stretched out from their house and down two flights of stairs, out onto the street.

<sup>61</sup> When the coffin is displayed at a church, chapel or funeral home, usually on the eve of the funeral. In Catholicism, appropriate religious service also takes place. It is an occasion for family and friends to mourn the deceased and pay respects to the family.

### 3. Relatedness and exclusivity

#### 3.1 'Neighbours' and social coordinates: idioms of relatedness

The distinctive feel of social proximity, especially among prior slum neighbours, was nurtured and expressed in other ways. Aside from sharing and helping, it was manifest in the ways people addressed and located one another in the neighbourhood. Closeness was often expressed in idioms of 'relatedness', particularly among Cape Verdeans (Carsten 1995).<sup>62</sup> Many people in Topia were related by blood or affinity. The age profile of Topia's population (Fig. 4, introduction) and 1999 demographics of four Cape Verdean slums in the Lisbon area pointed to many children per woman (ULHT and GEOIDEIA 2000).<sup>63</sup> This generated large families, with multiple 'brothers', 'sisters' and their partners ('brothers/sisters-in-law'), 'uncles', 'aunts', 'nieces' and 'nephews', 'cousins' and 'grandchildren', often residing in the same settlement. Foster parents and grandparents (*mai/avó di kriason*: literally 'of upbringing') were also referred to by kinship terms ('mother'/'grandmother').<sup>64</sup> All these ties were contextually acknowledged, confirming and reinforcing the bond between 'related' neighbours.

Another important set of ties was formed between godparents, godchildren, and the godchild's parents – referred to as *comadres* (literally co-mothers) and *compadres* (co-fathers).<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the children of two *comadres* or *compadres* were often termed 'cousins' and treated like blood relatives (see Weeks 2012a, 16). On one occasion Denise, a Cape Verdean woman in her mid-twenties, mother of two (and Diana's close neighbour), came to ask a man on the street for a car lift and sat on his lap, her arm familiarly around his neck. He played with the tip of her skirt, joking it was too short for her to leave the house. Diana clarified the man's father was the young woman's godfather. Another man presently came along, drunk, and tried playing with Denise's skirt in the same way. She quickly jumped to her feet, yelling and pushing the man away: 'What kind of familiarity [*konfiansa*] is that? He's my cousin! And what are you!?' (*Y abo é kusé!?*).

Affinity ties could extend to spouses' blood relatives ('mother/father-in-law'), and stretch out to include former partners with whom one had children (*mai/pai di fidju*: literally 'mother/father of [my] child'), along with their families. Sexual partnerships among Cape Verdeans were often transient, with men having children with more than one

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<sup>62</sup> I use 'relatedness' to refer to the 'indigenous ways of acting out and conceptualizing relations between people, as distinct from notions derived from anthropological theory' (Carsten 1995 224).

<sup>63</sup> Cape Verdean women in Topia expressed a preference for having at least two, usually more children, often agreeing that women should start getting pregnant before twenty years old.

<sup>64</sup> Fostering is a common cultural practice among Cape Verdeans in times of need, having a person or couple closely trusted by the parents bring up their child (Weeks 2012a, 47-48).

<sup>65</sup> *Compadrazgo* will be explored in chapter 4, in the context of religious rites.

woman simultaneously (the focus of jealousy and dramatic confrontations), while women carried children by several fathers over time.<sup>66</sup> These practices, recognised by subjects themselves in conversation, were closely linked to gender and relationship roles rooted in Cape Verdean culture and history (and prominent in rural Santiago).<sup>67</sup> By increasing the number of partners and children in common, these patterns of romantic interaction widened local networks of ties based on affinity and co-parenthood. As I spent the afternoon with Domingas in her garden, she spotted a woman with a baby on the street and stepped out to go look at it. Babies were a favourite focus of attention and joy in Topia (Bourgois 2003, 261-263). Parents paraded them proudly on the street, and women and children went out of their way to look at them, hold them and compliment them (Anderson 1990, 124-125). On that occasion, Domingas identified the baby to me as her 'son's children's mother's [*mai di fidju*] child' from a different father.

The more distant the ties, the less they were acknowledged or invested with meaning. But more diffuse ties could be circumstantially pinpointed to identify people in conversation with others. This happened when residents ran into acquaintances outside of Topia; when they brought someone over to visit the neighbourhood; or when looking at pictures on Facebook. Faced with the question 'Who's s/he?' (*Ê é kenha?*), answers usually came in the form: 'He's [so-and-so]'s sister's daughter's partner', or some similar phrase. I often got confused following the trail of terms. Ties of affinity and co-parenthood featured prominently, along with the terms 'brother/sister' and 'niece/nephew' – consistent with women having many children.

However, not all residents were related by either blood, marital or ritual kin. Another strategy for identifying neighbours included spatial mapping of their house, either in Topia or the old shanty towns. These were not exclusive but rather complementary strategies. One evening I went out to dinner with a group of women from Topia and other Cape Verdean settlements in the Município, most of them old friends from a particular slum. As we stood outside the restaurant, a car sped by and a man yelled an insult at them through the window. One of the women cried out in disbelief: 'He just called us whores!' The group put their heads together to place the offender, who was a neighbour in the old

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<sup>66</sup> These behaviours have been referred to, in the Cape Verdean context, as men's tendency to 'informal polygamy' and female patterns of 'serial monogamy' (Keil 1999, 27; Government of Cape Verde 1999).

<sup>67</sup> Namely codes of masculinity encouraging many female conquests and children, sometimes authorising 'de facto polygamy' (Grassi 2007b, 136; Raposo 2007, 131-132); femininity ideals linked to motherhood and childcare, consistent with traditionally matrifocal households (Wall 2008, 223-224; Grassi 2007b, 135); wide tolerance to male promiscuity and child neglect in Santiago, contrasting with stronger social control over women's sexuality; and arguably a colonial legacy of sexual exploitation of female slaves by white masters (David 2005, 11-14). These issues are only mentioned in passing, as they are beyond the scope of the argument. For more information, see Wall (2008), Bastos and Bastos (2008), INE-CV (2008), Couto (2001, 105-110), Keil (1999), Government of Cape Verde (1999).

shanties. They began tracing him through kinship and affinity terms: 'He was Silvino's sister's boyfriend, remember him?' 'Wasn't he Marco's brother-in-law's cousin?' As kin connections were unclear for some, one woman ventured: 'He used to live in that yellow house, in front of [X], next to [Y]' (in the old slum). Finally, physical traits completed the social mapping of the individual 'That small boy with the braids like so?' They all managed to place him.

This system of social coordinates – kinship, residential location, sometimes individual traits – was used on many occasions. The use of '*di*' ('of') was a common way of establishing these ties (Candea 2010, 132), either between people ('*Eva di Caio*', meaning Eva, daughter of Caio) or between a person and a place ('*Zefa di* [slum area]', meaning the Zefa who lived in that part of the slum) (Mitchell 1998, 86). In both cases, '*di*' translated ideas of possession and belonging. Often the first coordinate would suffice, and only rarely were physical traits needed. One afternoon in Topia, a couple of Gypsy vendors parked their van on the main road to sell children's shoes. Women gathered to look at the goods, and began chatting with the vendors. As part of their marketing efforts, the couple underscored they were not strangers: 'We've come here before.' Some women remembered them. They also brought up where they used to live. One woman claimed to know the place, close to the old shanties, and the chat evolved to identify common neighbours and acquaintances – the woman had a brother who lived on a different floor in their building.

For acquaintances not related by kinship or neighbourhood membership, other types of connections were underscored, frequently that of 'colleague' (*colega*): a co-worker or class mate. Despite my best efforts to be recognised as living in Topia (i.e. on residential coordinates), I was usually introduced as the 'colleague' of a resident who worked at NWIV – signalling people's denial of my membership to the neighbourhood 'proper' (cf. introduction).

Even when neighbours were not related in other ways, they could forge the connection by employing relatedness terms. According to age and gender, people circumstantially referred to one another as 'uncle/aunt' (for older people, an expression of respect), 'niece/nephew' (for younger generations), or 'cousin' (for age peers), when wishing to stress special proximity for some reason. Santos, who occasionally asked me for money, was eager to convince me he could help my research by introducing me to his 'uncle', whom I could interview, and his 'aunt', who could teach me all about vegetable gardens. But his 'aunt' (simply an elder from the shanties) sent him away rudely, very suspicious of who I was or why I wanted to grow vegetables. And when I mentioned Santos' 'uncle' to a neighbour, she dismissed it as simply 'a way to show respect' to elders.

The use of 'nephew' and 'niece' in this context was less common, but young people (especially males) sometimes called one another 'cousin', often jokily and to emphasise closeness. On one such occasion, a visibly drunk man whose mother had just died started reminiscing about the old slum (chapter 3). He described the 'good times' to no one in particular, repeatedly asking Diana, sitting across from him, to corroborate his stories. They had been neighbours in the shanties. She nodded along, uncomfortable. He turned to reminisce about Diana herself, recalling he had carried her as a baby, claiming she was 'good people' (*boa gente*), and through this addressing her as 'cousin', while she smiled awkwardly and looked apologetically at me.

Another term used to translate relatedness and proximity was, most significantly, 'neighbour' (*vizinho/a*), in situations when kinship terms seemed inadequate. It was not used on a regular basis, but in circumstances where a sense of closeness needed to be established. I was sitting with Ivone on her street, chatting and idling about, when a woman from her building walked past us carrying three small puppies. Ivone pleaded in a begging voice: 'Neighbour, won't you give me one?' The woman walked on, complaining that Ivone never greeted her when they crossed paths. This suggested the importance placed on sharing the same living space. The significance of being a 'neighbour', residing together in the same settlement, was confirmed by its use as a relatedness term.

All these ties, identified and used to locate each other in the social map, revealed and reinforced neighbours' proximity and familiarity. Like in Candea's (2010) account of greetings in Corsica, people in Topia appreciated 'mapping, making, and remaking connections' of relatedness, to find (or posit) their common 'belonging' (ibid., 127-128). Expressed connections, often fictive or circumstantial, emphasised closeness precisely by highlighting what individuals held in common: belonging to the same family or settlement, being of (*di*) the same school or workplace. They were often pinpointed with a purpose in mind, namely making a request – since as argued above the moral compulsion to say yes was centrally defined by social proximity.

In this interconnected web, people often had 'a number of links, of ways of orienting themselves, to the same person: he was at school, he is a relative by marriage, he lives in [the] neighbourhood' (Young and Willmott 1957, 92). Each connection served as a 'bridge', leaving the individual 'surrounded not only by his own relatives and their acquaintances, but also by his own acquaintances and their relatives' (ibid., 81-82). In many cases, these connections had historical depth, traced back through a common past of co-residence in the shanties. Memory of the former shanty neighbourhoods 'linked persons to places' (particular spots, houses, or the slum itself) and helped to establish 'personal

credentials for inclusion' in the local system of coordinates (Mitchell 1998, 86). Besides assistance ties, these social mappings and terms, in stressing mutual proximity and commonality, worked as another 'central linking element' in Topia, building a complex web where 'ties of friendship and kinship were muddled' (Raposo 2007, 156, my translation). Local idioms of relatedness manifested and reinforced residents' production of the neighbourhood as a social space of common history and belonging.

### **3.2 Interaction rituals: greetings as confirmation of belonging**

Neighbour relatedness was also asserted through other means. An intrinsic element of being a neighbour and participating in neighbourhood life was performing mutual greetings. People on the street greeted others standing-by when passing them. Local 'etiquette' determined that the person arriving (regardless of age or gender) should greet first, and the people so greeted to reply (Goffman 1956, 477). This was a lesson I learned early on in fieldwork. Just over one month into my stay, I walked up the road to talk to someone at the local cultural association. It was around 9:30 a.m., and on the corner by Club café, a group of five Cape Verdean men stood against the wall and watched me walk by. The association door was locked, so I turned back to ask the men if they knew whether it was closed for the day. They looked up and down at me in silence. One of them went to check the door as I had just done and told me it was closed (not a big help). The man next to him addressed me: 'He shouldn't have talked to you, 'cause you didn't say good morning. You went by and said nothing.' I was mortified, and apologised a few stuttered 'good mornings'. But the man kept his mind: 'If it were me, I wouldn't have talked to you.' Even if I came to reinterpret this episode as the man's way of teasing me,<sup>68</sup> it was significant that he invoked a breach of local greeting etiquette as a serious enough offence to justify not talking to me. The obligation to greet was a fundamental rule of neighbourhood life.

The absence of reply to a greeting also generated complaints. People usually gathered at Baker's Star café in the mornings. Whenever a neighbour arrived, s/he greeted others at the tables outside. Sometimes they did not notice the incomer, which could cause protest: 'Hey, I said good morning and nobody replied! When somebody greets you, you greet them back!' Some neighbours could then make amends: 'Oh sorry, good morning. We didn't see you there, I'm sorry.' While others insisted they had fulfilled their role: 'That's not true, I said good morning! Maybe you didn't hear me, I said it.' On one occasion, I sat at the lunch place with six others. They chatted as Nívea tended to the meat on the fire.

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<sup>68</sup> As this particular man, Zeca, turned out to repeatedly harass me during my stay.

Discussion was spirited about someone's earnings, and they failed to see an old Cape Verdean woman approach from one of the side streets. She said 'Good morning' as she saw them, and stood waiting for the reply. They did not notice her and went on chatting. She repeated the greeting twice more in louder voice, getting increasingly annoyed, until she protested angrily: 'Good morning! I've said good morning three times! When somebody says "good morning" it is polite to say "good morning" back! Why won't you greet me back?' She was upset. People apologised repeatedly and appeared ashamed. They lowered their eyes to the floor, one of them addressed her as 'aunt' (both signs of respect). When she looked pleased with their apology, she finally carried on walking.

These situations illustrated a mutual demand: to be greeted and have the greeting returned. After my early experience with the men by the association, I began greeting most residents I passed on the street. To my surprise, I was hardly ever greeted back. On the contrary, hostile and suspicious looks followed me as sharply as before. This was magnified on occasions when I stood in a group of residents and somebody else arrived to greet them individually. In these instances I was invariably ignored, even when all others were personally acknowledged. Like the generalised use of relatedness terms (and the refusal to introduce me as a 'neighbour' even though I lived in the estate), these practices were another means of confirming residents' mutual belonging to the social collective of the neighbourhood. This explained people's agitation and protest at the absence of others' greetings: silence and disregard denied them recognition of their 'neighbour' status.

Etiquette determined that people crossing one another on the street should greet, but greetings assumed different forms depending on who was involved. In these cases, age defined an asymmetrical obligation. Among Cape Verdeans, it was customary to ask for elders' blessings (both male and female elders, in their seventies or eighties and usually great-grandparents). Blessings were requested by reaching out one's hand towards the elder, palm facing upwards, while asking 'Will you give me blessing?' (*Nho/Nha dam-m benson?*) The elder should then hold that hand and lift it to touch the top of the petitioner's forehead while enunciating the blessing ('May God bless you and bring you happiness' or similar). Although this was the proper way to do it, people were often in a hurry or across the road when they spotted elders, and so performed the request from the distance, often without stopping or slowing down: the petitioner reached out a hand towards the elder and touched his own forehead in a single motion while muttering a blessing request; the elder replied raising his own hand and mumbling a blessing from across the street. The content or benefit of the blessing itself seemed secondary. Even if people could not hear it or touch the elder, they still followed the rule. It was a token of 'deference' due to Cape Verdean

elders (Goffman 1956). Like in other greetings, acknowledging elders' presence and showing due respect (more than obtaining the blessing) seemed the main purpose of the interaction.

Greetings took different forms depending on context. On the street, the most frequent greeting was 'good morning/afternoon/evening' according to time of day. This was an easy way to greet a group. But many greetings were addressed to individuals. Seeing a close neighbour across the street or at a window, passers-by might shout his/her name in a characteristic (somewhat musical) manner. Small talk could follow (asking how one was), but it constituted a greeting in itself. It could be returned with a simple wave or gesture of recognition. It was also a preferred way to greet young children. Calling out someone's name, even without communicating anything else, was again a means to acknowledge their presence.

Individual greetings varied according to groups. Young people, especially men outside Crow café or in the 'sun', used a conventional handshake: striking palms, then knuckles, and touching the chest with the fist.<sup>69</sup> Arriving to a group of peers, an incomer would stop to shake hands with each of the others individually. This also happened with men visiting from other settlements (although originating from the same slum). Some women and a few older residents (like the mother of one of the men) also used this handshake in the group. It was not employed with other neighbours, expressing exclusive belonging to a circumscribed circle. When I was among young people from that group, I was greeted (if at all) with a common handshake, as opposed to all the others. It again signalled that I was not considered to belong.<sup>70</sup> Emulating these habits, a group of male teenagers (thirteen to fifteen) from the same street made up their own 'exclusive' handshake (quite elaborate), which changed over time. Conversely, older adult men, namely immigrants from Cape Verde, used a simple handshake among peers. They addressed each neighbour in a group individually, again often ignoring strangers. Regardless of the form of the greeting, in all cases it was used selectively to acknowledge and include certain people (neighbours) as opposed to outsiders. In the context of Malta, Mitchell (1998, 87) described how expressions of common belonging among former neighbours, namely through metaphors of 'family' and 'household', had the same effect of demarcating 'insiders' from 'outsiders'.

When arriving at a neighbour's house, it was polite to greet people individually. Two kisses on the cheek for women, a handshake for men, a blessing asked of elders.

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<sup>69</sup> Fabi dismissed it as a temporary trend (*São modas!*), suggesting young people changed it over time.

<sup>70</sup> Towards the end of my fieldwork, it pleased me greatly to be greeted this way once by one of the men arriving to the group. It signalled I was no longer considered by him as an outsider.

These practices were more manifest among first generations, and there was special pressure to greet one's elders, namely placed on children to greet adults. Parents and grandparents admonished children when arriving at someone's house: 'Have you greeted?' (*Dja bu kumprimenta?*) But aside from death occasions, individual greetings rarely happened unless elders were present and a general 'Good morning people' (*Bon dia gentis*) usually sufficed. In fact, the more intimate and regular the interaction, the more neighbours dispensed with these formalities (Goffman 1956, 494). Requirements to greet only applied to people one had not seen that day: people need only be greeted once. This meant that close residents who saw each other frequently (such as next door neighbours did) were not compelled to continuously acknowledge each other. Diana's brothers (who lived in separate flats in Topia) often arrived without a word, except when guests were present; and Diana's close friends from the same street might greet her parents and husband, but not her. The closeness of their ties spared confirmation of their belonging to the intimate group.

On the contrary, when close neighbours had not seen each other for a while, they often halted for a few moments on the street to chat. On these occasions greetings could be prolonged. And when they had no particular business to talk about, greetings might make up the entire exchange, especially among Cape Verdeans. The content of these greetings could be quite empty and repetitive: asking about the person and each close family member individually (partner, children, parents). I once met Domingas after not seeing her for two weeks. As we greeted each other, she engaged in this sort of dialogue with me. However, because she knew I had no children and no large family, the list of relatives she could enquire about was somewhat restricted. So after asking about my 'husband' two times, she seemed unsure of how to proceed, and went on to ask about my mother (whom she had never met), then asking about my 'husband' a third time (and giving me enough turns in the conversation to enquire about her whole family). I witnessed other interactions where these questions were repeated, as if people did not wish to halt the conversation too soon, though they had little more to say. Stress was placed on the interaction itself, beyond actually learning or conveying information (Goffman 1956). This confirmed the importance of greeting and showing concern for neighbours and their family, more than exchanging news about them (although this might be part of it). The fact that calling out a neighbour's name constituted a greeting in itself already testified to this.

In contrast, goodbyes were neglected. People commonly left a group without saying anything at all, at most uttering a quick 'See you later' (*Ti logo*). And they often started walking away from an interaction before completing the last sentence, which was finished with their backs already turned, in leaving. This was disconcerting. In stark contrast with

the prominence of greetings, goodbyes seemed quite irrelevant (to the point of being absent). I came to see greetings in Topia as 'interpersonal rituals' of interaction (Goffman 1956, 478). Through them, neighbours constantly affirmed and confirmed their mutual acknowledgement, acceptance and familiarity with one another. In his analysis of 'deference and demeanour' acts, Goffman analysed the function of these rituals in ensuring due 'deference' is paid to others. In his words deferential gestures, including greetings, are 'ways in which an actor celebrates and confirms his relation to a recipient' (ibid., 477, 485). In Topia, these were means to establish proximity. More importantly, the fact that strangers were conspicuously excluded from greetings suggested they were also means to signal neighbours' exclusive and common 'belongingness' to a collective (Goffman 1956, 479). Drawing on Durkheim, Goffman argued that 'ceremonial rules' of this kind 'affirm the moral order and the society' (ibid., 496). They do this by confirming, through deference, the 'sacred' quality of others, ultimately confirming the sacredness of the group (ibid., 473, 497). This explained why neighbours became so upset to be disregarded. Greetings were informal ways to assert others' membership of a significant community – the neighbourhood, or an exclusive circle within it. Although neighbours were differently related (depending on former slum membership, kinship, age, street, and so forth) they belonged together to a meaningful collectivity. Sharing daily struggles, participating in request networks, cultivating proximity and mapping social ties easily became a part of living together. And although residing in the same estate did not necessarily translate into close-knit relations, repeated confirmation of mutual ties (through relatedness idioms) and acknowledgement of each other (in greeting rituals) expressed neighbours' recognition of their closeness and common belonging to the neighbourhood.

### **3.3 Intimacy and familiarity: the small things**

This sense of intimate familiarity was apparent in other small indicators. For example, in the fact that several residents, especially elder or illiterate, did not know their own street name, despite having lived there for years. I witnessed this on different occasions (trying to call an ambulance, to set up a welfare appointment, or fill out a form at a doctor's office). People were used to referring to Topia streets by informal local references, such as the name of a café or another significant mark, which other neighbours were also familiar with. And so they did not usually employ (or have use for) the official street names. Of course this created difficulties dealing with outside institutions, corroborating the point that individuals were able and willing to manage their daily

routines mostly with resort to local neighbour networks.

Another sign of familiarity was visible in the rarer occasions when people arrived at neighbours' houses informally dressed in their pyjamas, robe, slippers, sometimes hair nets (cf. Gorringe 2006, 53). These visits were usually short and for a purpose (e.g. borrowing something), often at night, and did not involve walking long distances on the street. Nevertheless, the fact that neighbours felt comfortable presenting themselves to each other in such informal attire testified to a sense of intimacy between them (Goffman 1959). When a Cape Verdean middle-aged woman arrived at the lunch place one evening in her pyjamas and slippers, she apologised for her garments. Neighbours' comments excused her familiarly: 'Like this is the first time!' 'Well you're not naked are you?'

These tokens of intimacy added to the distinctive atmosphere of proximate and familiar interaction among neighbours. Closeness was forged through similar experiences of hardship and the reliance on mutual favours and services. It was reinforced by moral discourses and expectations of generosity, and an etiquette of greetings which asserted the shared and exclusive belonging of its participants. Familiar ties were expressed and emphasised in the regular use of relatedness terms and coordinates, and were further apparent in the little intimate aspects of living together. Specific kinds of interactions (requests, greetings, social mapping) were repeatedly barred for outsiders, revealing the restrictive boundaries of the group. This compound of shared practical constraints, reciprocal exchanges, moral and ritual codes and reference systems produced Topia, more than a physical setting of residence, as a social space of exclusive participation. Neighbour relations, their networks, practices and idioms, were a meaningful ingredient in local processes of boundary production – the forging of Topia, in cognitive and practical terms, as a socially significant place.

### 3. The Building: 'Here there is loneliness'

*'I hate Topia! I'd put a bomb in every building and blow them all up. Then I'd move the people to different houses.'* (Santos)



Fig. 9: View of a building block in Topia

Assistance networks, relatedness terms, greetings on the streets, the intimate sociality of living together – they evoke a quaint cosy portrait of neighbourly unity and village-like communities (Friedland 2003). But this brightly-coloured picture faded quickly against local practices of refusal and concealment, scrutiny and gossip, beliefs in others' ill intentions, discourses of loneliness and isolation. Polarised answers to neighbour requests and expectations – conceding or denying them, according to context – created a delicate balance in local life: between keeping social barriers open (conforming to neighbourly codes) and restricting them under more exclusive claims about who should be entitled to receive (Jacobson 1985; Godelier 1998). The role of social distance in granting gifts and favours, as highlighted in chapter 2, co-existed with other factors, namely material and economic ones (Sahlins 1972, 202-204, 214). In a scenario of scarcity and high unemployment, some individuals managed to secure stabler income (from work, retirement pensions, informal vending). Generosity precepts stipulated they should share it with their deprived neighbours. However, continued economic asymmetry between individuals also brewed restrictive entitlement claims, creating a double bind: while upholding moral premisses to share, people also guarded against what they viewed as abusive demands.

This duality made for combined practices of giving and refusing in Topia – and its resulting effects, at once socially cohesive and divisive.

This chapter will focus on the practices of avoiding or refusing neighbour requests, their consequences for local sociality, and their links to discourses of disappointment, social evil and loneliness. I will argue that people understood and articulated what they saw as failures in others (withholding or demanding too much) through certain theories of the relation between people and place: specifically, between neighbour ties and housing structure. Contrasting an idealised past of 'open doors' in shanty towns against present life in the buildings of Topia, rehoused tenants, especially women, expressed a moral commentary on neighbour conduct and ties, reconciling its dual tendencies (generosity and selfishness) by projecting them onto two different worlds in space and time: shanty towns versus apartment blocks. In the following sections, I will discuss, in turn: the nagging of others for drinks and cigarettes (section 1.1), and people's responses of avoidance (1.2) and protest (1.3); the constant monitoring of others' belongings and sharing through gazing and gossip (2.1), while at the same time dodging their control (2.2); the resulting atmosphere of tension and mistrust, fuelled by beliefs in others' hidden intentions, envy, witchcraft (3.1), and anxieties about stealing (3.2); in turn expressed as disappointment at neighbours and their disqualification as 'acquaintances' instead of 'friends' (4.1). Finally, I will examine residents' nostalgic discourses contrasting 'unity' in the shanties against 'loneliness' in buildings (4.2), to argue that social failures crystallised in theories not about persons or evil (although these were a part of it), but about the relation between neighbours and neighbourhood space. In people's minds, spatial configurations – buildings, walls, closed doors, and the changes they entailed – brought forth divisiveness and isolation, by erecting physical, social and symbolic barriers which interrupted the flows (visits, gifts, support) of neighbourly sociality. Narratives of 'shanties' versus 'buildings' reflected a moral appreciation of present life in Topia, as a divided environment of underlying social tension, watchfulness and danger.

## **1. Failed requests and claims of entitlement**

### **1.1 Nagging: 'Aren't you buying?'**

Expectations of neighbour generosity were often disappointed. In people's minds, destitute others carried these demands too far, continually asking for favours without ever giving in return. But from the latter's perspective, failures to receive caused disappointed complaints and criticism (Åkesson's 2011, 334-337). Nagging and insistent begging from

poor and unemployed neighbours was the other face of request routines in Topia. In front of cafés and food vendors, the request 'Aren't you buying?' (*Não paga nada?*) was a common tune directed at familiar passers-by. It hoped to persuade neighbours thought to have some money to buy petitioners beer, wine, coffee, more rarely food. Sharing expectations were used by poorer residents to take something back from those seen to have more means.

Given the obligation to share one's surplus, in habitual circles it was usual to see the same individuals nag, and the same ones be repeatedly nagged. Those nagged usually had stabler earnings and were regulars at the spot where these requests happened. José (the mute white elder) for example, worked as a shoemaker in his own shop. He had no close family and outside working hours was often found at Club café, the lunch place, or sitting on the street corner with the vendors. In each of these places, he was nagged daily by the same few neighbours to pay for beer. Depending on his mood, he might offer before being asked (out of neighbourly spirit), or otherwise be hassled – 'Come on, one beer!' – until he agreed. The same happened at Crow café, where retired white women (pensioners) gathered at breakfast and tea time. Around those hours, some unemployed middle-aged women (including Ivone) would join their table and impose on them for drinks or snacks. As Ivone and I passed Crow café one Saturday afternoon, I saw her glance at the window and sigh: 'If they [the women] were here they'd pay for something. But they're not, so no can do...' A road worker was also often asked to finance bread or drinks at the lunch place. He was seldom there (he worked nights). But on weekends a woman he fancied sometimes drew him in. When something needed paying for (cigarettes, juice, food) she would send someone to fetch him and he often obliged, buying supplies to share with the group.

Even if some neighbours were known to have steady income and enter this one-sided generosity, many found themselves in either position (asking or being asked), depending on the group they were in or whether they had recently been paid. Sometime around Easter, I spotted Adelaide (a white elder) on a street corner and headed over to her. She was a pensioner, one of those nagged for coffee at Crow café. She was quite friendly to me and often offered to buy me tea. That day she failed to notice me when I went to greet her. She was chatting to a white woman and appeared restless. The woman went on about a dish cooked with sausages (*enchidos*), and on that note suggested stopping by Adelaide's house. 'What, to bring me something?' Adelaide asked. No, the woman wanted Adelaide to get her the sausages. 'Yeah, right!' – Adelaide ended the conversation: 'I'm gonna meet Zé', she decided. 'He's my godson, I'll ask him for my Easter gift' (*as minhas amêndoas*). The woman mocked it was the godmother's duty to give her godson a gift, not

the other way around.<sup>71</sup> Adelaide ignored her and she eventually left, having failed to obtain the sausages. Adelaide whispered to me: 'I'm going to Crow's to ask the man if he'll buy me something.' She gently pushed me away, suggesting I 'go visit Ivone' as she scurried down to the café. Being short on money, instead of inviting me for coffee, on this occasion Adelaide sent me away to go ask somebody else.

I also found myself in both situations at different times. José, Adelaide and Nívea insisted on buying me snacks, while others like Santos frequently asked me to buy them alcohol or 'lend' them money. I had recently met Luzia (a white middle-aged woman), who frequently complained to me about problems with money, welfare or her children. Some months into my stay, there was a public celebration in Topia. A few residents set up vending stalls with food and drinks on one of the pedestrian streets, while customers ate, chatted and enjoyed the music. I spotted Luzia and went over to greet her. I was eating a pasty and offered to buy her one. She smiled mischievously and grabbed my hand, taking me to a different stall where they sold drinks: 'Won't you buy me a beer instead?' Some weeks later, on a similar street event, she spotted me and came over to ask familiarly, with the same smile, 'Aren't you buying?' I gave her what change was left in my pocket and she took it cheerfully, announcing she now needed thirty cents from someone else to buy a beer.

Expectedly, people who asked me for things tried to establish some prior relationship with me (in Luzia's case, by sharing her problems) before feeling entitled to ask (chapter 2). This confirmed that nagging was not directed at just anyone, but mostly at familiar neighbours. People used local generosity codes, namely the moral compulsion to share with needier neighbours. But because of a persistent economic asymmetry, continued nagging was often perceived as abuse. It prompted resistance and personal tactics to dodge requests without jeopardising support networks or neighbourly codes. What resulted were concealment strategies, to avoid giving without directly refusing.

## **1.2 Avoiding without refusing: hiding, averting, excusing**

People devised creative ways to hide their possessions and avoid sharing with abusive neighbours without directly denying them. Examples abounded. I was with Ivone on the vendors' corner one afternoon when she suddenly decided to go home. I tagged along and as we left the group she showed me a cigarette pack she kept hidden in her coat. Up in her flat she smoked one, and before we left lit up another, hiding the pack again. A

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<sup>71</sup> Godparents were expected to offer gifts (sweet treats, sometimes money) to godchildren in Easter.

neighbour we passed on the stairs saw Ivone smoking and asked for a cigarette. Ivone regretted she did not have any more, but gave the neighbour the one she was smoking as proof of good will. Later that day, as Ivone had discretely reached for another cigarette and was smoking it on the street, a man walked by and asked her for one. She again denied having more and pointed to another man further down the road, also smoking, and claimed she had gotten her cigarette from him. This caused the first man to chase after the smoker to beg him for a cigarette, while the latter insisted he did not have any more.

Because deprived people expected generosity from those with some resources, individuals strived to hide what they had, especially when struggling with small earnings. An interesting admission came from one of the most destitute women I met in Topia, talking about the day of the month when she received her welfare check. She confessed that on that day she always took the longer route around Topia to do her shopping in the Município, so as to avoid neighbours stopping her on the way to beg for coffee, because they knew she had some money on her.

Another strategy was to stress how much one was struggling. I grew used to hearing Ivone's out-of-context remarks about being broke when we passed neighbours on the stairs. She would be talking about something else and suddenly throw in comments such as: 'This month I'm not paying for water or electric, there's no money...' On one occasion, she had a bag of groceries when she crossed a neighbour in her building. She quickly shifted the conversation to comment aloud: '€10... I don't have it now, I'll pay the grocer at the end of the month.' Later that day, coming back from the supermarket with a neighbour who offered her a lift back home, they sat condemning neighbours' intrusions into others' business. As the car reached Topia, they discussed where to stop so that others' would not 'control' (i.e. monitor) her grocery bags. The main road was not an option, as the driver summed up: 'the whole tribe will be there' (people on street corners). They decided to stop in one of the lower streets and head on foot up the stair passages to Ivone's street. As soon as we arrived and neighbours spotted her bags, they started calling her. She sped up, rushing to her front door while shouting back: 'This isn't mine, it's the girl's!' (i.e. me). The same happened when Ivone and her daughter asked me to go with them to IKEA to help carry back their things. Again they complained about the 'gossips' (*quadrilheiras*) who would be 'controlling' their purchases, and again they decided to stop the car a few streets down and walk up the stairways. And once more as we came onto her street and hurried to her building, neighbours pitched comments at our spoils: 'Ooh, I want that mirror!'

Aside from their resources, people also hid their availability to help. Diana complained she could not attend a party one weekend because of work. She remembered

Denise had asked her, as usual, to style her hair for the party: 'She's a pain!' (*É uma chata!*) Diana decided: 'Tomorrow when I arrive from work I won't tell her I'm home.' But hiding was often not possible. Another usual manoeuvre was to refuse requests in a vague or indirect manner, such as pretending not to listen or delaying reply. When asked for drinks, José sometimes gestured to neighbours that it was early and they should pace themselves. This indefinitely postponed the favour without refusing it. Under insistent hassle this worked for limited time, but it managed to keep his tab down. This strategy was often used when people were nagged for immediate favours. When Nívea asked Ivone, lingering about, to go fetch her something at home so she would not leave the grill, Ivone acted aloof, pretending not to listen, even after Nívea repeated the request. When she shook Ivone's arm vigorously to get her attention, Ivone simply mumbled: 'I'll go in a minute...' (and then never did). This kind of nonchalance was successful on different occasions in sending others away without clearly breaching neighbourly codes.

Finally, in situations when refusal had to be direct, it evoked some excuse to justify it. On one occasion, a white man with no source of income other than stealing and rare odd jobs hung around Nívea and hassled her for change. He harassed her to the point where she lost her patience: 'I don't have any!' She protested he would not quit pestering her, suggesting he should 'Go work!' He continued to hover about and at a point caught a glimpse of the coins she had been keeping under a box of food. He accused her of lying, to which she responded with outrage: 'What, you're controlling my money now?!' He saw his attempts were pointless and left, to return later with a worn-out woman's coat, trying to persuade a group of neighbours to buy it. The women turned their heads and looked away, pretending not to see him. When he directly admonished Adelaide, shaking her arm, she excused herself: 'I've got lots of coats...' Nagging behaviours made people hide their assets and availability – and then privately vent against others' abuse.

### **1.3 Private protest: 'It's abusive!'**

The site of others taking advantage of neighbour generosity was a topic of private commentary and protest, especially by second generations. A case in point was criticism against the Cape Verdean habit of serving food to neighbours after somebody died (chapter 4). Kutchi, a thirty-year-old Cape Verdean mother of two, was a neighbour and friend of the family of a recently deceased woman. She condemned the fact that everyone ate at the family's expense 'as if it were a party', without giving compensation. 'When I go [die] I don't want food. Or at least nobody would eat without paying.' Diana joked they could do it

at the café and whoever wanted drinks could pay at the counter. The deceased had nine children, numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren: 'a big united family'. Kutchi argued food should be served 'only for them, not for neighbours'. She recalled another recent death in Topia, where the widow was unemployed and there was no large family to share the expense: 'She's spending a lot of money on account of neighbours. They come to eat and drink all day.' Women around nodded. Days later, after one of the funerals, the topic again came up. Diana and Mina were eating food served by the grieving family. Mina, a twenty-nine-year-old Cape Verdean mother of five, was a close friend of the family (from the same slum), though she now lived in a different estate. As they ate, Mina complained she disagreed with the precept of having to 'feed everybody' after the funeral. Diana concurred: 'What if you don't have any [resources]?' (*Y si bu ka tene?*). Mina went on, condemning the people who took advantage of the family: 'If you ate and left, that wouldn't be so bad, but people stay all day long eating and drinking. It's abusive!' She confessed to me that 'we' (people her age) would like to end this custom, 'But the old folk [*os cotas*] won't let us.' They sat complaining even as they ate the family's food, highlighting the double bind to fulfil generosity demands while condemning and trying to dodge them.

Claims to restrict sharing to the family or close circle abounded. One Sunday in summer, Denise decided to have a barbecue. She invited a group of close female neighbours and collected individual fees (€3) for expenses. The grill was borrowed from a neighbour and the women and I sat outside Denise's building chatting and eating while the meat grilled. Later in the afternoon, a group of young men from Topia were gradually drawn to the grill and ended up sitting with us. They had not been invited nor paid the fee, but they asked to share in the meat and drinks. Denise was not happy, but she did not deny them. They could probably see it, because one of them approached her with a €10 note and mocking smile: 'Won't you give me a sausage?' Other men laughed, and she gave him the meat without taking money. That evening, after the barbecue was finished, the women lingered on. Everyone condemned the lot of men coming to eat and drink 'without contributing' (*sem contribuir*). Denise decided she wanted future parties to be 'just for us', while others objected that was impossible: others *always* joined in uninvited. They reiterated the idea, complaining about 'the nerve' (*a lata*) of the men.

The frequent inconsistencies between moral premises of sharing and individual claims to restrict it were expressed privately, but hardly detracted people from publicly showing generosity. Although Denise heavily criticised the men in private, she did not refuse them food or accept their money. Similar complaints arose at the lunch place. Ivone

decided one day to bring a bag of mackerel to share with Nívea, Adelaide, and a few regulars. Each of them often contributed something to the meal (bread, firewood, drinks). But Ivone complained that on that day 'Twelve people showed up to eat!' I asked if those people did not bring food on occasion. She grunted they never did, confirming Nívea was also upset about it: 'Next time we wanna grill, we'll do it in front of my building.'<sup>72</sup>

Although Ivone complained about twelve people joining, she, like Denise, did not deny them food. Averting open refusals to neighbours did not prevent private criticism. Lurdes was a thirty-two-year-old white single mother. She lived with her mother and stepfather and had relatives in other flats in Topia. One afternoon she chatted to Ivone about lottery numbers. I took the chance to ask what they would do if they won the lottery. Ivone would buy a house and furnish it. I found Lurdes's answer informative: 'The first thing I'd do would be to leave, quietly, with my children, without anyone knowing. 'Cause if they found out it'd be dangerous for me, everyone would want something.' She told me she had actually won €1000 once, years before. And although she tried to hide it people 'could tell', because she got a driving license and bought a used car. She recalled bitterly: 'Before people didn't care, even my family [she pointed down the street], 'cause I was the poorest daughter. Suddenly they wanna hang out with me, get to know me, go places with me.' She concluded: 'You can't rely on anybody...'

Outside Club café one afternoon, Luzia seemed dispirited with a throat infection. An NGO worker she was particularly fond of tried to cheer her up, reminding her of 'the ten million' she would earn from welfare. She laughed along, and after he left explained the situation to me: a social worker had informed her that by some mistake she had accrued unreceived benefits for years. Now social security had promised to pay the full amount in debt, and she had gone to the NGO to calculate how much she would receive. She did not tell me the full amount, but was jubilant at not needing to work any more. She planned to pay the rent she owed the council, furnish her house, buy her children a computer. Then Luzia's smile faded and she looked worried: 'I wish he [the worker] hadn't spread that around, now there'll be plenty of people knocking on my door – “oh, I have a problem...”, “oh, can I borrow this...?” – No way!'

People often justified their hiding and withholding by claiming neighbours had done the same to them. Ivone's interaction with Folha, a white middle-aged unemployed man, is illustrative. Folha came over to ask for a cigarette, and as usual she claimed not to have any. He was certain she was hiding them and insisted: 'You know I give you mine

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<sup>72</sup> The immediate area outside the building was, to a point, an extension of the house. Residents often grilled there for family meals (following a past habit of using space adjacent to shanties as prolongation of the home [Freitas 1994: 29]). These spaces entailed more privacy than street corners or the lunch place.

when I have it.' She objected he had refused her 'the other day'. He contended: 'That's 'cause you had a brand new pack and told me "Folha I'm not giving you any".' Ivone rectified: 'It's not because *you* refused me, it's because of people's attitude...' She illustrated: her neighbour had failed 'the other day' to give her a cigarette – 'How many packs have I given her!' 'Nobody gives *me* anything', she concluded, implying it was fair to deny others the same way. Folha seemed understanding: 'I keep two or three [cigarettes] for joints, but the rest I buy loose [rolling tobacco] 'cause nobody wants that.' He conceded: 'I'll roll *you* one if you ask me. But others I just tell 'em I'll give 'em one if they roll it themselves: nobody wants to.'

Private talk labelled others' one-sided requests as 'abusive', while underscoring their failures to be generous in the first place. Evoking moral fairness, they reacted against asymmetrical requests and justified their avoidance. These claims shifted moral entitlement to receive from poor neighbours or the neighbour collective, to the individual or close group: 'just us' (Grassi 2007b, 138). Individuals and households devised ways to erect privacy barriers and guard from others' 'abuse'. But their efforts were met with counter-attempts to keep request networks open and resources flowing. This was in tune with what Rodrigues (2003) identified as the 'individualisation' and 'autonomisation' of 'life projects' in a rehousing estate in the 1990s (*ibid.*, 97, my translation; Bourgois 2003, 241-242); and what Weeks (2012b) has termed the rise in 'notions of "self-accountability"' and 'self-propelled achievement' among Cape Verdean immigrants in the Lisbon area (*ibid.*, 7, 9; cf. Fikes 2010, 64).

## **2. Monitoring and concealing**

### **2.1 'The atmosphere': gazing and gossip**

Neighbours kept alert about others' attempts to hide and avoid giving. They responded by monitoring ('controlling') others' earnings and spendings, and condemning their failures to be generous. They kept a look out for purchases, clothes, home refurbishing (as in Ivone's IKEA example above), signs of paid wages or benefits. From street corners, sitting by building entrances or looking through windows, usually unemployed neighbours followed others' across the estate, paying attention to bags and items carried, or the anxiety over the arrival of post (meaning impending welfare checks). These discreet routines were elucidated by Diana: 'See that woman at the window? She's always there this time of month. When she's gone it means the postman's come. She's got her bag ready, as soon as the check comes she's out shopping.' 'See that car that drove

down? Those people just went down to cash their checks.' Ivone traced similar patterns as we furtively watched through her window on the day the checks were expected to come: 'See Texa there all dressed up? She's got her bag with her, they're waiting...'

Others' gazing was noticeable, and a focus of criticism. Neighbours were aware of being watched, and they recognised the power of others' scrutiny. Connections between gazing and power are well established, namely after Foucault's (2008, 1980) discussion of the Panopticon. The ability to see, and furthermore the awareness of being seen, act as mechanisms of 'discipline': those 'subjected to a field of visibility, and who know it', exercise restraint and control over their own behaviour in response (Foucault 2008, 7). In Foucault's words, 'Visibility is a trap' (ibid., 5). As such, residents tried to reduce their visibility to escape others' 'control'. One tactic was to use the passageways across the estate instead of the main road, or to detour through the emptier streets of Topia (or even around it, as the welfare recipient in an earlier example). Diana once remarked, as she chose the stairways instead of the main road: 'This way I won't keep anyone busy' (i.e. she would avoid others' gazing). This had of course limited efficacy, since residents also peeked through their windows. But window gazing was openly condemned by street pedestrians. People's sole intention to scrutinise others became not only bluntly obvious but also asymmetrical.<sup>73</sup> People seen watching others through the window could be confronted and told off. Women shut their curtains or lights (at night) before looking through the window, to avoid being seen. Ivone warned me as I got too close to her window one day that 'they'd see' me from the street and 'there'd be trouble'. A middle-aged white woman I interviewed equally complained that:

in the beginning we couldn't be at the window, it's 'cause [according to neighbours] we'd be talking about their lives, they'd call us gossips (*quadrilheiras*), call us this, call us that. Now it's quieter ... We so much as looked at them they'd start calling us names, gossips, this and that.

As Amster (2008, 176) concluded in his research on a Borneo border community, social life in Topia was also 'intimately tied to issues of visibility and invisibility: what and who is seen by whom, how public and private space is constructed, and the forms of social optics and surveillance by which people monitor (and fail to monitor) each other's behavior'. In Topia, neighbour gazing directly scrutinised others' resources. It countered individual efforts for privacy, working to keep their possessions out in the open. These

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<sup>73</sup> From the window, people could monitor without being monitored. As opposed to street-dwellers, who as even they gazed from street corners, could be gazed at in return.

practices of 'control' competed with cunning strategies to hide, avert and excuse. And expectedly, when moral failures became known – namely when people were seen to have some abundance and not share it – gossip followed (Scott 1976, 40).

Anthropologists have shown interest in mapping gossip's roles and functions since the 1960s.<sup>74</sup> Although the topic has been less popular recently, some authors have directly focused on it (Stewart and Strathern 2004), while several others have included it in their analyses, especially of transnational themes (e.g. Skolnik, Vega and Steigenga 2012; Åkesson 2011; Drotbohm 2010; Van Vleet 2003). Across settings and approaches, past and present, gossip has been shown to assume variegated roles, granting the term loose definition and broad latitude (White 1994).<sup>75</sup> Ethnography has illustrated how each of its roles is tied to particular situations, contexts, 'histories of interaction', local meanings, collective 'boundaries and bonds' (Van Vleet 2003, 500; White 1994, 79) – in other words, how it is unintelligible 'apart from the blood and tissue of life in the community in which it occurs' (Hannerz 1967; White 1994, 76). In the context of Topia gossip formed, alongside gazing, a central tool of moral and material control over neighbours (Weeks 2012b, 17-18). While gazing publicly scrutinised others' assets and purchases, gossip sanctioned efforts and claims to keep them private.

A group of neighbours chatted on the street about an elderly female neighbour, whom they claimed had 'a lot of money'. A young white woman complained the lady had spent '€1000' alone on eye surgery to remove cataracts. The others condemned it: 'At that age, what's she still gonna see?' Although healthcare might seem a fair expense, their outrage reacted against the idea that she had accumulated 'a lot of money' to then spend it on herself. Similar criticism targeted those seen to fail financial duties to their family to instead spend the money on themselves. Over lunch at my house, Diana and Denise gossiped about Mina's *pai di fidju* (the father of her children). He had very low earnings, and always claimed to be broke when Mina asked for money for the children. But when other women were present he allegedly squandered it around, buying everyone dinner. 'Even if it wipes him out, just to make himself look big', Denise condemned. Diana agreed: 'Pure ostentation...' (*Só bazoferia...*) Unlike the cataract patient, Mina's *pai di fidju* was known to have little money. Nevertheless, both uses of money were judged selfish and superfluous ('ostentation'), and so morally condemned.

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<sup>74</sup> Rappart (1996) identified three main approaches: 1) 1960s structural-functionalism stressed gossip's role in keeping social harmony by reinforcing group morals (e.g. Gluckman 1963); 2) 'transactionalism' highlighted individual manipulation to serve particular interests; 3) 'symbolic-interactionism' (late 1970s) emphasised the representational qualities of gossip in negotiating social norms and reality (Rappart 1996).

<sup>75</sup> A working definition is Hannerz's (1967, 36) description of gossip as 'the informal and private transmission of information about one or more persons between two or more other persons', usually reflecting poorly on the target's identity (ibid.).

Sanctioning others' failures to share, gossip 'allocated responsibility' and enforced 'ideas about deviance and virtue' (White 1994, 77-78). It revealed central topics of concern in the neighbourhood: 'the issues and questions and theories that circulate about humanness and reality' (Van Vleet 2003, 494). As manifest in gossip, neighbours' priorities revolved around income, social duties and their failures. People obsessively computed others' earnings, spendings and assets, their entitlement to them or lack thereof. In the process, their moral conduct was continually assessed. This was the quintessential ground for evaluative talk, building approval or (usually) disapproval of others' deviance from duties of resource distribution.

Gossip often used the dichotomy 'simple'/'fancy' (*simples/fino* or *chique*) to react against individualistic claims, which were seen as behaving like a 'rich person', acting above one's condition. People described in similar terms neighbours' reluctance to share cups or cutlery, also seen as 'acting fancy'. This was telling of local sanctions against creating distance from others or erecting barriers to social flows. The clear link between acting fancy and breaking neighbourly ties was articulated in a rap song by a local Cape Verdean man, who accused the people 'acting like kings and bosses' of causing neighbour disunity. Stories of resource accumulation, selfish spending and refusals to share were recurring moral tales in close circles. Goffman (1956, 488) recognised the 'inescapable opposition between showing a desire to include an individual and showing respect for his privacy'. Individualistic claims and refusals were seen to disrupt the fabric of neighbour assistance described in chapter 2 and raise privacy obstacles to request networks. Gazing and gossip worked to eliminate those barriers and keep neighbour ties and networks active.

## **2.2 Duplicity and secrecy**

An ethical duality existed between neighbourly duties and 'self-accountability' claims (Weeks 2012b, 7). The tie between gossip and sharing expectations (condemned for its excesses or failures) explained that people's ambivalence towards sharing extended to gossip itself. Even as it pervaded conversation, gossip was an object of criticism, including in the same conversations where it took place. Although most people engaged in gossip to some extent, a group of white unemployed middle-aged women on welfare benefits, who gathered regularly on a particular spot by the main road, was informally identified as 'the gossips' (*as quadrilheiras*) and seen to fully personify the essence of neighbourhood gossip. Fabi described them thus in an interview:

It's sitting there morning to night controlling who goes or doesn't go to work. ... That's what ruins and influences people. There are people who have quit working to become like them. Because they don't want you to work, they want you to be like them or worse off than them. If you're better off than them, they always try to inject poison (*pôr veneno*) [i.e. spread criticism]. They always have to find something to talk about.

Just as gazing monitored who was 'better off', gossip condemned those who failed to share. But the same way individuals were found contextually on either side of nagging; likewise neighbours found themselves both condemning gossip and engaging in it. Often gossip about others' conduct entailed censuring the very act of gossiping. The following case is telling of this ambiguity. Ivone chatted to Lurdes one morning, sitting on a step at the end of their street by the main road. They again criticised the gossips who usually sat right where they were sitting. Lurdes stressed the point: 'I don't hang here any more. One day I was sitting with them and I left, then I came back 'cause I forgot something and I heard them criticise me behind my back.' Ivone agreed and they both condemned 'standing here idling' (*estar aqui parada*), denying they ever did it any more (chapter 9). They lingered for a while, quietly watching the road.

The duality inherent to gossip and gazing was the evident counterpart of expecting generosity while trying to avoid giving. The same way that favours were publicly enforced while privately opposed; so control over others was at once exercised (through gazing and gossiping) and condemned (by criticising window-gazers and gossips). People watched and gossiped; just as people knew they were watched and gossiped about; and they took turns in monitoring others' possessions and conduct, while criticising the same scrutiny over themselves. This ambivalence was resolved through secrecy. Hiding one's feelings and views enabled some reconciliation between sustaining request networks even while restricting them. The stand-off could be maintained by keeping gossip relatively secretive, restricting information to small close groups and excluding others present.

In front of me for example, Cape Verdeans gossiped in Creole to prevent me following the conversation. More than once people used it to talk about me in my presence. The content of gossip was also veiled by speaking cryptically (using vague terms, not including names). Questions were pointless: they were ostensibly ignored. So people tried to get others to talk without openly asking, to avoid accusations of minding others' business. The morning after a fight broke off in front of the vendors, a man approached Ivone hoping to learn the details. He mentioned the subject, appearing nonchalant. She replied vaguely, not adding information. He quickly averred: 'I don't know anything', and

she concurred: 'I didn't see it either.' As he left frustrated she muttered: 'If you're after the news go read the paper. My mouth stays shut.' In this context of duplicity, 'don't tell anyone I told you' was a frequent admonition.

Like greetings in the previous chapter, gossip also consolidated exclusive group belonging. An 'idiom of intimacy' meant to share secretive information, gossip built trust among participants by excluding 'outsiders' (White 1994, 76, 79). But secrecy did not prevent information from spreading, nor people from knowing there were others talking about them. On the contrary, Topia was widely recognised by its residents as a place of gossip. An expression came up several times when I asked interviewees what they disliked about Topia: 'the atmosphere' (*o ambiente*). It referred to idling residents, especially the *quadrilheiras*, who sat outdoors in groups monitoring neighbours and gossiping about them. As I explained my interest in local 'culture' to a group of teenage girls at NWIV, a scoffing remark by a sixteen-year-old said it all: 'The culture of Topia is sitting around in corners talking about other peoples' lives.'

### **3. Mistrusting others**

#### **3.1 Discrepant intentions: 'evil' and 'envy'**

A dissonance between what was publicly said and privately done, and the awareness of being 'controlled' and criticised made people wary of others' 'true' intentions. Duplicity and concealment caused tension and mistrust, highlighting 'discrepancies between "impression" and "reality"' in people's conduct (Hannerz 1967, 38). The resulting tension affected neighbour solidarity. The perceived gap between public and private intentions weakened ties of trust and sociality. Adelaide complained that she presently opted to stay home instead of going to the café like she used to, because she 'realised these people flatter you [*dão graxa*] in your face to then stab you in the back'. I became aware of residents' widespread beliefs that envy and malice pervaded the neighbourhood, and that it was difficult to maintain true friendships. Swapping stories about fortune telling, Diana dismissed a palm-reader's prediction that others envied her: 'That's nothing, envy's everywhere!' (*Inveja há em todo o lado!*) On another occasion, a woman Diana did not recognise chatted to her on Facebook, raising alarm over who she 'really' was (*na realidade*). 'She could be an enemy', Diana warned. Different instances revealed similar assumptions about the social world and the danger hidden therein. In an interview with Talara, an unemployed Guinean immigrant in Topia, she resented the lack of solidarity of better-off neighbours towards poorer ones:

Those who own [money] don't help those who have none. Those who own think 'Oh, just 'cause I own doesn't mean I must help others' ... Just now I'm talking about my life, and I have nothing! I wanna buy a piece of bread and I can't. But who knows if I'll have something tomorrow? I don't! So there's no point in so much evil [*maldade*], there's no point in so much envy, no. We're all the same, the only thing that changes is a difference in skin, but skin isn't what matters. What matters is the heart, what's inside. In my country they always say that 'Everything beautiful on the outside, is rotten on the inside.' It's better for the inside to be beautiful than what's outside. (Ana: Do you feel there's evil [*maldade*] here in people?) I think there is. I think there's much, much envy, a lot. [pause] A lot. [long pause] That's what everyone thinks: because they own, that they own the world.

Talara's assessment of much 'envy' and 'evil' in Topia was linked to neighbours' seeming refusal to share. She saw it as remaining hidden at 'the heart', the level of true intention, and invisible in people's outer stance – consistent with local concealment habits. A distinction between a visible and an inner invisible dimension entered local theories about persons/neighbours and the dangers in proximate social relations: neighbours could cause harm. When I told Leandra's my early plans to visit Cape Verde, she advised me not to tell anyone until everything had been set, lest it fail to happen: 'There're people with a big eye and all that...' (*Tem gente com o olho grande e essas coisas...*)<sup>76</sup> She confessed that her projects sometimes failed when she mentioned them to others, due to people's 'envy'. Others' envy and ill intentions could hamper one's success. Beliefs in the harm concealed in others were stronger among Cape Verdeans (especially first generations), but pervaded most groups in Topia. Duality in social relations was traced to neighbours' duplicitous nature, a prominent feature of witches – 'the epitome of the divided self', between what is shown and what stays hidden (Munn 1986, 264-267). Witchcraft became feared in 'a world divided between surface appearance and actual intention' (ibid., 231).

The topic of witchcraft was hardly mentioned outside familiar circles, which made researching it challenging. Ivone mentioned a man in a nearby building who could detect when people were victims of the evil eye, but added residents hardly ever went there. 'The problem is', she explained, 'people who see you go in know what you're there about.' Around the first death I learned about in Topia, ten months into my fieldwork, was the first time Diana freely addressed the subject. As I probed into the details of mourning rituals,

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<sup>76</sup> The Creole term for 'evil eye' is *odjada*, after *odju*, 'eye' (Lang 2002, 529). The Portuguese term is *mau-olhado*, but Cape Verdeans often translated it to Portuguese as *olho* (eye), *olhado* ('eyed') or *olhada* (direct translation of *odjada*).

she touched on the topic of witches (*feiticeiras*), listing some of the ways to identify and trap them, and to protect oneself or one's children against them. A popular defence against witches and their *odjada* were small black beads with painted white dots, known as *sibitxi*, 'amulets' (Lang 2002, 725). They featured in necklaces, bracelets, earrings and rosaries, worn by Cape Verdean men, women and children. The brief conversation with Diana opened a new world for observation, and I began noticing many informants wearing *sibitxi*, from elders to infant babies. Not all Cape Verdeans did. As several cultural habits, it was weaker among second generations (chapters 4 and 5). But its normative status was clear. When I mentioned my interest in learning about 'protection against witches, evil eye and all that', Fabi summed up: 'That's *sibitxi*!' It was sold in fairs across the Lisbon area, alongside assorted trinkets, scarves and fashion accessories. One resident mentioned a Guinean man they could be bought from. *Sibitxi* and other elements linked with witchcraft (*feitçaria*) were associated with Guineans in Cape Verdeans' speech,<sup>77</sup> and people did not disclose many details about its properties or uses.<sup>78</sup>

Besides *sibitxi*, several methods were employed by Cape Verdeans to protect from others' evil,<sup>79</sup> including: hanging Aloe Vera (in Creole *babósa*) by the door, or carrying rue (*arruda*) in one's pocket; spreading creosote around the entrance to the house to keep witches out ('little, otherwise others will smell it'), or adding some drops to bath water as protection; children's urine could also be added to bath water to defend them 'from witches of eye and mouth';<sup>80</sup> people could bathe in holy water (chapter 4); or dip a rosary in water to trace a cross on the forehead. Protection of children was paramount, and mothers frequently exchanged methods and advice.

Second generations referred to these procedures with mixed feelings of deference and dismissal. At the house of a recently deceased man, women chatted in the kitchen about people who had died shortly after visiting Cape Verde. Some mentioned a shop owner who caused his visitors to die on their return to Portugal. At some point a woman in her thirties laughed off the matter as Cape Verdean superstition: 'If a pot lid falls to the floor nobody worries and we think it's normal, but just have a person die and we'll rush to

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<sup>77</sup> For ritual practices and beliefs of Guineans in Lisbon see Carvalho (2012) and Saraiva (2008).

<sup>78</sup> Some elders suggested that *sibitxi* worked by taking the harm instead of its carrier. So visible signs of deterioration in beads could be interpreted as witches' blows having been successfully parried. This explained a girl's tale of being taken to a ritual expert by her mother after her *sibitxi* bracelet suddenly 'burst' at school.

<sup>79</sup> Witches were not the only threat people identified. In interviews they also mentioned spirits of *finadu* (deceased) who roamed about and could cause harm. Making *kórda* (sorcery), meaning paying a specialist to cause harm through ritual methods, was also rarely mentioned (being a strongly avoided topic).

<sup>80</sup> Aside from *odjada*, witches also acted through *bóka fêdi* (lit. 'mouth stinks'), i.e. through speech: flattery which caused illness or misfortune; advice or negative predictions which came true. Harm could be caused in other ways (like giving a child food or an object which caused illness), but the 'eye' was most commonly mentioned in Topia – consistent with gazing being so prominent in local life.

put salt on the doorway and protect the whole house.' She mocked this mentality as irrational, while others agreed timidly. The topic shifted.

Silence on the subject contrasted with its prominence in neighbours' lives. When I mentioned being interested in witchcraft, including remedies and experts on it, Eva assured me there were none in Topia – 'And even if there were they'd never admit it.' I suggested I might approach it then through people's complaints of being victimised. She shrugged: 'Oh, *that* everyone says.' People's embarrassment and secrecy about the topic limited the information I could collect to an inchoate array of practical precepts, whose origin or explanation were hardly provided. But their pervasiveness in Topia confirmed local assumptions about the dangers hidden in neighbour relations.

The connection is well established, for small social contexts, between social conflict, wealth disparities and gossip on the one hand, and beliefs about witchcraft on the other (Stewart and Strathern 2004). Witches epitomised in Topia the duality and divisiveness in neighbour relations: witches' envy – 'the anger of the excluded' (Munn 1986, 221) – represented the unrestrained demand for others' resources; while on the other hand it was seen to operate furtively in 'secret acts' of selfishness and concealment (*ibid.*). Witchcraft beliefs exaggerated and carried to an extreme the duality of demanding and hiding, and made a clear statement about their morally reproachable nature (since the witch was herself a disparaged figure). Local beliefs in witches could be read as incorporating people's theories and attitudes about social relations and their divisive forces. However, these beliefs did not spur in Topia, as could be expected, public accusations or trials as means of social purging or conflict resolution (Stewart and Strathern 2004, x-xii), or even public discourses against witchcraft (Munn 1986, 217-218). Expectations that others' envy or resentment could cause harm (through gaze or speech) made people safeguard against them, but they did not entail addressing witchcraft in discourse as a fundamental social problem. This suggests that witches and their actions were not considered an ultimate or effective explanation for 'evil' and conflict in Topia (Stewart and Strathern 2004, xii). Instead, I will argue (section 4.2) that social tension and loneliness was seen to arise in buildings as opposed to shanties.

### **3.2 'They steal everything'**

Mistrusting people's intentions extended to worries about stealing (Munn 1986, 224). Media representations of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Portugal in the last decade have emphasised images of crime and deviance, creating an overly negative

portrayal of migrants and their settlements.<sup>81</sup> In Topia people were aware of these representations, and in conversation often used the terms 'problematic neighbourhood' (*bairro problemático*) or 'social neighbourhood' (*bairro social*) to refer to Topia, the old slums (also 'degraded neighbourhoods' [*bairro degradado*]) and other migrant settlements (Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 176, 178) (chapter 5). Although residents used these concepts, some defended these media portrayals were mostly inaccurate and unfair. Nevertheless, 13% of households surveyed in Topia in 2010 had reportedly been victims of robbery or theft (*assaltos*) inside the estate (mostly personal robberies and house burglaries), while nearly half (48%) considered the estate was either 'unsafe' (*inseguro*) or 'very unsafe'. On several occasions at local cafés or parties, people advised me to beware of my belongings and not leave them unattended. 'They steal everything', Luzia warned, reporting someone had stolen two bags of meat from Club café, and the same had happened to a crate of milk. She claimed to know who had done it, 'And it's someone regular at the café.' One morning, I found Ivone and another middle-aged white woman scurrying to pick up a basket of clips and a patterned cloth fallen from a neighbour's window above. They divided the spoil among them and hid it in a plastic bag. Then they sat out in the sun and called me to join them. Ivone wanted to smoke and asked a passer-by for a lighter, but alas, he was not a smoker. The street was empty, so she asked me to go borrow one from NWIV. I obliged. In the end, she returned the lighter to me with a caution: 'You know if I didn't have respect for you Annie, I wouldn't give this back.' I believe she meant it as a compliment, but I found it rather disturbing. Behind an appearance of overall safety, people in the estate were occasional victims of neighbours' petty theft. Concerns about stealing were visible on post boxes in Topia, where strips of metal or wood were added by residents to narrow the openings (Fig. 10). Ivone, waiting for her welfare check, explained this practice even as she peeked into neighbours boxes to confirm whether others' checks had arrived: 'Otherwise they'll tuck a hand in' (*Senão metem a mão*).

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<sup>81</sup> Cádima and Figueiredo 2003; Cunha et al. 2004; Cunha and Santos 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Horta 2006, 2000, 182-186.



Fig. 10: Detail of postboxes in one rehousing building in Topia.

People were wary of lending money over fear of not having it back. Luzia boasted about a recipe for meat pasties she made at home, claiming neighbours had suggested she sell them. She clarified she would not take orders 'in the neighbourhood', because in Topia 'nobody pays up'. She went on: many neighbours had insisted on placing orders, but when she had asked for half the money in advance, nobody paid.

It was not unusual to hear people on the street ask for their money back from passing neighbours, who assured they would pay it back 'at the end of the month' (when salaries were due). This restricted lending to closer, trusted neighbours, who were sure to settle their debts. Living together was in fact a partial warranty that people would likely pay up. They could be stalked and pressured, gossiped about, their earnings and spendings monitored. As I tagged along with a group of young people from Topia to a party in another settlement, Diana stopped to take money from a cash point and one of the men escorted her. They returned laughing and she teased he had taken '€200' from her. She added jokily: 'But I know where you live, I know your family and everything about you!'

The idea that people in Topia were overall dishonest is certainly inaccurate. Some people stole (a few were known for it) and some tried to avoid paying loans or debts. There were also honest people who made a point of not owing money nor taking others' property. Regardless of their accuracy, relevant to the discussion are people's *perceptions* of others' dishonesty. The notion that one needed to be cautious because 'they steal everything' further nurtured an atmosphere of mistrust. People were mindful of their belongings not only to avoid sharing them with nagging others, but to prevent having them stolen or not returned. Feelings of insecurity added to awareness of others' duplicitous intentions,

anxieties about being monitored and fear of others' envy to disrupt neighbour ties (Pereira, Silva, Baptista e Perista 2001, 98; Pinto 1994, 39-40). Together they damaged mutual trust, challenging beliefs in the possibility of 'true' friendships.

#### **4. Discourses of loneliness**

##### **4.1 'I don't have friends, I have acquaintances': 'not getting familiar'**

The quaint scenario of support and familiarity described in chapter 2 was tempered by avoidance, resentment, gossip and control, in 'a peculiar combination of neighbourliness and self-defence' which fostered estrangement and more distanced interactions (Anderson 1990, 80). Like in Lurdes' lottery example earlier, people often believed they could not rely on others beyond immediate family. But faced with scarcity and urgent need for support, this belief could coexist with strong norms of assistance and sharing, especially enforced by older generations. The attitudes of Ivone and Denise, not refusing people food even while resenting them for joining uninvited, illustrated this duality well. But discrepancies between norms and private claims, between behaviour and intention, called for caution about the dangers of social interaction, giving way to the idea that people had no 'true' friends, and could not get too close or familiar with others.

When I asked informants where they had met their closest friends, they often distinguished between 'friends' and 'acquaintances', claiming to have only the latter. The interview transcript of a young Cape Verdean woman was representative of this feeling:

Closest friends, I don't have them. Because I got so disappointed at friends, friends are my mother, my sisters and my children. Because them I know that if something happens to me, or if I fall, they'll always reach out their hand to help me rise. But friends, I don't have them any more. I've hurt a lot because of friends, I've been disappointed because of friends. I don't have friends. I've acquaintances (*Tenho pessoas conhecidas*). But my best friends are at home. Those are indeed my friends. ... As for the rest, I have no friends. I really don't.

There were rumours that Tânia, a Cape Verdean young woman, had cheated on her best friend by sleeping with her boyfriend. Three Cape Verdean women in their twenties, including the cheated girlfriend, sat discussing the situation, unsure of whether to trust the rumours. The cheated woman complained bitterly: 'From men I can expect anything, but not from girlfriends...' One of them contended: 'Why I expect *anything* from girlfriends!' The third one remarked the woman truly needed friends' support in times like these: 'but

you have few true friends', she concluded sadly. Some individuals (especially of first generations) admitted to having friends. Domingas often smiled and reminded me without prompting that she had 'many friends' in Topia, people who 'cared for her' (*muita gente gosta de mim*). This mostly came up after somebody offered her vegetable produce or lent her something. Some informants I interviewed mentioned having friends and included close neighbours in that category. However, the idea of 'not having friends, only acquaintances' came up consistently.

A related concern was 'not getting familiar' (*não dar confiança*) with neighbours,<sup>82</sup> which some people advised and confessed to doing. Talking to Ivone one day at her house, she told of the abuse she had suffered at the hands of her jealous ex-husband, claiming she used to be shy and introverted because he never let her leave the house or speak to anyone. She reported that 'In the beginning when I came to the neighbourhood [Topia] ... I used to lock myself at home, with no water or electricity. I'd ask my next-door neighbour for water to flush the toilet and she'd tell me to go out and meet people, but I'd just stay in.' I tried to be encouraging, suggesting she had come a long way since then and met many people. Her expression turned defensive and she declared: 'But I get familiar with no one! [*não dou confiança a ninguém*] I say "good morning", "good afternoon", but I don't get familiar!'

Although people advised me 'not to get familiar' with men in Topia, keeping a distance was hardly normative or desirable behaviour (contra Stokoe and Wallwork's 2003; Tonkiss 2003). Conversely, it was criticised as unfriendly. But while at odds with neighbourly values, people made ostensible efforts to display non-familiarity. This involved looking afar, acting uninterested, repeatedly ignoring somebody when they spoke – in short, the same strategies used for avoiding requests. It occurred with topics people wished to avoid: when asked for information they did not want to disclose; given advice they did not intend to follow; or told things they did not want to take a position on (like when probed for gossip). Naturally, this happened to me on a daily basis (chapter 8). Repeating the question or insisting was pointless: aloofness was very effective.

Personal distancing undermined the kinds of intimate proximity described in chapter 2 and increased the isolation of individuals and families, especially among second generations. People grew 'disappointed' at neighbours who failed them, refuting their standing as 'friends'. Amid delicate and strenuous work to manage resources and social barriers, people longed for an idealised past where, in their minds, no such restrictions were at place. Sustaining support networks while guarding from abuse; criticising other's failures to share while justifying their own; monitoring others' assets while hiding from

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<sup>82</sup> Literally 'not giving confidence/trust', i.e. keeping a distance, not letting people be too close or personal.

their gaze; relying on neighbours while mistrusting their intentions; investing in social ties while keeping others at bay – the discrepant impulses to show and conceal, to open and restrict were ultimately resolved by polarising and projecting them onto two different places in time: shanty towns and building blocks.

#### **4.2 Closed doors and closed floors: 'Here there is loneliness'**

Disappointment at shortcomings in neighbour conduct often turned to themes of housing and the past. A collective discourse circulated in Topia contrasting life in the old shanties against current life in building blocks.<sup>83</sup> This contrast was articulated by men and especially women of different ages and from different slums. In many cases it came up in interviews, either spontaneously or when I asked about the rehousing and what had been gained or lost. But it also arose in neighbour conversation as people reminisced together. There were a few negative testimonies of a hostile social environment in the slums, namely from young people raised elsewhere and sent to live there as teenagers or later.<sup>84</sup> But these were the exception. A surprisingly consistent discourse identified slum life (even across different slums) with 'unity' in neighbour relations, whereby 'doors were always open' and neighbours easily borrowed what they needed; as opposed to 'here'/'now' (Topia), where people 'shut themselves at home' and rarely socialised, making excuses not to help out. A conversation at Baker's Star illustrated this contrast. Eva and Alice, two women in their thirties originating from the same slum, chatted in Creole one morning and drifted to reminisce about the past. They spoke of the idyllic life in the shanties as compared to Topia: people were more available and willing to help, to 'control' neighbours' children ('if they've eaten', 'if they're doing their chores'), to 'control the pot on the fire'. 'Now they say they can't', the women regretted (Anderson 1990, 76). I meddled and asked what the main difference was: 'Nowadays life is different, people are different.' They proposed different explanations: 'Now we have to pay rent and bills. Women now have to work [outside the home]. Not before, before it was more the husbands who worked.' I asked about single women. 'Before you didn't see much of that either. Lone women were just widows.' Eva went on, explaining how women now had to find jobs: 'They leave in the morning and come back at night.' They complained that 'Today they [the women] make excuses, they

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<sup>83</sup> I had no direct access to life in the shanties aside from personal accounts and institutional reports. As such I do not pretend to address shanty life, but merely to interpret residents' perceptions of it as they related to life and place-making in Topia.

<sup>84</sup> Fabi, who moved to the shanties at fourteen, described being scared and finding it hard to adjust to the constant 'police violence'. Another man, moving there around the same age, complained about 'the rule of the fittest' among the youth, and about older boys beating him and forcing him to steal for them.

always can't [watch neighbours' children].' They described the strict boundaries enforced between the slum and 'the outside' (*lá fora*): 'In the neighbourhood [slum], everyone controlled children, they didn't want them outside. If children left, they had to fear not just their parents, but the other neighbours', who would smack them and tell their mothers. Eva explained they were afraid of children leaving the safety of the neighbourhood 'because there was that climate, more racism, you know: "Look at that black."' They spoke of their routines as children growing up there: getting water from the fountain (as they lacked indoor plumbing); collecting cardboard to sell and make money for candy; riding bikes, playing with marbles; fighting with children from neighbouring rival slums. Eva excused it as kid's stuff: 'At the end of the day we might all be friends again.' She expressed regret: 'I'm sorry our children have missed that.'

A perceived decline in neighbours' mutual assistance prompted frequent comparisons between Topia and the old shanty towns, as polar scenarios for different kinds of neighbour relations (Weeks 2012a, 2012b). Not all aspects of the move to Topia were seen as negative: most people acknowledged the improved infrastructure and sanitation. But they concluded that if given their current house in the old neighbourhood, they would have much rather stayed there.<sup>85</sup> This balance is well illustrated in the following interview transcript with a Cape Verdean woman rehoused in Topia, who later bought a house there:

Our transition [from the slum] was good, it wasn't bad. Because at least we were going to get houses with better conditions and infrastructure, because there, as we lived in a degraded neighbourhood [*bairro degradado*], there were houses without water, electricity, even sanitation. Without means to even keep proper hygiene. And when we moved here, I was glad. Because many people lived in destitution, in subhuman conditions really. And these houses are much better in terms of infrastructure. But we also lost much of our culture, of our way, of the neighbourhood we lived in. Because we were much more solidary [*solidários*] with each other, we were closer [*mais amigos*], in other words in [the slum] we never closed the doors. We always had the doors open. Any place, any street, any alley you'd go to, doors were never closed. Not here. Here, people are forced to close the door because [pause] I don't know. First of all, because the aesthetics of the neighbourhood is different. And secondly, I'll just give you an example: I hardly know the neighbours in my building [a mixed building].

The theme of the 'open door' was prominent in residents' accounts. It seemed to

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<sup>85</sup> Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista (2001), Quedas (1994), Guerra (1994), Freitas (1994) and Pinto (1994) all address the duality of 'liking the house, disliking the neighbourhood' after rehousing (Pinto 1994; Guerra 1994).

stand for the openness of people and social relations themselves. Open doors ensured neighbours were connected and nobody was left alone. Later in the interview, she went on:

The neighbourhood [slum] had a very good thing. Since we didn't close the doors (just at night to sleep) if our next-door neighbour had a hungry child or had nothing to eat, we could tell and what little we had, we could share it. But here that doesn't happen. Here if somebody feels ill or hungry at home, we can no longer tell. ... Loneliness doesn't exist in the shanties [*barracas*]. It never existed in the shanties: never. Because no matter how bad off we are, we always reach out a hand to each other, we always share. But here it's different. Here there is loneliness. ...

Keeping doors open was directly linked in informants' accounts to housing structure – shanties as opposed to buildings. Buildings seemed incompatible with open doors. When I asked what she thought made people close their doors in Topia, she returned to the topic:

To begin with, it's the aesthetics of the neighbourhood itself. Because we're living in buildings. In buildings, it's impossible to have the door open. Because. Well for starters, it attracts burglars. And further because. How should I put it. For example, if you look at rehousing buildings (this one's owned [*de compra*]), doors outside are all damaged, the doorbells, it's all damaged. Because. I think the *building itself* doesn't give people that ease and trust to keep the door open. Because we don't know our neighbours. ... Because here we were rehoused together with other neighbourhoods, we don't have that kind of trust to leave the door open, because we don't know who lives next to us, what kind of people they are. There in [the slum] it was different, we were practically a family. We grew up together, our parents were neighbours, they knew each other since Cape Verde, and they're *compadres* and *comadres* you see. If I left my door open and my neighbour entered my house, I knew she'd only grab what she needed from the kitchen. Because we knew who lived next door.

These transcripts identified some of the factors seen to damage sociality in Topia, as opposed to the old slum. Part of the explanation resided, as Eva hinted at earlier, in important social and economic changes: higher living costs (Pinto 1994, 42; cf. Bourdieu 1979, 83ff.), women's participation in the labour force, social changes in racist mentality and segregation. Another part of the problem lay in the fact that people from different slums were rehoused together in Topia, along with outsiders who bought flats there. This contributed to a decline in trust, to the feeling that 'we don't know who lives next to us, what kind of people they are'. Common feelings of mistrust and insecurity about theft were

addressed above. But all these transformations were attributed to the changes in housing. Housing structure – 'the building itself' – was responsible for deteriorating social bonds. Aside from new neighbours (some unacquainted or distant when the rehousing took place), feelings of mistrust and disappointment were centrally linked, in people's narratives, to changes in housing type. Newly felt insecurity and isolation were associated with living in buildings, where doors were closed and one could not tell what was happening with neighbours.<sup>86</sup> The 'open door' was a pervasive metonym in narratives of slum life. It symbolised the open space and unrestrained social flux of things and people, living and relating together as 'practically a family', because the house and street had no real barrier between them.

In a Maltese setting, Mitchell (1998) described nostalgic accounts of past neighbour interactions based on ideas of 'openness' of the household to a collective space shared with other households (ibid., 89). In the Portuguese context, Freitas (1994, 29) similarly suggested that shanties made the street their natural extension, 'making possible an opening of domestic life to community life' (my translation) without having to leave the house (cf. Bourdieu 1979, 88-90). In buildings, the 'functional' side of those adjacent spaces (to wash, hang clothes or grill meat) lost purpose, while the loss of their 'symbolic' and 'sociability-supporting' dimensions was deeply felt, leading to a 'double closing/isolation': from the street itself (with increased privacy) but also from the street's social and relational roles (Freitas 1994, 29). Stairs became the new transitional spaces between private (home) and 'public' (street) spaces. But unlike the area outside shanties, stair landings are places only for 'passing', not 'staying' (ibid.): 'non-places' (Augé 1995), no longer the natural prolonging of the house, no longer supporting sociability. And so as doors became closed in Topia, keeping neighbours apart, significant social losses took place, as Livia (a Cape Verdean woman in her fifties) described in an interview:

We lost our sociality [*convivência*] with people.<sup>87</sup> (Ana: How was it?) Doors were all open. With neighbours, if we didn't have salt, we'd go ask 'Oh neighbour, don't you have a pinch of salt, a pinch of sugar, Oh neighbour don't you have an egg', it's always [pause] She never says no. And the door is open, we could go in and take it. It's a sociality we can call family sociality [*convivência familiar*]. Which is broken here [in Topia]. There's no sociality. People here are all selfish! (Ana: But they are more or less the same people here right?) They're the same. (Ana: So what do you think changed?) It changed because [pause] Even their attitude. I don't know if it's 'cause it's a building,

<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, living behind walls and gates in fortified compounds has been found to exacerbate insecurities and fear in similar ways (Low 2001; Caldeira 1996). Cf. chapter 7.

<sup>87</sup> *Convivência* (literally 'co-living') conveyed frequent and intimate contact over daily interaction.

because people are in a building? People changed their attitude, they're more arrogant.

In residents' accounts, buildings created barriers to 'sociality', to living and interacting together as a 'family' (Mitchell 1998, 87-89). If before neighbours 'never said no', in buildings their attitudes changed. Visits also became less frequent and spontaneous. This turned streets (and street corners) into the main meeting points, as buildings changed the centre of daily routines from an outwards-extending house to a confined one (Freitas 1994, 30). Because doors were now closed, people needed a reason to visit. Mena, a Cape Verdean woman in her late thirties, addressed the topic spontaneously in her life narrative:

I can say that after coming here [to Topia], everything changed. People changed, that sociality [*convivência*] we had in the neighbourhood [the slum] doesn't exist any more. In the old days in the neighbourhood I could leave the house, the door was always open, nobody had any problems. Because we knew everybody, children, youth, we knew everyone. And we always got along well. ... But to go to somebody's house [in Topia], there's a certain barrier, I don't know. I think many people when they came here, they've severed ties, that thing of frequenting each others' houses. To go to somebody's house, if they're not really my friends, I won't go. The people I visit are those I also feel comfortable having over. That's something that didn't exist in the neighbourhood [the slum]. We were always together, we'd meet on the street, People here are, I don't know. Things had to change. ... I think there's also the influence of living, lets say, in a building-type structure. Which is totally different. There, because it was a shanty, I think nobody had the complex of 'Oh, I have a better house', or 'My house is prettier.' Because here, for example if you're remodelling, others are paying attention because they think like 'this one's remodelling, it's because she has money and' - That's not the point. ... There's little harmony between people. People see it's dirty, but 'Oh I'm not gonna clean, because it's the other one who lives there', there's always that kind of trouble.

Mena mentioned another frequent complaint in new building life. Paradoxically, even while isolating people at home, buildings imposed new collective management of common areas (stairs and doorways). These new spaces had no correspondence in the old slums, and therefore no previous rules to ensure harmonious use. Neighbours criticised others for not taking responsibility to clean or care for these common spaces, which ended up dirty and damaged. Interviews at the housing office and other local institutions stressed the prior 'lack of preparation' of the rehoused population to live in buildings, and the importance of coming to 'educate' them over time to become responsible and liable in these

matters (chapter 8). Another aspect seen to deteriorate neighbour relations was something a social worker once termed 'the dazzle of buildings' (*o deslumbre dos prédios*) (cf. Bourdieu 1979, 90-91; Young and Willmott 1957, 129-133). Mena hinted at this by mentioning people's 'complex' of striving for a prettier home and monitoring neighbours' refurbishing. In the new buildings, houses became 'recipients of material and affective investments' (Pinto 1994, 37, my translation). Rodrigues (2003) explained people's investment in the home by arguing the new houses became for residents the 'symbolic markers of social status', seen as a 'unique opportunity for social promotion', confirmed in people's 'anxiety' and 'pleasure' in receiving the keys, and in the thought given to 'decorative styles and modes' (ibid., 96-97). For a socially and economically marginalised population, the upgrade to mainstream housing was seized as a way to affirm the household's social advancement, leading to the 'individualisation' and 'autonomisation' of life projects in the estate, and the creation of social 'divisions previously absent' (ibid., 97). When Ivone asked me to write a letter to a TV show to ask for help refurbishing her house, she rejoiced at the thought of her neighbours 'filled with envy, thinking I'm rich'. Conversely, she complained about her next-door neighbour coming over, under pretence of asking for garlic, to grab a peek at her living room after she painted the walls and bought some furniture: 'She wants to imitate me!' When I asked Fabi why she thought buildings changed people, she touched on the same issue:

They change people. Because [pause] there in [the slum] it's neighbourhood, not buildings. Buildings change people because you get inside the building and you close the door. Each person goes up to their floor. You don't see them. Not there [in the slum]. There there are no floors, there it's house next to house [*casa com casa*]. Like that, really close. You just need to go out and you're watching your neighbour leave the house. Not here in the building. You're going out, you see nobody. You go in, you might not see anybody. There, there's no one who won't notice you [*dá conta de ti*]. (Ana: And couldn't you have the doors open here like you did there?) No because [pause] it's different. Because here, many people are at work and they don't have their [pause] It's very hard to explain. Because here if you have your house open, you have other sorts of things in there. Like in the slum, many things weren't bought because people were afraid to ruin them, or to buy good stuff, they wanted to move to the building to put in those things, they ended up having those ideas. I think it's a ridiculous idea but whatever: 'Oh no, when I move to the building I'll buy this, I'll buy that.' They end up having more luxury than in [the slum], you get it? (Ana: So because they have more luxury they need to close the door.) They think that closing the door is

a way to prevent other people from buying the same, or [pause] It's that kind of thing. And also, one doesn't know, you're working, you don't know what time you'll be back. Many people who lived in [the slum] didn't work. (Ana: How did they manage?) My sister is one of them, she didn't work and after she came here she had to start working. Because there are more things to pay. There you didn't pay rent, you didn't pay water, there you didn't pay for anything, you lived [pause] comfortable [*à vontade*]. To answer your question, that's the difference. There you didn't pay for anything, you were more comfortable, here you pay for everything.<sup>88</sup> (Ana: What about men, did they work?) Men worked. Some of them, not the boys. The boys sold drugs.<sup>89</sup>

Like Eva, Fabi portrayed shanty life as more 'comfortable', not requiring female employment, allowing more free time and the chance to keep doors open – contrary to buildings, where 'you pay for everything' and open doors were not an option. Central to her account was again the idea that 'buildings change people'. As she put it, with closed doors and floors buildings interrupted neighbours' visual range and control over each other. Horizontal space ('house next to house') connoted sociability, whereas verticality (each with their 'floor') was linked to isolation and loneliness. She also pinpointed the connection between buildings and luxury, cultivating a sense of envy and competition between neighbours wishing to surpass each other. Visual 'control' in the shanties was a positive thing (keeping social ties alive, making sure people did not go hungry or ill, checking up on children), whereas in buildings gazing was to be prevented, assuming greedy or ill intentions (coveting one's purchases or copying one's home style). In people's minds, a social space of open doors, uninterrupted ties and support was transformed, in the new buildings, by the erection of walls and barriers – physical, social and symbolic. Foucault's (2008, 6) comment on cell partitions is also fitting here: through wall-building, a 'crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities'. Housing barriers and social barriers interrupted the flow of visits, items and assistance, severing neighbourly bonds. Fabi's initial clarification about the old slum summed it up: 'it's neighbourhood, not buildings'.

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<sup>88</sup> Although this was a common claim, a woman who bought a house in Topia claimed the opposite: for her family bills were higher in the slum because they paid council tax for their shanty. From interview testimonies, bills varied individually. Regarding electricity for example, some had electrical contracts, others pulled it clandestinely from the main network, still others from their neighbours, splitting the costs. One man claimed neighbours tricked others when splitting the bill. Nevertheless, most informants protested about paying rent in Topia.

<sup>89</sup> Drug dealing (common in some of the slums represented in Topia, not all) was also mentioned by other residents as partial explanation of why people did not have to work in the shanties. As one man put it: 'money circled around those days, it would find its way into most families'.

Working from social psychology, Stokoe and Wallwork (2003) offered useful insights on the interweaving of neighbour relations and space. Their research on conflict revealed how neighbour relations are 'constituted spatially' through defining the proper distance and ideal separation to be kept between people (*ibid.*, 557) – which varies according to setting and socio-economic group (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 35; Tonkiss 2003). The same 'power of space to include and exclude' transpired from residents' regrets about closed doors and weakened ties in Topia, longing for greater social proximity (Stokoe and Wallwork 2003, 566). Even though houses themselves were considered better, rehousing was mostly articulated as a profound loss in neighbourhood sociality and trust. The duality of shanties against buildings was the collective idiom for that loss: open versus closed space, with transformations in physical space having a social counterpart. Nostalgia and mourning for the past spoke about present neighbourhood life, a moral commentary on a social existence marked by 'adversity' (Mitchell 1998, 83). Depictions of communal solidarity in a place and time now extinct were 'held up as a kind of Edenic paradise, against which the present is judged', and so also 'reappropriated' (*ibid.*; Westwood and Williams 1997, 11). Articulated in idioms of space and physical barriers, these narratives could 'be heard as legitimate complaints about the disruption of the socio-moral order' (Stokoe and Wallwork, 555). Residents bemoaned the strained social environment where private claims and 'autonomised' projects made for 'numerous failed, unsuccessful, or incomplete mutual-help attempts' (Weeks 2012b, 7). They lamented the false pretences and hidden intentions, the declining visits, favours and trust (disqualifying 'friends' into 'acquaintances'), the house-centred investments and petty competition, gazing and gossip made invasive so as to penetrate closed doors and reveal concealment tactics. Buildings, doors and space were foregrounded in these tales to reflect people's dissatisfaction with neighbourhood life. The social meaning of these spatial configurations – of the estate itself – lay intertwined with ideas about the missed past, morals and community. Santos, quoted in the beginning of the chapter, wished to 'blow up' the buildings and keep the people. Topia, the social neighbourhood, was composed of more than its people. It was made of practices, symbols and discourses configuring specific relations between people and space.

## **4. The vegetable garden: 'That's the Cape Verdean tradition'**

Practices and rites of Cape Verdean culture were prominent in Topia's routines. Although some customs were upheld mostly by elders, an array of Cape Verdean habits and products was adopted by people of all ages. In this chapter I will examine these practices and objects, identified as Cape Verdean 'tradition' or products so-called '*di téra*' (i.e. of Cape Verde), to argue that second-generation Cape Verdeans actively appropriated a selection of them, and through learning and repeating came to reproduce in Topia an exclusive Cape Verdean 'community of practice' (Wenger 2006). Part 1 will address language (section 1.1) and names (1.2) to show how their differentiated contexts of use confirmed the exclusivity assigned to neighbours as opposed to outsiders. Part 2 will focus on religious rites around death (2.2) and infancy (2.3), to suggest that second generations' adherence to a tradition they were not fully familiar with happened through active learning and repeated doing, by exchanging information and following others' guidance – in other words within a 'community of practice' (2.1). In part 3, I will address ritual kinship (3.1) and yearly trips to a religious sanctuary (3.2) to highlight how second generations engaged selectively in Catholic rites, in mostly secular ways – focused on social priorities and utilitarian pleasures. Finally, part 4 will focus on cultural references '*di téra*' (typical Cape Verdean food, music and dance) and how they formed a shared repertoire of objects, meanings and performances for Cape Verdeans. The 'constitution' and 'sedimentation' of a 'Cape Verdean tradition' through repeated practice and performance (Butler 1988), as addressed in this chapter, worked on distinct grounds from local identity discourses of what it meant to be 'Cape Verdean' (the focus of the next chapter). My point in this chapter is to illuminate how the 'Cape Verdean tradition' and people's active engagement in its habits and products made for exclusive practices and knowledge in the neighbourhood, which enhanced the distinctiveness of neighbours (as participants) as opposed to outsiders.

### **1. Exclusive codes**

#### **1.1 Language: Creole and Portuguese**

Language was perhaps the most prominent cultural aspect in Topia's routines. Walking the streets, *badiu* Creole dominated daily conversation. Although each island of Cape Verde speaks its own version of Creole, there is a broad distinction between

windward (north) and leeward (south) variants, from the position and recognised cultural divide between the two main island groups in the archipelago (Batalha 2004b, 105-107; Carter and Aulette 2009, 216-217). The northern variant, so-called *sampadjudu* Creole and typified in the island of S. Vicente, is considered closer to Portuguese, with the southern variant, more strongly influenced by West African languages and dialects, known as *badiu* Creole. The latter is foremost represented in the island of Santiago, where most immigrant families rehoused in Topia originated from. Therefore, Cape Verdean children in Topia were socialised into the *badiu* variant. Although second-generation parents showed concern for teaching their children Portuguese to ease their transition to schooling, in practice most children learned Creole as a first language. Besides children, Cape Verdeans in Topia only spoke to each other in Portuguese when others present did not understand it. Some elders could not speak fluent Portuguese, articulating just enough to get by, or less. Generations born and raised in Cape Verde spoke Portuguese rather poorly, unlike younger ones raised in Portugal, usually fluent. But among both, Creole remained the standard language for oral communication in the estate. Because Creole-learning at home was a purely oral practice, people never learned how to write it. Although political discussions are ongoing about making Creole an official language in Cape Verde and agreeing on a written standard to teach it in schools (Batalha 2004b; Cardoso 2005, 86-89), in Topia schooled residents learned to read and write only in Portuguese.<sup>90</sup>

The occasional statement by Cape Verdeans in Topia that Creole was 'ill-spoken Portuguese' (*português mal falado*) implicitly reproduced old colonial ideologies of assimilation, still current among post-colonial Cape Verdean elites (Batalha 2004b, 107). Colonial discourses considered the metropolis (Portugal) a stronghold of civilization, and Africa its uncivilised counterpart (Meintel 1984, 103-107). Cape Verde, resulting from the miscegenation of Portuguese settlers and West African slaves, was seen to stand midway between the two, striving to emulate Portugal's sophisticated contributions (Batalha 2004b; Carter and Aulette 2009, 218; Meintel 1984, 141-143). Language was a privileged object in these discourses. As the result of linguistic colonial encounters between settlers and slaves, Creole was denigrated as a broken and incorrect version of Portuguese. As Batalha (2004b, 103) put it, 'African influence was seen as the corruptor of the metropolitan Portuguese, and the African natives were seen as incapable of learning the "complex" structure of Portuguese language'. These ideas pervaded residents' views of Creole in Topia, as illustrated by the following conversation. Four Cape Verdeans in their twenties

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<sup>90</sup> This led to interesting mixed practices in written communication media like text messaging or the internet. Text messages shown to me by Cape Verdeans used mainly Portuguese, while Facebook usually employed Creole, combining Portuguese spelling with phonetic resemblance to spoken Creole.

and thirties (including Eva) chatted in Creole one morning on the street, while I struggled to make out what they said. When they learned I was taking Creole lessons, the topic shifted to language. Eva, who had worked as a cultural mediator, claimed to have taken classes as well, 'to learn how to write Creole properly'. They concurred that 'true Creole' (*o verdadeiro crioulo*) was Guinean Creole: 'When Guineans speak you can't understand a thing!' They defined the Creole they spoke in Portugal as 'ill-spoken Portuguese', arguing 'is not proper, it's a mix', even while switching back and forth between addressing me in Portuguese and speaking Creole to each other.

Depictions of Creole as broken Portuguese corrupted by African ('Guinean') origins found direct correspondence in past colonial ideologies. But because colonial authorities had attempted to suppress Creole and other African-connoted habits of *badiu* culture in Santiago, in time these habits assumed political significance as tools of resistance against colonialism (Meintel 1984, 141-51; cf. Bourgois 2003, 50). According to Carter and Aulette (2009, 213), this legacy of Creole as a weapon to 'challenge the dominant contemporary power structures' subsisted in Cape Verde to this day, as Portuguese remained the official language 'used in schools, administration, and every formal domain of Cape Verdean society' (Batalha 2004b, 107). Interestingly, the same 'ambiguity' towards Creole, rendered as primitive even while used as an everyday tool of resistance, was also patent in Topia (cf. chapter 5). Even while considered a poorer version of Portuguese, Cape Verdeans regularly and effectively employed Creole to exclude outsiders in Topia, and to resist perceived asymmetrical interactions and paternalism (chapter 8).

In Topia, Creole was the informal language of everyday life for Cape Verdeans, while outsiders were typically addressed in Portuguese. Although Portuguese was also used with non-Cape Verdean neighbours, many of them understood Creole from growing up together and establishing affinity ties with Cape Verdean families. Among second-generation residents, some whites spoke Creole fluently and regularly. Bilingual interactions were also common, with Cape Verdeans addressing white neighbours in Creole and the latter replying in Portuguese, without it disturbing the conversation. The partial bilingualism of second-generation residents gave rise to other interesting practices, such as never translating quotes from others' speech (in either language). Quoting happened in the original language of the quote, even when different from the one being used in the conversation. So for example Maria (a white middle-aged woman married to a Cape Verdean man) complained in Portuguese to Eva about a man who had broken a window in her building and then yelled: '*N ka ta paga mérda nenhuma*' ('I'm not paying for shit'). I was startled by this irruption, since I had never heard Maria speak Creole before,

but the conversation in Portuguese carried on undisturbed. Second generations evinced no problem in shifting quickly between the two languages. But despite their fluency in both, Creole was evidently a first language for Cape Verdeans. This was confirmed by the fact that it was spoken by default (when nothing specifically required Portuguese); by Cape Verdean children's particular difficulties with Portuguese school grammar; by minor 'transference/interference mistakes' and performance 'lapses', including Portuguese misphrasings and mispronunciations, suggesting some direct translation from Creole occurred (Cardoso 2005, 92-101, 137). Creole was the language of informal and daily interaction among Cape Verdeans of all generations, along with their bilingual neighbours. Growing up together in a predominantly Cape Verdean social environment, most neighbours had some command or understanding of it – including middle-aged and elderly white neighbours (e.g. Ivone, Luzia, Maria, Adelaide). In contrast, all contact with institutions, formal situations and official powers forced Cape Verdeans to employ Portuguese. From experience, white outsiders were assumed not to understand Creole and treated accordingly, either addressed in Portuguese or ignored and excluded from conversation by using Creole.<sup>91</sup> Neighbours' restricted knowledge of Creole made language into an exclusionary asset, creating 'locality through social participation' (Pardue 2012b, 10): Creole was the intimate language of neighbours; outsiders spoke only Portuguese.

## 1.2 'Who's that?': 'house-names' and 'church-names'

The same logic of having an inside familiar language used with neighbours and a different official one for outsiders also applied to names. There was a distinction among Cape Verdeans between individual nicknames (one or several), attributed by family or friends, usually from an early age, and the official name chosen for registry and baptism. This division was a common practice in Cape Verde. About it, Mariano (quoted in Filho 2003, 273-274) argued that the relation between the two types of names, which he termed respectively 'church-name' and 'house-name' (*nome-de-casa*), was that of a 'coexistence [*convivência*] between different kinds of culture': an 'official' one, versus 'a familiar and domestic one' (*ibid.*, my translation). This contrast mirrored the same found in language, which set daily neighbourhood life apart from outside contexts through a selective, contrasting use of codes: a familiar vs. an official language; familiar vs. official names. When introducing her family to me on Facebook, Leandra articulated the same distinction between the 'church-name' (*nómi di igreja*) used for baptising the child, and the 'short

<sup>91</sup> People could be wrong in their assumption. Stories circulated of Cape Verdeans being embarrassed for speaking about outsiders in Creole in front of them to then find out they had been understood.

name' (*nómi piquinóti*) used at home.

The nickname could take a number of forms: a common Portuguese or Cape Verdean first name, a shortening of one's own name, a word in Portuguese or Cape Verdean with some personal meaning or a set of syllables with no meaning at all. Fabi explained that nicknames could be given by parents or age peers, and people might come up with new ones when they grew up. Although women with Cape Verdean citizenship could register their children in Portugal with a Cape Verdean name (by paying embassy fees), chosen nicknames for children were sometimes the Cape Verdean names which had been refused by the Portuguese Civil Registry, or just shorter names used to replace long or complicated ones in daily use.<sup>92</sup>

I often came to know people by their official names, either in interviews or because they spontaneously introduced themselves that way to me (as an outsider). When I mentioned those names in conversation with other neighbours, most people did not know whom I was referring to: 'Who's that?' They would eventually get there through residential and kinship coordinates (chapter 2): 'She's the mother of so-and-so; She lives on that street' – 'Oh, that's [nickname].' Not only was it clear that residents knew their Cape Verdean neighbours by familiar nicknames, but also that they reserved official names for institutional contexts and interactions with outsiders. This drew a practical distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' names. I was surprised when the (white) owner of Crow café addressed Fabi by her official first name, as I knew she had been going there for years. Her reply was illuminating: 'Everyone in the neighbourhood knows me as Fabi, but I'm used to using [official name] on the outside [*fora*].' Although Crow's existed in Topia from early in the resettlement, the fact that the man was not a neighbour automatically consigned him to 'the outside'. Nicknames stood alongside language and other elements of social interaction, like greetings (chapter 2), to demarcate clearly who was a neighbour and who was not. In his discussion about 'truth' in personal names, Pina-Cabral (2010) posited a relationship between name use and 'personhood'. When naming practices produce different personal names – usually a 'real' or official name and one or more pseudonyms – each name and its context of use 'refer to and reinforce those aspects of personhood to which they are associated' (ibid., 306). As 'objectifications of the person's relational constitution' (ibid.), names 'evoke', 'contain' and 'validate' certain aspects, features and relations of the person in a local naming context, to the detriment of others (ibid., 306-307). Nicknames and official names clearly belonged to different contexts of use in Topia. They carried contrasting

<sup>92</sup> First names in Portugal must be Portuguese unless the child or parents can claim citizenship of another country. Names admitted are specified in a list published by the Director-General of Registry and Notary services (viewed 7 July 2013): [http://www.irn.mj.pt/IRN/sections/irn/a\\_registral/registos-centrais/docs-da-nacionalidade/vocabulos-admitidos-e/](http://www.irn.mj.pt/IRN/sections/irn/a_registral/registos-centrais/docs-da-nacionalidade/vocabulos-admitidos-e/).

expectations, types of relationship and levels of intimacy. 'Church-names' were impersonal, employed in detached interactions with distanced outsiders, or tied to official settings and power relations: forms to be filled, bureaucratic resources to bargain, employment requirements. Conversely, 'short names' were the domain of neighbour relations, familiar exchanges, created and used with close others in informal settings and routines. Naming practices and their clearly demarcated contexts validated and reinforced the relational distinction between the neighbourhood and the outside.

## 2. Cape Verdean religious rites

### 2.1 Learning 'tradition'

Religion in Cape Verde (as in Portugal) is primarily Catholic. Catholicism was the only recognised religion in Cape Verde until the late nineteenth century, when other churches and faiths began entering the islands, and more so after independence in 1975 (AHN 1998, 164-175). The National Historical Archive of Cape Verde identified eleven religious communities in the country by the end of the twentieth century, nine of which were Christian (ibid.).<sup>93</sup> However, religious practice in Cape Verde has also incorporated elements of popular (namely West African) beliefs including, as mentioned in chapter 3, witchcraft and the evil eye, *kórda* and the belief in *finadu* spirits (ibid., 156-164) – especially in rural Santiago, considered closer to its African cultural roots (Bäckström 2009, 45, 49-50). In this respect, it is common to find mention to a 'religious syncretism' in Cape Verde (ibid., 41-51; Filho 1995). A government worker from Praia (Santiago), in Lisbon during my fieldwork, suggested that 'spirituality in Cape Verde carries many marks [*marcas*] of Catholicism, but it has many other rites who have the appearance of it, but are not Catholic'. Rites marking significant events in the life cycle (especially birth and death) reflect this combination of Catholic and popular beliefs. Deep-rooted in rural Cape Verde, these rites are also well established, despite variations, in the cultural life of Cape Verdean diasporic communities (Esteves and Caldeira 2001, 108). Topia was no exception. 'Traditional' ritual practices were prominent in the estate, namely around the events of birth and death. To learn when and how to follow 'traditional' ritual precepts, people resorted to knowledgeable elders or people who had learned it from books. 'That's the Cape Verdean tradition', Fabi shrugged dismissing my questions: 'It doesn't have much explanation.'

Studies of religion and migration have illustrated the differentiated responses by

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<sup>93</sup> Namely, Church of the Nazarene, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Pentecostal Church 'God is Love', Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), New Apostolic Church, Assemblies of God, Jehovah Witnesses, Bahá'i Faith, and Islam (ibid.).

migrants, namely second generations, to their parents' religious traditions – from weakened or strengthened adherence, to conversion, non practice, instrumental use or fundamentalist zeal – and the diverse social and cultural meanings they can assume in the host country: promoting ethnicity-building, allowing access to support networks, state resources, public recognition or political participation (cf. Cadge and Ecklund 2007, 368-369; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, 140-141). In Topia, cultural rites certainly mobilised neighbours and strengthened sociality through celebratory gatherings and ritual kinship ties (Nutini and Bell 1980). However, some ritual practices missed the familiar sense of habit. People's unfamiliarity with them was apparent, especially within second generations. Cultural rites carried a degree of strangeness and novelty for the people who took part in them. Differing ideas about correct precepts and tentative behaviours in ritual moments suggested Cape Verdeans were often unsure of what to say or do, actively engaging with a tradition they did not master. Their willing engagement pointed to an active process of ongoing learning, participating and reproducing 'tradition' through watching, sharing and doing. Second generation's selective appropriation of their parents' ritual 'traditions' became a platform for learning, from other Cape Verdeans, how to engage appropriately. 'The Cape Verdean tradition', as Fabi put it, established a common ground around which Cape Verdeans and their close others mobilised to participate, and learn how to do so. Beyond expressions of personal faith, Cape Verdean religious practices in Topia became, in other words, the focal objects of a 'community of practice' (Wenger 2006, 1).

Coined in the early 1990s as part of a practice-oriented approach to informal learning, the concept of 'community of practice' looked beyond passive knowledge internalisation to recognise the agency of learning subjects (Lave and Wenger 1991). Learning was redefined as an integral part of individuals' situated everyday activity and participation 'in the lived-in world' (ibid., 35). This involved a process of mutual constitution: individuals' learning trajectories worked to reproduce and change their social learning environment, while transforming learners themselves (ibid., 56-58). In this process the learner progressively became 'a full participant, a member, a kind of person' within that learning environment (the community of practice) as he developed 'knowledgeably skilled identities in practice' (ibid., 53-55). And that 'ongoing, conflicting, synergistic structuring of activity and relations among practitioners' served to reproduce and transform the 'community' (ibid., 56). Wenger (2006, 1) summed up the concept of community of practice as 'people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor'. He clarified the conditions for any learning process to translate into a community of practice, entailing: a 'domain' of 'shared competence that

distinguishes members from other people'; a group ('community') of people who 'interact and learn together', sharing activities, information and advice; and a 'shared practice' which through 'time and sustained interaction' will develop a common 'repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems' (Wenger 2006, 1-2). The wide latitude of the concept has allowed its application to such diverse areas of learning as 'business, organizational design, government, education, professional associations, development projects, and civic life' (ibid., 4-6). In the field of migration research, Reed-Danahay (2008) used the concept to examine how Vietnamese immigrants in the U.S. learn in practice about citizenship and 'belonging' in their host country. In Topia, I found the concept helpful in illuminating second generations' engagement with their parents' perceived cultural 'tradition', and how that engagement constituted Cape Verdeans and their neighbours (also involved in these cultural practices) as a distinctive and exclusive group with respect to outsiders. By creating a repertoire of shared cultural affinity, learned and reproduced through ongoing social participation, 'the Cape Verdean tradition' defined a basis for exclusive membership, from which non-Cape Verdeans and non-neighbours were in practice left out.

## **2.2 Death: the *stera***

Death was a key ritual moment for Cape Verdean families. Aside from common Catholic rites like funeral Mass and requiem services (on the seventh day, after one month, and on death anniversaries), specific Cape Verdean rites took place at the family house. A prominent one was the placing of the *stera* (literally 'mat'), a kind of altar set up for the soul of the deceased for seven days, with a daily rosary said on behalf of the soul. I visited three *steras* in Topia.<sup>94</sup> They were set on the living room table, covered on that occasion with two or three cloths: white, (sometimes) blue and black.<sup>95</sup> A big crucifix rested against the wall, wrapped in another white cloth, and bordered by a rosary and statuettes of the Virgin Mary or other saints. On either side of the table, a white candle burned for the deceased's soul. A woman explained these candles should never die out for all seven days, serving to guide the soul and keep it at the house. Spare candles might be included on the table. Before the crucifix stood a picture of the deceased (in one case an ID with photo). One relative added a piece of paper with the full official name and dates of birth and death. All these things faced the family and visitors coming to pray, cry and pay their respects.

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<sup>94</sup> With small exceptions, they fitted the descriptions of typical *steras* given to me in Cape Verde.

<sup>95</sup> People dismissed the meaning of colours as simply 'tradition'. Some specified that black represented death and mourning, and blue signalled an adult had passed (therefore absent when children died).

Lining the walls of the room next to the table, chairs and seats were set out for visitors. Diana explained the correct procedure to follow: upon arrival, visitors should stop in front of the altar to pray (sometimes cry) for the deceased. Then they should go around to greet each person individually (at least those they were acquainted with) and express their respects to family members, easily recognisable from black attire worn in mourning and white cloths tied around women's heads, to relieve headaches.<sup>96</sup> Finally, visitors should sit or stand for a while, silent or participating in ongoing chats, and be offered a meal from the kitchen. Closer visitors, usually female, could sit in the kitchen instead, eating and chatting to the women cooking the food. As mentioned in chapter 2, female neighbours were mobilised to prepare food for visitors, as the grieving family should not cook during this time. Conversely, men often drank and talked on the stairs just outside the door, reflecting a gendered division in the occupation of domestic space. Chats could revolve around mundane and disconnected topics, and from time to time crying would break out, momentarily halting others' conversations.<sup>97</sup> Babies in the house could become a focus of interaction, exempting people near them from the gloomy atmosphere of sorrow: women held and shook them in the air, calling out their names in playful affectionate tones.

A central element connected to the *stera* was the daily saying of the rosary for the deceased's soul. Neighbours owning a book with rosary prayers, often people with some experience in it, could be invited to guide the praying. Around the announced time, usually 8 or 9 p.m., neighbours arrived to the house and gathered with the family in front of the *stera*. The person in charge conducted the prayers and read the appropriate passages for each day of the week. After the rosary, it was customary to serve black coffee and couscous (a typical Cape Verdean dish) to the visitors remaining, though many left for their homes.<sup>98</sup> Some visitors remained through the night, dozing off on their seat. A woman assured that on such a setting 'one can't sleep', making this a close testament to people's closeness to the family. Family members were expected to wear black clothing for different periods of time, depending on their relation to the deceased.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In practice, greetings to the family and acquaintances were usually offered *before* praying at the *stera*.

<sup>97</sup> Bereaved crying followed its own genre, like a prolonged moan performed in drawling high-pitched voice. Words were repetitive and uttered in a singing-like manner, addressing the deceased to express regret and sorrow ('Oh my mother, my mother' [*oh nha mai, nha mai*], 'Oh I can't endure it' [*Ami-N ka ta aquenta*]), or request the soul to send regards (*fla mantenha*) to other deceased family members.

<sup>98</sup> Couscous was home-made from mixed manioc and corn flours and sugar, combined in a typical woven sieve (*balai*) and steam-boiled in a ceramic container with holes. It resulted in a cake-like shape of a thick and sticky consistence, sliced and dipped in butter or sour milk (*leite durmidu*).

<sup>99</sup> Spouses kept all-black clothing for a year, along with children and godchildren, for whom not all pieces must be black. Siblings and uncles kept it for six months. During mourning people should not attend parties (including christenings and weddings), but in each case I was told 'it's up to one's conscience'. There were exceptions to mourning: parents should not mourn for children, for 'that would call for more deaths'; similarly, if a second close person died mourning should be lifted lest it attract more deaths.

Past midnight of the seventh day, after a requiem Mass had been held at church, the *stera* was finally lifted [*levantada*]. The person who set it should be the same to remove it. Some elders explained that the purpose of the lifting was to guide the soul out of the house so it would not linger on. This was done by carrying *stera* objects (candles, cloths, crucifix, etc.) away from the house, while exhorting the spirit to leave. In the process, the person presiding would talk to the soul, encouraging it to go away, and nobody should cry lest the spirit feel their grief and enter them, forcing the rite to be re-enacted from the beginning. Elders in Cape Verde described a candle procession as part of the lifting, whereby relatives and neighbours brought their own candles, prayed and sang along the way while *stera* items were carried away from the house.

The only *stera* lifting I could witness in Topia was far simpler. After returning from the requiem Mass, a young woman who had guided the rosary prayers from a book at some point suggested to two others (an elder who had helped with the rosary, and a knowledgeable woman who had set the *stera*) that they should lift it now. It was a practical decision. The whole process occurred under her guidance, with frequent questions and clarifications shared between the three. Everyone in the room rose and was instructed to keep repeating a series of Catholic prayers, guided by her voice. While we prayed, the three women discussed how to remove the objects from the table, blowing the candles and wrapping everything in the cloths, checking with one another as they went along ('Like so?') The woman who had set the *stera* took the bundle and carried it out of the flat and down the stairs, while the younger woman instructed us to follow. A gloomy and insecure procession walked cautiously down the steps into the dark chilly night, many dressed in black and without their coats, all mumbling prayers, carrying after the woman with the bundle. Out on the street, the three women waited for everyone to step out of the building, insisting for the last person to leave the threshold. The younger woman made a feeble gesture with both arms and hands over the bundle, as if casting something away from it into the distance (thereby expelling the spirit) and we all carried back up to the house, this time in silence. The bundle was placed under the table and instructed to remain there for three days before washing and putting away. People in the room repeated these instructions to one another and explained them to children and those standing at the back. They were learning about the rite, and many of them seemed to be witnessing it for the first time. I could detect some curiosity (not unlike my own) about the ritual. The whole process was tentative, like following a new recipe from a book (as was literally the case), unsure about and checking each next step. People willingly followed a tradition they were relatively unfamiliar with.

Although agreeing on the core points of the rite, it was interesting to see how people, even elders, had slightly different versions of it and were unsure about details, although admitting there was *one* right way to do it. The day when the *stera* should be lifted was one such topic of disagreement. Two young women explained the *stera* to me, one describing it should be held with the rosary, the coffee and couscous for seven days, the other promptly correcting: '*Eight* days.' Others clarified it should be lifted after midnight of the seventh day or sometime during the eighth day. They sat commenting on a case that stirred some confusion. Domingas' mother had died in Cape Verde and Domingas only learned about it a few days later. She had planned to go to Cape Verde for the funeral but a problem with her passport prevented it, so she ended up setting the *stera* up in her house several days after the demise. The question then arose of when it should be lifted. Different people discussed the matter. Some suggested it should be lifted seven days after it had been set. Others argued the moment of reference was not the *stera* but the death itself: 'She's gonna lift it in the wrong day. If she didn't set it the day of the death, she shouldn't have set it at all.' Domingas should rather remove it seven days after her mother's death.<sup>100</sup> Close to the date, Diana warned me they planned to lift the *stera* on a Tuesday evening (in two days time) so I would not miss it. But on Monday evening she messaged correcting they had decided Monday was the right day after all, and they were about to lift it. I rushed up to Domingas' house, but was very surprised to find it nearly empty. Her husband quietly dined in the living room while Domingas sat in the kitchen with some neighbours peeling beans and talking about gardens. I joined them. Some minutes after the hour, as nobody else arrived and it did not seem like they would finish soon, I asked Domingas if they were lifting the *stera* that evening. 'No', it would be removed the next day (Tuesday, as initially planned). I insisted someone had assured me it should be removed that day, but she repeated I was mistaken, it should be the following. As they got started on a brand new bag of beans, I decided it was time to leave. So the following evening I returned at the set time, only to learn they had in the end decided to lift the *stera* the previous evening. Domingas apologised, explaining that after I left she was told Monday was the right day after all. Although I was frustrated to miss the lifting, the confusion around this episode raised some interesting issues. It confirmed that people were often insecure about ritual precepts and that these were frequently carried out by following others' (sometimes contradictory) pointers and advice. Still discussing Domingas' case, a few neighbours criticised her family for 'breaking' [*quebrar*] the *stera*, i.e. not adhering to proper mourning precepts, by watching television during the seven even days: 'On those

<sup>100</sup> Two elders in rural Santiago argued that the day of the funeral, not of death, should be the reference for placing and removing the *stera*.

days you shouldn't watch TV or listen to music, that's the way it is in Cape Verde.' A woman agreed: 'That's how it is in my house!' While another contended: 'I think you can watch it if it's during the day...' People's limited familiarity and certainty about ritual details was again made apparent one month after Domingas' mother's demise, when family and neighbours attended the requiem service for her soul. Walking back from the church to Domingas' house, I was surprised to see that the *stera* was back, exactly the same as three weeks before. I asked different people about it, without clarification. Domingas 'had been told' she should place it again that day. Domingas' daughter (about my age) gave a telling reply: 'I don't know: *you're* studying these things, *you* know more about them than I do.'

### 2.3 Infancy: the *faze kriston*

Birth was another significant ritual moment in Cape Verdean culture. As suggested in chapter 3, it was paramount to protect the young child from evil supernatural forces. In Cape Verde, two related ceremonies were conventionally held on the the night after the seventh day of birth: the *guárda-kabésa* (literally 'to guard the head') also known as *noti di séti* ('night of seven') or simply *séti*; and the *faze kriston* ('to make Christian') (AHN 1998, 162-163; Filho 1995, 19-36). Filho (1995) along with Esteves and Caldeira (2001, 108) seem to conflate both rites into the same ceremony, as some informants in Topia also did (probably because in Cape Verde they took place on the same night). However, several interviewees distinguished them as to their functions and procedures.<sup>101</sup> Conventionally, *séti* would be carried out on the night of the seventh day, when family, neighbours and friends gathered to protect the baby from spiritual harm, namely witchcraft and evil spirits. With the infant laying in bed, a number of metal objects were placed under his pillow or at the head of the bed to 'guard' him (these could include scissors open to form a cross, a knife, a blade, a needle, a pin). Adults remained awake through the night, often eating and dancing. At dawn of the eighth day, danger would have passed.<sup>102</sup>

The ceremony of *faze kriston*, on the other hand, was seen as a 'first christening' (*primeiro batismo*) carried out at home. Cape Verdeans saw it as protecting the child until she was properly baptised in church. One informant in Topia argued that it would replace baptism in case the child died before being christened. Others claimed that priests in Cape

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<sup>101</sup> A clear statement of this division came from a man in Ribeira da Barca (Santiago), locally known as an expert on *faze kriston* and frequently called to perform the ceremony. After describing the procedures of *faze kriston* in great detail and a very systematic fashion, I asked him about *séti*. He declared he did not know about its precepts very well and suggested I try interviewing an expert on that.

<sup>102</sup> AHN (1998, 163) suggested the origin of this ritual might be tied to children in Cape Verde often dying from tetanus around the seventh day of life, due to inappropriate sterilisation techniques at home births.

Verde refused to perform the sacrament if the child had not previously gone through the *faze kriston*. Despite these variations, its main purpose of spiritually protecting the child was agreed upon. *Faze kriston* involved the parents and godparents, the child and an expert called to preside over it. Certain ritual objects were also used: a white candle, a white cloth wrapping the child, a white plate containing water with salt. The expert would light the candle, conduct a series of prayers, ask the godparents to renounce Satan, and draw signs of the cross (with the water) on the infant's forehead, while claiming to baptise the child, under her official name, 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. Only very close relatives were expected to attend (and I was able to attend only one).

Although according to informants in Cape Verde *faze kriston* should be carried out (like *séti*) on the night after the seventh day, I never heard about *séti* being performed in Topia, while *faze kristons* often took place on the child's first birthday party. At the party, with a full house of guests, godparents and close relatives shortly retreated into a private room to perform the *faze kriston*, rejoining the party afterwards. One reason for having both ceremonies (birthday and *kriston*) at once was to save on food expenses, condensing both into a single party (cf. chapter 7). Like *stera*, *faze kriston* took place in a context of active sociality. It involved food, drinks, dancing and many guests. Close female neighbours were again expected to help cook and serve the food.

Aside from activating and strengthening social ties, another similarity between the *faze kriston* and *steras* I attended was that people seemed unfamiliar with the rite itself. When the part came for godparents to renounce Satan they hesitated on the reply, unsure of what to say, until the elder instructed them to answer yes. Again when the ceremony ended, the child's father reacted with genuine surprise: 'That was it?' (*Dja sta?*) The elder confirmed 'that was it', causing uneasy laughter among those present. People's limited familiarity with these rituals suggested that Cape Verdeans in Topia, especially second generations, chose to enact ritual traditions they were somewhat ignorant about, and which they learned tentatively, from direct participation and others guidance. In the example above, parents and godparents had never witnessed a *faze kriston* before, nor were they aware of what roles to fulfil in it. Still they considered it important for the child to follow 'tradition' and have one, even if later than prescribed (on his first year instead of seventh day), and called a knowledgeable elder from another settlement to guide them. In this and other examples, Cape Verdeans learned about 'the Cape Verdean tradition' from engaging with it in practice, guided by others' pointers and experience. But this appropriation was selective. Rather than passive reproduction, young people's religious participation was actively shaped by their (mostly secular) interests and motivations.

### 3. Secular rites

#### 3.1 Sacraments: to be godparents

Whenever I asked informants about religion or church, they painted a consistent picture: most residents were Catholic, most of these were non practitioners. Many households I entered had religious images and statues on display; yet not many people I knew ever attended church. 'That's the old folk [*cotas*], they always go'; 'I used to go when I was younger, but now I can't find the time...' – these were common remarks by second-generation informants, all self-identified as Catholic.<sup>103</sup>

Some elder Cape Verdean women knew local Mass schedules by heart and often attended church on weekends, but most other adults entered church only on special occasions such as requiem services or weddings. In fact, even on these occasions many second-generation guests arrived at the end of the service and waited outside the church to offer respects or best wishes. Among the fewer who attended Mass on those events, participation in the service (uttering of replies and prayers, taking part in the Eucharist) was much lower than that of elders. Although everyone showed respect for the Mass and the priest, rising and sitting when required, lips and voices did not accompany the liturgy.

Despite their weak church participation, most second-generation Cape Verdeans I knew were baptised, many had received their first communion and some even their confirmation. And Cape Verdean parents, even young ones, made a point of having their own children baptised. For money constraints they might postpone the baptism to combine it with larger celebrations (their own wedding or a collective baptism in the family or neighbourhood) and share the expenses. But most retained the plan, in the short or longer term, to baptise children. Moreover, Cape Verdeans of different generations often spoke of Catholic sacraments in terms of wanting to 'get them over with' [*ficar despachado*], or being happy about 'being done'. Phrasings like these suggested that sacraments were felt as a social requirement or milestone to reach, more than a spiritual desire or commitment to the Church. Although a middle-aged Cape Verdean woman suggested their importance was in assuring one would 'go to Heaven', the fact that children in Topia often got baptised (and even made *kriston*) at a later age evinced the limits for this explanation.

In these celebrations, important social ties were forged or consolidated, namely ties of 'co-parenthood' (*compadrio*): between godparents, godchildren and their parents

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<sup>103</sup> Statistics on young people's religious practice in Portugal suggest a downward trend (Duque 2007), but here I am interested only in how religious habits were lived and reproduced in Topia, and how they affected place-making in the neighbourhood.

(Åkesson 2004, 118; Nutini and Bell 1980; Gudeman 1972; Mintz and Wolf 1950, 341). These ties permanently linked the two families, assuming the idiom of ritual kinship. Parents and godparents (and respective spouses) thereby became *compadres* and *comadres* ('co-fathers' and 'co-mothers'), with their children treated as cousins (chapter 2). People employed these terms ('godmother', '*compadre*', 'cousin') both for treatment and reference. Although these ties did not extend to others in the family, godparents were taken into 'greater consideration', as one informant put it, by members of the godchild's family.

A sixty-year-old Cape Verdean woman explained who was the *compadre* in Cape Verdean culture: 'It's he who baptises my child, and his wife is also *comadre*. Or the parents of the child I baptise.' The phrasing was common: godparents, rather than parents, were said 'to baptise' godchildren, portraying their role as an active one. The act of baptising children founded the relationship between the co-parents. But the child was more than a passive 'mediating' figure in the tie between *compadres* (Nutini and Bell 1980, 54-55), being a focal node in the relationship. While consolidating the esteem and 'consideration' between the two families, these ties were also associated with another, more immediate function. Unlike Gudeman's (1972) analysis of godparents' position as an essentially spiritual one, quintessentially separated from material or economic functions, in Topia an assumed role of godparents was to 'give things' to the celebration (Nutini and Bell 1980, 56-67). By the time I attended my first baptism in Topia, I was already very mindful of the importance of 'sharing' and 'contributing' (chapter 3). As usual in parties involving food, I asked Diana whether to bring something. She strongly rejected the thought: 'You don't take anything to a baptism! The godfather gives the drinks and the godmother brings the cake.' She mentioned her daughter's 'birthday godmother', something I had never heard of. She noticed my puzzlement: 'We have them. We Africans have godmothers for everything!'<sup>104</sup> Her only role was clear: 'She brings the cake!' This kind of purely material obligation could be transient or could form a lasting bond: I both heard of birthday parties '*when*' someone was the godmother, and women claiming 'to *be*' someone's birthday godmother: 'I *always* bring the cake.' Nevertheless, this expected flow of material benefits did not turn, from what I witnessed, into vertical 'patron-client' relations (Befu 1977, 268).

Ties of co-parenthood and patronage were a classical focus of ethnography in so-called 'complex societies' from the 1940s (Gudeman 1972, 250-251; Kushner 1969; Mintz and Wolf 1950). Discussions of co-parenthood have often underscored these ties' function in sustaining 'social solidarity' (Mintz and Wolf 1950, 342). Functional perspectives on the topic have at times unduly stressed social harmony, overlooking conflict, contradiction and

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<sup>104</sup> 'Africans' was often used interchangeably with 'Cape Verdeans' as self-identifier (see chapter 5).

dynamism in social relations; or emphasised structure to the detriment of 'thick description' of local meanings (Geertz 1973). Nevertheless, some classic observations and tools remain useful. Among them, I found helpful the distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' co-parenthood (Mintz and Wolf 1950). 'Horizontal' refers to 'the direction that the *compadre* mechanism takes when linking together members of the same class', while a 'vertical' direction ties together 'different classes'. Like in the Mexican community studied by Nutini and Bell (1980), in Topia there were 'no distinct societal divisions that can be construed into identifiable social classes', which therefore did not allow ritual ties among second generations to be used as 'a mechanism for economic maximization' (ibid., 219). Expected material sponsoring by godparents in celebrations did not imply or turn into 'vertical' patron-client relations.<sup>105</sup> Patronage implies quintessentially asymmetrical ties, both in the ability to provide goods and services, and in the kind of resources provided (Wolf 2004, 16-17; Befu 1977, 268). Whereas patrons grant immediate economic benefits or social protection, clients reciprocate in intangible assets such as loyalty, esteem, information or reputation-building (ibid.). This did not happen in Topia. Although there certainly was heterogeneity of income and employment, the overall portrait (described in chapter 2) was one of generalised hardship to differing degrees. I met a few first-generation individuals (and there were likely more) who mentioned having an unusually high number of godchildren. They tended to be well-respected members of the neighbourhood (namely in their former slum) and had wide acquaintance networks. Despite their good social standing, their economic status was modest.<sup>106</sup> Some people were better off than others and perceived to have more resources, and as such more regularly asked for things (chapter 3). But income differences were often circumstantial (depending on current job situation), and otherwise insufficient to set apart different economic strata. Residents usually found themselves either in the position of asking or being asked depending on the time of month and interaction context, and even when they secured higher earnings they often tried to hide or avoid sharing them. Neighbour reciprocity was expected both in concrete terms (goods or services) and reconciled with more immaterial or symbolic ones (like praying at one's *stera*). As for godparents in particular, although they were expected to give things one-sidedly at celebrations, their purely material contributions were circumscribed to those occasions and often modest, like buying the cake or giving children a birthday present. Their more enduring support to *compadres*, doing favours and helping out when needed, was reciprocal, part of normal mutual assistance practices. Co-parents maintained mostly 'horizontal' kinds of relationships, based on mutual esteem and proximity more than

<sup>105</sup> For different readings (among first generations) see Weeks (2012a, 19) and Åkesson (2004).

<sup>106</sup> One man was a retired construction worker on a pension, another woman was a cleaner.

asymmetrical instrumental advantages. According to one informant, godparents were chosen by parents as soon as children were born, long before baptism (and even if years went by before it took place), suggesting the roots of their relationship went beyond instrumental ones (Nutini and Bell 1980). Godparents could remain the same for different sacraments (*ibid.*, 80), and reasons put forth to choose different ones for future sacraments – the relationship with the parents deteriorating or the children growing to dislike them – confirmed the personal and affective meanings of these ties, over utilitarian, liturgical or 'spiritual' ones (Åkesson 2004; Gudeman 1972).

Ritual kinship has been described as an essentially 'sacred' institution (Nutini and Bell 1980; Gudeman 1972). This contrasted with its mainly secularised meanings for second generations in Topia. Participation in church rites and fulfilled ritual obligations seemed to focus around social concerns and bonds, over 'sacred' duties or religious liturgy. Moreover, other than bringing 'the cake' or 'drinks' to the celebration these obligations were little codified or institutionalised in daily routine (*contra* Nutini and Bell 1980, 55-58). They 'reinforced' and 'intensified' previous, more diffuse ties of neighbour solidarity, proximity and assistance between *compadres* (*ibid.*, 201-202), combining social with material aspects (*contra* Gudeman 1972). Enduring trust, 'consideration', esteem and assistance defined the ideal and lasting relationship between *compadres* and godchildren, and shaped parents' selection of godparents – usually within closely trusted neighbours and friends (Nutini and Bell 1980, 208-209).

However, priests could reject parents' choice of godparents if these had not received the necessary sacraments (Nutini and Bell 1980, 74). This was a third type of reason for choosing different godparents. Diana and Denise touched on the issue when discussing an upcoming baptism. They examined the parents' selection of church for the service, since it was not one of the usual churches (close to Topia or the old slum) but one near another migrant settlement in the Município. Denise explained they had picked that one because it did not require both godparents (only one of them) to have received the confirmation sacrament, which would have forced the family to choose somebody else. There was a clear link between being able to become a godparent and having done the necessary sacraments. The role of co-parenthood bonds and the sacraments required for it affected the importance and meaning locally assigned to these sacraments. They helped to explain people's attitude of wanting to 'get them over with', even when other aspects of Catholic practice were not followed. They also shed light on the fact that confirmation was usually as far as people went. Not many residents were married in Topia,<sup>107</sup> and among

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<sup>107</sup> The 2010 survey pointed to 26% of respondents either married, divorced or widowed, against 74% single.

those who were I knew of few who had been married in church. In contrast, adults without the confirmation sacrament made plans to receive it, and some in fact did during my fieldwork. At Fabi's confirmation celebration, a young female guest counted at least three others taking place in Topia that day, adding she would also like to have hers soon. Fabi happily noted she 'had gotten it over with'. As with other aspects of ritual practice, second generations' perceptions and attitudes towards Catholic sacraments confirmed their selective religious engagement. They highlighted people's choice to keep certain aspects of their parents' religion alive in practice while disregarding others (like Sunday Mass or church weddings). They also illustrated second generations' mostly secular engagement with these rites. Religion and ritual were not upheld through normative references to God, religion, or participation in organised cult, but mainly through a series of secular practices, many of them described as 'tradition', which people decided to learn and reproduce. Their choices seemed to follow social concerns and priorities, namely to reinforce assistance ties or close personal interactions, over sacred or spiritual obligations.

### **3.2 Other 'traditions': Fátima excursions**

Every year in August, different Cape Verdean settlements in the Greater Lisbon area kept another 'tradition' alive: a bus day trip to Fátima and Nazaré.<sup>108</sup> Fátima is a famous Catholic pilgrimage site about 130 km north of Lisbon, founded on the spot of the alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary to three child shepherds in 1917, and recognised by the Church in 1930. The town's economy revolves around selling goods and services to religious tourists: from a panoply of images, statues, amulets, candles and souvenir tokens for sale in town shops, to hotels, restaurants and church duties (like requiem services). Some 50 km west of Fátima lies Nazaré, a small town by the sea. It is also a popular religious site (in much smaller scale), grounded on another alleged miracle by the Virgin Mary in the twelfth century.

Several trips to Fátima were announced in Topia over the year, which included other Cape Verdean settlements. But the one in August was the most popular. Different people in Topia and other settlements took the initiative of organising these trips: they rented buses, spread the word, put names down and collected fees. The same people often did it year after year, and some neighbours became regulars in specific organisers' tours.

I saw the first flyer advertising a trip to Fátima in April on the window of Baker's

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<sup>108</sup> Its origins were unclear. Fabi told me it had started with her father's grandfather, a man with a reputation for being very religious and devout. According to her, he would have started organising the trip yearly in collaboration with another Parish in the Município.

Star café. I mentioned it to the women at the table, who compared organisers and soon concluded they would rather go in August: 'It's the best one.' They discussed prices and reminisced about previous trips. Eva described the routines revolving around food: 'We eat in groups sitting on the lawn. Each group that comes by has a little taste of each others' food. And neighbours who don't have any food, we call them to share in ours.' She described the lavishness of food: 'It's a never ending supply but people still think it's not gonna be enough! Nobody sleeps the night before, just preparing the food.' She listed: 'chicken, potatoes, fried cakes [*sonhos*]', all kept in containers in the trunk of the bus. She recalled people stopping on the way for breakfast at a specific café. Then the women shifted the focus to shopping. A younger woman assured that 'You can take €80 and come back with nothing!' Her mother agreed. Eva described her own plan for the day: 'I might catch a bit of the Mass', then go off to 'buy some saints' and 'go for a stroll' [*dar uns giros*]. The younger woman mocked the time when her mother had decided to buy an oversized effigy which hardly fitted inside the bus. The mother dreamily spoke of a Holy Family she planned to buy this time. In conclusion, Eva insisted I should go in August, it would be good for my work: 'You can watch the bustle.' Women's memories of previous trips and their plans for the coming one portrayed it as a yearly routine, complete with expected activities everyone engaged in (around food and shopping). Neighbours had been going for years, since the old shanty towns, and women's description privileged the routine practices that were part of every trip. Their emphasis on aspects of continuity and routine suggested that the trip was understood, like illustrated below, as a 'tradition'.

When the day finally came, I had booked my place on a bus rented by Fabi's uncle. That year, unlike previous ones, he got only one bus, because many regular excursionists (including Eva herself) failed to go. The main reason presented was the 'many parties' taking place in Topia that day: one family alone was having five children baptised. I ventured that neighbours might not have known the date for the trip beforehand. Fabi dismissed it, assuring it was always the same: 'the first Saturday of August', people had been going for years and so could not claim ignorance. She insisted: 'It's a very old tradition.' Fabi was going with her parents, uncle and small child. She also described the trip as a regular group routine: 'We spend the whole day, and we also go to Nazaré, to buy dried fish.' She reported impressive numbers of Cape Verdeans attending every year, from different neighbourhoods all around the Lisbon area, from both margins of the river Tagus. People would meet many acquaintances, she predicted. I asked what the occasion was. She suggested it had to do with 'a day of Africa' in Fátima. Her uncle corrected it was 'the day

of the immigrant'.<sup>109</sup> She continued with stories of people getting lost in the crowd, wary about keeping her child close at all times. Like Eva, Fabi's account emphasised the repeated and collective nature of this 'tradition'.

That Saturday morning I left the house at 7:30 a.m., as Topia still looked asleep. Only Club café was open, and mostly empty. I spotted two tour buses leaving Topia and waited at Fabi's parents' house for ours. Two hours later, our bus finally arrived. It had gone through all the other settlements to fetch people first, and Topia was left for last. Still only a third of the bus was full. I stepped in with Fabi, waiting while she greeted acquaintances before choosing our seats. The bus filled up. I noticed a stark contrast between the front and back halves of the bus: elders all sat at the front, younger people at the back with their children. A Cape Verdean elder, a friend of the organiser and regular guide in this excursion, took to the microphone to direct Catholic chants and prayers the whole way to Fátima, including a complete rosary. The distinct participation of older and younger generations in cult practices was once again obvious. The front half of the bus painstakingly joined in on every prayer and song, while chatting rumble reached them audibly from the back. When the bus stopped for a break at the usual café along the way, I was indeed amazed at the site of the crowd: I counted at least eighteen buses, all filled with black excursionists, while Fabi sneered: 'You still have much counting to do!' I was the only white on our bus and white people were a minority in the parking lot. It was difficult even to move inside the café. Fabi stopped to greet many different people, and I was happy to meet some acquaintances from Topia travelling on different buses. Once our bus arrived in Fátima, Fabi and her family stayed behind and we lost track of the group. But our routine did not diverge much from what Eva had predicted months before: we went to see the Mass but left early because Fabi was hungry. We walked around looking for a restaurant, eyeing the long row of shops and stalls with religious merchandise, tourist souvenirs, clothes and toys. They made plans to shop after lunch, and Fabi also wanted to get holy water to 'bless the house' and put in her child's bath (chapter 3). Unfortunately it started raining, and we ended up walking about, looking for shelter from the rain, going to the supermarket and heading straight for the bus. In Nazaré, it went on raining. I asked Fabi what they usually did there: 'We buy dried fish, we have a swim in the ocean, some people swim in their clothes! But we can't today because of rain', she clarified. 'Then we go for coffee.' As predicted, some people went to buy the fish, and we did stop for coffee at one of the cafés by the sea, leaving for the bus shortly after. On the trip back to Topia, after more religious chanting, the man encouraged others to take the microphone. The

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<sup>109</sup> In fact the whole week was 'Migrations Week' (*Semana das Migrações*) in Fátima, and that was the day of the yearly pilgrimage promoted by the Chaplaincy of the African community of the Lisbon Patriarchate.

generational contrast was again made clear, as children took over to sing tunes from school, cartoons and music videos. They laughed and enjoyed themselves while mothers at the back sat amused at their efforts, and the front of the bus remained silent. Back in Topia, I felt disappointed. I had hoped to finally witness second generations' deeper engagement in Catholic rites and church activities. Instead, the tour had felt more like tourism, focused on shopping, eating, seeing the sights, having fun. I later realised this experience allowed a more interesting reading, taking into account people's usual religious behaviour in Topia. While older generations originally created this trip tradition around more explicit 'sacred' rites like the prayers, chants and Mass service in Fátima, younger Cape Verdeans appropriated that tradition in their own way, upholding and reproducing selected (more secular) aspects of it: the socialising, shopping, eating and general enjoyment. This also shed light on why so many residents decided to miss it on account of neighbourhood parties, another occasion for intense and enjoyable socialising. Just as with Catholic sacraments, for second generations the yearly pilgrimage centred around mundane practices of socialising, more than spiritual or sacred experiences. Like other Cape Verdean religious events in Topia (death and birth rites, sacraments), the 'tradition' of Fátima trips was reproduced on collective social occasions, where its local meanings were learned, appropriated and transformed through group practices and interactions.

#### **4. *Di téra*: a repertoire of 'traditional' performances**

A big part of life in Topia was filled with sights, smells and sounds from Cape Verdean culture, starting with language itself. Some informants alleged that life and routines in the former slums were very similar to those in Cape Verde (see Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 185-188; Santos 2008). That did not happen in Topia. The estate could not possibly be mistaken for a Cape Verdean village. Not only for the buildings and infrastructure, but transports, jobs, institutions, children's schooling, official bureaucracies, consumerism: activities, demands and opportunities of a present-day developed urban centre pervaded the daily lives of its residents (Horta 2006, 273, 283). A few rural habits remained, but they were less popular among second generations. That was the case with vegetable gardens (Fig. 11). Several older residents kept gardens (cf. introduction). They took up unused public ground around the estate and close-by slums in the Município to set up their land plots. The habit of keeping gardens and the knowledge these required were recognised to originate in Cape Verde. Older generations had owned or learned how to tend gardens while growing up there. When asked how they knew when to sow or harvest

each particular vegetable, they shrugged: 'Everyone knows.' But 'everyone' mostly meant first generations. As elders complained, younger ones 'don't care much about these things'. First generations were also the carriers of other sorts of 'embodied' cultural habits and objects, which younger people did not usually reproduce (Wade 2004; Csordas 1990). Besides more active religious participation described above, these habits included women carrying heavy loads on top of their heads, tying cloths around the head to cover the hair, sometimes using *panus di téra* instead of coats to wrap themselves in.<sup>110</sup>



Fig. 11: Working in a vegetable garden

But many other Cape Verdean cultural elements pervaded social relations and habits across generations, and formed a repertoire of 'traditional' objects and references. Through being repeated and consolidated over time, their appearance of stability and perduringness formed 'a compelling illusion, an object of *belief*' (Butler 1988, 520): the Cape Verdean tradition. Food – eating it, cooking it, being familiar with it – was a central element in this repertoire. Most people I interviewed and visited at home combined simpler routine foods (like fried or grilled meat/fish with rice), 'because it's quicker', with so-called 'traditional' Cape Verdean dishes, especially on weekends, parties and special occasions. The most common traditional dishes were of course *katxupa* (a stew of shelled corn, beans, sometimes vegetables and various meats or fish, in Topia usually pork and blood sausages), *canja* (a thick chicken and rice soup) and *feijuada* (bean stew with meats and cabbage) made from different varieties of beans, mainly Cape Verdean ones (*kongo*

<sup>110</sup> Multifunctional patterned cloths typical of Cape Verde (used, among other things, to carry babies on women's backs). Being quite expensive, cheaper versions produced in Senegal with distinctive patterns and colours were sold as *panu di téra* in Cape Verde, and used by these women.

and *pédra* beans) grown in the gardens. Besides couscous (see section 2.2), rarer dishes included *xeren* (made from coarsely-ground dried corn) accompanying other meat dishes, *mása di midju* (stewed corn-flour cakes), often with goat meat, and *káldu pexi* (fish stew with potatoes). The habit of grilling meat and fish over charcoal in front of buildings was also common in Cape Verdean routines (chapter 3). A few typical Portuguese dishes, including *bacalhau com natas* (a cod casserole with cream) and *arroz à valenciana* (so-called Portuguese paella, a hearty rice dish with vegetables, chicken, sausages and shrimp) were also popular for celebrations like weddings and birthdays, but not for more traditional occasions like *stera*, when only *kumida di téra* (literally 'food from the land') was prepared. The phrase '*di téra*' was often used for Cape Verdean objects or products.<sup>111</sup> Families in Cape Verde sent over produce *di téra* when opportunity arose, even though many ingredients needed to make these dishes were available in Portugal. Some were bought from shops selling 'ethnic' products (a few of these existed near the old slums), others were cultivated in residents' vegetable gardens. Sugar cane, for example, was grown domestically. It was cut into pieces and chewed-on like candy, or used by a few individuals to make *grogú*, traditional Cape Verdean rum (consumed pure, with honey or mixed with juices and condensed milk to make *pontxi*, a traditional fruit cocktail).

Other Cape Verdean products featuring prominently in neighbourhood routines were music and dance. While older generations might prefer the quieter nostalgic *morna* genre, windows and doors in Topia more often overflowed with the rhythms of *funaná* and *batuku*, sometimes *zouk*, more fast-paced and strong-beat music genres with lyrics in Creole. These were danced in traditional steps and postures, focused on sexually marked, sometimes frenetic movements of the hip and waist (cf. chapter 7). Children from an early age were taught and encouraged to dance at home and parties, to the sound of adults' spirited clapping and shouting. They also learned these moves and steps in local dance groups, which were common in Cape Verdean settlements (sometimes fostered by local NGO's). Diana certified that 'Every neighbourhood has one.' Topia was no exception. Its dance group originated in one of the old slums and was still active, performing in ethnic dance shows in Portugal and abroad. Many second-generation Cape Verdean women in Topia had belonged to this group at some point in their youth.<sup>112</sup>

Music and dance were a central focus of parties and celebrations (birthdays, baptisms, weddings) but also had an important part in leisure. CDs and DVDs with Cape Verdean songs and music clips were played loudly at home while children danced and

<sup>111</sup> Like the word 'land' itself, *téra* is a polysemantic term, encompassing meanings of 'earth', 'home country/home town', 'property', 'soil' and 'dirt' (Lang 2002, 801). It was employed here to mean products from the home country (Cape Verde).

<sup>112</sup> These groups were usually composed by teenage girls and younger.

adults tended to chores or sat watching.<sup>113</sup> The ability to perform these dance moves was seen to relate to one's 'African' or 'Cape Verdean' roots, or the belonging to Cape Verdean neighbourhoods. Barbosa and Ramos (2008) suggested the importance of family and the neighbourhood in socialising individuals into Cape Verdean music and dance genres. The association between belonging to a 'neighbourhood' and knowing how to dance these rhythms was confirmed by Diana as we walked out of Topia one day. A white elderly man passing by started chatting Diana up. He introduced himself as being from a migrant slum in the Município and knowing some people in Topia. As if doubt remained, he promptly exhibited his *funaná* moves. I found them quite impressive, all the more so given his age, but Diana later shrugged unimpressed: 'Well he's from [that slum].'

These disparate cultural elements of food, music and dance, along with more immaterial religious rites, local nicknames and language formed a visible and tangible repertoire from which an awareness of common cultural affinity and performance was built among the Cape Verdean population in Topia. This cultural stock was learned, selected and reproduced as part of informal and 'embodied' socialising, at home, on the streets, at parties or marked ritual events, through repeated face-to-face interaction, imitation and participation. From the perspective of gender, Butler (1988) provided some interesting ideas to articulate the role of repetitive codified practices in the constitution of objects and identities. In her proposal, the repetition of certain 'stylized' embodied acts, 'sedimented' through being continually 'renewed, revised, and consolidated through time', gave agents the 'compelling illusion' of the existence of a 'predetermined' and objective essence behind them (ibid., 519-23). In other words, these acts took the appearance of being 'expressive' of some underlying ontological entity (in her argument, gender), when the latter was in fact 'performative', i.e. not prior to the practices and acts which instituted it (ibid., 528). Fortier (1999) applied Butler's formulation to her research on Italian immigrants in London, to highlight how cultural and religious rites enacted by migrants served to 'produce social categories and the norms of membership within them' (ibid., 43). The continued re-enactment of these rites associated them with 'images of duration and continuity' (ibid., 45), in other words: as part of a cultural and historical tradition.

In Topia, second generations' repeated embodied performance of specific ('stylised') acts – speaking, praying, cooking, dancing – in the same way warranted their claims to a common cultural 'tradition'. Their direct engagement with this tradition defined them as participants in a group of circumscribed membership, just as it consolidated social and ritual ties between them. Like nicknames examined earlier, participation in all practices

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<sup>113</sup> So-called 'Cape Verdean' music is a 'transnational' and 'hybrid' field whose production, performance and consumption spans different continents (Monteiro 2008; Cidra 2008a).

rendered 'Cape Verdean', '*di téra*' or 'traditional' reinforced and validated 'those aspects of personhood to which they are associated' (Pina-Cabral 2010, 306): in this case, the sharing of a repertoire of meanings, stylised practices and social ties which became 'sedimented' as membership to a cultural 'community' of Cape Verdeans. This did not mean a shared 'imagined community' of people originating from Cape Verde (Anderson 1991), as the next chapter will make clearer, but rather a collective of learners and participants who in repeated daily cultural practices, words and gestures actively reproduced Topia as a visibly and tangibly 'Cape Verdean' settlement.

**Part II – Neighbourhood lines: Identity,  
movement and territory**

## 5. The neighbourhood: 'The Cape Verdean race'

Besides a common repertoire of practices and products, second-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia also shared certain ethnic identifications and discourses.<sup>114</sup> However, the ways and contexts in which they spoke about themselves suggested that 'the Cape Verdean tradition' (which forged a sense of common membership through participation) was not at the centre of their identity categories. Instead, this chapter will describe local ideas of 'Cape Verdeanness' and 'Africanness' as constructed in opposition to 'white' 'Portuguese' society. I will argue that identity-building by second-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia was sustained less by connections to the national 'imagined community' of Cape Verde (Anderson 1991; see Gibau 2005, 417), than against representations of, and relationships to the host society. Part 1 will address transnational connections to show that ties with Cape Verde were mostly maintained by first generations, at material (section 1.1) and symbolic levels (1.2), while transnationalism among second generations more often forged ties with other European countries (1.3). In part 2, I will discuss the racism underlying Portugal's political (2.1), media and social responses to African immigrants and their children (2.2). Part 3 will examine young Cape Verdeans' identity constructions. I will argue that the identity categories (3.2), tacit meanings (3.3) and group attributes (3.4) upheld by second-generation Cape Verdeans spoke less of ties or belonging to Cape Verde than of a 'looping effect' (Hacking 2006), whereby racism and segregation in Portuguese society became appropriated and reworked by the subjects they target (3.5).

### 1. Transnational connections

#### 1.1 Flows of goods and people

In an age of global exchanges and cross-border flows, any discussion of place-making must acknowledge translocal connections established with other places, namely other countries. While travels outside Topia, to other places in the Município, will be the focus of the next chapter, I will address transnational connections here. As argued above, Topia was reproduced in practice as a 'Cape Verdean' settlement. As such, flows and ties to Cape Verde were particularly prominent. Surprisingly, although second generations

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<sup>114</sup> A modified version of this chapter has been published in *Caderno de Estudos Africanos* (vol. 24, 2012) as "The Cape Verdean race": Identity-building in a suburban council estate' (<http://cea.revues.org/640>). I have benefited from the invaluable comments and suggestions of the editor and anonymous reviewer, which I have partially incorporated here.

engaged in 'traditional' practices and referred to themselves as 'Cape Verdean', they did not establish strong ties with Cape Verde itself, and less so than with other European countries. As shown below, their identity labels and discourses of 'Cape Verdeanness' did not reflect the transnational connections they established (but rather existed *in spite of* them).

In reality most Cape Verdean families kept regular contact with relatives in Cape Verde. They called to exchange news, keep in touch (some claimed to call weekly) or mark special occasions. However, the initiative was taken mostly by first-generation immigrants, who had left family members behind. This made sense given that emigration from Cape Verde is often motivated by aspirations to help one's family (Åkesson 2004, 94). Some immigrants in Topia also claimed to send regular remittances, while others uneasily admitted they sent bits of money when they could manage, suggesting a more occasional deed. People often sent packages (or money) through travelling acquaintances, to save on postal fees.

While money flows were unidirectional (from Portugal to Cape Verde), packages travelled both ways. Interviewees suggested the main products requested from Cape Verde were foods and ingredients *di téra*: corn,<sup>115</sup> beans, plantains, mangoes, 'Cape Verdean biscuits' (*bolacha de Cape Verde*, a consistent and blandly sweet biscuit), desserts (such as *doce de leite*, a typical custard), *grogu* (sugar-cane rum), among others. Some clothing and textile items were also appreciated, namely so-called 'Cape Verde knickers' (*cuecas de Cabo Verde*) for children, seen as more resistant and lasting than European underwear. Women also sent lace, crochet and other home-made crafts from the home country. Although many of these products existed in Portugal, people argued that '*di téra* is better/tastier' (which also extended to food-preparation habits, such as cooking over the fire or grilling outdoors). Linked to this was the idea that people in Cape Verde lived longer years because their food was especially healthy, namely free from agricultural chemicals. Fabi illustrated the point regarding her own grandmothers: one had lived to be ninety-eight, and the other had died at the age of one hundred and five. Bäckström's (2009, 277-286) research on health practices among Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon found similar associations of Cape Verde with 'healthier' living: with 'more natural' food, fresher air, favourable climate, amicable social relations, less stress and more free time (namely to exercise). The posited distinctions between health in the two countries put forth symbolic associations of Portugal with 'threats' and 'dangers' seen as absent in Cape Verde (*ibid.*).

In turn, packages sent *to* Cape Verde mostly contained fashionable clothing, house textiles, shoes and money – stylish products from European markets. Åkesson (2004, 155-

<sup>115</sup> Prepared for different aims: *kutxidu* (without the bran) to make *katxupa*; roasted and ground for *kamóka* (a kind of porridge), *piladu* (pounded) for couscous.

156) found that on the receiving end, these items were symbolically tied to 'modernity' and 'affluence', connecting people in Cape Verde with the imagined world of the rich emigrant. Although connoted with a hostile and dangerous environment, the host society was also a 'modern' stylish one. And while Cape Verde was seen as a generous natural environment, it was also materially destitute and backward. When Diana, wanting to style her hair, realised she had lent her straightener to a neighbour, she was left to use a brush and dryer and complained in contempt: 'It's like I'm in Africa!' (*N sta sima na África!*) Even positive views about Cape Verde's natural environment were weaker among younger generations. While admiring the nice beaches, they complained about the mosquitoes feasting lavishly on visitors of any colour, 'Even through clothing!'

A few women in Topia attempted to make business out of the positively valued assets of each country, selling European-styled products (namely clothing) from Portugal in Cape Verde and buying products *di téra* to sell in Portugal (cf. Grassi 2007a, 45-55; Grassi 2007b, 134). A woman used to buy folk 'remedies' (*ramédi di téra*) in Cape Verde and travel through different migrant settlements in Portugal to sell them.<sup>116</sup> Some female residents in Topia bought them (namely to put in children's bath water). Goods from other destinations were also involved. Leandra received bulk human hair from a friend in Brazil to sell in Topia on her behalf. In another example, when escorting Diana to an African hair salon in a migrant slum in the Município, I noticed the walls lined with variegated products for sale, including African hair products and extensions, trousers and underwear from Brazil, bags and slippers with Cape Verdean and Senegalese flags. While I waited, Diana encouraged me to check the Brazilian trousers for their 'fashionable' waist cut, and praised the leggings she had bought from the hairdresser on a past visit.

The goods flowing in each direction were tied to symbolic discourses about the assets and lifestyle of each country. First generations' positive views of Cape Verde sometimes led to wishes of return. One afternoon, sitting by the vendors, I listened to an old Cape Verdean woman tell Ivone her plans to go back to her birth place. She 'had been here [in Portugal] for 40 years' and 'had had it' with the cold winters. Ivone teased her: she had been talking about it for years without leaving. I asked about the family she would leave in Topia. She reasoned that all her children were grown up and had had children of their own: they could go visit if they wished. This was unlike most elders I interviewed. When asked about return plans, they usually shrugged and noted their children and grandchildren had been raised 'here' and would not move to Cape Verde, suggesting they had no choice. Others explained their close relatives in Cape Verde had already died or

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<sup>116</sup> Biomedicine and traditional therapies were combined in Cape Verdeans' health care choices (Bäckström 2009; Beijers and Freitas 2006).

emigrated. I asked Diana if anyone in her house planned to return to Cape Verde:

My father's building a house there. He wants to go back, my mother doesn't [she smiled]. My father says when he retires he'll move there, but my mother says no: for holidays it's fine, but not to live. She's already accustomed here, she likes to go to the farmers' market, to go here, to go there. So it's different. (Interview transcript)

Visits were more frequent from Portugal to Cape Verde, though the reverse sometimes happened. They could be motivated by special occasions (weddings, funerals), a simple plan to visit relatives and go on holidays, or the wish to have new generations meet old relatives in Cape Verde before they died. Yet these visits crucially rested on people's ability to afford air travel, especially with children. Travel projects were usually hindered by money constraints. With the odd exception, most people I interviewed did not visit often: older immigrants had been to Cape Verde usually one to three times since coming to Portugal, while their children had more commonly been there once (if at all).

While first generations could hold stakes or desires to return (even if unfulfilled), second generations would not think of it – 'I'd like to visit, sure, but not to live there' was a common reply. Their involvement with Cape Verde was limited to the 'traditional' habits and products discussed in chapter 4. While these rites and objects can be considered 'transnational',<sup>117</sup> second generations' engagement with them contributed less to build cross-border connections with Cape Verde than to forge a highly localised sense of shared cultural participation – which their lack of interest and knowledge about their parents' country confirmed.

## 1.2 Ties of interest and knowledge

There were other connections people maintained with Cape Verde, which again highlighted the different stakes of first and second generations in relation to the home country. During my stay in Topia, there were two important election polls in Cape Verde, for presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>118</sup> Both MpD (*Movimento para a Democracia*) and PAICV (*Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde*), the two main parties competing, conducted campaigns in settlements across the diaspora, including Topia. Signs of it were apparent on the days running up to the poll: a couple of cars

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<sup>117</sup> In the example of music, see Cidra (2008a) and Monteiro (2008).

<sup>118</sup> The country's constitution gives Cape Verdean citizens abroad a right to vote for both, and their impact on election results can be significant (Carling and Batalha 2008).

circulating with speakers and party flags, stickers on lamp posts and stairwells, a few people wearing campaign t-shirts. The local cultural association was active registering willing voters carrying a Cape Verdean passport. Although the polling station for Topia included the whole parish (making it hard to assess the volume of Topia voters), a total of 218 residents were registered by the cultural association on the weekend before the first poll.<sup>119</sup> Talk around the estate confirmed some immigrants in Topia were involved and alert to the topic. A middle-aged Cape Verdean woman (registered voter) urged neighbours passing by her building: 'Have you voted yet?' A few days after the presidential election, I sat with Diana's father (in Portugal for decades), Diana (born in Portugal) and a young immigrant recently arrived from Cape Verde. The young man expressed disappointment that PAICV had lost, and explained to Diana (a complete stranger to the topic) his views on MpD. Her father joined the conversation, while Diana kept silent. They certified that many first-generation residents had participated in the poll.

This active involvement and interest was largely lost in generations raised in Portugal. For these, Portuguese national election (which also occurred that year) generated much more commentary and interest. When the topic of the Cape Verdean election arose at Baker's Star a few days after the poll, Eva mentioned she knew about it but did not much care (*passa-me ao lado*), she did not even know who had won. In this and other issues, younger generations were visibly more distanced from Cape Verde. Their adoption of 'transnational' cultural habits did not imply more direct ties with the country.

Although young Cape Verdeans identified with selected aspects of their parents' culture, they also showed ignorance or criticism about them: 'tradition' was at times deemed 'exaggerated' (e.g. the obligation to feed neighbours on death occasions); certain traditional and religious habits were unfamiliar or not adhered to. There was also a degree of distancing and ignorance regarding Cape Verde itself. This became evident at a local celebration of the independence of Cape Verde (5<sup>th</sup> of July). I was told it used to be a yearly event in one of the old slums, but this was the first time it was organised in Topia. Several music and dance groups were called to perform at Topia's main square and a big crowd gathered to watch, eat and drink from local vending stalls. Most performances were from second-generation Cape Verdean women dancing (*funaná* and *batuku*) and men rapping in Creole. In between performances, the announcer grabbed artists on stage to ask them the year of Cape Verde's independence and their views on it. With only one exception, performers tried to flee, smiled embarrassed and eventually admitted: 'I don't know.' Transnational ties sustained by Cape Verdean immigrants were clearly weaker

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<sup>119</sup> As a reference, in 2010 there were roughly 270 first-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia.

among their children, at both material and symbolic levels. Interestingly, the ties younger generations lacked with Cape Verde were in some cases maintained with other countries.

### **1.3 Connections to Europe**

Many second-generation Cape Verdeans from Topia and the old shanty towns had migrated to other European countries, such as France and Luxembourg, in search of better jobs and wages. Others had tried it for a while and come back: 'I didn't like it' or 'my children didn't adjust' were common reasons given for returning. Still others (men) had worked for months or years in construction sites (e.g. in Spain) to come back when work was finished. Some young people spoke of wanting to migrate to 'give their children a better life', disappointed at the lack of jobs and opportunities to make a good living in Portugal. They contemplated joining relatives abroad who might help them settle in. A female informant left during my fieldwork to find employment close to her brother in Luxembourg, while their sister joined them after one year (leaving two children in Topia).

In this scenario, many Cape Verdean residents had siblings, nephews and close relatives in other European countries. This created new transnational flows of gifts, visits and communications for second and third-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia. Since people were known to have higher wages in these countries as compared to Portugal, communication flows were reversed: Topia residents were more often on the receiving end of phone calls (due to fees involved). But unlike older generations, much communication happened through new virtual media like Facebook. Browsing and commenting on each others' pictures and statuses or (more rarely) chatting online were ways to learn news and keep in touch (Madianou and Miller 2012). On the other hand, flows of goods assumed distinctive configurations. Packages were much less frequent, in either direction: within the E.U., markets, stores, fashion and brands were relatively similar. But other motivations could be involved. In one case, a household in Topia sent a package with a travelling relative, requested and paid for by family members abroad. The reason was a difference in prices: some items (clothes, shoes and cigarettes) were cheaper to buy in Portugal.

Conversely, visits were two-directional. During holidays or for special celebrations (weddings, baptisms), Cape Verdeans travelled to stay with family abroad or welcomed them in their homes in Topia. More than once emigrants chose to hold their celebrations in Portugal to ensure the presence of friends and family from Topia and other settlements. Difference in wages also determined that residents' air fares were sometimes paid for by those they visited abroad, especially when attending special ceremonies: 'In July I'm going

to my nephew's baptism in France. My brother's paying for the ticket.' Children frequently took part in these trips and got to know relatives abroad. Even if raised apart in different countries, they shared the fluency of Creole as a first language.

The weak ties second generations kept with Cape Verde did not stop them from categorising themselves, individually and collectively, as 'Cape Verdean'. Nor did transnational ties with other European nations affect that. Identity claims to 'Cape Verdeanness' in Topia (Góis 2010, 268), shared by both immigrants and their children, were constructed on visibly different grounds. While participating daily in cultural practices (language, food, music, dance), the strongest reference in second generations' self-identification was not a sense of belonging to Cape Verde. Instead, the meanings and contexts of use of these identity categories were directly tied to the national context: young Cape Verdeans' difficult relation with the host society. Ethnic 'boundary' construction took precedence over the 'cultural stuff that it encloses' (Barth 1969, 15). The following sections will argue that, unlike their parents, second generations' identity-building rested on an oppositional boundary between 'black' 'Africans' and 'white' 'Portuguese', indebted to legal, media and social racist discourses against black migrants in Portuguese society.

## **2. Responses to African migrants in Portugal**

### **2.1 Immigration policy: citizenship laws**

Over the past three decades, Portugal has shifted from a country of emigrants to a significant immigration destination (SEF 2010, 17; Horta 2000, 66-75). Decolonization, accession to the European Community and the Schengen area generated large inflows from Africa, especially from the 1980s, and later Brazil and Eastern Europe (Santos 2004). In 2010, foreign citizens in Portugal officially amounted to 445262 individuals (SEF 2010), roughly 4,2% of the population. Official responses to immigration changed over time, reacting to the nation's shifting migratory profile.

Portugal kept political rule over colonial territories until the end of the dictatorial regime in 1974, under a purported 'civilizing mission' of 'primitive peoples' (Marques 2007, 24). However, as a result of international pressure and criticism against colonial and racial discourses following World War II, the Portuguese dictatorship was forced to display a more 'integrationist' stance (ibid.). It embraced the ideology of 'lusotropicalism',<sup>120</sup> proclaiming a Portuguese vocation for easy contact with colonial populations, stressing proximity, miscegenation and milder forms of slavery in settler-native relations (Fikes

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<sup>120</sup> Based on the writings of Brazilian social academic Gilberto Freyre.

2009, 31-64; Marques 2007, 24-27; Meintel 1984, 73-74). A new citizenship law was thereby introduced, based on a principle of '*jus solis*' which rooted the right to citizenship in territorial belonging (Carvalho 2009, 37; Góis 2008, 15-16; Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 175-176). Its wide scope extended Portuguese citizenship to natives of all colonies – now renamed 'overseas provinces' (*provincias ultramarinas*) to fit a new state ideology portraying the colonial empire as a plural unified nation across the sea, instead of an illegitimate system of human exploitation (Marques 2007, 25-26).

Following decolonization and the arrival of masses of African repatriates and refugees to Portugal (Horta 2000, 68-69), a new legal frame instituted '*jus sanguinis*', based on descent ties (ibid.; Carvalho 2009, 37, 135). Citizenship was restricted to descendants of Portuguese natives (to the third degree) or long-term residents in Portugal (Góis 2008, 14-15; Fikes 2009, 43-45), causing many to retroactively lose citizen status (ibid.). In former colonies, Portuguese citizenship was basically restricted to the white colonial population (Carvalho 2009, 38; Healy 2011, 52). Many newly-arrived Cape Verdeans, formerly Portuguese, now became foreigners in Portugal, with their children made official citizens of Cape Verde.

From the early 1990s, new waves of immigrants from Brazil and Eastern Europe, along with Portugal's participation in concerted European policies and treaties,<sup>121</sup> gave rise to legal changes and additions (Santos 2004, 109-132). These were adjusted to the agendas of consecutive governments in Portugal, trying to reconcile privileged ties to former lusophone colonies with the E.U.'s restrictive border policies (Carvalho 2009; Santos 2004; Horta 2000, 63-86). Among other things, new laws created a network of institutions and services to inform and help immigrants (Healy 2011, 79, 95-97), following public and academic concern for topics of 'interculturalism, multiculturalism, ethnic minorities, ethnicity, immigration policies and integration' (Horta 2000, 5; Rosário, Santos and Lima 2011; also Fikes 2009, 46-54).<sup>122</sup>

Faced with new migratory realities, including increase in 'irregular' migrants and their descendants (not considered citizens although born and raised in Portugal), a new citizenship law came into force in 2006. It reinstated '*jus solis*' with other criteria, allowing long-term residents and native-born children to access citizenship regardless of parents' nationality (Healy 2011). A political concern expressed in the legal text was precisely to 'fight the social exclusion' prominent among immigrants' children (ibid., 67, my translation). In Topia, many second-generation Cape Verdeans born and raised in Portugal

<sup>121</sup> Namely the Schengen Agreement (1995), the Amsterdam Treaty (1999), the Summits of Tampere (1999) and Seville (2002) (Santos 2004, 111-112).

<sup>122</sup> New institutions included a High-Commissariat for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIDI), a National Centre of Support to Immigrants (CNAI) and the first Plan for Immigrant Integration (PII).

were only able to obtain citizen status recently, and some still struggled with the process.

Aside from a symbolic exclusion from their native country, the lack of Portuguese citizenship also created practical obstacles to foreigners' everyday routines. Healy's (2011, 105-112) research on immigrants' take on the 2006 law revealed some of the complications faced daily in Portugal by non citizens, namely voluminous bureaucracies and paperwork, increased difficulties in obtaining jobs or bank loans, and obstacles to international mobility. Healy's interviewees also reported feelings of social discrimination, unrecognised legal rights and deficient integration, aware of society's hostility towards them.

## **2.2 Immigration discourses: media and 'systemic' racism**

If legal and political agendas have affected the place of migrants and their children in Portuguese society, media have also had a prominent role in shaping public discourse and attitudes, especially towards the 'second generation'.<sup>123</sup> Horta (2000) examined media coverage of shanty towns and rehousing estates in Greater Lisbon in the 1990s. She described the stress placed on 'images of ethnic difference, disadvantage and black youth idleness', 'marginalization, disenfranchisement and potential social disorder', 'delinquency and drug abuse', violence and criminality, prominently linked to groups of African youths (ibid., 182-184). This kind of portrayal has reinforced a 'semantic field of foreignness, deviance and exclusion', and a 'linear association between race, crime, poverty and space' in official discourses and popular views (ibid., 185-186; Horta 2006, 273).

Just as in Topia, people in the squatter settlement analysed by Horta (2000, 2006) and in others have opposed these views from 'outsiders' as inaccurate and reductive, recognising the role of media in these sensationalistic portrayals (Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001, 99; Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 121). An NGO worker and former resident in the shanties invoked media misrepresentations to explain people's suspicion of strangers (namely me and my research). He denounced newspapers' 'sensationalistic' 'made-up' headlines about the old slum, featuring exaggerated tales of drug traffic, false robberies, pictures removed from context. The same idea was conveyed by others, confirming that the 'racialisation of crime' in public imagery came along its 'geographical delimitation' to certain neighbourhoods (chapter 8), assimilating the threat of crime and 'dangerous individuals' to 'dangerous topographies' (Fernandes quoted in Raposo 2007, 66). Residents' familiarity with these negative discourses transpired from their use of debased terms like 'problematic' or 'degraded' to refer to migrant settlements (chapter 3). A

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<sup>123</sup> Horta 2000; Cádima and Figueiredo 2003; Cunha et al. 2004; Cunha and Santos 2006, 2008a, 2008b.

Cape Verdean interviewee started her life story with 'I was born in a problematic neighbourhood.' At times the single term 'neighbourhood' became synonymous with these socially depreciated meanings. So an informant asked if I was only interested in the part of his life spent in 'neighbourhoods' (*bairros*), and later explained the many alcohol-related quarrels in a particular slum by suggesting that 'All neighbourhoods are the same.' In another interview, a middle-aged Cape Verdean woman referred to 'people from neighbourhoods' (*peessoas de bairro/dos bairros*) to mean a purportedly shared profile of residents from shanty towns and rehousing estates (Pinto and Gonçalves 2000, 105).

Political, legal and media discourses, amid legacies of a close colonial past, have contributed to shape public mentality regarding migrants and their children. Rosário, Santos and Lima (2011) found racism prevalent in informal talk about minority groups in Portugal, adopting rationales of inferiority to justify their social inequality and exclusion. Marques (2007) similarly concluded that African immigrants and their descendants are targets of an 'inegalitarian' (*desigualitário*) or 'inferiorisation' type of racism, which delegates them to lower and depreciated positions in Portuguese society, calling on perceived 'natural' traits to justify social hierarchy (*ibid.*, 22). He traced this kind of racism to European colonial ideologies which warranted 'discrimination' and 'exploitation' of purportedly inferior peoples (*ibid.*, 23). In the case of Portuguese colonialism, Marques argued that 'lusotropicalism' became an effective national 'myth', spreading to political and academic circles and in time to popular mentality, supporting beliefs that the Portuguese are essentially not racist, or at least less so than other colonial powers (*ibid.*, 24-33). Although probably moderating doctrinal manifestations of racism prominent in other countries (e.g. by right-wing parties), the 'lusotropicalist' legacy has not avoided the pervasiveness of 'popular' (explicit, often verbal) and especially 'systemic' (implicit and widespread) racism in Portugal (*ibid.*, 54; also Vala, Lopes and Lima 2008). From interviews with institutional figures and individual citizens, Marques concluded that prejudice against Africans and their children, linked to notions of 'inferiority, lack of ability, laziness and violence', were widespread across different sectors of society (the job market, housing, transport, commerce and leisure venues) (*ibid.*, 39-40; cf. Fikes 2009).

### **3. Identity building**

#### **3.1 'Identity' problematised**

The responses of second-generation Cape Verdeans to continued official, symbolic, discursive and social 'systemic' discrimination in Portuguese society were key in the

demarcation of Topia from the outside. In what follows, I will analyse young Cape Verdeans' identity categories and meanings, building on Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) threefold typology of 'identity', after briefly discussing some implications of the term.

'Identity' is a complicated concept. Besides encompassing protean ideas, feelings and practices, the term is loaded with theoretical debates in the social sciences. A basic discussion concerns 'primordial' versus 'situational' views, the latter highly influenced by Barth (1969; Jenkins 2004, 87; Góis 2010, 266-267). Primordialism sees identity as a fixed stable feature, while situationalist views stress its situated negotiation over interactions and relationships with others (ibid.). Evidently these are complementary aspects of identity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) pointed to this underlying duality: while 'identity' implies subtle 'essentialist' connotations of stable commonality, the term always appears qualified with rows of adjectives stressing fluid, subjective and constructed qualities (ibid.). This contradiction is compounded when looking at 'transnational' groups – like the case of self-defined 'Cape Verdeans' born outside of Cape Verde. The 'Cape Verdean' transnational identity was taken by Góis (2010) as an example of the scale of complexity involved in studying identity. The complicated feedback interactions between all relevant variables (such as place, gender, age, ancestry, phenotype, nation, language, religion, class, education, personal choice, collective ascription, among others) made Góis equate identity to a chaotic system of 'autopoiesis' and 'organised complexity' (ibid., 266, 270-273; Sardinha 2010). Faced with this utmost complexity, he concluded that identity as such 'cannot be measured' and the concept 'resists operationalisation' (ibid., 169).

Searching for more operational tools, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) discarded 'identity' and put forth three sets of alternative concepts. First, 'identification' and 'categorisation' denote discursive acts of naming and placing people in categories, underscoring subjects' active role in ascribing identity (ibid., 15-17). Secondly, 'self-understandings' and 'social location' refer to subjects' tacit and unarticulated perspectives on their own identity (ibid., 18). Finally, 'commonality', 'connectedness' and 'groupness' speak of the ties, feelings and affective aspects of group belonging (ibid., 9-20). Although this typology is not exhaustive, I have found it useful to structure my discussion of Cape Verdean identity-building in Topia. I will argue that second generations' self-identification 'categories', 'understandings' and 'group' belonging as 'Cape Verdeans' and 'Africans' revealed a 'looping effect' in Hacking's (2006) terms, whereby Portuguese colonial and racist discourses became appropriated by young Cape Verdeans themselves, tacitly conflating racial, cultural and residential markers and contributing to delimit Topia as a place *against* the outside.

### 3.2 'Self-identification'

Although second-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia drew from multiple cultural references, including Cape Verdean, Portuguese and 'European' ones (Fikes 2009), they mostly categorised themselves as 'Cape Verdean' and 'African'. Phrases such as 'We Africans are...', 'You know Cape Verdeans are...' appeared frequently and seamlessly in conversation. When probed, second generations traced their claims to being 'Cape Verdean' to the cultural habits examined in the previous chapter and their parents' provenance:

Music, also people, food, Yeah, all that. But especially music: *funaná, batuque*. (Ana: Do you feel any connection to Cape Verde?) Why sure! Sure right? My parent's home land [*terra*] and all that. [pause] And when I went there in 1997 I quite liked it. (Interview transcript with Diana)

But despite being explicitly tied to cultural habits and parent nationality, the identifier 'Cape Verdean' was used interchangeably with 'African'. Second-generation Cape Verdeans referred to themselves and their culture as 'African', especially when discussing behaviours they considered distinctive from Portuguese ones. 'Africans' was also deemed the politically correct term. The topic arose at Baker's Star one morning. Amália (married to a Cape Verdean immigrant) chatted to Eva, a second-generation Cape Verdean. They were street neighbours and seemed quite familiar. Amália wished to refer to another black woman but was unsure of how to put it. She usually employed the term 'blacks' (*pretos*) as collective identifier without further thought, as most whites in Topia did. But this time she seemed concerned about politeness. She asked Eva: 'I can't say "black" 'cause that's offensive. Do I say of colour? [*de cor*]' Eva and another Cape Verdean at the table declared that was even worse: 'If you say "of colour" we're going to ask you what's the colour.' 'So what do I say?' 'African people!' – Eva retorted, as if the answer were obvious. In fact, Cape Verdeans in Topia at times jokingly contended against white neighbours' use of the term 'black': 'I'm not black, I'm brown.' Even if used in familiar conversation, including among Cape Verdeans, the marker was at times openly refused.

'Africans' and 'Cape Verdeans' were thus both self-identifying categories and polite identifiers employed by whites. Situational distinctions could be pointed out regarding traits or practices seen as specifically Cape Verdean, as opposed to other African nationalities. For example, when talking about Cape Verdean women having children by

many partners, Eva felt the need to stress that 'Not all African women are like that, I'm just talking about Cape Verdeans.' These occasional distinctions confirmed that categorisation was, as expected, as much about posited 'essential' traits as about unstable negotiations resting on situated interactions and relationships: both 'self-' and 'hetero-attributed' identifiers (Góis 2010, 272). But the fact that she needed to clarify whom she was referring to also confirmed that 'African' and 'Cape Verdean' were often used interchangeably. Despite circumstantial distinctions, it was revealing that the two categories were conflated across most interaction contexts: be it among Cape Verdeans, Cape Verdean and white neighbours, or Cape Verdeans and myself – clearly suggesting that 'Cape Verdeanness' entailed more than participation in Cape Verdean habits.

### 3.3 'Self-understandings'

The more tacit meanings and implications of those categories transpired from the contexts and ways in which young Cape Verdeans used them. One conclusion was that identification as 'Cape Verdeans' did not imply identifying with the nation of Cape Verde. Previous sections have described the lack of material and symbolic engagement of younger generations with their parents' home country. This ambiguity of being 'Cape Verdean' while not being tied to Cape Verde was often illustrated in second generations' discourse:

I don't stop having a connection with Cape Verde, my roots [*a minha raiz*] are African. And I never forget! And I quite like being Cape Verdean, I really love it. Only it's like they say: 'You're a false Cape Verdean [*caboverdiana falsa*]! Because you were born here.' That's what they always say: 'You were born here so you don't know anything!' ... But one day I'll know the land of my parents. I really will. (Ana: And how does Cape Verde enter your day-to-day?) Oh, that's through. Because I always watch RTP África.<sup>124</sup> ... And also because at home I always speak Creole, I listen to Cape Verdean music. From food, *katxupa*, and other things my mother makes. So I never loose, I'm always connected. Always always always really. (Interview transcript with a second-generation Cape Verdean woman, 27 years old)

The same awareness among second generations of a 'false' or contradictory quality to their Cape Verdeanness came up in other accounts:

Sometimes they come and ask: 'Where are you from? So you're from Cape Verde. But

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<sup>124</sup> A Portuguese television channel broadcasting news and programmes with people, places and subjects of former African colonies, including Cape Verde.

do you know Cape Verde?' - 'No, I've never been there' - 'Oh, so you're from Cape Verde but' - 'Well I was born here, I haven't been able to visit so far.' But when I have the means [pause] ... (Ana: And how is Cape Verdean culture present in your daily life?) Every day getting up, simply putting on some *kizomba*.<sup>125</sup> ... Watching videos with Cape Verdean comic strips. ... A bit of everything. ... Simply the speech [*o.falar*]. (Interview transcript with a second-generation Cape Verdean man, 22 years old)

Despite active cultural habits described in chapter 4, often cited in interviews to support claims to a 'Cape Verdean' identity, there was a strong sense among second generations of not belonging to Cape Verde, not being '100% Cape Verdean' as Fabi once put it, often not even knowing the country (also Góis 2010; Gibau 2005). Even among those who had visited Cape Verde, no one expressed a will to live there, while some denied having any connection to it:

I'll tell you the truth: I have no contact [*contacto*] with Cape Verde. It's true, I don't. My sister's there, but I don't call her, because she doesn't call me either. Even going there [pause] But I will, I'll go. I'm planning on going there on holiday. (Interview transcript with a second-generation Cape Verdean woman, 24 years old)

A young girl arrived from a visit to Cape Verde covered in mosquito bites across her face and arms. Seeing the girl, Diana recalled her own trip to Cape Verde years before and complained that 'for mosquitoes there, immigrants carry a stamp on their foreheads', claiming they only bit outsiders. She included herself, the young girl, and all 'Cape Verdeans' strangers to Cape Verde as 'immigrants' there, even though she held double citizenship at the time of this conversation, and was a Cape Verdean citizen at the time of her trip. Identity is indeed a complex issue (Gibau 2005). Researching ethnic categories among second-generation Cape Verdeans in a Portuguese council estate, Fernandes (2006, 76-77) also concluded that citizenship did not imply or coincide with national identity. In Topia that was true of both Cape Verde and Portugal: second generations' identification as Cape Verdean did not imply feelings of belonging to Cape Verde; nor did Portuguese citizenship entail identifying as Portuguese. Underpinning their understandings of Cape Verdeanness, there seemed to be rather a 'racial' definition, based on shared skin colour.

'Race' is a loaded term. Recent world history, fresh with colonial scars and memories of genocide, is (like the history of anthropology itself) closely entwined with the

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<sup>125</sup> Although *kizomba* is traditionally an Angolan rhythm, the more modern style *zouk* (with similar rhythm), popular among artists and public in the Cape Verdean diaspora, is commonly known in Portugal as *kizomba* (Cidra 2008a, 118).

wrongs of hierarchical classification, based on posited natural human differences (Harrison 1995, 50-52). The absence of genetic grounds for racial classification, and the diversity of ways and contexts in which rhetorics of 'race' continue to be used have made the category exceedingly broad and nebulous, even while hard to exorcise (ibid., 48-49, 53; Wade 2004, 160-161). As a result, the validity and usefulness of the concept have been questioned, popularising 'ethnicity' as an alternative (Harrison 1995). However, focusing on ethnicity or other replacements ignores the persistence of race in social discourse (Wade 2012). For that reason, Wade (e.g. 2012, 2004) has argued for the heuristic value of race, defined not in reference to any fixed 'natural' human traits, but to the diverse 'cultural' ways of conceiving human differences, including those inherited from colonialism (Wade 2012, 1169-1170). For Wade, the term's value resides precisely in its breadth, able to encompass diverse classification systems grounded on ideas of 'genealogy, "blood" and inheritance' (ibid., 1670-1672; Wade 2004, 157-158). The fact that Cape Verdeans in Topia recognised and employed the word 'race', and the fact that its use was indebted to Portuguese colonial ideologies, makes the term appropriate to address identity here.

The expression 'our race', sometimes compounded into 'the Cape Verdean race' or even 'the African race' was commonly used by first and second generations of Cape Verdeans. It stood loosely in reference to 'black' skin colour, carrying a homogenising and all-encompassing effect (like the category 'African' itself): different birth countries, citizenship statuses, generations and cultural references were tacitly fitted in the same category. 'My colour' was also mentioned on rare occasions. It transpired the conflation of culture and colour implicit in Cape Verdeans' identity categories.

There were various stereotypes circulating among Cape Verdeans about other African groups (including Angolans, Guineans and even *sampadjudu* Cape Verdeans from the northern islands). Yet perceived differences did not dismiss a sense of shared identity, based on a loose understanding of common 'blackness' (Gibau 2005, 428). The following situation is telling. I escorted Fabi to a post office in Lisbon. The long queue made some people tire and give up. We took a numbered slip and awaited our turn. After a while a black young woman gave up the queue. Before exiting, she crossed over to us and handed Fabi her numbered slip. They exchanged polite smiles and Fabi thanked her in Portuguese. They were the only black people in the post office. Fabi smiled to me and explained that she 'did the same': 'When I give up I give my slip to someone my colour', to reduce their wait. She now had two slips. By the time we were done at the counter and ready to leave, the number on her second (original) slip had not been called, so I suggested she hand it over to somebody else. There were no other black people in the post office, and she

dismissed it: 'Oh it's not worth it' (*não vale a pena*).

The prominence of skin colour in second-generations' understandings of identity was apparent in other small indicators. Cakes on festive occasions often carried black figurines (e.g. the bride and groom on top of wedding cakes). At Baker's Star one day, a woman picked out her twenty-fifth birthday cake from a picture catalogue. As she considered a cake made out as the skirt of a doll, she asked the owner if they also made it with 'black dolls'. Also when admiring famous actresses for their beauty or style, I noticed women tended to focus on black actresses, irrespective of nationality. This was also the case with pictures and identities chosen for fake Hi5 profiles.<sup>126</sup>

The entwining of culture and colour markers in Cape Verdeans' self-understandings was also at times conflated with living in shanties or rehousing estates: 'neighbourhoods'. A second-generation Cape Verdean woman used interchangeably 'blacks', 'Africans', 'Cape Verdeans' and 'people from neighbourhoods' in an interview. This did not mean of course that all categories were seen to coincide. It was perfectly obvious that not all Africans were Cape Verdeans (as stereotypes about other African groups confirmed), nor were all shanty or rehoused dwellers Cape Verdean, nor even black (as Topia and the old slums attested). However, there was a degree of tacit overlap between these different kinds of categories. They were closely entangled in young Cape Verdeans' ethnic understandings.

The reason for this can be traced to their mainly 'relational' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15), in particular 'oppositional' or 'reactive' definition of identity (Batalha 2008, 2004a; Sardinha 2010, 247). Sardinha's (ibid., 268) research on Cape Verdean associations in Lisbon found that 'cultural identities for Cape Verdean youth are often built upon feelings of rejection by, as well as discrimination from, the host society, in the media and from the state'. For second generations in Topia, being Cape Verdean was rooted not only in participation in shared cultural practices and habits – a 'categorical' mode of identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15) – but also in the definition of a crucial contrast to the Portuguese host society.

### **3.4 'Commonality'**

Besides Cape Verdean traditions and habits, common attributes and traits among 'we Africans' or 'blacks' were frequently posited and pointed out: 'We Africans love taking pictures', 'We are very sociable', 'Our race doesn't care about physical ailments', 'Africans only like hearty dishes', 'African women give birth very young' – these kinds of broad

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<sup>126</sup> Hi5 is a social network which warns users when others have been looking at their photos or profile info. To avoid being identified, some women created fake profiles with names and pictures of celebrities.

statements were commonplace in conversation (both with me and among Cape Verdean neighbours). They usually stressed a contrast to perceived Portuguese habits or behaviours. Some months into my fieldwork, I met Domingas on the street after not seeing her for a couple of weeks. Last time we had met, her grandson had an eye inflammation and so I politely enquired about it. I was perplexed when she mumbled in return how 'Whites are worthless.' (*Branços não valem nada.*) I thought back to what might have offended her, but she made her point clear in a second: 'Blacks are much tougher than you.' Domingas meant that the inflammation was not worth mentioning to her (nor apparently to 'blacks' in general), as opposed to (perceivably weaker) 'whites', who took those things too seriously.

A particularly awkward example of this habit of identifying with black (versus white) attributes arose at a Cape Verdean party where several guests actively tried to persuade me to have sex with 'a black man' (*um preto*). They argued that 'Blacks are a hot people' (*um povo quente*), insisting they were better at sex than 'whites'. One woman was particularly uninhibited and imaginative in her contrast: 'With a white it's like a ride across Portugal's landscape, you see the sights, it's nice... But with a black! He'll take you on a spaceship and you'll rise to the moon!' Some women laughed at her audacity, others insisted more seriously with me on that notion.

Perceived Cape Verdean or African traits were also defined against hypothetical criticism. When a tiny bug landed on a muffin and a young Cape Verdean woman refused to eat it, fiercely complaining to the white café owner, it generated approving claims from women around the table that 'Africans are a poor *but* clean race!' Although everyone visibly agreed with the claim, the comment was set in defensive terms, as if an opposing claim was implicit (see Sibley 1995). Other times, comparisons took the form of reproaches or complaints about the Portuguese, defending what was posited as African or Cape Verdean behaviour against Portuguese or white attitudes. A Cape Verdean woman living in a residential block outside Topia organised a lunch party at her house and invited several young women from Topia. I tagged along. A middle-aged man and I were the only white people at the party. The music and talking grew unbelievably loud, and around 7 p.m. the police knocked on the door to request they keep the noise down because of neighbour complaints. Inflamed claims arose in the kitchen and continued throughout the party: everyone agreed that it was unacceptable to call the police at that early hour on account of noise, and that *Tugas* (pejorative slang term for the Portuguese) 'are always the same, always calling the police'.<sup>127</sup> They had pressured me to go talk to the policemen

<sup>127</sup> The term '*Tuga*' (derived from 'Portugal') was popularised in the colonial wars in Africa in the 1960s among guerilla forces fighting Portuguese troops (Pardue 2012a, E48). Its use thus carries pejorative and rebellious connotations – even though the term has been appropriated by Portuguese (in another 'looping effect') as identity banner in certain contexts (including as the official mascot in the 2002 World Cup).

'because you are white', but the other white man, proudly claiming to 'know the environment' (*ambiente*) and be 'used to African parties', came forth. Although the hostess turned the music off, the party carried on as noisily as before, with people shouting and arguing, more indignant about white neighbours and the police than worried about the latter returning (which they did). The conflict assumed clear colour lines, with neighbours and police on the side of 'whites/*Tugas*', who 'always' harassed 'Africans' in their parties.

Cape Verdeans also complained explicitly about perceived instances of racism and injustice. Eva had found a temporary job working door-to-door on commission. She was one of only four black employees on a large local project, and all four of them had been assigned areas of the Município with shanties and rehousing settlements. She protested against perceived differences between whites and blacks on the job: in her view, many whites had 'surely' been admitted through personal connections, since she did not remember them at training week; whites spoke arrogantly as if they were better than her; whites probably held a 'second job' and were there to earn extra cash 'to buy a new car, or go on their third holiday', while others like her were there to 'afford food'. She sneered at the idea that 'they thought' assigning black employees to migrant settlements would be 'punishment' for them, when they were rather 'lucky' to have fewer competition and so be able to run more houses and earn more money. Her outrage was directed at what she construed as racism in the work place, a hierarchical distinction between blacks and whites. It was not primarily directed at employers, but at her white colleagues, seen as essentially different and less worthy of the job than herself and other black employees.

Despite frequently codified in an idiom of race and colour, interrelations between Cape Verdeans and white Portuguese conflated colour with cultural and national markers: whites, Portuguese and *Tugas* were used interchangeably by Cape Verdeans.<sup>128</sup> In addition, place of residence was also entangled in Cape Verdeans' definitions of ethnic boundaries, and set in opposition to the host society (Gorringe 2006; Smith 1993). A particularly striking example of this occurred one morning at Baker's Star. The café owner was white and employed a Cape Verdean woman (not from Topia) as a waitress. Five women, including me, sat at the table outside. Eva was the only Cape Verdean. Two others, Maria and Amália, were white residents married to Cape Verdean men, and the fourth was a white outsider who worked with me at NWIV. We often met at the café in the mornings, ordering at the counter and then sitting outside to eat. Sometimes we waited for the food inside, other times the waitress brought it to us at the table. That morning, she brought Eva her coffee and went back inside. I waited for my tea at the counter and carried it to the

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<sup>128</sup> They had the same basic meaning, but not the same use: 'Portuguese' was the polite term, less used in familiar informal talk. Like 'blacks', 'whites' and '*Tugas*' were deemed more offensive terms.

table, as did Maria and Amália. This was all trivial routine. Then the NWIV worker arrived to order, and shortly after the waitress brought her food to the table. Seeing this, Maria snapped at the waitress, crying out in outrage that 'You only bring coffee to the doctors [*doutoras*] here! How about the rest of us, isn't our money worth the same?' The bewildered waitress tried to explain that it had to do with the number of customers to serve inside, but her efforts were muffled by Maria's yelling: 'Don't tell me it's white money and black money now!' Amália grinned and nodded approvingly, while the NWIV worker looked as perplexed as I was. Eva smiled coyly, but was soon engaged into the argument by Maria: 'Isn't that right, Eva?' 'Yeah it is...' – Eva agreed unconvincingly, saying nothing of the fact she had herself been waited on. The argument had evidently nothing to do with colour. Outraged Maria (whose skin was fairer than mine) was arguing with a Cape Verdean waitress about not being served at the table on account of being 'black'. The discriminatory line, although expressed in terms of colour, referred to a distinction she perceived between herself and the NWIV worker, who were both white. She ignored inconsistencies (namely that I was white and had not been served, as opposed to Eva who had been waited on) and grouped me and the NWIV worker ('the doctors') along with the waitress she accused of discrimination, against herself, Amália and Eva. Her claim to an identity as 'black' was based on an implicit notion of sharing the identity of her Cape Verdean husband and neighbours, one of whom (Eva) she asked to support her claims. The lines expressed here in racial terms actually referred to a putative distinction between residents (Eva, Amália and herself) and outsiders (the NWIV worker, the waitress and myself). Residence was key. In his research on Cape Verdeans in Portugal, Batalha (2004a) also found residence to be a prominent element of identity in 'neighbourhoods':

Segregation also seems to affect people independently of differences in skin colour. Within the *bairros* [neighbourhoods] people tend to override 'racial' differences. Their common class position is superimposed on the rest of their identities. The people in the *bairros* tend to construct their identity in opposition ... to the surrounding world of the middle and upper classes. (Batalha 2004a, 189)

I often witnessed behaviours of fiercely sticking together against 'the outside' (Bourgois 2003, 8-11). Sharing 'the same social condition, the same difficulties and the same geographic space' sometimes overlapped with, and even overrode ethnicity (Raposo 2007, 93, my translation). 'Economic and social commonalities', shared experiences of 'the same streets and schools', 'the defeats of the classroom and police harassment', and 'a

specific view of white authority and institutions' came together to shape residents' identity as a collective one (Westwood 1995, 203). Low socio-economic status merged with ethnic difference in popular and media depictions of migrant neighbourhoods as dangerous topographies (Raposo 2007, 162-163; Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 176; Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001, 95). As a result, identity boundaries in Topia also followed the lines of residence, fostering 'racial/spatial imaginaries' (Westwood and Williams 1997, 8-10). Being a Cape Verdean became inextricably linked with being from a 'neighbourhood' (Pardue 2012b, 7). And living in Topia significantly implied standing in opposition to the outside. That explains Maria's bizarre claims, with Eva and Amália's complicity.

I noticed that this type of incensed or defensive claims sometimes belied feelings of inferiority (Link and Phelan 2001, 374-375), or what Raposo (2007, 68) found in another council estate to be an admitted 'low self-esteem' and absence of life prospects among second generations (also Pinto 1994, 38). At times strongly rejected, especially in the face of discrimination or superiority claims by outsiders, a sense of inferiority could be openly expressed by Cape Verdeans in familiar conversation, including with white neighbours. Self-denigration, like all talk of common African attributes, again followed a 'relational' logic of contrast to white Portuguese. These comments were sometimes directed at me, suggesting that informants felt they were being judged not so much by a researcher as by a white person. I spent an afternoon with a group of young women at Diana's house, while they cooked, styled their hair, chatted and engaged in routine activities. At different points in the afternoon they turned to me with apologetic remarks of the sort: 'You must think we sound like a fish market' [*peixeirada*] – because of the loudness they thought I would not be used to and find reproachable; or 'You must think this is disgusting' (*uma porcaria*) – as one of them styled another's hair at the table, adding: 'I know, because I've been married to a white.' In this context, the distinction between 'you' and 'we' clearly followed a colour line. The other facet of Cape Verdeans' self-deprecation was the occasional association of positively valued traits with white Portuguese. Domingas mentioned her grandson's good performance at school and when I praised him for being smart she noted: 'Well, he's the son of a *Tuga*.'<sup>129</sup> It was interesting that although interactions between Cape Verdeans and white outsiders were sites of tension and protest against perceived discrimination, Cape Verdeans themselves often expressed self-criticism as opposed to posited white features, or ascribed higher entitlement to whites in certain contexts. A particularly illustrative case happened at the wedding of a young Cape Verdean man from Topia. As usual there was an open bar, run by volunteer party guests. The majority of guests were Cape Verdean, as

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<sup>129</sup> The boy's mother was a second-generation Cape Verdean while his father was white Portuguese.

were bar volunteers. Halfway through the party the bar ran out of glasses, announcing they would only serve people carrying their own. A woman from my table returned from the bar frustrated to inform us of the new rule. Diana promptly appointed me to go order drinks for them. Confused, I repeated her friend's message, but she argued: '*You* they'll give, you're white.' I reluctantly followed her request, to come back empty handed. It was revealing that at a Cape Verdean party with mostly Cape Verdean guests (whom she knew far better than I did) she naturally expected me to attain special treatment for being white.

Expectations of inferiority in relation to whites were integral to Cape Verdeans' constructions of 'commonality' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 19). The regular use of the offensive term 'blacks' in self-reference, while defied and resented in outsiders, further illustrated the racial and denigrating connotations of Cape Verdeans' identity constructs. It had an equivalent in the ascription of the adjectives 'problematic' and 'degraded' to one's living place, corroborating the underlying conflation of race and residence in identity claims. Perceived Cape Verdean traits were clustered into a bundle of black attributes or expectations about 'people from neighbourhoods', and expressed in relation to white features with implications of opposition, indignant protest and tacit inferiority. The content of that relationship evinced an appropriation by Cape Verdeans of racial categories and meanings imposed by Portuguese society, law and media, and heavily indebted to colonialism.

Meintel's (1984) pioneering study of race relations in Cape Verde (and the United States) under colonialism described this colonial legacy in detail. From the times of settlement through slavery practices to the end of Portuguese colonialism, Meintel examined dominant racial ideologies in Cape Verde and the metropolis, characterised as a fluid and contextual (so-called 'Iberian') type of racism. An interesting aspect of this system was how it was appropriated by subordinate subjects themselves. The ambiguity in racial meanings and categories described by Meintel helps to illuminate identity practices in Topia. Meintel noted how categories of skin tone and phenotype carried ambivalent moral undertones and assumptions (*ibid.*, 101-107). On the one hand, slavery and economic dependency promoted domination and ideological superiority of whites over blacks – in practice devoid of civic, economic and political rights (*ibid.*, 159-63). Dark skin colour was denigrated as signalling 'backward', ugly or inappropriate features, close to an African heritage and opposed to the purported 'cultural' superiority of Europeans (*ibid.*, 103-107). On the other hand, popular resistance to colonialism, especially in the case of *badius* in Santiago (chapter 4), lent an ambiguous quality to African features, which simultaneously reproduced *and* countered Portuguese racial ideology (*ibid.*, 151-153). As a

result, negative stereotypes about white Portuguese were perpetuated, while African traits became symbolically tied to both 'Cape Verdean-ness' and resistance to 'Portuguese-ness' (ibid., 142, 151).

Meintel interestingly noted that this racial ideology was appropriated by Cape Verdean migrants in the U.S., whose identity remained ambiguous, located in-between Portuguese and African migrant groups, disparaging the latter as 'backward' while refusing the former's superiority (ibid., 164-165). In the context of Topia, aspects of colonial racial ideology were likewise appropriated by targeted subjects, but in different, specific ways. Although negative stereotypes of other African groups circulated in Topia, and the marker 'black' was contextually rejected, the legal changes, political agendas and media images of black 'foreigners' in Portugal contributed, in young Cape Verdeans' minds, to the conflation of Cape Verdeanness and Africanness, both defined in terms of colour, culture and residence, and set in definite contrast to the Portuguese.

### **3.5 'Moving targets'**

The power of categories and meanings to build 'kinds' of people was put forth by philosopher Ian Hacking (1986, 1999, 2006). Illustrating his argument with cases like 'multiple personality' and 'child abuse', Hacking suggested that concepts and categories open new and specific possibilities for action, thought and meaning, under which individuals can live and see the world differently (ibid.). In turn, people come to appropriate and interact with the categories imposed upon them, reworking their possibilities of action and meaning (ibid.). In a different discussion, Hacking (2005) specifically addressed 'race'. He traced the pervasiveness of racial categories across space and time to an 'imperial imperative' to classify subjects in order to 'magnify' domination over them (ibid., 112-116). Racial classification congealed ruled subjects as essentially different kinds of people from the ruling, warranting their conquer and exploitation (ibid.).

Before the advent of 'lusotropicalist' ideologies, racial categories imposed by the Portuguese colonial empire indeed essentialised differences between the ruling and the ruled. Distinctions between 'us' and 'them' were reinvigorated in citizenship laws after colonial independence under a principle of '*jus sanguinis*' which excluded immigrants' children born in Portugal as foreign. European multiculturalist values and citizenship discourses in the 1990s, although aimed at promoting equality, contributed in practice to crystallise the distinction between 'citizens' and 'migrants' in Portugal, significantly coded in colour terms: *white* citizens versus *black* migrants (Fikes 2009). Current media

discourses target migrant settlements and youth gangs, conflating colour, culture and residential meanings with associations to crime, deviance and an uprooted second generation (Horta 2000, 2006). In the process, racial prejudice has settled in public mentality and is enacted daily in implicit and explicit forms of racism. New categories have sprung ('second generation', 'youth gangs', 'problematic neighbourhoods') and old ones ('Cape Verdean', 'black', 'immigrant') have taken on new meanings.

These changes have caused a 'looping effect' in Hacking's (2006) terms, and categorised subjects have become 'moving targets'. Hacking noted that even as categories mean to crystallise people 'as definite classes defined by definite properties', they transform individuals through 'interacting' with them (ibid., 2). As subjects are classified, they become different kinds of people, reworking their horizons of thought, action and meaning in light of the new categories. In a similar way, racial discourses and categories in Portuguese society have been appropriated by their subjects – second-generation Cape Verdeans – in specific modes of identity-building. Young Cape Verdeans in Topia came to adopt the essentialist distinction between whites and blacks, citizens and migrants, subsuming all internal diversity (of culture, nationality, age) under the bulk categories of 'us' ('Africans', 'Cape Verdeans', 'blacks', 'people of neighbourhoods') against 'them' ('whites', 'Portuguese', '*Tugas*', 'outsiders'). Cape Verdeans' identity categories assumed a reductionist and homogenising stance – common to racist ideologies, citizenship laws and sensationalist media headlines – conflating colour, culture and residence. The dichotomy implied a rhetoric of opposition, whereby one side was what the other was not: African traits became visible *against* Portuguese ones. Moreover, in this duality only one pole was perceived in each case to be 'right'. Race is not a neutral classification, as noted by Hacking (2005) and Meintel (1984). It entails hierarchy between the ruling and the ruled, warranting domination and enslavement of deemed inferior 'kinds' of people by purportedly superior ones. The element of hierarchy in racial discourses was also appropriated and transformed by second-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia, resulting in moralising discourses. White and black attributes were addressed in moral terms, each compared and judged as better or worse than the other. Each feature of Africans was presented by Cape Verdeans as good or bad, to be followed or avoided, a reason for pride or shame; with a Portuguese trait standing as its counterpart, in complementary (negative or positive) terms. Often, commending African traits served to counter or rebel against outsider discrimination. But African features were not always judged better than Portuguese ones. They might be depreciated by Cape Verdeans against perceived positive features of *Tugas*, suggesting that racist prejudice against Africans in Portuguese society

has to an extent been taken up by Cape Verdean subjects themselves.

Not all residents in Topia were Cape Verdeans, nor of African ancestry. Some whites produced racist remarks about 'black' neighbours in colloquial conversation, as their neighbours did about them. The boundaries of neighbourhood membership did not follow strict lines of race or colour. And yet, identity-building by second-generation Cape Verdeans in Topia re-enacted the same conflation between colour, cultural and residential markers current in popular and media representations in Portugal. The socially pervasive opposition between subsuming categories of white citizens and black lower-class neighbourhood-dwellers was mirrored in residents' constructions of identity *against* the outside. Thus a fair-skinned woman could claim to be discriminated against by outsiders for being black. 'Segregation' was a prominent aspect of life (Batalha 2004a, 189). It began at symbolic and discursive levels of social exclusion, and by a looping effect it was enacted daily and carried as an identity banner by the same subjects it was imposed upon. In the process, second generations were self-identified as 'foreign' without identifying with a foreign country; and 'the neighbourhood' became meaningful as a stronghold of identity (Gorringe 2006), the dwelling place of a certain 'kind' of people, cast in opposition to the outside.

## 6. The car: 'That's why neighbourhoods are safe'

For the population rehoused in Topia, the 'neighbourhood' assumed social, cultural and identity contours. It was (re)produced daily through neighbours' relatedness ties and exchanges, through participation in a shared cultural repertoire, through social discrimination and identity-building against the outside. However, Topia's segregation did not produce an island enclosed from the urban space around it: jobs, shops, schools, institutional and medical services, relatives and friends required regular travel outside Topia, mainly in the Município, occasionally in Lisbon and surrounding municipalities. The Município was relatively familiar terrain for Topia residents. A small but densely populated suburban city, with easy access to the capital, the Município was made up of residential areas of squat building blocks and small commerce, punctuated by few remaining shanty towns, small parks, roundabout squares, schools, churches, and some larger commercial areas including shopping centres and big supermarkets. Most tenants in Topia had lived in the Município for decades or even all their lives, and the schools, hospitals and shops they frequented lay mainly within its confines. Those working outside Topia often knew by heart transport schedules, routes and fares linking to the city's centre and its different areas. But social space is not uniform (cf. introduction), and this also applied to the Município. The area around the old shanties (with familiar shops and cafés) and other migrant settlements in the city were some of the places residents regularly visited and sustained ties with, and which became most familiar and meaningful to them.

In this chapter, I will explore important social and spatial connections which residents maintained with special places outside Topia, along with the mobility constraints they faced. I will focus on how these connections, and the practices and meanings that forged them, built a significant translocal space beyond Topia, namely between Cape Verdean 'neighbourhoods', further contributing to the distinctiveness of 'neighbourhood life' in contrast to the wider Município. Just as chapter 4 described how people's repeated participation formed a 'community' of shared cultural practices, this chapter will describe how people's repeated movements and travels built a web of safe familiar places beyond Topia, ultimately constituted as a symbolic 'community'. Part 1 will describe the mobility constraints that residents faced when wanting to move beyond Topia or its immediate surroundings, and the clever 'tactics', in Certeau's (1984) terms, used to overcome them. Parts 2 and 3 will be devoted to analysing how certain physical places (neighbourhoods) in the Município and beyond were 'delimited', by Topia residents and other neighbourhood-

dwellers, as special 'habitable', 'familiar' and 'practiced spaces' (ibid.). I will look at the practices and meanings which defined these special places and the social, spatial and symbolic ties between them – making up a distinctive experience of the Município. I will address in turn: residents' memories and intimate knowledge of the area around the old shanties (section 2.1); the dense social networks connecting Cape Verdean settlements (2.2), and how they were formed and maintained through visits and gatherings (2.3); the distinctive spatial models, names and meanings attached to these 'neighbourhoods' (3.1); and finally, the encompassing symbolic narrative, superseding particular neighbourhood rivalries (3.2), which portrayed the shared sufferings of 'ghetto life' (3.3). These different elements combined to engender, for Topia residents, a distinctive translocal 'map' of safe familiar places, interwoven through movements, visits, feelings and ideas, and demarcated from the more impersonal 'non-places' (Augé 1995) beyond.

## **1. Getting out and about**

### **1.1 The bus**

For travelling to different parts of the Município, Topia residents often relied on buses. The estate had three nearby bus stops, serving several destinations in the area and connecting to train or bus services to Lisbon and other nearby cities. But these buses did not run at night, they did not easily reach all areas of the Município, and fares and passes were considered expensive by residents' standards (Young and Willmott 1957, 88).<sup>130</sup> Walking to and from bus stops was also a nuisance under cold and rain, especially for women with children. For these and other reasons, the favourite means of transport was the car. However, it was also a relatively scarce asset in the neighbourhood, along with drivers' licenses.<sup>131</sup> During my stay in Topia, several women were undertaking instruction to get their licenses. One morning at Baker's Star an interesting exchange developed among a group of these women. Alice had passed her driving exam the day before and arrived cheerful to the table to narrate it in detail. Amália suggested: 'Now you're gonna buy a little tin [*latinha*]' (a cheap second-hand car). Alice nodded happily. This triggered a long conversation about the importance these women ascribed to the car. Their first emphasis was on children: 'I have two small children!' Alice reasoned, denouncing they had recently arrived to school drenched from the rain, despite wearing rain boots and coats. Women all around agreed, complaining about travelling with children in crowded public transport. A

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<sup>130</sup> Monthly bus passes varied from €20 to €40 (rarely €50), depending on how far they reached. Combining other means of transport (e.g. trains) increased them to €45 or €50. Single tickets cost between €2 and €3. During fieldwork there were several increases in fares due to rising oil prices and government austerity.

<sup>131</sup> Costing between €700 to €900 to obtain (with another €300 for each driving exam).

driver's license also carried new job prospects: 'Now if you're smart you'll get a job delivering newspapers' or 'driving patients' to the hospital. One woman praised the flexible hours in these jobs, which allowed dropping off children at school (again a main concern). The group collectively agreed with every point, each woman contributing her own experiences to support the importance of the car in their lives. Alice resented institutional workers who had discouraged her, suggesting a driver's license was 'not that important'. Her success story was also meant to inspire: 'Now it's your turn', she encouraged the others.

The shortcomings of public transport and the scarcity of cars and licenses made residents rely on creative 'tactics' to get around. In an influential work, Certeau (1984) put forth a distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' (*ibid.*, xviii-xix, 37). He was interested in the spontaneous daily ways in which subjects appropriate ('consume') products created and imposed by the dominant 'technocratic' economic order (*ibid.*, xxiii-iv). Certeau reacted against a scientific and pictorial tradition of approaching reality from an overarching schematic viewpoint, in his terms reducing reality to a 'theoretical simulacrum' (*ibid.*, 92-93). Instead, he proposed looking at individual practices from 'down below', at a 'factual' rather than 'conceptual' level (*ibid.*, 94). This served to balance excessive concern (including by practice theorists like Foucault) with everyday mechanisms of discipline and power, which favoured the 'production' of culture over its appropriation and subversion by users (*ibid.*, xiv, 96). In this context, Certeau defined 'strategies' as the conscious management of outside 'goals' and 'threats' by powerful institutions holding their own place and interests, set apart from the targets they try to manipulate (*ibid.*, xviii-xix, 36-37). They are the 'producers' of culture (i.e. objects, space, texts and symbols). Certeau was instead interested in the 'ways of operating' of the 'users' and 'consumers' of that culture, those in a socially 'dominated' position who act on the products thus imposed upon them (*ibid.*, xi-xiv). Users employ 'tactics' – the 'art of the weak' (cf. Scott 1985) – to manoeuvre, manipulate and seize chances to use products in novel ways to their advantage, even while moving in the 'space of the other', organised and imposed by an outside power (Certeau 1984, 37). Tactics are a 'marginal' kind of activity, involving 'clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning", manoeuvres' and other forms of 'poaching' (*ibid.*, xvii, xix, 12). Certeau's concept of 'tactics' translated perfectly the kinds of 'marginal' practices and creative manoeuvring enacted in Topia to cope with the difficulties of moving in the city. Faced with the scarcity of cars, the need for licenses and the shortcomings of transport, residents resorted to 'tricks', bent rules and created new ways of using the objects and means at their disposal.

Two main tactics used by non car-owners relied, as usual, on neighbour support.

For places reachable by bus, residents, especially Cape Verdeans, regularly borrowed neighbours' passes.<sup>132</sup> The need for a pass was felt daily. Its absence could mean missing important engagements. A middle-aged Guinean woman I interviewed was a case in point. She had been unemployed for a long time, being supported by her daughter (who earned below minimum wage) and a boyfriend. She had been waiting for months to be called for a cooking course to further her school qualifications. A new one would start soon but as usual, it was full. When there was a last-minute cancellation, they called her in short notice to fill the spot. Days later I ran into her and she admitted, resigned: 'I didn't have the money for the pass or anything else, so I refused.' A similar case involved a white man in his twenties who had abandoned school at the age of ten. Presently, he could neither get employed (for lack of a school certificate) nor go back to school, on account of his age. He was very excited when the prospect of a professional course arose for him, but in the end failed to enrol because his family could not afford his pass. The lack of a pass or transport options served at times as easy excuse for skipping unpleasant institutional appointments. But mobility was crucial for daily routines, and not having a pass could impede basic projects such as attending a job interview or frequenting a course.

Several residents, especially those employed outside the estate, bought monthly passes. But to cope with travel expenses, many others relied when possible on family or neighbours. Sometimes a pass was 'shared' within one household when individual travelling routines did not overlap. An informant once admitted that: 'I don't buy the stamp because it's not worth it. I only need the pass in the mornings to drop off the children and at night to go to work. My mother's always home then, so we can share the same pass.' Of course this was not always the case, and people often had to make numerous phone calls and knock on several doors before getting a pass for the day. The normality of this 'ritual' was striking. Nobody hid it from neighbours, rather they would send word through one another: 'If you see my daughter, tell her I need the pass to go to work.' They used interesting criteria to assess how risky it was to get caught. There was the idea among Cape Verdeans (which perhaps explains why they commonly used this tactic) that bus drivers focused more closely on the stamp than on the user's picture, and that in the case of African users, drivers only noted the picture's colour. One morning I planned to accompany Diana and Fabi to the Município, but Diana's pass had been lent to a relative. Fabi announced she

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<sup>132</sup> Monthly passes for most transport services used the same card (*Lisboa Viva*), featuring the user's name and picture on the front and a magnetic chip on the back. Each month users would buy a sticky paper stamp for the card, or top-up the chip with the appropriate ticket (only available for some providers). Ticket clerks numbered the stamp to match the number on the user's card, to prevent them from sharing it with others. During my fieldwork, most suburban buses still employed the stamp method. When entering a bus users should hold up the pass so the driver could check for a photo match and appropriate stamp.

would remedy that. I walked with her a few doors up the street to borrow her sister-in-law's pass. Heading back, Fabi considered the photo: 'This pass wouldn't work for me.' Her sister-in-law had much darker skin and the driver would notice the difference. When Diana went to return her neighbours' pass at work in another occasion, the neighbour was out to lunch so she left the pass a white co-worker. The white woman reproached her: 'That's a crime.' Diana chuckled nervously and justified that 'All they care about is the stamp...' This was common reasoning when borrowing others' passes. However, when Leandra asked to borrow my own pass a few weeks later, Diana and Fabi warned against it: the driver would surely see the picture was a different colour, seize my pass and demand a fine. This confirmed that residents were mindful of sanctions and weighed the risks of being caught. However, risk was usually considered low as drivers were seen to scan users' photos based on skin tone. These ideas were inconsistently coupled with stories of being discriminated against in public transport to create the notion that white bus drivers were racist: 'They never look at anyone's stamp, but when it's us they always ask to see it! "Blacks, blacks" – it's always the same.' Domingas voiced this complaint even though she shared her pass with family members and therefore believed drivers hardly focused on black users' pictures. At the same time, she claimed they inspected black users' stamps more closely. If these notions might seem contradictory, they agreed on portraying drivers' conduct as racist (chapter 5). These views also justified residents' bending of the rules, claiming it as both irrelevant (the stamp is what 'really matters') and fair (manipulating drivers' racism). Faced with the pressing need of mobility and weighing the risks of getting caught, residents used 'clever tricks' to manoeuvre and get by in the 'space of the other'. But passes were limited assets. Sharing them restricted users' movements to the routes and zones specified by neighbours' stamps, usually confined to buses in the Município and its close surroundings.

## **1.2 The car**

For travelling beyond the easy reach of buses and others' passes, residents relied on car lifts with neighbours and relatives. Aside from driving children to and from school, car lifts were paramount on parties and celebrations (chapter 7). These frequently took place in other migrant settlements, usually in the Município, sometimes in other municipalities around Lisbon. On these occasions neighbours were mobilised to drive others to the event, often making several trips. Cátia, a Cape Verdean neighbour from the former shanties, had bought a house elsewhere in the Município and hosted her child's first-birthday party there. Many people from Topia and other migrant settlements attended, even though transport to

the area was scarce. So while Cátia, her mother and other neighbours kept busy cooking and serving guests, Cátia's sister spent half the evening driving people to and from the party. Similar dynamics unfolded at a church wedding in the Município. After greeting the wedded couple and taking some pictures, guests left in cars for the reception, held in another municipality. But there were clearly more people than available car seats. People wandered about in the crowd, asking relatives and acquaintances for a lift. 'Who're you going with?', 'Have you tried Vania's car, they had a spare seat', 'Do you have room for my cousin?', 'Can you take some of Raquel's children?' – these questions were anxiously repeated to a number of people, before a place was secured in someone's car. Cars left when they were full. Sometimes the driver promised to return for a second round of lifts. 'At parties we must organise ourselves this way', Fabi explained, sitting in a full car and shrugging amid the commotion. Like her, others seemed to consider these exchanges part of normal neighbour assistance expected at parties and social events, even though some privately complained about others imposing on them for rides (chapter 3).

People addressed the shortage of cars, seats and driver's licenses with different tactics. The first time I returned from a party in another migrant settlement and noted there were not enough seats for all, a woman smiled amused, assuring we would fit: 'Some will sit on laps.' Neighbours frequently squeezed into cars over their seat capacity, risking fines if they were caught, sitting crooked on the back seat or each other's laps. They often carried six to eight passengers in a five-passenger car, though I once witnessed ten people squeeze in (including a woman riding in the trunk). Another tactic was to borrow a friend's car and drive without a license. I heard of at least three male residents who had been to prison for this. People mentioned these cases matter-of-factly, without judgement, suggesting it was routine behaviour (chapter 9). Whether squeezing in or driving without license, as when borrowing passes or riding without a ticket, risk was weighed according to area of the city, day of the week and time of day. These transgressions were not blind to circumstance, they rather seized 'on the wing' the 'chance offerings of the moment' (Certeau 1984, 37). Drivers might refuse to carry passengers over the limit in specified roads, mindful of recent traffic 'stop operations'. Because of moving in the 'space of the other', tactics relied on 'vigilant watchfulness', flexibly adjusting to the unpredictability and 'perpetual mutation' of variables controlled by powerful others (ibid., 41, 81). Neighbours' cars allowed moving around more freely than neighbours' passes. But for non car-owners, lifts limited travel to short distances and familiar roads: to avoid being caught with passenger excess or without a license; to allow several trips to fetch guests. While neighbours' passes and cars served in clever ways to overcome restrictions to everyday mobility, their limitations circumscribed

people's movements, to an extent, to the Município and its familiar surroundings.

### 1.3 Walking

Despite the far reach of neighbour support, it failed on numerous occasions. Sometimes squeezing in was simply not enough to ensure seats for all, and people were inevitably left out. At other times car owners were busy or made excuses as they could (chapter 3). When neither bus passes nor lifts were available, some people relied on walking long distances, especially if the weather suited. In summer, retired residents walked daily to vegetable gardens near other migrant settlements in the Município (some a thirty-minute walk away), others without a pass walked regularly to and from the city's centre (fifteen to twenty-five minutes away). This of course restricted people's trips to manageable distances. On the occasion of a neighbour's funeral, I walked with Luzia and another neighbour for 4 km to the cemetery, dressed in dark clothes under a burning July sun, because they could not afford a bus ticket. We cut across busy roads, wastelands, a shanty town, on a path clearly familiar to them. When I expressed surprise at their decision to walk that long distance Luzia told me she was used to it, and in fact took the same route to visit her mother's grave and a nearby market. A few months later, Ivone met a middle-aged neighbour outside the supermarket and stopped to greet him. The man was dripping sweat, and explained he had just walked back from his new job, roughly fifty minutes away. Ivone suggested he should buy a bus pass, but he objected it was not worth the cost: the job was temporary. For less important engagements, residents frequently skipped them rather than walk such long distances (chapter 10). Young people seemed less willing to walk and more used to relying on lifts. They often skipped casual parties and events when no lifts were available (confirming the lack of transport could also be used as an excuse).

Each time residents wished to get around, a familiar procedure unfolded: they weighted public transport options, schedules and fares, recounted neighbours they might rely on for passes or lifts and tried calling them individually, until they either found what they needed or gave up. This careful and demanding process of pondering, choosing and working to find transport was a habitual formula outside regular routines (like commuting to work). Although neighbours' favours played a central role, the scarcity of resources and uncertainty of others' availability posed constant challenges to individual creativity and resourcefulness.

A christening party was held on a Saturday in a shanty town in the Município. Diana's young niece was the godmother, and she invited Diana along with others from

Topia and the old shanties. After returning from work that afternoon, Diana sat with Denise to discuss how to get to the party. They knew their neighbour had borrowed her boyfriend's car for the weekend. They tried calling her, without luck. It was Saturday evening: lifts would be hard to find. They called a few neighbours they could think of. No one answered. They considered not going, but Diana's sister-in-law (her niece's mother) would be very upset. Diana suggested taking the bus, Denise argued against it: 'It'll take too long.' She mentioned the train, Diana argued it was too expensive. 'We'll buy children's tickets' (half the price), Denise proposed. Diana feared ticket inspectors, but Denise reminded it was the weekend: 'they're not around like that', besides it was only a few stops. Diana was finally convinced and we left the house. On their way down the road, they sighted Denise's cousin near the food vendors. They were in luck, he was a car owner. They went to him, trying to entice him to drive us, inviting him over to the party and promising an enjoyable evening. After some time and excuses, he finally agreed.

A simple trip could be a hard feat to attain. Either as excuses or actual hindrances, mobility constraints made life more local. With limited travel options, the neighbourhood was the primary place for leisure and socialising. The scarcity of means and neighbours' unavailability demanded constant creative work to arrive at instant solutions for moving outside the estate. Borrowing passes, squeezing in, driving without a license, travelling on foot, riding without a ticket or paying children's fares – these were common examples of 'secondary production' in Certeau's (1984, xiii) terms: creative and novel ways of using and consuming products (passes and tickets, cars, space itself), different from those planned and enforced by the institutions who conceived them. They allowed residents to leave and move outside Topia. However, the limits of others' passes, available rides, familiar roads without police, physical endurance, even the energy and thought put into securing each trip restricted, in practice, residents' movements. Besides centring life in the neighbourhood and its surroundings, these constraints affected to a lesser degree the familiar routes and accessible destinations in the immediate space of the Município, more easily traversed by bus and on foot. Sharing the same passes, the same cars, the same usual routes and places, residents' constrained patterns of movement braided a shared translocal map. Their continued trips, repeatedly favouring specific places and avoiding others, over time 'weaved places together' (Certeau 1984, 97), forming distinctive and socially meaningful connections with (and between) specific sites beyond the estate.

From the 1990s, anthropologists have increasingly recognised the practical and 'embodied' aspects of space (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 2; Low 2003; Farnell 1999, 353). They have considered how 'place' is constituted, in locally specific ways, through

subjects' patterns of movement, trajectories and detours, cognitive mapping, bodily gestures, language and naming practices (e.g. Rockefeller 2001; Gray 2003; Munn 2003; Pandya 1990). In these approaches space is conceptualised 'as movement rather than as a container' and the body as 'a moving spatial field [which] makes its own place in the world' (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 6, 18). Subjects' regular movements are shown in these works to connect 'simple coordinates' and ascribe to them 'positive or negative value', thereby dividing 'space into places' as well as 'non-places' (Pandya 1990, 788; Augé 1995). The repeated routes and movements of Topia residents contributed to a set of shared spatial ties and meanings: stories and memories about the old shanties; bonds connecting different migrant neighbourhoods; distinctive cognitive maps of the city; and an encompassing symbolic narrative of marginalised 'neighbourhood' life. Their trips, visits, gatherings, embodied practices, gestures, feelings and knowledge marked certain destinations as familiar, safe, habitual, social, enjoyable, as opposed to the impersonal 'transit' spaces in between (ibid., 107).

## **2. Beyond Topia**

### **2.1 Familiar places: the old shanties**

The Município was not uniform to the people rehoused in Topia. Space beyond the estate encompassed a number of distinctive places, to which residents maintained significant affective, social and symbolic ties. One such place was the area surrounding residents' former shanty towns. For most informants I talked to and interviewed, remembering the old slums brought happy memories and deep longing (chapter 3). They described feeling sad or nostalgic when travelling to the area, noting how much it had changed and regretting they could no longer identify where their own shanty had stood. Although some people had not returned,<sup>133</sup> most of my informants still frequented the area around their former shanties. Some women shopped at the local farmer's market (keeping loyal to the same vendors), and at several nearby shops selling African hair products, Cape Verdean ingredients and other 'ethnic' goods aimed at an African clientèle. Residents stopped by specific cafés in the area where they knew the owners and sometimes got deals as old customers. Many women still bought their meat from the local butcher's, while some elders still preferred the local church to the one near Topia. On occasion, older residents still frequented a local recreational association. Informants told me these habits were much stronger immediately after the rehousing, gradually waning over time. Enough so to make

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<sup>133</sup> Mainly the case with a minority of slums whose surroundings (including shops) were completely rebuilt.

some local businesses close down after the shanties were removed. Constraints of transport, convenience or (namely for elders) physical ability, and the new generations raised in Topia contributed in time to consolidate new shopping habits near the estate. Nevertheless, consumer ties to shops and services around the old slums subsisted to the time of my fieldwork (up to ten years after the rehousing).

The area surrounding the old shanty towns was a familiar space to its former residents. 'I know all of it!' Diana declared one afternoon while we visited shops in the area. Her knowledge of side streets, bus schedules and shop bargains certified this, and her interspersed comments revealed an intimate familiarity with the place: 'This Gypsy woman comes to beg here since I was a child, always sitting on that spot.' 'This used to be a Chinese shop, it had really cheap stuff, but it closed.' 'This café is known for its soup.' 'My mother buys all her meat there.' Other informants shared personal preferences and tales about the place: 'Just the other day I stopped by [a certain café] for coffee and a pastry, in the end the man didn't let me pay: "That'll be nothing." It's because I'm an old customer, he recognises me from the times of [the slum].'

Familiarity with the area and its shops rested partly on relationships with business owners, vendors, staff and previous neighbours. Cruising the area with a former resident felt like taking a tour with a native guide. Although I had been to those parts of the Município before, I now followed residents' personal routes to places which held memories of their former lives and ties with old acquaintances. Certeau's (1984) focus on users' space consumption recognises how 'invisible' things like words, names and stories about places 'invent' them as lived personal spaces, making them special and familiar by setting them apart from the impersonal 'geometrical' space outside (ibid., 104-108; Tyrell 2006; Basso 1988). Residents' attachment to and knowledge of the area around the shanties illustrated how it was filled and 'haunted' by past memories and meanings (Certeau 1984, 108). These places looked and felt different 'over the shoulders', or along the 'footsteps' of insiders (Geertz 1972, 29; Certeau 1984, 97). Kirby (2009, 15) defended that 'Social knowledge of, and movement through, a social "milieu" is necessarily topo-mnemonic in character – memory is always influenced by spatial practice and spatial cues, and engagement in surroundings flows from embodied mnemonic interplay with characteristics of place in a community.' That was also my impression when walking with Luzia and her neighbour to the cemetery (section 1.3). We were some of the first people to arrive for the funeral that day, so they took the time to walk around and stop for coffee. They passed different cafés, most of them closed (it was Sunday). Their comments revealed an intimate knowledge of the area: 'This one's closed down.' 'That one's changed management.' Luzia had worked in

one of them, and at a local bakery when she was younger. In their stories I could catch glimpses of an exclusive past I was 'not allowed to read' (Certeau 1984, 108), shared only with the people who had inhabited the place together. After coffee we sat to wait in the shade, where white women sold flowers by the cemetery gates. Luzia recognised them: by chance they had been shanty-town neighbours. The women had been rehoused in a different estate and they had not seen each other since. Luzia had been pregnant at the same time as one of them. They asked about each other's children and nostalgically swapped memories of the old days. The knowledge they shared from a common existence in the shanties tied them together in an 'organic interpenetration of place, people, and history' (Candea 2010, 127).

## **2.2 Familiar faces: 'You'll surely bump into someone you know'**

I was constantly amazed by the number of times that residents, especially Cape Verdeans, ran into acquaintances in the Município. There was always someone to greet by the train station, at bus stops, in shops or just walking on the street. Cape Verdeans were also sure to meet acquaintances at certain spots in Lisbon, like the Cape Verdean Embassy or Lisbon airport. On the bus trip to Fátima (chapter 4), the designated stop for coffee made this exceptionally apparent: amid the crowds of people arriving in separate buses, individuals repeatedly bumped into acquaintances from different areas around the capital.

This was such a routine fact of life that sometimes residents actually counted on it. When I complained about exceeding my baggage allowance before leaving fieldwork, a middle-aged Cape Verdean woman gave me some interesting advice: 'Go to the airport early, you'll surely bump into someone you know, and you ask them to carry some stuff for you.' She had done it before with some of her husband's co-workers, and advised me to do the same. It never crossed her mind (as it quickly crossed mine) that it would be very unlikely for me to casually run into an acquaintance at the airport, least of all travelling to the same destination. I found her assumption telling: residents' wide social networks made their world (at least particular places in it) small.<sup>134</sup>

Residents' casual encounters included former neighbours from Topia or the old shanties. But many times they ran into Cape Verdeans from other migrant settlements (slums and rehousing estates) in and around the Município. I found striking not only the considerable size of their networks of acquaintances, but the prevalence of Cape Verdeans

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<sup>134</sup> This impression was much stronger in Santiago (Cape Verde). There were social links (through relatives, godparents, co-workers, friends) between almost any two people I met on the island, and I was constantly impressed by how 'small' (in the sense of richly and densely connected) their social world was.

and 'neighbourhood'-dwellers in them. Reasons for this became clearer after a conversation at Baker's Star one morning in late February. A young white Brazilian woman whom I had seen once before came to visit that day. She chatted to several people on the street without an apparent purpose in mind, and ended up sitting at the café with me and several others. By now used to neighbours' short purposeful drop-ins, usually aimed at asking favours, I asked her the reason for this visit to Topia. Women around us protested vehemently to my question, regarding it as visibly offensive. The terms of their objections were interesting: 'You've seen her around loads of times, you just don't remember!' 'There are lots of people here who aren't from the neighbourhood, you just don't know it!' These claims were hurled in indignant tones. Their point gradually became clear: the fact that she was not from Topia (nor from the old slums), like apparently many regular visitors to Topia, did not make her not belong there, as I seemed to be implying. In other words, her presence in Topia did not require an explanation. They were objecting to my assumption that she was in some way an outsider. Their reaction puzzled me. It was obvious in the way people spoke about outsiders and acted towards them that marked lines of belonging and trust were drawn, with white non-residents usually placed beyond them. She was clearly friends with some residents, but why should that grant her insider status? After apologising and explaining awkwardly I meant no offence, they began to draft an explanation. They hinted at the wide and close circle of relations formed in their childhood and youth in the shanties. 'People from all the neighbourhoods [migrant settlements], even across the river, gathered in [a specific slum] for "matinees" [*matinés*].'<sup>135</sup> I asked about them: they were regular parties at that slum, with Cape Verdean music and dance, held on weekend afternoons and lasting through the night: 'Sometimes if we missed the bus we'd sleep over.' According to the women, these 'matinees' in their youth introduced them to young people, mainly Cape Verdeans, from a number of migrant settlements around Lisbon. That was the case with the Brazilian woman at our table. Although they had not been neighbours, they were old acquaintances from the shanties. Sharing the same social and residential status and a wide common network of relations allowed her an insider-like position in Topia.

I was surprised that these matinees, apparently so significant, had never been mentioned. Over time, I realised it was but one setting, among many, where Cape Verdeans from different neighbourhoods met and socialised. Weeks later, Eva again recalled the topic: 'All neighbourhoods [slums in the Município] knew each other, we were very close.' When I asked why, this time nobody mentioned matinees: 'Oh, there were always relatives of relatives', 'We went to the same schools', 'There was that thing of rivalry between

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<sup>135</sup> According to the 2010 municipal survey, only one household in Topia originated from that slum, meaning that Topia residents who attended these 'matinees' in the old shanties were visitors, rather than hosts.

neighbourhoods', whereby children fought each other to prove which slum was 'stronger'.

### **2.3 Familiar places: other migrant settlements**

According to old maps of the area and people's descriptions, several shanty towns in the Município were located close together. Some were adjoining (set apart by a road), others were a twenty or thirty-minute walk apart. In 2010, almost 4/5 (78%) of households in Topia originated from a group of only three neighbouring slums. Although many residents had family and acquaintances in migrant settlements around Lisbon (including across the river Tagus), their connections within these particular shanty towns were especially strong. Informants stressed that 'everyone knew each other, even if by sight'. The fact of living nearby, sharing language (Creole), cultural habits and economic condition led people from different neighbourhoods, namely age-peers, to socialise repeatedly in various contexts: playing on the streets as children, attending church, school and neighbourhood parties. But common meeting ground stretched beyond a common zip code. Two other arenas of contact between Cape Verdeans of different settlements were family networks (meeting at christenings, weddings, funerals, other rites and events) and jobs.

Families often stretched across migrant settlements (e.g. Weeks 2012a, 20-21). It was common for children, living with their mothers, to have their fathers living in other settlements. The pattern of bearing children from different fathers (cf. chapter 2) extended family ties – between relatives-in-law, cousins, paternal grandparents and children – across different neighbourhoods. These bonds fomented visits, gatherings, party invitations and assistance ties, namely centred on women. Diana's brother, for example, had a daughter living in a shanty town in the Município. This often made Diana and her family travel there to visit her niece or attend celebrations, and her 'sister-in-law' (the child's mother) to visit Topia or drop off her child for sleepovers at Diana's house.

Work contexts also offered important interaction points for residents of different settlements. As mentioned in chapter 2, Cape Verdean workers in Portugal are a mainly unqualified labour force, mainly employed in precarious and poorly paid segments of the job market, including construction (for men) and cleaning (for women). Within these niches, Cape Verdeans from different neighbourhoods also got acquainted. Residents' guests or acquaintances were often referred to as 'my colleague' [*colega*] (chapter 2). In some cases this bond could be significant enough to establish lasting relationships and social obligations. When Eva was invited to a former co-worker's wedding, she confessed to me she did not care too much for large social events, yet felt obliged to attend this one:

'He was my colleague, he'd never forgive me if I missed it.' Informal trade also contributed to widen connections between different settlements. Some vendors and dealers chose to sell in other settlements, reckoning lower police presence or a wider clientèle. This was the case, towards the end of my fieldwork, with Nívea, who temporarily chose to trade in a different migrant settlement in the Município, hoping to achieve higher sales there.

During my fieldwork, most Cape Verdeans I met from other settlements were introduced to me at parties and gatherings. They were friends, relatives, former neighbours, former classmates, co-workers of Topia residents or other party guests. Some were very close, others casual acquaintances. Most of them were Cape Verdeans of similar socio-economic and residential backgrounds. After attending a few Cape Verdean parties in different neighbourhoods, I also sporadically ran into other guests when walking in particular areas of the Município, namely near the old shanties. Diana and I once bumped into a white young woman we had met twice before at these parties. We greeted and made small talk, and when they parted ways Diana smiled: 'Until the next party!' These events provided a key arena in which people from different neighbourhoods socialised. They caused residents to travel regularly or sporadically to other settlements, which in time also became familiar to them: their streets and alleys, the best routes across them, the safe and dangerous spots, local transport options.

Growing up as neighbours, visiting and attending common social events, working together, sharing the same language and similar cultural and social backgrounds produced wide networks of relatives and neighbours from different Cape Verdean settlements around Lisbon. Contrary to outsiders, for whom these neighbourhoods were linked with crime, marginality and youth gangs (chapter 5), for visiting relatives and 'colleagues' these places were rather associated with family ties, social interaction, lively parties, shared cultural practices, and in the case of shanty towns less police surveillance (convenient for street vending and loud parties). As they moved about these neighbourhoods, people transformed them from neutral physical locations into 'practiced', lived 'spaces' (Certeau 1984, 117; Barbosa and Ramos 2008, 180-181). Visitors' spatial and embodied practices in these contexts (Low 2003) – their habitual routes and movements, social gatherings involving dancing, eating and other pleasant sensations, shared emotions and memories formed on these occasions, the stories, intimate knowledge and overall engagement with the place and its inhabitants – 'founded' these settlements as 'familiar' places, set apart as special from outside 'foreign' ones (Certeau 1984, 123, 130), and connected to one another to form an integrated translocal space (Gray 2003).

### 3. Translocal connections

#### 3.1 Synecdoche: 'habitable' spaces

Diana and Denise were invited to a party on a Saturday night in a shanty town repeatedly targeted by Portuguese media as a crime-ridden and drug-dealing hub. Denise asked in Creole: 'Do we take her [me]?' Diana hesitated before agreeing. She addressed me in Portuguese: 'The party's in [slum name]...' 'But don't worry', she added quickly. 'Usually people think it's like a dangerous place...'

As described in chapter 5, outsiders' representations of migrant neighbourhoods were often countered by residents. As we walked to the bus stop one afternoon, Diana suggested I could travel to another council estate in the Município to interview some women I had met at a party. Because of their work schedules I would have to go at night. I asked about safety in their settlement for an outsider like me, because, I argued, 'one hears stories'. This introduced some interesting comments. Diana immediately dismissed my concerns: 'It's people from the outside [*pessoas de fora*] who tell those stories, never those from the inside. These feel safe inside. That's why neighbourhoods [*bairros*] are safe. Even in [the old slum]. There were many stories about it. Sure there was a lot of [drug] traffic at some point, but there were no people being killed.' She recognised there were quarrels among residents, 'but that's normal for us Africans'. She insisted: 'But there aren't people being killed.' The idea of outsiders (like myself) having an exaggerated view of insecurity inside 'social neighbourhoods' was repeatedly conveyed to me.<sup>136</sup>

The rejection of these negative connotations was an aspect of a wider phenomenon. Cape Verdean settlements in the Município, especially shanty towns, were conceptualised in distinctive ways by residents of 'neighbourhoods'. Their 'spatial models' and 'stories' of the Município, and of these places within it, differed from those of other city-dwellers (Shore 1996, 61-62; Certeau 1984, 104-108). They seemed to share certain sets of knowledge 'orienting' them to the environment, including cognitive 'navigational models', 'route maps', 'models of interpersonal space' and behavioural 'context markers' (Shore 1996, 42-45, 61-62). I found that perceptions, meanings and representations of migrant settlements, more markedly shanty towns, were similar among its residents and regular visitors. An interesting indicator was the names they used to refer to Município's slums. The more recent estates (including Topia) were called by their official or abbreviated name. Conversely, when referring to the familiar shanty-settlements they grew up in and around, they named instead the part of the Município where it stood. They did not use the

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<sup>136</sup> Like identity claims (chapter 5), these objections were of course contextual. They coexisted with notions that people should mind their belongings in Topia, because 'they steal everything' (chapter 3).

settlement names employed by outsiders and news reports, but rather the name of the parish or area where the settlement was located. In other words, being in a specific parish or part of the city was meant to imply, in normal communication, being at the local Cape Verdean neighbourhood.

These references were contextual. Parish names could be used literally to refer to the parish, and I was at times confused as to which spatial scale was meant. But a pattern became apparent. Parish names usually stood for migrant settlements whenever the topic involved social interactions: 'I'm doing my hair at my ex-colleague's in [parish X].' 'We ran into him in [parish Y].' 'The party Saturday's in [parish Z].' In turn, they could mean the actual parish when referring to more impersonal venues (health centres, shops or other less socially marked contexts). The distinction between neutral areas and 'practiced spaces' is of consequence (Certeau 1984). As Basso (1988) argued, the 'use of toponyms in concrete instances of everyday speech' is a way of 'appropriating physical environments' (ibid., 102). Names and stories about a place made it personal and distinctive, 'delimiting' and 'founding' it as 'habitable', retrieved from the void of neutral urban fabric (Certeau 1984, 104-108, 123). Cape Verdean neighbourhoods formed for its residents and visitors distinctly lived, practiced, habitable spaces – facets mostly unknown to outsiders.

On the contrary, the wider Município was often the impersonal space of bureaucratic tasks and 'solitary contractuality' – at the supermarket, school, doctor's office, social security – or merely a space of 'transit', 'to be passed through' on the way to 'somewhere' (Augé 1995, 94, 104). Outside familiar areas and places of meaningful sociality, the space of the Município came close to a 'non-place' for residents, in the sense of not being 'relational, or historical, or concerned with identity', but instead a space of 'solitude' and 'anonymity' (ibid., 77-78, 102-103).<sup>137</sup> In this context, Lisbon was even less of a place. While most rehoused dwellers had lived in the Município much of their lives and knew how to (creatively) move about it, Lisbon was largely unfamiliar ground. Excluding migrant settlements in Lisbon, as well as popular leisure spots for young people (a big shopping centre, some favourite night clubs), the Embassy, airport and other key administrative services, residents seldom travelled to Lisbon unless they had to. This was corroborated by Diana and Fabi's requests for me to escort them there whenever they had something to take care of. Their uneasiness in moving about Lisbon was also confirmed after fieldwork: whenever I visited Lisbon and arranged to meet with Fabi, Diana or

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<sup>137</sup> Although the 'anonymity' of the 'average man' described by Augé (1995) can be traced to a white literate middle-class consumer, the agent in his depictions of supermodernity – including air travel, reading magazines, shopping with credit cards, staying in hotels, passing unnoticed through passport control. For lower-class black urban dwellers, on the contrary, non-places expectedly involved much less refined consumption and limited anonymity amid a white crowd (see Madanipour 2011; Castells 2004).

Leandra, they always refused to meet in Lisbon – because 'it's far', 'I don't have a pass', 'it's not convenient', asking me to meet them in the Município instead. Lisbon was not only unfamiliar, but also a space identified with white Portuguese. This became apparent when a well-connected informant from Topia invited me to attend a social event in Lisbon with political figures visiting from Cape Verde. Even though she invited me, and her friend (also guest at the event) drove us, they naturally assumed that I, the only white in the car, would know how to lead the way to the venue. Residents' unfamiliarity with Lisbon, its routes, areas, transport options and people made it roughly into a 'non-place' in residents' eyes.

Residents of Topia and other neighbourhoods held distinctive representations and maps of the urban space around them. In them, Lisbon was assigned marginal status, and migrant settlements assumed prominence and took on specific meanings, opposed to outsiders' derogatory portrayals. The following example illustrates these shared models. After dinner with a group of young Cape Verdean women from different settlements in the Município, they decided to go to 'a bar'. This was my first night out with them. 'The bar's in the *bairro* [literally neighbourhood]', Diana told me. Talking of bars 'in the *bairro*' is very common for people living in and around Lisbon. This is of course synonymous with *Bairro Alto*, an old quarter in central Lisbon rich in bars and cafés and widely known (to tourists and locals) for its night life. However, I had noticed that Topia residents felt visibly less at ease in Lisbon than in the Município. Their choice to go there sounded strange to me. When I asked Diana about it she laughed and repeated what I had said to the other women. The idea sounded as ludicrous to them as it had to me: Diana had of course not meant *Bairro Alto*. The meaning of the term was obvious enough to her that she had not felt the need to explain it. She meant the local shanty-town whose bars they usually frequented. And in fact, when we arrived at the bar I recognised familiar faces from Topia. '*Bairro*' ('neighbourhood') was tacitly employed in a distinctive sense. It involved taken-for-granted assumptions, spatial models and stories of the Município which these women shared (and I did not).

Like the retracing of familiar footsteps (Luzia's example earlier), the names employed in familiar uses served to 'summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations': 'of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life' (Basso 1988, 103). Through residents' usual movements and routes, names, comments and perceptions of places, the Município took on distinctive shape and meaning. 'Neighbourhoods' were delimited as safe, familiar, social, enjoyable spaces. Speaking of the Município and its areas came to imply these places, unconsciously operating a spatial 'synecdoche': taking the part as the whole – taking the

city to mean the familiar places in it (Certeau 1984, 101).

### **3.2 Neighbourhood identities: 'Go on, represent!'**

Occasionally at parties, when Cape Verdeans from different settlements gathered, some reference to neighbourhood rivalry emerged. At a barbecue in Topia one afternoon, a group of young women discussed transport routes between Topia and their own council estate. A curious interaction developed, as women from either estate recounted local transport options, claiming to have better ones. They claimed the nearest train stations (somewhat distant from the actual estates) as their own, and the conversation escalated, in tones of mocking competition, about which estate was the best: 'We've got' this, 'Well we've got' that. Shopping centres, health centres, supermarkets: all local resources around each estate were inventoried to argue that each was better than the other. At some point, watching a male neighbour dance foolishly to entertain others around him, a woman from Topia pointed triumphantly: 'Well, we've got him!' Others laughed. But this only served as pretext to settle the dispute another way: dancing. A woman from each side stepped forward dancing, each facing and pushing the other, trying to overthrow one another by standing out (in energy and endurance) in the dance performance (chapter 7).

Dance at parties was a common way to express, in an entertaining light-hearted manner, this sense of neighbourhood rivalry.<sup>138</sup> Like fistfights among children in the old shanties, whereby 'at the end of the day' they might all be friends again (chapter 3), these dancing contests were inconsequential: usually spontaneous, accompanied by cheers and laughs, they halted as soon as one side gave up, and nobody referred back to who had won. These competitions were frequently expressed as 'representing' each neighbourhood (Raposo 2007). Individuals could be incited by anyone present to move to the dance floor to 'represent' their settlement, either on their own or against others: 'Go on, represent [Vá, representá]!' Those who obliged strived to give good performances, spurred by the collective clapping and encouragement (chapter 7). On a few gatherings, dancing contests were explicitly called (though not always carried through) between the neighbourhoods present. On one of these occasions, I learned that a group of these women attributed animal names (in Creole) to the female members of each shanty town in the Município: 'tigresses', 'ponies', 'cows'. These were meant to set the settlements apart rather than reflect any of their perceived features (Lévi-Strauss 1962; Harrison 2006). When I asked Diana how this had come about, she merely restated: 'It's according to zone.' The ascription of identifying

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<sup>138</sup> The case could be very different in other migrant council estates, namely in other municipalities, where rival groups sometimes faced each other in violent physical (even armed) confrontation.

labels to each settlement confirmed the role of the 'neighbourhood' as a reference in identity-building among second generations (chapter 5). Feelings of neighbourhood identity and mild competition, not usually apparent in daily life in Topia, were occasionally expressed when young people from different settlements were present. At two parties taking place a few days apart, a crowd of teenagers raised their voices over the loud dance music playing to repeat identity mottoes to the beat: 'It's us from [Topia], it's us from [Topia]' (*é nos di..., é nos di...*). Teenagers from another settlement took up the challenge, collectively shouting the name of their own settlement, trying to sound louder than the first. The shouting went on until it was clear who had 'won': which crowd of voices had imposed itself. The same kind of competition was evident in wall graffiti in Topia, featuring the names of different neighbourhoods written next to each other (clearly by different authors), with territorial messages attached to each.

A curious phenomenon was that feelings of neighbourhood allegiance differed according to age. Teenagers tended to identify with the council estates they grew up in, while older youth (in their twenties and thirties) patronised them: 'That's kid's stuff', 'Shouting like that, what is that anyway?' – but in turn expressed similar feelings about their former shanty town. At parties, young people sometimes evoked the name of their slum, followed by many cheers and challenged by cries of rival slums. Strong emotions surfaced when remembering the shanties. Aside from interviews (chapter 3), these emotions were manifest in more spontaneous contexts. Wall graffiti in Topia extensively featured the name or initials of an old slum.<sup>139</sup> Facebook and blog pages were created by young men linked to a rap group, featuring old pictures and nostalgic comments about their shanty town. Towards the end of a christening party, a group of young men, slightly drunk and huddled in a group hug, sang laments about their old slum in whining, nostalgic voices. When I asked Diana what song they were singing, she shrugged: 'They made it up.'

Feelings of neighbourhood belonging were expressed by second generations on several occasions and through varied means, usually when age peers from other settlements were present, confirming their important symbolic attachment to the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, a wider sense of common identity, belonging to the same social and cultural background as poor ethnic neighbourhood dwellers, often surpassed division and particular settlement allegiances.

### **3.3 Asyndeton: 'but our struggle's the same'**

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<sup>139</sup> Further examples of what Harrison (2006) termed 'proprietary' 'identity symbols'.

Shared repertoires and discourses among Cape Verdeans – including language, cultural practices and identifications opposed to outside society – have been explored in previous chapters. Together with the spatial patterns and meanings described here, they worked to build close connections and familiarity between neighbourhoods scattered across the Município and beyond. Growing up together, knowing and frequenting the same places, sharing memories and stories, travelling to each other's settlements, attending common parties, meeting in similar jobs, belonging to the same extended social networks – all this contributed to a sense of commonality between them. More than simply belonging to 'a category', people's repeated movement patterns forged their 'connections and attachments' 'to places, to stories, and to other people' (Candea 2010, 124). But besides cultural, social and spatial practices, these ties between Cape Verdean neighbourhoods were also symbolic (Cohen 2001). Common representations of living in 'problematic' neighbourhoods and sharing a deprived difficult life added to the sense of connectedness between settlements. Although dispersed around the capital, 'neighbourhoods' perceivably enclosed similar kinds of lives, united in suffering and social exclusion.

The celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> of July in Topia (Cape Verde's independence) evinced these symbolic ideas of commonality. Once again, it brought together Cape Verdeans from several neighbourhoods, both as performers and in the audience. Contents of rap music and rappers' interaction with the crowd were interesting to observe. Performers explored similar themes in their songs: the difficult life 'in the ghetto', ruled by poverty, racism and police violence, unemployment, marginality and imprisonment. These lyrics re-enacted 'oppositional' identity references at a wider scale, assuming a collective 'we' set against an antagonistic (sometimes explicit) 'they': the police, less often decision makers or simply wider society (Barbosa and Ramos 2008). The self-referencing 'we' extended beyond the group of performers to encompass the audience, addressing their common experience and understanding of 'neighbourhood' life (ibid.; Raposo 2007). Rap songs revealed the 'sharing of visual, musical and territorial identifications and social and political positioning', which translated 'a common identity experience' (ibid., 44, my translation; Gibau 2005, 430). One particular song made this exceptionally clear. Its lyrics in Creole bemoaned a life of misery and police persecution in a specific shanty town, while the refrain expressed hope, calling out to comfort the neighbourhood: '[Slum name], let's not cry any more; one day we will have peace' (*ka nu txora más; un dia nu ta ten pas*). In a very moving display, the singer replaced the slum in the original refrain, in turn, with the names of different Cape Verdean settlements in the Município, addressing each one individually, to a chorus of voices and applause from the audience. This performance united singer and crowd in a lament over a

shared existence of marginalisation and suffering. An even clearer statement of this collective identification came later in the show when one performer, after yet another song in Creole about difficult 'ghetto' life, addressed the audience to remind that even though he originated from Timor rather than Cape Verde, 'our struggle's the same' (cf. Raposo 2007, 44-45).

Besides spatial practices and models, wider symbolic meanings and narratives of 'neighbourhood life', often unspoken daily but expressed in music and performance in special collective events, overrode neighbourhood rivalry and joined together different settlements in a collective 'we' united by the 'same struggle'. These symbols and stories of 'ghetto life' operated a spatial 'asyndeton' in Certeau's (1984, *ibid.*, 101) terms: they omitted the physical distance, differences and rivalry between neighbourhoods to portray them side by side.<sup>140</sup> This encompassing narrative of slum life highlighted resemblances and affinities, denying the uniformity of Município space and bringing these habitable spaces symbolically together in a common way of life.

The 'embodied' spatial practices, models and stories operated and shared by inhabitants of Topia and other neighbourhoods produced a certain kind of space. Their regular footsteps, routes and movements between different migrant settlements (including former ones) in the Município and beyond engendered a translocal social space out of places 'woven together' through spatial 'synecdoches' and 'asyndetons'. They favoured specific places and their connections, omitting and avoiding others. Social gatherings, exchanges, visits and stories populated this translocal space with emotions and ties, intimate knowledge, memories, shared models and symbols. They 'delimited' and 'authorised' it as familiar habitable space, against the 'foreignness' of the inhospitable ('inhabitable') surrounding city (*ibid.*, 123).

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<sup>140</sup> Asyndeton is 'the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs' (Certeau 1984, 101). Applied to space, 'it selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits', it 'opens gaps in the spatial continuum, and retains only selected parts of it' (*ibid.*).

## 7. The party hall: 'You're a friend of my friends, you're all right'

Teenagers I tutored at NWIV often asked me if I was a teacher. Trying to explain ethnography to them in a nutshell sometimes prompted interesting responses, especially when I mentioned 'culture': neighbourhood 'culture' was seen to revolve around idling and gossiping (chapter 3). I tried to argue there were other interesting things. 'Like what?', a sceptical sixteen-year-old once asked. In a simplified way, I started listing: 'The outdoor grills, the gardens...' At that point two girls completed in unison: 'The parties!' (*As festas!*)

Parties were a central component of Topia life. They were busy social gatherings orbiting around food, music and dance, to celebrate birthdays, *faze kristons*, christenings, confirmations, weddings, or simply summer barbecues. Depending on family means and the size of the party, they could be hosted in people's homes (in Topia or other settlements) or in party halls rented for the occasion. As settings of intense social interaction and heavy resource consumption (food, drinks, lifts), parties were interesting to observe social life: their preparation magnified usual practices of neighbour assistance, its expectations and failures. On the other hand, parties also provided an interesting contrast to daily life. The atmosphere of light-hearted enjoyment and the way unfamiliar guests were accepted and integrated at parties were at odds with the hostile monitoring of outsiders on the streets. This chapter will focus on this contrast to illuminate dynamics of resistance and territoriality in Topia. In part 1, I will focus on street displays of territoriality. I will describe how hostile gazing was applied to 'control' and discourage outsiders entering the estate (section 1.1), and relate it to local codes of confrontation and 'not showing fear' (1.2). Territorial measures restricted access to the social space of the neighbourhood, turning a strictly 'public' space into a defended 'heterotopia' (Foucault 1986) (1.3). Contrasting attitudes were prominent at Cape Verdean parties. I will describe one party (2.1) to then examine two central elements of these events: food giving (2.2), with the assistance practices which supported it (2.3), and *funaná* dancing (3.1). The imperative to share plentiful food and the atmosphere, intrinsic to *funaná* dancing, of unconstrained fun (3.2) and inclusion (3.3) contrasted with the suspicion and control on the streets. At parties, strange others faded in the crowd instead of being singled out and antagonised. I will argue that these polarised attitudes followed different kinds of access to the two spaces, creating distinct gate-keeping mechanisms against intrusion. At parties only 'friends of friends' were allowed (3.4), making guests traceable through social networks and creating liminal spaces where conventional boundaries between insiders and outsiders were temporarily dropped.

## 1. On the streets

### 1.1 'They're controlling': power and territoriality

The rehoused population in Topia appropriated the space of the estate as their own (Rodman and Cooper 1996, 93). They took over street corners, building entrances, the lunch place or land plots for daily social activities (cooking, eating, trading, growing vegetables, socialising) and they transformed the built environment to suit their needs: occupying it, cultivating it, vandalising it, even building on it (cf. introduction). Their uses of space often subverted its planned purposes, including with projected 'socio-cultural equipments' (benches, chairs, tables, a children's playground). Many residents preferred to stand all day on street corners rather than sit on the benches and chairs designed for them. The main reason was simple, and it greatly shaped space occupation and sociability in Topia: keeping 'control' over neighbourhood space. Benches and chairs were built on the side streets. Being encircled by buildings, they offered limited view of the surroundings. Monitoring space and movements in Topia (and trying to escape that scrutiny) were integral to local life, as examined in chapter 3. As control was exercised primarily through gazing, residents preferred to gather in spots allowing inspection of who entered and left Topia and how people circulated in it. As local 'users' of an estate planned, built and owned by a foreign (municipal) power, residents manipulated their options 'tactically' (Certeau 1984), refusing to use the appropriate equipments and rather concentrating on corners by the main road, near cafés and vendors, to smoke, eat, drink, sell, and above all, to watch.

The controlling gaze carried a double purpose: on the one hand, as argued, it was a way to get updated information on what neighbours were up to, and ensure friends and acquaintances did not pass unnoticed without a greeting or a chat (chapters 2 and 3); secondly, and my focus on this chapter, gazing also identified potential outside threats (e.g. undercover police or social workers) and displayed towards them hostility and territorial ownership.<sup>141</sup> From street corners, cars and incomers could be indiscreetly scrutinised for recognition as friends or possible foes. Conversations would halt and heads turn from street corners to check an unknown car driving up the road or entering one of the side streets. The same happened when unfamiliar individuals walked up the road and when buses went by. Gazing over neighbourhood space was a powerful instrument. The local term used (especially by Cape Verdeans) for checking up or scrutinising people was 'to control'.

Contexts in which people employed the term will illuminate its local meanings. For

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<sup>141</sup> The meaning and implications of these threats will be the focus of chapter 8.

example, whenever Diana found her boyfriend's male friends staring at her on the street she would complain: 'They're controlling' (*Es sta na kontrolu*): monitoring to see what she was doing and whom she was with, to later run it by her boyfriend. 'Does Cachó [her boyfriend] know where you are now?' – one of them spotted her walking into a bar in another settlement. She replied annoyed: 'If you're controlling (*na kontrolu*) now, you should be controlling where *he* is!' Elders also remembered nostalgically how in the slums neighbours kept an eye on children when parents were away: 'If you left you didn't have to worry, your neighbour would be controlling your children, if they're doing their chores. If they did something wrong she'd scold them and run it by you when you got home.'

Uses of the term 'control' confirmed that the 'gazer' carried power over the 'gazed'. Between neighbours, this power was up to a point reciprocal: observers and observed had interchangeable positions, they were (usually) able to watch each other and held similar power to report, gossip and judge (chapter 3). But 'controlling' also carried connotations of hierarchy and asymmetry, including in neighbour interactions. People in street corners were in privileged positions (and window watchers even more so, if unspotted) to scrutinise others better than they were themselves scrutinised. They remained immobile and alert while others moved around going about their business. Passers-by carried items, engaged with others, took part in activities. What they did, carried and who they tagged along with became objects of interest and scrutiny: they were more visible and more interesting to watch. In contrast, usual standers-by were seldom involved in anything other than routine idling in habitual groups, smoking, drinking, trading or gossiping. Although they were still judged for it – as 'gossips' (*quadrilheiras*), 'bandits' (*bandidos*), or 'drunkards' – it hardly brought new information to those who observed them. Although neighbours in passing took the opportunity to gaze, there was both less room and less interest for them to do so. Although 'control' could be reciprocal, there was a circumstantial asymmetry involved.

Social hierarchy also had a role. Adults 'controlled' children's behaviour and not the other way around. And since women's movements were more restricted than men's, control gazes were more often exercised over females: because being seen on the streets was less appropriate for a woman; and because more men hanged out (watching) on the streets.<sup>142</sup> Whether reciprocal or asymmetrical, direct gaze was a local weapon of neighbour control. But a more evident power-asymmetry, and one more relevant in this chapter, was the one at play between residents and outsiders: here gazers were invariably insiders, standing as collective claimants to the territory of Topia against incoming (often lone) outsiders.

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<sup>142</sup> Several authors have noted gender asymmetries in gossip, linking them to differentiated gender roles (e.g. Skolnik, Vega and Steigenga 2012; Drotbohm 2010; Van Vleet 2003).

While direct gazing served to control neighbours' movements, it was also a way to express territoriality, especially by males. It displayed residents' ownership of Topia space and appeared to demand justification from trespassing 'intruders' (Goffman 1971, 74; also Candea 2010, 132; Anderson 1990, 39, 164). In this territorial sense, gazing was directed at unfamiliar others, mostly whites (suspected of being undercover agents [chapter 8]). It was a means of conveying hostility and confrontation, following local codes of standing up for oneself and looking fearless (section 1.2). I felt it many times myself, more intensely in the beginning. My visibility on the streets became oppressive (Tonkiss 2003, 302). Four months into my stay, a visibly drunk man came to confront me at Baker's Star, where I sat with other women. He accused me of being a social worker, rambling on about cut welfare benefits and my duty to 'control his son' who had wandered off the previous day. He was clearly upset. The women and I tried to deny his claims and explain my research, but he angrily cut off our attempts and insisted he constantly saw me 'walking up and down' the estate. A couple of people had warned me about this common suspicion, but this was the first time I was directly confronted. It surprised me that after many months much of the hostile gazing had disappeared. Conversations carried on and people seemed not to notice me as I walked up the road. The contrast was disconcerting. Nevertheless, whenever I changed my routine (walked up on different hours, with strangers, entered Crow or Club cafés or got a ride up in someone's car) hostile gazes were automatically re-enacted.

On fewer occasions, I witnessed this from the inside, as people around me suddenly fell silent to follow a car with their eyes. If it was somebody familiar, they might share some gossip about the person and quickly lose interest. If the car was unknown or recognised as threatening, they would try to identify the driver. On one occasion, a white man drove off one of the side streets and down the lateral road by the lunch place. The six people gathering there fell silent and stared at it for a while on its way down. One of the men asked: 'Is that the cop?' Someone denied it, but he insisted: 'That undercover one?' A man assured it was not him and chatting resumed. Constant watchfulness and open hostility confirmed residents' appropriation of Topia space, and their claims to its territory.

## **1.2 'You can't show fear': defending oneself**

I was scared to find myself alone with Zeca, a Cape Verdean immigrant in his thirties who enjoyed harassing me and making explicit sexual propositions (chapter 1). As a heavy drinker, known to get involved in knife quarrels, Ivone and José warned me against him several times. At Ivone's house one morning, she gossiped about a neighbour

beaten up on her birthday by a jealous husband: 'Cape Verdean men are fucked...' (*fodidos*), she pondered. This apparently reminded her of Zeca, leading to a cautionary warning: 'Ana you can't show fear of him, otherwise something bad can happen to you.'

This was not an unusual admonition. The importance of 'not showing fear' was recognised by informants of different ages. People often described individuals' bold reactions to threatening situations and advised others to act in similar fearless ways. At Baker's Star one morning, having complained rudely about the coffee, Amália prided herself in always speaking her mind and letting nobody silence her. To support her claim she recalled arguing with a police officer over a woman who was taken to the police station 'just' for stealing a cream from the supermarket. Amália reiterated she 'wasn't afraid to speak', even when the officer tried to intimidate her: 'What you need is to not show fear.'

Fearlessness was not just about resisting police or authorities. On the contrary, it could at times require not being afraid to call them or denounce a situation. At the café table, Eva and Lara (a Cape Verdean neighbour in her thirties) talked about women marrying immigrants for money in other countries. Lara reported the case of a woman unwillingly locked up by her prospective husband without food or a phone. After two days without hearing news, a friend went to 'get her out' and denounce it to the authorities. Lara praised his behaviour: 'You need to not show fear. You mustn't shut up: call the police!'

The emphasis on appearance – 'showing' rather than 'feeling' – made it especially important to stand ground against opponents in public. This possibly explained that large Cape Verdean parties and celebrations were a favourite arena for quarrels and disputes. Before a large audience of guests, offences or accusations should be faced boldly, even if not carried through to actual violence, as in the following example. At the end of a large christening party, a group of young men (including the host), visibly drunk, decided to undo their shirts, and found it amusing to force any man who refused to participate. They soon made a game out of ripping any unbuttoned male shirt at the party. Many young men willingly undid theirs, while others exited the party venue. On the street outside, one man complained loudly about what others had done to his clothes. Cacho, relatively tipsy, sitting next to Diana and myself with his own shirt unbuttoned, asked if the man had meant him: 'Hey! Who're you talking to? Are you talking to me?' As most shirt-rippers were his friends from Topia, Cacho felt provoked. After posing the question a second time, the first man seemed to take up the challenge and returned 'Are *you* talking to me?' Silence fell. The atmosphere felt heavy with expectation. Diana and another friend tried to calm Cacho down, but he retorted aggressive, loud enough for the other man to hear: 'He's talking about my friends, I wanna know if he's talking to me!' He repeated the question looking the man

in the eye, until the other finally retreated: 'No, I wasn't talking to you...' Cacho sat down and tension dissipated. He had succeeded, in front of his girlfriend and friends, to display fearlessness and assert 'respect' (Bourgois 2003).

This example also illustrated a related pattern: a local resistance to admitting guilt or responsibility (their own or of relatives or friends) in the face of others' protest. When Fabi and I arrived close to one hour late to the departure bus in Fátima (chapter 4), making everyone wait for us and the man on the microphone reproach us indignantly, she did not apologise but instead mocked the man's lecture and complained the bus had parked 'too far' from the town. This unwillingness to yield to others' accusations applied to oneself and close others (like Cacho did with his friends): relatives took each others' sides in neighbour disputes; parents condoned children's bad behaviour against teachers' complaints; close neighbours' defended each other's transgressions against police or institutions.

Confrontation and 'not showing fear' were not just about pride or respect, but also a theory about people and how social relations worked. Asserting fearlessness was seen to be the most effective way to respond to threats or impending violence. Conversely, displaying fear was believed to invite, as Ivone's argued, 'something bad' to happen. At Baker's Star one morning, Iara (a Cape Verdean in her twenties) complained about quarrels between Gypsies and Cape Verdeans.<sup>143</sup> 'With Gypsies [*ciganos*] you need to protest [*reclamar*], raise your finger and yell, not show fear.' That was 'the only way', she argued, to make them 'have respect' and 'calm down'. She proceeded to list occasions when Gypsies had 'messed with' Cape Verdeans and received due reprisal. Not showing fear and imposing 'respect' were the means to make opponents retreat.

Albeit less explicitly, the belief in standing up for oneself was shared with older generations. At Domingas' house, three first-generation Cape Verdean women in their fifties shared experiences of being sexually harassed in public transport and the workplace. Each story highlighted how they had boldly stood up against their harassers: Adelina had stepped on a man's hand and threatened to blind him; Natércia had thrown cleaning liquid to a man's face until 'he was lying down and couldn't get up'; Domingas had gripped two rocks from the ground to threaten a man who insisted she get in his car. Natércia declared she always carried a knife, and had once threatened to kill a taxi driver who took her to a deserted place to abuse her. The women agreed they should not bother their husbands to come defend them: 'I'll defend myself!' These amazing stories meant to underscore the trials these women had endured in the host society. But they also conveyed a moral statement: the value of standing up for oneself in the face of threats.

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<sup>143</sup> According to interviewed informants, quarrels between them were frequent in one of the old slums, as in other council estates around Lisbon where Gypsy and African families were rehoused together.

It was interesting that these values agreed to an extent with Cape Verdean beliefs on witchcraft (chapter 3). When asked about the nature of witches' attacks in an interview, David, a ritual healer in Topia, explained that witches acted by trying to scare [*assustar*] the victim's spirit, stressing the importance of not being frightened on those occasions:

The witch always chooses those with a [pause] weak spirit, those who're easily scared. That's their weakness. ... The witch can't do anything to you. He can only try to scare you. ... If I'm not scared, [if] he doesn't scare me, [if] he doesn't make me fear him [*me mete medo*], he's powerless against me, he can't do anything to me. (Interview transcript)

Beyond resisting witches' attempts to frighten them, victims' most effective defence was to try to scare witches back. Interestingly, through the idea of the evil eye, David made a link between the power of causing fear and the power of gazing:

When you see a person gazing transfixed [*olhar assim fito*] at you, take great caution. You need to scare that person immediately. If the person doesn't know you: 'Why are you looking at me like that?' Obvious, you scare him immediately! You need to scare him. If you scare him, he won't mess [*se mete*] with you. ... [If] you're like this, and a witch is staring fixedly at you, and you're disregarding him, he'll harm you!

In interesting parallels, spiritual and secular theories of human relations both warned of the dangers of showing fear, and stressed the importance of confronting one's opponents. The powers of gazing and confronting were recognised as at once offensive and defensive, both a threat and a shield. In chapter 3, I explored neighbours' monitoring gaze and the evil eye as daily threats to manage in Topia. In this chapter, I am instead concerned with confrontational gazing as a local strategy of resistance against outside threats.

### **1.3 Gatekeepers: Topia as a heterotopia**

Although there were clear official borders to the estate, alongside prominent social, cultural and ethnic boundaries to the neighbourhood, there were no gates or walls around Topia. Outsiders drove by and walked in to work, meet residents, frequent cafés, local NGOs, the library, on their way to the local school or the nearby police station. Nothing tangible, no clear barrier stood in their way to prevent them from stepping in. The estate

was, architecturally speaking, 'public' space. From this, a need arose for boundary control.

Close-knit familiarity, assistance networks and limited mobility (chapter 6) meant that neighbourhood life overflowed the walls and doors of buildings. Rather than demarcate the proper space for close interaction (the home), closed doors and floors were actually seen to hinder social contact (chapter 3). As a result building entrances, street corners and cafés became hubs not only for idling and catching up with neighbours, but for exchanging goods, cooking and eating, even earning a living. These routines made the physical estate into a neighbourhood 'proper' (introduction), a daily arena of social exchanges and intense relations between co-residents. In the process, Topia was appropriated in 'tactical' personalised ways by its residents. A sense of ownership underpinned their claims and uses of it. It was not simply 'public' space: it was *their* space. Territorial claims made strangers entering it into 'intruders' – who 'encroached on the preserve claimed by and for' its inhabitants (Goffman 1971, 74).

In the absence of physical or other barriers controlling access to the estate, residents on the streets, especially those involved in illicit activities, assumed themselves the role of gatekeepers, erecting protective boundaries. Unsurprisingly, this was done primarily through challenging and hostile 'eye-behaviour' on the streets (ibid., 70), ostensibly gazing at intruders, following – 'controlling' – their trajectories in the estate. When this proved insufficient and outsiders attempted (as I did) to pry more deeply into local affairs, other gate-keeping measures were taken: enforcing language barriers (Creole) to exclude others, falling silent upon outsiders' arrival, ignoring their attempts to engage in conversation. In the absence of gates or fences protecting neighbourhood territory, each resident willingly became a gatekeeper, setting boundaries against intrusion. Strangers could still walk in and cross the physical space of the estate, invariably under the controlling gaze of discouraging others. But they were not allowed to cross neighbourhood lines. The social space of the neighbourhood was barred to them: in it, they remained outsiders (Gorringe 2006).

Foucault (1986) described this phenomenon of spaces both open and with closed access when addressing 'heterotopias': spaces that are like 'counter-sites', being 'outside of all places' in society while still relating to them – 'representing', 'contesting' or 'inverting' them (ibid., 24). Foucault's examples of heterotopias include prisons, psychiatric hospitals, cemeteries, cinemas/theatres, gardens, brothels, colonies, ships, museums, libraries. What these disparate sites seem to share is that by some feature (their purpose, target population, spatial configuration, relation to time, etc.) they are exceptions to 'normal' space, or in Foucault's phrasing, 'all the other real sites that can be found in the culture' (ibid.). The fact that Topia was built to rehouse subjects of a marginal socio-economic profile (unqualified,

migrant, with high rates of unemployment and low precarious wages) could qualify it as a heterotopia 'of deviation': a site 'in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant to the required mean or norm are placed' (ibid., 25). But more relevant to the argument here is heterotopias' character of 'contestation' and resistance (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 19), namely as exercised in border control. Foucault described the dual nature of access to these spaces:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. ... To get in one must have a certain permission. ... There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into these heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion: we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded. (Foucault 1986, 26)

In heterotopias, unfamiliar 'visitors' are always just 'in transit', in a mere 'illusion' of access, as opposed to 'invited guests' (ibid., 26). That was the nature of Topia space: while the architectural estate remained open to circulation, gatekeepers restricted access to the social neighbourhood (Erdentug and Colombijn 2002, 233).<sup>144</sup>

Although men involved in illicit activities on street corners were the most obvious agents of control and hostility, any resident could be a gatekeeper in street life – just like any outsider became an 'other' by 'reactive' identity-building (chapter 5). Society's power to socially exclude residents was 'mirrored' in residents' power to exclude *it* (Foucault 1986, 24). In both cases, boundary maintenance was a vehicle to affirm power and control (Lawrence 1996, 35). Topia streets were 'political' zones of 'contestation' (Connerton 2009, 22; Rodman and Cooper 1996, 94). I felt their action every day of my fieldwork, even if over time my movements in the estate became more familiar to onlookers. 'Controlling' outsiders' access to social life was an act of resistance. It enacted social and ethnic boundaries between 'us' and 'them' to defend a 'private' space, 'beyond the reach' of outsiders (Valentine 2001, 83; Gorringer 2006, 53).

Local mechanisms of protection and exclusion enforced in Topia recall descriptions of gated communities across the U.S. and Latin America (Low 2007, 2001; Caldeira 1996). These are segregated residential spaces, 'reserved exclusively for residents and their appointed guests, with no access for uninvited outsiders', and as such with 'closely

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<sup>144</sup> Besides space, neighbourhood time was also an exception to 'normal' time: a 'heterochrony', in Foucault's terms (ibid., 26). This distinctive sense of time will be the focus of chapter 10.

restricted, monitored, and controlled' access (Lemanski 2009). The term 'gated community' typically means walled and gated compounds, defended by armed guards and 'sophisticated technologies of security' (Caldeira 1996, 318). However, Lemanski (2009) noted that the concept has recently been applied more widely to 'the private and/or collective governance mechanisms that control these spaces, rather than the physical presence of gates or walls per se'. In this wider sense, Topia bears evident resemblance to these gated compounds, which can illuminate the practices and effects of access control in the neighbourhood. There are some obvious differences between them. The relative independence of gated communities, built to 'possess all that is needed within a private and autonomous space' (Caldeira 1996, 308), did not apply to Topia. Nevertheless, common traits of socio-economic homogeneity, segregation and surveillance make comparison worthwhile.

The estate of Topia was property of the council. In exchange for accommodation, it received rent, regulated housing matters and managed household's personal files (chapter 8). Topia was to an extent, like gated compounds, 'private property for collective use' (ibid.). People's shared socio-economic traits also shaped a relatively 'homogeneous' social environment (ibid.; Pellow 1996, 217), only in this case for lower rather than upper-class inhabitants. Therefore, living in Topia confirmed residents' undesirable social standing, as opposed to 'conferring high status' (Caldeira 1996, 308; Low 2007). These traits pointed to a reversal in Topia of the characteristic space of upper-class fortified communities. Both were socially segregated spaces, where access of unfamiliar others was 'controlled' and restricted (through distinct mechanisms of gate-keeping). However, while both established a degree of social separation from the wider city, the logic of 'avoidance' and fear was inverted: unlike gated compounds, Topia residents did not fear the outside city (Low 2001), rather it was outside city-dwellers who avoided Topia as an undesirable place (chapter 8). Segregation had similar effects in both settings. 'Spatial and social insulation' diminished contact between residents and 'others' (ibid., 55), reinforcing the 'symbolic boundaries' between insiders and outsiders (Caldeira 1996, 324). In both cases urban planning made 'visible the systems of exclusion that [we]re already there' (Low 2001, 55). If living together fostered closeness and interdependency (chapter 2), living apart was capable of 'emphasizing inequality and distance', 'suspicion and danger' (Caldeira 1996, 324; ibid.).

I was intrigued by one exception to these ubiquitous practices of differentiation and control: Cape Verdean parties. Unlike daily conventional boundaries between insiders and others, in these parties 'us' and 'them' seemed to dissolve and controlling stances be dropped, with everyone (familiar and unfamiliar alike) invited to partake in the food and dancing. For the rest of the chapter, I will analyse what went on in these parties, to account

for the contrast in people's attitudes towards outsiders there and on the streets.

## 2. Parties as social microcosms

### 2.1 A party

Cátia's baby was turning one year old. Cátia grew up in the shanties with Diana, but was rehoused to another council estate and had recently bought a flat elsewhere in the Município, where she lived with her child's father. Diana, myself and three others had spent the previous night at her house preparing desserts for the birthday party the following day. On the evening of the party, we caught a lift to the house with Cátia's sister.

Upon arrival, we saw a group of young men drinking on the stairs outside the flat, with children running around them. Among them I recognised faces from Topia. The door to the flat was wide open. Inside, the walls appeared to barely contain the mass of guests. The flat was medium-sized, with two bedrooms, a kitchen and spacious living room. But it was made much smaller by the all people cramming into it. It was hard work stepping in, slowly making our way across the sea of adult men in the narrow vestibule, with children struggling here and there to pierce through. I gripped Diana's shoulder in front of me, trying to stay afloat. Nobody seemed to find odd the volume of people compacted into the tiny space. It was my first 'African party'. Under the circumstances, nobody greeted us at the door. I tried to catch a glimpse of the living room on my right, but the crowd stretched on impenetrable. Diana's children quickly disappeared into it to go play. We carried on into the kitchen on our left. Brief greetings were exchanged along the way, and again I recognised faces from Topia, although Cátia had never lived there. I was the only white as far as my eyes could reach.

Inside the kitchen, four gigantic pots of hot food lay in a corner. A middle-aged Cape Verdean (Cátia's mother-in-law) reached into them to pour generous portions to guests stepping in. Without a word, she handed me a plate of Portuguese paella (*arroz à valenciana*). There was also Cape Verdean bean stew (*feijuada*) with rice, and a rich chicken soup (*canja*), served later in the evening. Drinks also abounded: beer (mostly for men), wine, spirits, soft drinks. The kitchen was packed with women. On the floor, bits of food and drink accrued. By the end of the party, they had congealed into a viscous paste.

We squeezed into a corner and ate standing up. Women moved around to help Cátia, taking turns washing dishes, serving plates, fetching drinks and food for the living room. The rest ate, drank and chatted amid the clatter. Mobility constraints were serious enough to discourage people from stepping in, and items requested travelled from hand to

hand until they reached the door. There was not an inch to spare. I did not meet Cátia herself or the birthday boy until hours later, when they finally left the living room.

In this scenario, noise was extreme. Talk in Creole was lively all around me. Topics included the news, children, food preferences and recipes, gossip about other parties. My own voice projection was useless here and I soon gave up trying to shout over the babel. Interestingly, in marked contrast to Topia, I was treated by guests (who did not know me) with surprising familiarity. People around me were unaware or untroubled by my presence. A woman offered me her chair. Some addressed me in Creole, assuming I was fluent in it. Still I found myself a complete foreigner in this overcrowded atmosphere, while no one else seemed to notice what my body felt as poignant excess and discomfort.

Over the evening, some events threatened to disturb the festive mood. Halfway through the party, a commotion rose in the living room. Someone came to the door to announce a fight had broken off between two women, competing for the attention of a man. Women around me protested indignant at the sheer 'disrespect' (*falta de respeito*) for the hostess: 'To do that in someone's home!' Hours later, Cátia arrived to the kitchen very upset, complaining that people in the living room had finished all the desserts without permission or thought to the other guests. Again accusations of 'disrespect' echoed across the kitchen, while Cátia and others tried to salvage any leftover cakes.

As food and drinks were finished, the flat gradually emptied out. Cátia distributed small packages of candy and gifts to children. We stayed on until 1:30 a.m. The kitchen grew gradually emptier, guests drunker and chats more spirited. The door was shut to prevent children leaving the house. Stairs were now empty, as was the vestibule. I finally managed to move to the living room. A DVD of Cape Verdean music clips (*funaná*) was playing, and some women and children danced to it. A few drunk men lingered on. I took the chance to grab a peek of the bedrooms. Children played in them and two women had dozed off in front of a small TV. Someone offered to drive Diana and me back to Topia, which we gladly accepted. A woman was throwing a party the following day and invited us to come along. When we got home, I confessed to Diana my surprise about having such an impressive party thrown for a one-year old. She argued: 'The baby might not know it's his birthday, but he can tell there's a bustle [*animação*], and he likes it.'

## **2.2 'Black's parties must have food!'**

All Cape Verdean parties I attended revolved around food. It was cooked in large pots with the help of female neighbours and relatives, making sure it was plentiful. The

size of these pots impeded cooking inside the house, so women used portable gas hobs attached to squat metal structures to cook food on the stairs. Habitual party dishes included *katxupa*, bean stew with rice, chicken soup, boiled cornmeal, corn-flour cakes with meat, and popular Portuguese dishes like cod with cream or Portuguese paella (cf. chapter 4).

The importance of food was confirmed by the fact that parties remained busy for as long as food abounded, quickly waning when it finished. Guests were promptly served a plate on arrival and often left right after eating.<sup>145</sup> When I suggested that Diana and her family could have a small *faze kriston* with only close relatives to save expenses, the idea sounded absurd to them: 'What, to do a *kriston* without food?! Blacks' parties [*festa de preto*] must have food!' It was not only crucial to have food, but to have enough of it. It was the family's responsibility to provide abundance. If this failed, hosts were privately criticised. People talked for days about a wedding where food and drinks ended halfway through the party, criticising hosts and complaining it had ruined the party. Gossip praised specific parties from the past as counter-examples of abundance: 'Elsa's son's christening, now that was a blast [*de arromba*]. Food and drink were left over! It was really excellent.' Diana determined: 'When mine comes, I'll start shopping a year before. There will be food left over [*vai sobrar*]! I'd rather throw it away afterwards...' An element of competition over who hosted good parties was certainly at play, ensuring that people only threw these parties when they could afford enough food.<sup>146</sup>

Depending on their scale, parties could mobilise impressive material and human resources. Aside from massive amounts of food, other things were needed for a successful event: room decorations, cooking utensils and platters to serve food, cutlery, plates and cups, token gifts for guests,<sup>147</sup> as well as a proper party venue. Larger events like christenings and weddings usually took place in rented party halls, better able to accommodate formidable crowds of guests and the noise they produced. Some halls became popular from past parties. The smaller party halls I visited were in the Município, with larger, more luxurious ones located in suburban areas with wide surroundings. Halfway through fieldwork, a small hall also became available in Topia, and it was rented time and again for local celebrations.

Parties were expensive. For barbecues or summer gatherings, guests often shared food expenses. But that was not the case with birthdays, christenings, confirmations or weddings (cf. chapter 4). In a deprived setting like Topia, it surprised me that aside from godparents (sponsoring the drinks and cake) hosts were expected to provide everything

<sup>145</sup> This explained the habit of keeping a table for desserts (*fatiota*) intact for later, waiting until most guests had arrived and encouraging them to stay for longer.

<sup>146</sup> That also explained why the more destitute families did not throw parties at all.

<sup>147</sup> Ornaments or small bags with treats, sometimes with a card remembering the date and occasion.

else. More so given that 'renting the hall alone can cost €2000', as someone informed me. I asked whether hosts charged guests to help pay for the venue. Diana seemed shocked: 'No! The person [host] gives everything!' I insisted confused: 'So is it only the rich people who throw parties?' She sounded offended: 'Ana, we're all poor!...'

How to account for constant and expensive parties in a setting where people 'are all poor'?<sup>148</sup> This was made worse by guests' inveterate habit of bringing over uninvited people (relatives, co-workers, neighbours). This was not only routine, but also largely expected. 'At Cape Verdean parties people don't usually sit much', Fabi replied unimpressed when I noted there was a shortage of seats at the first Cape Verdean wedding I attended. The 144 chairs in the hall were quickly filled, as were spare seats added impromptu, and still a large crowd was forced to stand through the party. When the same happened at another wedding some months later, Fabi explained the couple had sent invitations to one hundred guests, 'only those special and closest people'; and set fifty extra seats, counting on guests' friends to show up unannounced: 'those who knew about it and wanted to come'. Still, a large group remained unseated. She shrugged: 'The rest was through word of mouth' (*de boca*). The habit of bringing uninvited people along explained the thick crowd of guests cramped into Cátia's flat: a scene repeated in most house parties I attended.

### 2.3 Neighbour requests magnified

Faced with impressive numbers of guests, the cost of renting a hall and the demand to provide abundant food, parties still formed an important part of neighbourhood 'culture'. This was again made possible in part through social networks and creative 'tactics' (Certeau 1984). When large celebrations required renting a venue, expenses were distributed by combining several parties into one: close neighbours might host their children's christenings together; a couple might combine their wedding with their children's baptism or confirmation; many families held the *faze kriston* on the child's first birthday (chapter 4). Besides this stratagem, social demands for abundance were met, as usual in Topia, through assistance networks. Shopping and carrying supplies, borrowing pots and utensils, cooking, setting up tables and chairs, decorating the room, serving guests, washing dishes and cleaning up, tending to rubbish, driving guests or simply looking after children while mothers helped out: for most essential tasks and goods, the family relied upon relatives and neighbours, from Topia or other settlements. Hosts were expected to provide most of the

<sup>148</sup> The idea that residents were 'all poor' was part of normative discourse, reiterated by residents. Although income statistics (chapter 2) suggested this was officially accurate for most families (excluding unreported activities), the more destitute households did not throw parties, evincing that some were certainly poorer than others.

ingredients for others to help cook and prepare, but it was common for close neighbours to offer a dessert, cake or small dish. Although feeding heartily an unforeseen number of guests remained a financial burden, all other party expenses were importantly relieved through neighbour assistance.<sup>149</sup> The sheer scale of resources and ties mobilised at parties made them the epitome of neighbourhood relations. The success of parties depended on enough people being around to lend, carry, prepare, cook, serve, clean, drive. These interactions were largely constrained by gender. Most people involved in preparation work were women. They cooked the food, set up the space, served guests and cleaned up afterwards. Men's role was smaller, relied on chiefly for car lifts (to fetch supplies or drive guests) and sometimes to serve drinks at the bar. Spatial divisions at the party also evinced the role of gender. The kitchen was taken almost exclusively by women (many helping to serve and clean), the vestibule and stairs by men (drinking and chatting). The living room was a mixed space, with men and women eating together, dancing and chatting. But even here, it was usual for adult guests to interact within same-gender groups.

The hours leading up to the party were especially busy. Women gathered in the hosts' kitchen or stairs, arriving at different times, carrying pots, portable hobs, cake tins, trays and ingredients. Although the kitchen where they worked was not their own, each woman seemed to know exactly what to do. Being close to the hostess, they had likely spent considerable time there and knew the ropes around it. Children added to the bustle, running up and down the stairs, making the most of errands they were asked to run. Expectations and duties were felt strongly, and its failures widely criticised.<sup>150</sup> I saw women in Topia get very little sleep, ask for days off at work, miss gatherings or appointments to fulfil this sort of obligation (namely on death occasions). While they cooked, cleaned and decorated, women also shared food and chatted, exchanged recipes and stories. Besides fulfilling social obligations, mutual assistance around these occasions strengthened ties through the prosaic activities involved in lending a helping hand, gossiping about others and spending time together (which they often had little to spare).

The counterpart of relying heavily on neighbour assistance was of course the tension and complaints around its failures, as people reacted to others' unavailability to help: 'You can't count on people!' Routine protest over failed generosity or abuse were amplified around these events, which placed additional pressure on assistance networks. Uninvited guests were also frequently criticised (especially at house parties, where food

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<sup>149</sup> In many cases I still could not grasp how residents could afford these parties. Fabi once mentioned hosts had resorted to 'stealing' abundantly from large supermarkets, relying on willing relatives to help them. Some illicit activities (like drug dealing or marrying immigrants for money) could also generate high earnings. Regrettably, the sensitive nature of the topic impeded serious data collection on these activities.

<sup>150</sup> Aside from duties of assistance, the obligation to *attend* celebrations was also strongly upheld.

could easily run out). Nevertheless, everyone was admitted in and served, allowing for crowds of unfamiliar guests to become intrinsic to Cape Verdean parties. Although they fuelled private talk and some promises of future parties 'just for us' (chapter 3), the same script was re-enacted anew at each party.

Parties and celebrations also allowed other kinds of tensions to become manifest. With a large young crowd from different settlements, plentiful alcohol, and a strong ethics of standing up for oneself and 'not showing fear', these events promoted frequent altercations, usually between two men (more rarely two women). Motives varied. For women they often involved jealousy, while men frequently stood up against insults or provocations (like Cacho's example earlier). 'It's always the same', Diana scorned: 'Black's parties always have fighting [*Festa de preto tem sempre briga*]...'

Between the strengthening of ties and tension over unmet or excessive demands, the duality of neighbour requests (chapters 2 and 3) was clearly represented and amplified around these events. The centrality of food sharing and the common outbursts magnified some of the underlying forces operating in everyday neighbourhood life. In that sense, parties could be seen as microcosms of local neighbour relations. However, parties were also illuminating in another way, precisely as a contrast and exception to daily Topia routines. Remarkably, in these events conventional boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' were temporarily dropped. Everyone, familiar and unfamiliar, white and black, invited and uninvited alike, was welcomed in and offered food and drinks. Even though other conventional distinctions – gender roles, neighbour and family ties – were still in place, the boundary between 'us' and 'them', otherwise so prominent in Topia, was abandoned in these events.

### **3. Parties as liminal spaces**

#### **3.1 *Funaná* dancing: eroticism and unrestraint**

The starkly different attitudes shown towards me at Cape Verdean parties, as opposed to the houses or streets of Topia, struck me from the beginning. At parties people were not suspicious or hostile, they did not gaze as if my presence required explanation or damage-control (even when I was the only white present), they sometimes addressed me in Creole, assuming I could speak it. Instead of a line of hostile gazes measuring me up and down and discouraging me from entering, there were only unimpressed looks of ordinary curiosity. The difference was not in the simple occurrence of a party, nor in the influence of alcohol (men in street corners drank regularly during the day), nor even in the fact that I

was escorting locals (which also happened in the streets of Topia). The difference, I will argue, was in the nature of access to parties. Differently from the estate, where just anyone could walk in, at parties unfamiliar people were brought over by 'friends of friends'. Habitual crowds of uninvited guests meant that each party had plenty of unfamiliar faces. However, I will argue that the operation of a gate-keeping network (through 'friends of friends') was perceived to keep party space free from the threat of intruders, therefore creating an exceptional space where boundaries against outsiders could be dropped, tension and control abandoned, and even strange white others invited to join in. The practices of *funaná* dancing incorporated this uncontrolled, cheerful and inclusive mood which stood as the counterpart of everyday suspicion, control and segregation.

As described in chapter 4, music and dance were integral to Cape Verdeans' routines. Listening to African rhythms – popularly *funaná*, *batuku*, *zouk* or *kuduru* (Marcon 2012) – on mobile phones, CDs, car speakers or the internet was a favourite activity among second and third generations, just as watching *funaná* and *batuku* music clips on DVD at home. These clips invariably featured young Cape Verdean women dancing, swinging and swirling their hips in characteristic moves which young girls strived to imitate. I often arrived at Diana's house to find her children dancing in the living room to music clips of Zé Espanhol (a popular *funaná* singer) while Diana's mother watched, shelling peas or beans from her garden. But while a part of routine, music and dance reached special intensity and unruliness at parties. After eating, a crowd of second and third-generation guests, predominantly females (from small children to women in their thirties) gathered to dance to the loud music playing, usually *funaná*, in the centre of the room. Although lyrics spoke of trivial things like the struggles of migrant life (Cidra 2008b, 197), Cape Verdean customs, specific individuals or relationship issues, *funaná* moves and the way young people danced them evoked a realm of unconstrained sexuality and playful competition, which peaked at all-women's parties. Active cheering and audience participation diluted boundaries between dancers and observers, acting to include onlookers in the experience. In its apparent lack of restraint and role boundaries, *funaná* dancing at parties embodied the exceptional atmosphere of uncontrolled enjoyment and collective inclusion so much at odds with the exclusionary all-controlling street gaze.

*Funaná* is a music and dance genre originating in rural Santiago, possibly in the late nineteenth century, and later spreading to cities and recently the transnational diaspora (Palmberg 2002, 122). The music is played in a fast-tempo duple meter with characteristic instruments (*gaita*, a diatonic accordion, and *ferro*, a metal rod scraped with a knife), replaced after independence with electronic instruments (ibid.; Sieber 2005, 128). The

music is accompanied by vocals and dancing, traditionally in couples. Its roots are usually linked to African influences, although it has also been argued to derive from European genres (Sieber 2005, 128; Palmberg 2002, 117, 122-123). In its early versions, the music was closely linked with the dance and the 'rowdy parties' (themselves called *funaná*) where it was played, contributing to its unpopularity among colonial authorities (ibid., 122).

The repertoire of *funaná* moves and steps I witnessed in the field was not very diverse. Though traditionally a couple's dance, it was widely danced by single individuals, mainly women and children. With their torsos still and lower backs slightly arched, their hips swung rhythmically and loosely from side to side, rocking on the spot, stepping forward and backward or turning. The arms swayed relaxed or were locked in to frame the movement of the pelvis. Men's steps were similar but tenser, sometimes quicker, with firmer and wider arm movements. Especially for women, these steps were also alternated with '*rabola*' ('to roll'), the swirling of the hips and buttocks, rhythmically contracting and releasing the pelvis, sometimes bringing the knees together and apart to amplify the movement. As the song peaked at especially energetic strains, the swirling became frantic as women intensified it to incredible speed (so-called *rapika*), to others' clapping and cheering (Lang 2002, 656).

The same basic repertoire of steps was used at parties, adapted to different contexts and preferences. Guests might dance alone, in circles of friends or in pairs (man-woman, woman-woman or adult-child). Depending on the relationship between dance partners, pairs might hold each other in intimate or more detached ways: with bodies pushed closely together, possibly the head resting on the other's neck; or with a looser grip, faces looking aloof and afar in opposite directions, all-the-while with waists and hips closely engaged. Individual dancers could also approach others (of same or opposite sex) to compete in performance. This happened either individually or to 'represent' one settlement against another, a common and entertaining occurrence at parties (chapter 6). In these challenges, endurance and energy were essential, more so than skill: a winner was only proclaimed in those rare cases when the other party could not keep up and quit. Otherwise the challenge would gradually wane and lose interest, until it ended simply with one of the dancers turning away after a while to dance with somebody else. While spoken of as 'representing', the idea of a 'competition' was evident, sometimes explicit. Watching a video of two men dancing close together, clashing their waists, lowering their pelvis and rolling their hips back up, a woman clarified for me: 'They're competing.'

In informal and intimate contexts among second generations, especially in mostly female or family environments, these competitions escalated: individuals pushed each

other's hipbones in frantic hip swirling, trying to knock one another off balance and topple the opponent. When they succeeded, dancers on top assumed dominance over fallen ones, pushing with their pelvis to keep them down. Dancers on the floor cooperated, assuming submissive positions and rhythmically thrusting their own pelvis.<sup>151</sup> All these moves clearly simulated sexual postures and gestures: the frantic rolling of the hips, the rhythmic thrusting of the hipbones, pelvis pressure to overthrow dance partners in order to subjugate and dance over them. These erotic innuendos have been a part of *funaná* dancing from its roots in colonial Cape Verde (e.g. Sieber 2005, 128; Brito 1998, 18). Alongside the rowdiness of its parties and its perceived association with Santiago's *badiu* culture, its sexual connotations contributed to make *funaná* unpopular among colonial authorities and the Catholic Church (C. Monteiro 2009, 83; Sieber 2005, 128; Manuel 1988, 96).<sup>152</sup> The sexual connotations of the dance were also clear in Topia. They were corroborated by Diana and Denise's remarks about the video of a young teenage girl from another settlement dancing *funaná* with a young boy. Her moves were quite daring and explicit, much like the videos with adult dancers that they often watched and found entertaining. Only this time they responded with shock and indignation at the girl's moves, blaming her parents' permissiveness. Female guests at a wedding also severely criticised a professional female dancer for being too provocative and licentious in her movements: 'This is a family party! Dancing like that with family men present, with children and all!'

*Funaná* steps were considered proper enough to be performed publicly by teenage dance groups, and single women were not criticised for dancing it. However, if performed too freely its sexual connotations would become overly explicit. The line between a good performance and improper licentiousness was contextual and subjective, revealing the ambiguities of female sexuality (Reed 1998, 517-519; Farnell 1999, 349): between 'desire' on the one hand, 'danger' and 'disgust' on the other; between pleasurable performance and a matching need for restraint. The dance's strong sexual content had to be kept within limits.

### **3.2 Unrestraint: swirling, pushing, falling**

Although women were mindful about transgressing gender rules which might give them a reputation or make their partners jealous (namely dancing with other men), they

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<sup>151</sup> I only observed this for women, or between them and male relatives. Although couples danced with the same moves, this amount of pressure and vigour was inappropriate between the sexes. I realised this when a woman was criticised for trying to seduce a man she was forcefully pushing with her hips, while she defended herself intently, explaining he was her cousin so that was out of the question. Though boundaries between 'us' and 'them' were dropped at parties, gender roles were enacted as usual.

<sup>152</sup> Not unlike other colonial contexts (Farnell 1999, 349; Reed 1998, 506, 517; Hanna 1966, 303-304).

found ways to give free rein to the sensual forces and excesses of *funaná*. When playfully competing with other women or male relatives, and especially at all-women's parties, female dancers' performances were free to escalate into rowdy simulations of sexual domination. As competing dancers swirled together, soon enough they started pressing one another's waists to throw each other off balance. As pressure increased and competition intensified, so rose the laughs and claps of encouragement of guests around them. Inflamed by observers' reactions, dancers increased pressure, turning their backs and flexing their torsos for added force. As cheering grew wilder, excited guests sometimes joined behind either dancer, adding their own swirling to the general pushing, attempting to knock others to the floor. A line of pushing and swirling was formed, each dancer trying to force others in the row to fall. This invariably ended with one of the sides giving in and most dancers falling over in a pile: laughing, spilling drinks, soiling clothes on the gummy floor, accidentally ripping clothes or breaking earrings, and once in a while causing injuries as they hit the ground or guests caught off guard. Participants at the top sometimes lingered on, still rhythmically thrusting their hipbones to keep others down in an ultimate act of 'sexual' domination. Despite the apparent rowdiness and violence of the sequence, throughout the process participants laughed, teased and visibly enjoyed themselves. In the end they simply rose, helped each other up and resumed dancing, without keeping score of who had 'won'; and soon to repeat the process over again.

There were no strict distinctions between the different modes of dancing *funaná* (in pairs, in circles, competing, pushing), contextually combined or alternated. When dancing in a circle, individuals or pairs could be sent in turns to dance in the centre, impelled by others to show their skill. This might easily turn into a competition, later escalating to wild rows of dancers pushing and falling. Rows might also form from two women dancing together, being encouraged to '*rapika*' at a particularly energetic part of the song, starting to compete with each other, adding pressure and eventually being joined by others. The chosen mode of dancing certainly depended on mood, age, relationship between guests (namely shaped by gender) and informality of the setting. The excesses of these 'pushing dances' (*de empurrar*), as Diana once referred to them, were usually restricted to second generations. These were displays of extreme looseness and unrestraint, which I observed mainly at domestic parties, when only women and their male relatives were present. Although boundaries of age and gender played their usual roles, dance displays were not inhibited by the presence of unfamiliar (even white) onlookers like myself. Strange guests did not disturb these rowdy manifestations, nor curb other guests' enthusiasm.

Observers' reactions to others' dancing, and especially competing, were widely

encouraging: smiling and clapping to the rhythm, cheering by shouting meaningless syllables ('*Heh! Heh!*', '*Táua! Táua!*'), sometimes urging a dancer to get on all fours and the other to move on top: '*Dibáxu! Dibáxu!*' ('Under!'). Some individuals were called to dance more frequently or insistently than others, depending on how often they accepted the challenge and how entertaining a performance they put up. Competition could also become gendered, with women and men provoking each other: '*Bu ka ta aguenta!*' ('You can't hold it!'). Dancers also made provocative sounds themselves, hissing ('*Ssss*') or pursing their lips to make kissing noises to the beat. These provocative interjections were in keeping with the atmosphere of playful sexualised competition. They again highlighted a climate of light-hearted uninhibited enjoyment characteristic of Cape Verdean parties, and so much at odds with the regular tension and control on the streets. Untamed sexualised performances and observers' spirited participation evinced guests' abandonment to unrestrained fun, even in the presence of strangers. Inside party space, the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' faded: outsiders did not trigger defensiveness and territorial gazes, they were not singled out and closely monitored. In striking contrast with what happened elsewhere, at parties unfamiliar others were not rendered a threat. Their presence did not interrupt conversations nor make heads turn. They became invisible, fading into the crowd. Party business went on as usual.

### **3.3 Inclusion: imitating, cheering, competing**

Cape Verdean children in Topia were taught and encouraged from an early age to learn to master the *funaná* dance repertoire.<sup>153</sup> These efforts were widely successful, seeing as most Cape Verdean teenagers in Topia could already reproduce its steps and style. Their bodies moved with seeming effortlessness in ways difficult to grasp (let alone master) for outsiders. This became apparent at NWIV when a white NGO worker and a few white children from the local school (non residents) participated in African dance classes along with teenagers from Topia. The worker and white children had serious trouble reproducing the moves that Cape Verdean children from Topia performed with striking ease. No matter how many times I saw the same steps repeated, mimicking them remained a challenge.

At home and in parties, mostly through example and encouragement, adults incited children to imitate their dance steps and compete with each other. Whenever *funaná* music played, they were directly encouraged to 'go dance' (*bai badja/bai dansa*), and the habitual laughing, clapping and cheering ('*Heh!*', '*Táua!*', '*Dibáxu!*') were used to spur them on. Teaching and learning these moves relied on imitating adults (including dancers on music

<sup>153</sup> I focus here on *funaná* because it was the favourite choice at the parties I attended, as well as for dancing at home and teaching children. As a result, it was also the dance I observed more often and in more detail.

clips). Although at times vague directions were incorporated in the teaching – 'Do like this', 'Go low', 'Now dance with her', 'Get in pairs' – 'vision' was the primary medium of communication: embodied learning happened 'in repetition and rehearsal and in simulated motor imagery of the exercise' (Marchand 2008, 263-264). 'Watching is really how you learn', Denise insisted when I asked for instructions on how to do the steps properly.

These were playful and intimate occasions, usually at home or house parties, always enveloped in cheering and laughter: the proud and affectionate laughter of adults; the timid self-satisfied laughter of child apprentices. Sometimes parents filmed children dancing to later show off their skills to others. Children seemed to love the attention and work hard to keep it. They smiled embarrassedly but strived to impress, even approaching adults to attract attention before exhibiting their skill. Joyce, a four-year-old Cape Verdean girl, danced *funaná* in the living room with her older sister and cousin while her mother prepared lunch and chatted to neighbours in the kitchen. While they were busy cooking and talking, Joyce arrived to the kitchen door with a mischievous smile and started swirling her hips to the music. She was still only partly competent at it, but her efforts caused enthusiasm among the women. They laughed lovingly at her perkiness and spurred her on with claps and cheers. Animated by their response, Joyce improvised and tried out new steps, including recent moves she had learned in a video, standing on all fours and arching her back to the beat, causing another burst of laughing and clapping among the women. Hearing the cheers from the kitchen, Joyce's sister Érica soon came to join her, competing for the women's attention and applause.

A popular way to incite children to learn and make an effort was to encourage playful rivalry between them. Besides cheering, competition and winning were sometimes mentioned: '*Érica é ta ganha-u? Ou Joyce é ta ganha-u?*' ('Will Érica win? Or will Joyce win?') Children of different ages showed visibly different levels of skill. But it was usually younger children, who had far more to learn, who received the highest encouragement. This also made older ones try harder. Even though adults never called a winner, the idea of competing drove children to make an effort to impress. Dance allowed for 'displays of virtuosity', a way to exhibit skill and collect attention, encouragement and admiration from others (Ness 1996, 218; Radcliffe-Brown 1922, 251). Soon enough competition became implicit whenever child dancers were being watched by adults, as they sought to attract some of the incitement to themselves.

Farnell (1999, 344) argued that meaningful embodied interactions such as dance are 'dialogical, intersubjective means by which persons, social institutions, and cultural knowledge are socially constructed, historically transmitted, and revised'. Dancing was

more than a leisure activity, it was a complex experience rich in social meanings and rules 'constructed' and 'transmitted' over repeated embodied interactions. Competing with others and striving to impress were, from an early age, built into the experience of dancing and interacting at parties. Cheering, clapping and laughing were an integral part of the performance. For children and adults alike, dancing took the form of a playful and entertaining display of skill and endurance: being watched and applauded were intrinsic to it. Dance was meant to be shared with others around, to entertain viewers, to envelop them in the rhythm through clapping and cheering, even to encourage them to join by challenging them to compete – namely to 'represent' their settlement. Dance challenges took on a light-hearted and mocking quality. They did not aim at proclaiming winners but only at impelling people to give their best performance. Guests competed to entertain, without an end (victory) in sight. Unlike a real competition, this playful version allowed the dance to continue on, the process to be repeated over and over again, and any onlookers to join in. The boundary between performer and audience was therefore diluted: both were actively immersed (dancing, clapping, shouting) in the rhythm, and continuously swapped positions over time. Onlookers were so intimately engaged into the experience that no visible distinction between participants and audience endured. Baumann's (1992) perception that ritual performances often 'implicate "Others"' (as participants or referents) was hereby taken to the next level: in these dances audience participation was integrated and alternated so seamlessly with performance that there resulted, strictly speaking, no 'others'. Dancing *funaná* at parties was not the action of a closed ritual community celebrating itself (ibid., 98).<sup>154</sup> It rather confirmed a space where anyone, whether a resident or not, a Cape Verdean or not, a competent dancer or not, could be included.

Dancing *funaná*, like speaking Creole, appreciating Cape Verdean food or engaging in 'traditional' rites, was a cultural marker of commonality in Topia, part of what made Cape Verdean parties (and guests) distinctive. However, these markers seemed to have different implications and uses at parties and outside of them. For example, unlike what happened elsewhere in Topia, where Creole was used as a tool to exclude outsiders, at parties guests sometimes assumed I could speak Creole. Simply *being at* a Cape Verdean party seemed to imply a certain measure of belonging. A young woman I repeatedly met at these parties complained impatient when I addressed her in Portuguese: 'It's about time you learn to speak Creole!' The language of outsiders (chapter 4) sounded odd in a space where everyone was viewed as insider. Like Creole, *funaná* could easily be used to demarcate 'us'

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<sup>154</sup> Resemblances to functionalist renderings of dance as 'a condition in which the unity, harmony and concord of the community are at a maximum' are superficial (Radcliffe-Brown 1922, 252), since at these parties group boundaries became all-encompassing, making 'the community' as such temporarily dissolve.

from 'them'. A difficult repertoire to master, internalised and embodied from an early age, it made outsiders' dancing efforts look awkward and incompetent. Nevertheless, at parties I was repeatedly incited to dance (by myself, in pairs or in circles), often pulled to the middle, one time even called to represent. Rather than singled out, I was actively encouraged to participate. *Funaná* was an all-inclusive activity, performed by dancers and fuelled by involved observers. Like the food offered all around, the cheering, clapping, laughing and teasing translated the collective experience of parties, and attested to the thin fluid line between categories of guests: performers or observers, invited or uninvited. Unlike with so-called 'traditional' Cape Verdean cultural rites, at parties inclusion was clearly not based on knowledge, performance or skill. It derived from something else.

### **3.4 'You're a friend of my friends': parties as liminal spaces**

What was the reason for the discrepancy in the way strange people (including me) were approached at parties and outside of them? The habit of bringing along uninvited guests filled these events with numbers of mutually unacquainted people. If Topia residents were generally suspicious of outsiders and monitored them closely when they entered the estate, why was this controlling gaze dropped at parties, where so many guests were unfamiliar, some of them white? Why did people go about unworried, in an atmosphere of utter unconstrained enjoyment, when the presence of outsiders in the neighbourhood triggered, on the contrary, territorial claims, watchfulness and hostility? Why were these unfamiliar onlookers instead offered to partake in the food and drinks, assumed to speak Creole, and encouraged to join in the dancing, just as everybody else? The answer lay in the different ways in which party space and neighbourhood space were accessed, which allowed parties to be liminal arenas where certain conventional boundaries did not apply.<sup>155</sup>

Parties were delimited in time and space. They had a posited date and physical venue. Guests attending were either directly invited or learned about it through 'word of mouth'. Information and access to the party were limited to direct invitations, their escorts and neighbours who found out about it through others' gossip. The ingress of uninvited guests filled every party with unfamiliar people, even to hosts themselves. However, they arrived as company to familiar others – they could easily be traced through hosts' extended

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<sup>155</sup> I use 'liminal' as a state of exception to 'normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes', occurring in 'framed spaces set off from the routine world' and containing 'festive, joyful, and playful episodes and incidents' as well as 'episodes of status reversal' (Turner 1979, 465-470). However, Turner's category of 'liminoid' would be more accurate here since, unlike 'liminal' rituals, these parties were 'not cyclical but intermittent, generated often in times and places assigned to the leisure sphere', 'bonded more by optation, by choice, than by obligation', and did 'not so much invert as subvert quotidian and prestigious structures and symbols' (ibid., 492-493).

social networks: a neighbour's partner, co-worker, cousin, friend. As a result, any strange guests were assumed to be brought, trusted and esteemed by other, familiar ones: 'friends of friends'. A thirty-four-year-old Cape Verdean woman explained this logic in an interview, describing what she saw as a positive trait of 'us' (compounding 'Cape Verdeans' with people growing up in 'neighbourhoods') against 'them' (white outsiders):

Because we lived and grew up in the neighbourhood, we possibly have a human side they [outsiders] don't have. Because we might [pause] not know you from Eve, right. But if you come with someone who's a friend of ours, or. For example picture this: I arrive with you now – Actually, you were here last week! [at a barbecue near her house] (Ana: Yeah.) People don't know you! Right. But you probably came with someone who knew those people, and you can stay there, you can be at ease [*à vontade*], no one will harm you, right. No one will harm you. You're a friend of my friends, you're all right [*tranquila*]: you can eat, drink, sleep. That's the good thing about the neighbourhood. ... For example, sometimes we do barbecues here, people come from, like [lists other Cape Verdean settlements in the Município], who are friends with our friends, and they sit with us, We don't know them! I don't know them, right. But it's enough that they arrive with someone from the neighbourhood [Topia], with an acquaintance of ours [*uma pessoa conhecida nossa*], for that person to be welcomed and well treated, both in the neighbourhood and in our home.

Tagging along with a local's 'friend' or 'acquaintance' was a way in. Even if others did not 'know' the newcomer, s/he would be 'welcomed and well treated' – invited to 'eat, drink, sleep'. Trust and welcome were extended, through the assumption that strangers 'probably' came with known guests, to a social network of 'acquaintances'. The privileges of being 'known' (to be fed, taken in, well treated) were allowed by proxy to interconnected others. Just as in Candea's (2010) discussion of the importance of being known in Corsica, 'knowing' here was not a matter of knowing a person's name or personal information, but of confirming his/her 'interrelationship' to others (ibid., 126-127). In Corsica, the way of mapping these connections was through 'anonymous introductions', meant to confirm that 'the interlocutors had in fact been “connected” all along' (ibid., 130). At Cape Verdean parties on the other hand, where peoples' acquaintance networks were so wide (chapter 6) and bringing company so common, these connections were automatically assumed without explicit tracing. The fact that quarrels commonly arose at parties (section 2.3) did not threaten this assumption. Although a friend of a friend might potentially be an enemy, protection was required not from personal disputes or competing claims, so frequent and

trivial among neighbours, but from dangerous outsiders (namely institutional agents, as examined in chapter 8).

At Cape Verdean parties, the same function of 'anonymous introductions' was filled by hosts' neighbours and acquaintances. They served as gatekeepers, protecting the social space of interaction by controlling who was allowed in. Each was entitled to filter those worthy of penetrating intimate social contexts. While hosts held a claim to the demarcated 'territory' of the party (Goffman 1971), arriving with a friend was 'enough' to share their right of way. These unfamiliar others could be brought along to parties precisely because they were not considered real 'intruders' (*ibid.*, 74-75): they were 'friends of our friends'. Gatekeepers assured that any strange guest entering the party was socially bound to familiar ones, and so ultimately traceable through hosts' social networks. They ensured a social boundary against outsiders was in place.

The distinct ways in which unfamiliar others were approached at parties and outside of them helped to shed light on the dynamics of street territoriality. Just as party hosts claimed ownership of party space, residents held a claim to the territory of the neighbourhood. Topia was used and felt as their own, its spaces appropriated in specific ways as arenas for everyday sociality. Parties and the neighbourhood both required social space to be protected from intruding outsiders. But in contrast to parties, Topia's street corners and cafés were public physical spaces where anybody could enter. The estate was not guarded by gates, but open to the urban fabric around it. A need for access control arose, rousing threatening gazes from street corners to monitor outsiders' movements and discourage their approach. In contrast, parties were secluded spaces of interaction, where incomers were invited by hosts or brought over by their guests. Guests were seen to act as filters, selecting those ('friends') trusted to enter the otherwise unmonitored arena of parties. The distinct rules of access to the two spaces illuminated the distinct mechanisms of gate-keeping at work, and the resulting contrast between: control and exclusion in the heterotopia of the neighbourhood; as opposed to unrestraint and inclusion in the liminal space of parties, where precepts of food giving and dance performance embraced everyone present, subverting everyday boundaries of race, class, residence and cultural skill. The exception confirmed the rule. Principles of acceptance at parties shed light on the boundaries at work outside them. Just as in gated communities, surveillance, privacy and access control were enforced, forming 'a suburban landscape of exclusion' underpinned by 'class dominance, and residential (race/class/ethnic) segregation' (Low 2007, 270). Residents' territorial claims confirmed and enhanced the social and spatial boundaries 'already there' (Low 2001, 55), between 'us' and 'them', inside and outside.

## **Part III – Outside: Risk, pedagogy and exclusion**

## **8. The police station: 'Whoever's there will get it'**

Topia had a tense relationship with the outside, manifest in permanent hostility and suspicion towards strange white incomers. While the previous chapter analysed defensive strategies against the penetration of these 'intruders' in the neighbourhood, this chapter will examine the meanings and threats inherent to that intrusion, and how they were expressed and managed in people's daily interactions with institutional agents. In part 1, I will address outsiders' avoidance of Topia (section 1.1) and the constant threat of police raids in the estate (1.2). Part 2 will discuss social workers' house visits as feared means of information gathering (section 2.1) and government control over money and children (2.2), prompting constant watchfulness against white undercover agents in the estate (2.3). In part 3, I will analyse residents' interactions with institutions and their staff (health professionals, teachers, NGO workers), describing their approaches as mainly 'pedagogical': centred on lecturing, reproaching, teaching people how to live in a modern urban setting. Finally, in part 4 I will describe residents' resistance against the asymmetry in these interactions, which tacitly conveyed their incompetence in key areas of life (health, employment, finance, family relations) (Donzelot 1980). Whether watching out for agents 'policing the poor' (police and social workers) or rejecting institutions' expertise on urban life, I will argue that space worked in Topia as a central and reciprocal homogenising element: in the eyes of outsiders and authorities, it grouped all people *living in* Topia as potential law offenders and inept citizens, in a logic of 'territorial stigmatisation' (Wacquant 2007); in the eyes of residents, it unified all strange whites *entering* Topia as potential agents working to monitor residents or reform their behaviour. The space of Topia thereby became doubly tarnished by risk, making individuals into threats by simply sharing (or entering) its territory, and thus reinforcing the boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

### **1. Space tarnished by risk**

#### **1.1 'Do you live near those rogues?': territorial stigmatisation**

Topia residents were aware that outsiders held mostly negative images of the neighbourhood (Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 120-122). According to municipal staff, when it was announced that an estate would be built to house shanty-town dwellers, people in the near area protested vehemently and a number of them chose to sell their homes (cf. Horta 2000, 116). Their protests were met with a 'political promise' that the local police station

would closely monitor the new settlement. Nevertheless, several 'for sale' signs quickly appeared, and many were still visible during my fieldwork on the windows of empty flats bordering the estate. Topia residents also complained that taxi drivers and food-delivery services refused to enter the estate. They compromised to stop in front of the nearby police station, but were wary of venturing deeper inside the neighbourhood, especially at night. Residents suggested this was linked to the mugging of some drivers in the early days of the settlement, but assured most men responsible for the robberies had been imprisoned: 'It was rough in the beginning but things are quieter now.' Although neighbours were often suspicious of others and kept their belongings close, many dismissed outsiders' fears as misrepresentations of the supposed violence and crime inside 'neighbourhoods' (Pinto and Gonçalves 2001). As suggested in chapters 5 and 6, residents were aware of outsiders' negative portrayals of migrant settlements, and managed them daily in different ways: resisting, challenging or appropriating them. As I returned to Topia one afternoon in a taxi with Ivone, her daughter and her niece, they purposefully withheld the name of the estate from the driver, mentioning only the parish. As we came closer to our destination, the driver recognised where we were heading and asked worried: 'Do you live near those rogues (*gandulos*)?' The women played the part: 'Don't worry, we'll guide you through the safe places', knowing all along that they would not (and did not) adjust their route. They were clearly used to that kind of assumption and played along rather than try to refute it.

Outsiders' rejection of Topia as a dangerous and crime-ridden place was a readily apparent fact. It was reiterated not only in media discourses, but in the reluctance of taxi drivers, delivery men and neighbouring house-owners to venture (or live) near the estate. Outsiders' avoidance of what society and media rendered as 'dangerous topographies' (chapter 5) carved out Topia and other such neighbourhoods as 'negative' and 'excluded' spaces (Munn 2003; also Connerton 2009, 17). The negative imaging and reputation linked to these places in popular discourse extended to their inhabitants as a whole. Although 'place of residence' (being from shanty towns or rehousing estates) was the 'disqualifying' factor (Wacquant 2007, 67), faults were assigned not to the space itself but to the people. Living in Topia was synonymous with being a certain kind of people: 'those rogues'. Social exclusion operated here through 'spatial exclusion' (Madanipour 2011, 191; Gorringer 2006; Castells 2004, 84). Space became an infamous and discrediting attribute (Goffman 1963). It took on 'the ability to confirm identity', by causing 'commonalities of ... race, ethnicity, and class to assume spatial identities' (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 35). This logic of oversimplified labelling, stereotyping and excluding of difference is a familiar one: it is the same at work in the ascription of 'stigma' (Link and Phelan 2001).

Sociological studies and definitions of stigma are largely indebted to Goffman's (1963) seminal work. He defined stigma as a discrepancy or 'undesired differentness' between the 'socially standardized anticipations' about the 'conduct and nature' of people belonging to a specific 'category' and their actual perceived attributes, causing discredit and discrimination of the individual as 'a tainted, discounted' human being (ibid., 3, 53). Although his classical discussion has been a reference for later redefinitions of 'stigma', Goffman's narrow focus on the micro-level of face-to-face interactions has called for wider discussion of the 'pervasive, socially shaped exclusion from social and economic life' taking place at more 'structural' levels (Link and Phelan 2001, 364-366).

Building on Goffman's (1963, 4, 23, 145-146) brief mention of the stigmatising powers of 'race' and 'class', Wacquant (2007, 67-69) included 'territorial stigmatisation' as a defining feature of 'advanced marginality': the posited regime of life dominant among ethnic urban poor in the United States and Europe. In reality, Topia does not fit his other proposed traits for 'advanced marginality': 'spatial alienation and the dissolution of place', and 'the absence of a common idiom around and by which to unify themselves' (ibid., 69, 72; see Caldeira 2009, 851-852 for a critique). On the contrary, this thesis speaks directly against his ideas, highlighting the production of Topia as a meaningful and determining place for its inhabitants and local collective identity-building. Nonetheless, Wacquant's proposal on territorial stigmatisation helps to shed light on the discrediting of Topia as a 'negative' and 'dangerous' space in the eyes of outsiders, and of its residents as 'tainted, discounted' people (cf. Gorringer 2006, 62; Sibley 1995). Like in Topia, Wacquant observes that in poor urban settings 'discourses of vilification proliferate and agglomerate about them, "from below", in the ordinary interactions of daily life, as well as "from above", in the journalistic, political and bureaucratic (and even scientific) fields' (ibid., 67). Due to the spatial concentration of discrediting marks of poverty, ethnicity and their ready association to crime, settlements of poor urban dwellers are ascribed 'territorial infamy'. A 'blemish of place' attaches to these settlements, purportedly 'reserved for the urban outcasts', thereby 'disqualifying' its inhabitants as a group (ibid.; Auyero 2000, 103). Residence becomes 'an index of the attitudes, values, behavioural inclinations and social norms of the kinds of people who are assumed to live' there, reducing complex social issues and differences to a simplified, 'manageable' popular stereotype (Smith 1993, 133-134). In the process, place of residence effectively becomes a stigma: a basis for 'labelling' difference and assigning it oversimplified 'undesirable features' ('rogues', 'criminals', 'welfare cheats' [cf. chapter 9]); for separating 'us' from 'them' (Falk 2001); for warranting 'structural discrimination' and exclusion (Link and Phelan 2001, 367-376). In this sense Topia was a 'stigmatised' place:

in it (and other settlements like it) 'group images and place images combine[d] to create landscapes of exclusion' (Sibley 1995, 14). Territorial stigma also drew from and affected residents' interactions with powerful others: police, social workers and institutional staff.

## 1.2 'Whoever's there will get it': police raids and contaminated space

While outsiders were mindful about entering Topia, residents were very watchful about police entering the estate.<sup>156</sup> Residents claimed to be regular targets of surveillance and unpredictable house searches. Young black men in particular complained of frequent physical harassment by police. A seventeen-year-old male resident reported that the thing he disliked most about Topia were, in fact, 'policemen':

I never liked them. Because they're very abusive [*muito abusados*]. (Ana: Like what for example?) They hit us for no reason. I had the beating of a lifetime one day. ... They like hitting for no reason, if there's nobody to hit, they'll go 'Well, there's nothing to do today, let's go hit some kids', and the others go 'Yeah let's.' (Interview transcript)

This was not unusual (Bourgois 2003, 36-37). Others drew a similar picture:

Ivo [twenty-three years old]: What I dislike most here is no doubt that police station. No doubt! I hate that police station. Because normally they [officers] know who causes trouble around here right? But they find us sitting there [on a street corner], if they're in a bad mood, whoever's there will get it! They don't care!

Beto [twenty-two years old]: It's happened to me before, I was coming from my son's mother's house ... I ended up at the police station. I said: 'Can I at least make a phone call to let my mother know I'll be late?' 'Oh no you can't.' I had to ask a kid going by: 'Hey, call my father now at home' so he'd come get me out.

Ivo: He [Beto] and I have been in a situation where we were just driving through [Beto nodded and laughed], they stopped us and searched us and took us to the police station. They're kidding me! We're just driving through!

Beto: They were walking by the vegetable gardens, we were going out, across the river, we had a party in [another Cape Verdean settlement] ... the car was like sliding down, I was chatting to him, the officer comes: 'Say what?' [*É o quê?*]. I looked at him, he goes: 'Stop the car now!' We stopped, they searched us, they took us to the police station. I yelled for my mother to bring my ID, then I showed it to them, they still wouldn't let us go ...

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<sup>156</sup> As I was unable to obtain interviews with police officers, I focus here only on residents' perceptions.

Ivo: It's things I really don't understand. I've given up trying. There was that time I left my aunt's, came down, stopped for less than five minutes there [on a street corner], the police came, we all got it [*apanhámos todos*]. I'd just left the house! That's why I say it's the worst thing here – for me it's definitely that station. Because even the boys when they start drinking they like to provoke [*provocar*]. But the police know exactly who provokes around here. But when they come in a bad mood [pause] When they come like to talk it's not so bad, but when they're in a bad mood, whoever doesn't get out of the way...! (Interview transcript with two Cape Verdean young men from Topia)

Leandra, who lived close to the police station, mentioned she was afraid to go out on Friday nights, as additional officers used to arrive and conduct house raids in Topia, allegedly taking young men in and beating them [*dar-lhes muita porrada*] (she claimed to hear their screams from her house). Tension was made worse by a few known past cases of black males being physically abused or killed by Portuguese police in migrant settlements, including a recent case of a fourteen-year-old boy killed in 2009 in the municipality of Amadora, causing a wave of protest in several Cape Verdean settlements (including Topia) and attracting media attention.<sup>157</sup>

The relationship between second-generation black men and police was in fact tense. Young men's accounts revealed the injustice felt over police actions: even if they did nothing, 'just left the house' or 'drove through', police could randomly harass them and take them in despite knowing who the real 'provokers' were (cf. Raposo 2007, 74, 132-123). This made police not only unfair to their eyes, but also a constant and unpredictable threat, one they could not control or keep away but must constantly lookout for (Anderson 1990, 194-199). Different episodes suggested that some young men in Topia expected and even 'prepared' for confrontations with police. One Saturday evening in February, police raided one of the cafés in Topia. The following days, gossip about it was rife in the neighbourhood.<sup>158</sup> According to residents, neighbours had called the police on account of noise at the café. But the decisive event had been a man's act of lighting up firecrackers, which were mistaken for gunshots. The police promptly arrived, firing rubber bullets at the crowd by the café. Some of the younger men climbed up on the roof of a building to throw stones and bottles at police, until they were finally arrested and taken to the police station. Ivone, who lived in the building, explained: 'When they [young men] drink they keep the beer crates up on the roof. For when there's trouble' (*confusão*).

<sup>157</sup> The officer who fired the shot was later acquitted. News reports and comment on the case are still available online from newspapers and blogs (e.g. <http://www.publico.pt/sociedade/noticia/agente-da-ppsa-absolvido-de-morte-de-jovem-de-14-anos-na-amadora-1576208>, [http://www.dn.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content\\_id=1138893&page=-1](http://www.dn.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content_id=1138893&page=-1), <http://brutalidadepolicial.blogspot.co.uk/>, viewed 6 April 2013).

<sup>158</sup> These were second-hand reports, as I was not present at the scene.

Regardless of the accuracy of these reports, they confirmed the underlying hostility of young men towards police. This was also manifest in their Creole rap songs, featuring aggressive messages against officers who 'love to put them in prison' and 'the system' which 'sucks them back' into it.<sup>159</sup> Against the backdrop of a 'difficult and complicated life' in 'neighbourhoods' (chapter 6), songs bemoaned unfair police persecutions or conveyed messages of rebellion, unconformity and marginality, using explicitly violent language and inciting '*niggaz*' and 'brothers' (*manus*) to keep up resistance despite police sanctions.

In a setting where several people made a living through illicit means (chapter 9), references were frequent to relatives and partners (especially young men) in prison. But the tense relation with police authorities was not restricted to young men. A number of white men in their forties to sixties had served time in prison earlier in life, as had several younger women. According to municipal data, in 2010 there were fifteen imprisoned residents (1%), roughly ten times the national figure for that year (0,1%).<sup>160</sup> Different kinds of transgressions, from petty (sharing bus passes, selling loose cigarettes) to more serious ones (drug dealing or theft) were a normal part of making a living, turning watching out for police into a routine aspect of day-to-day existence.

As a result of being spatially stigmatised, vigilance against law offenders extended to the space they lived in and occupied. Being from the neighbourhood required alertness. Even people who were not directly involved in transgression had to stand alert and prepared. Not only could younger males be randomly targeted in police searches, but house raids also disrupted their family and neighbours. An elderly Cape Verdean woman living with her children and grandchildren stated in an interview that she feared more for her safety and had a lower sense of security in Topia as compared to the old slum:

Down there [in the shanties] when I slept at night I wasn't afraid. But here I'm afraid. Because here, all of a sudden [pause] I have no problems with the police, but many times I'm fast asleep, they knock on my door forcefully [*numa aflição*], I wake up like mad. One time I remember I was in bed, I hadn't slept for two days with a toothache, that night I was sleeping better, at 3 a.m. they knocked hard on my door, I got up I asked 'Who is it', it was the police, I came half naked to open the door ... When they come they don't care! If a person takes time to open, they kick the door down, and no one ever feels at peace [*sossegada*]. It's happened to me many times, many times! One time I was lying on the sofa, I was tired, it was about 7 p.m., it was like a horror film!

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<sup>159</sup> Lyric snippets from a rap song.

<sup>160</sup> Diving the number of prisoners in Portugal on 31 December 2010 for the total resident population in 2010 (Source: INE). The gap would expectedly be lower if considering only the population of Greater Lisbon (with higher crime incidence), and controlling for age (as Topia had a comparatively young population).

They knocked really hard on my door, I was asleep, it was summer. I opened the door, there were three policemen at my door, two more upstairs on another floor, and one more downstairs. They were looking for a boy, who lives in [another] street. But they got the door wrong and came here! ... they said 'Call your son, call you son!' I was like 'What did he do? What did he do?' They said 'Call your son, get out of the way' ... I called my son, he came here, 'That's not him, that's not him', they climbed down the stairs again. But if I didn't open quickly, they'd knock it down. (Interview transcript with a sixty-four-year-old Cape Verdean woman)

Interestingly, she claimed to be 'more afraid' due to police, even though she 'had no problems' with them. Due to the constant possibility of police raids, the space shared with potential police targets was saturated with the risk of police encounters, engendering a permanent sense of alertness: 'no one ever feels at peace'. A group of middle-aged Cape Verdean women chatted about muggings in public transport one evening. After claiming never to carry identification with her, Domingas quickly clarified: 'If there's a raid [*rusga*] I'll run home and get it.' Raids were a taken-for-granted concern. When leaving for other migrant neighbourhoods, young people made sure to carry ID. Residents were aware of the risk of raids not only in the neighbourhood, but in any space tainted with potential law-breaking, including other migrant settlements (both indoors and on the streets) and even cars shared with others. One night around midnight, I waited with Fabi on a deserted street close to the train station for a taxi to take us to Topia. She was uncomfortable in the area 'because of muggings'. By chance, she spotted a female neighbour leaving the train station. The woman was getting a ride to Topia with her boyfriend and offered to take us. Knowing how common it was to share rides with neighbours, I was surprised when Fabi turned the offer down under some excuse. After the car left I asked her why. 'She hangs with drug dealers', Fabi said. I was not following: Fabi encountered drug dealers everyday walking up the road in Topia. 'Because of police raids', she insisted. In the end she spelled it out for me: if police found drugs in a car and the dealer did not take blame, everyone would be taken to the police station. She dismissed my surprise: 'Oh so many times that's happened!'

I felt this was a different world from my own. Residents' attention was well trained to identify threats completely foreign to me, which they had been faced with 'so many times'. A direct implication of spatial stigma, even people who had no direct issue with the law displayed this sort of alertness when they shared space with offenders. Fabi had a friendly relationship with police officers at her work place, knowing them by name and often stopping to chat to them. But even she was wary of police when she found herself at risk of raids. By the same token, residents could call police or advise others to call them

under distress (e.g. faced with robberies, domestic violence, excessive noise). According to municipal data, 111 households (out of 493) even supported the idea of 'reinforcing policing' of the estate. However, like Fabi, residents kept an eye out for police whenever (wherever) they could be identified as potential offenders. Small children with imprisoned relatives already carried notions of this risk. I watched a six-year-old (whose father had been to prison more than once) play with her dolls at Christmas. One was 'the mother', the other 'the daughter'. At some point the 'daughter' was arrested. The child explained: 'She was in a room and the police came. But she didn't do anything.' In this enacted police raid, being 'in a room' was the simple triggering event, even though she had not done 'anything'.

Law transgression by certain residents, from the time of the shanty towns, tarnished the living space of the neighbourhood as a whole. As Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista (2001, 96) noted: 'these are spaces which have in their history cases of marginality and delinquency [which], even if few, are enough to cause syndromes of social amplification and generate feelings of insecurity and suspicion for those who live in the neighbourhood and its surroundings' (my translation). The neighbourhood's perceived 'history', no doubt magnified by the media, marked it globally as a threat to outsiders (who feared entering it and had objected to its construction), and therefore as a designated space for police intervention, affecting everyone in it as a potential side target (cf. Anderson 1990, 163-167). Such was the effect of residential stigma: 'by the assimilation made between the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, living in those neighbourhoods means risking the image of being marginal, delinquent, undesirable' (Guerra 1994, 11, my translation). This contamination affected other kinds of shared spaces (like cars, in Fabi's example above). Entering it, simply being *there* brought others, along with offenders, under risk of police raids or searches. In Ivo's words: 'whoever's there will get it'.

## **2. Institutional power**

### **2.1 House visits: social workers and the power of information**

In people's minds, police were not the only looming threat in the neighbourhood. Social workers were also feared for their power to take valued things away. The municipal office in Topia tended to housing matters. The small team of social workers and desk clerk dealt with two types of issues. The first concerned tenancy-related matters: structural repairs; changes to tenancy (adding new-born children or subtracting deceased relatives or those moved away); temporary rent reductions due to lowered income; and trying to collect rent debts. The second group of issues was broader, comprising other institutions. The

council had aimed in recent years to implement an 'integrated customer service', whereby institutions would cooperate with each other to simplify the process for the user. The housing office could direct residents or referrals to different local institutions depending on the matter at hand. For example, the unemployed were guided to job-search appointments; low-income families could be referred to a local branch of social security in the Município; families could be assisted in finding nursery facilities or setting medical appointments. In cases of child neglect or abuse, the housing office collaborated with the local commission of child and youth protection (CPCJ) and the team (ECJ) who handled cases of removal of minors from their families. Although social workers at the local office were chiefly concerned with housing matters, in people's minds they were associated to this wider universe of power and control over children and resources (Donzelot 1980; Moffatt 1999, 232): they were seemingly able to lower rents and facilitate subsidies, but also cut them or take children from their mothers. While their work might be guided by the desire to help families and expedite solutions, social workers in Topia were bound by institutional duties and rules. They mediated between council decision-makers, which they represented and were subordinated to, and the population they directly serviced.<sup>161</sup> Their best intentions and merit notwithstanding, here I will focus solely on their position as perceived by residents – for whom their role, resources and practices marked them as agents of institutional control.

It is significant that social workers' main tool was information gathering (Moffatt 1999). Starting from the PER housing census in 1993, workers had a case file on each household, including documents and relevant information on household members. Some user requests (like rent reduction) were assessed through appropriate documentation, while in others (e.g. medical appointments) information was volunteered by residents. Yet some interventions arose from institutional coercion rather than users' requests, namely in matters of child neglect or rent collection. In these cases, social workers summoned people or visited their homes to assess the situation. House visits (especially entailing note-writing and form-filling) were the identifying mode of operation of social workers (ibid., 226). The collection of personal and statistical information was linked to asymmetrical acts of examining and assessing 'eligibility' for benefits, or 'surveillance' of social (moral, sanitary, juridical, educational, psychological) transgression (ibid., 223, 225; Donzelot 1980). In the words of Rose and Miller (2010, 283): 'Information in this sense is not the outcome of a neutral recording function. It is itself a way of acting upon the real, a way of devising techniques for inscribing in such a way as to make the domain in question susceptible to

<sup>161</sup> Depending on the issue, they could be critical of either side. They sometimes went beyond the call of duty to help residents, assisting with tasks of interpreting and filling out paperwork, or if time allowed seeing people without a prior appointment. Some residents I interviewed, especially elders, were very fond of their assigned worker. Others privately expressed resentment and hostility towards them.

evaluation, calculation and intervention.' Information gathering was an evident act of power by institutional workers over family and household routines. Not unlike police raids, social workers' visits conspicuously brought institutional control to penetrate people's private home space (Donzelot 1980).

For a brief period, NWIV visited parents' houses to warn them of children's poor attendance and lack of motivation to study. Thinking this would be a good way to access people's homes, I tagged along a young Cape Verdean woman, my colleague at NWIV and herself a resident in Topia. My plan collapsed on our first visit. Piercing gazes from neighbours on the street intently followed our moves in and out of buildings. My colleague made efforts to hide the forms our project manager had instructed us to use, and complained repeatedly that she neither liked nor agreed with these visits, arguing that people immediately grew suspicious of us: 'People think we're there to pry [*coscuvilhar*].' 'It's social workers who make house visits.' This was apparent in the houses we visited. People were reluctant to let us in, looked uncomfortably at her sheets and repeatedly asked, 'But what's all this for?' Information was a strong tool of power. It served to 'make calculations, plans and strategies' which could affect people 'in concrete material ways' (Moffatt 1999, 236). It could be turned against them. That is why people feared house visits. In them institutional power, manifest in 'technologies of government' beginning with simple 'inscription' acts (Rose and Miller 2010), reached over into people's most private space of the home and family (Donzelot 1980). These visits attested clearly that no place in Topia was impervious to institutional influence. There was nowhere to hide.

## **2.2 Welfare aid and child protection**

Significant power could come from knowing people's 'business'. It was seen to have serious effects, namely concerning income and child protection. Although social workers at the housing office had specific functions, inter-institutional collaboration mingled different areas of intervention in residents' minds to create a compound notion of 'social workers' as agents of surveillance and disciplinary intervention.

Welfare recipients often complemented their benefits with undeclared income: from street vending, cleaning, hair styling, among others (chapter 9). But this required keeping undeclared earnings away from institutional ears, under pain of losing welfare aid. Luzia once chatted to me and another neighbour about welfare. She alleged to being entitled to over €600 according to 'her worker' (*a minha assistente*), but had received only a fraction of it. Payment had been halted because, Luzia argued, 'an anonymous call' had been made

to the worker reporting she was earning over €700 at an undeclared job. She promptly clarified the call had been mistaken: it was someone else making the €700, not her. I showed surprise at the possibility of an anonymous call without further evidence serving as a reliable source, since any resentful neighbour could provide false reports. She claimed that had been the case, asserting that 'the doctor' (usual term for social workers) 'believes anything you tell her'. Regardless of accuracy, this conversation revealed some local assumptions and beliefs about social workers: they were able to interrupt benefits if they learned of people's parallel earnings. This was a major reason why jobs and income were both obsessive and delicate topics – because information about them carried power over neighbours. A destructive kind of power: of withdrawing essential resources. This kind of information was largely shared with trusted neighbours, but not just *any* neighbour, as Luzia's tale cautioned. Sharing information posed a risk. This explained why information given by people about their own earnings should be taken with scepticism (cf. Bourgois 2003, 2-8). It also illuminated the conclusions of the National Commission of Minimum Income (CNRM), in charge of assessing the implementation of *RSI* (Social Insertion Income, formerly *RMG*): beneficiaries wanting to quit the measure justified it, besides its insufficient amount, with a wish to escape the institutional control that went along with it, and a felt incomprehension about why it was granted or removed (CNRM 2002c, 18).

Besides income, another important domain where institutional power penetrated people's private space was child protection (Law 147/99, September 1 and Law 31/2003, August 22). The protection of children's bodies and personalities from harm, immorality and delinquency has been a priority of social work since its inception in the late nineteenth century (Donzelot 1980). This mission stretches beyond social work to enrol a network of specialists, including juridical, educational, medical and psychological (*ibid.*, 82; Moffatt 1999, 232). In fact, institutions in Topia worked in close inter-collaboration in situations considered as posing 'danger' for the child: local protection commissions could include representatives from the municipal or parish councils, local schools, medical staff, police forces, NGOs working with children or youth, and professionals trained in social service, health, law or psychology (Law 147/99, September 1, Arts. 17 and 20). The legal text expressly favours an 'interdisciplinary and inter-institutional composition' of local protection commissions (*ibid.*), and any institution or organisation witnessing a situation of 'danger' for the child should communicate it to the CPCJ (*ibid.*, chapter IV). Although social workers at the housing office in Topia did not directly take part in local commissions, they belonged to the wider institutional network which cooperated in these matters. And their involvement in local cases in Topia, including those leading to removal

of children from their families, would not go unnoticed:

That's why we say we also have a very direct articulation both with the commission [CPCJ] and with ECJ [who handled adoptions]. Because many times they also have to conduct house visits, and when they don't know the situation sometimes they ask us to accompany them on a first visit, so there's always a familiar face, right. And they've sometimes asked us for our reports, to complement their own. (Interview transcript with social workers at the Topia housing office)

The fact that workers participated in these cases through house visits arguably contributed to their broad identification with a power to control families' care of children, enforce protective measures and ultimately remove children from parents. In people's minds, their 'familiar face' became entangled in the process and confirmed them as agents of institutional control. I mentioned in chapter 7 a man who confronted me at Baker's Star one morning, accusing me of being a 'social worker'. His confusing claims that I had cut his benefits mixed with admonitions for me to 'control his son' confirmed the broad local representations about social workers and their seeming power over income and children.

### **2.3 'They try to learn something': undercover agents**

In matters of unemployment, children's schooling or rent reduction, social workers in Topia collaborated with different institutions to assist residents. The system of integrated customer service, together with 'interdisciplinary and inter-institutional' cooperation in child protection built bridges between different fields of institutional action. So for example, teachers at school could signal child neglect or abuse to local protection commissions; social workers could accompany teams handling the removal of children from families; police officers could pressure parents at home when they breached the measures proposed by protection commissions (e.g. when children repeatedly missed school). Different institutions and professionals were seen working together to either help families or enforce control over them. Their functions were discernibly specific – a teacher could not be mistaken for a police officer. But being known to collaborate in some areas and cases, they were assumed to work together as a group, and therefore posed a collective threat.<sup>162</sup> Institutional agents shared simple features in residents' minds: they were white outsiders who tried to gather information so as to enforce power. A continuous effort was

<sup>162</sup> For example in the case of *RSI* (granted to 107 families), local assessment commissions should integrate delegates from social security, employment/professional training, education, health, municipal and parish councils, who should all share data with social security (Law 13/2003, Art. 33, line 3; Art. 17, line 2).

required to keep sensitive information from them. However, the problem was compounded by the idea that both policemen and social workers could operate furtively.

It was widely known that police in Topia often worked undercover. The proximity of the police station made some undercover officers and their unmarked cars familiar to residents. Leandra called me to her house one morning to help with a course assignment. She had to describe in detail whatever she observed through her window. At some point she noted matter-of-factly 'an undercover policeman' [*polícia à paisana*]. I had heard people identify undercover policemen before, so I pointed out the contradiction. She confirmed: 'Yeah we know who they are. Because later we see them at the police station.' But the fact that officers' faces were often known did not help to ease residents' suspicion of strangers.<sup>163</sup> On the contrary, it created further distrust by fomenting the notion that institutional agents commonly worked undercover or otherwise furtively.

Eva put it clearly one day, to clarify why so many residents seemed mistrusting and hostile towards me. She told me people got 'suspicious' (*desconfiadas*) whenever they saw 'a strange woman' (*mulher estranha*), promptly assuming she was a 'social worker'. Because 'once in a while they [social workers] go have a cup of coffee to try to learn something [about residents]', 'that's why people don't wanna answer questions'. Moreover, she continued, there had been a recent case in Topia of children being removed from their mother. She offered examples of people's suspicion: 'The other day people saw a woman [riding in the back of] a police car and just for that they thought she was a social worker.' She also mentioned a community project implemented years before, whereby a handful of residents had been trained as mediators to work alongside municipal staff and facilitate institutional intervention on different social problems in the neighbourhood. She recalled that residents had been deeply suspicious of the white female monitoring the mediators and kept privately enquiring about her. I asked if people's distrust extended to mediators themselves. 'No, not them!' – she dismissed the thought: 'People knew them well.'

This conversation illustrated interesting points. It highlighted residents' general mistrust of 'strange women', automatically suspected of being social workers, and the idea that they 'tried to learn something' through surreptitious means. The conceptual link between policemen and social workers (riding in their car) again suggested that official agents were tied together as a group in people's minds. And they were clearly associated with an 'outside' threat. Even when neighbours were known to work alongside institutions, they were not mistrusted because 'people knew them well'. White outsiders were a repeated target of suspicion, seen to pose an ever-present risk as they moved about Topia.

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<sup>163</sup> It should also be noted that officers rotated as part of normal police business, new ones being brought in and local ones being transferred or promoted to other places.

The same assumptions were manifest in the following situation. Ivone and Lurdes were hanging out on a street corner facing the main road. A male neighbour stopped to greet them, but soon halted and pointed to the far end of the buildings behind them, where two ordinary cars were parked. They were undercover police cars, he noted. The women recognised them: 'That's right, the white [Fiat] *Punto*...' They all stared intently at the plain-clothed men who moved about near the cars. They did not recognise the men, but the cars had given them away. They all wondered what the 'officers' (*agentes*) were doing. The man claimed they had been 'entering people's houses' and Ivone added that 'yesterday they were taking pictures', she did not know what for. They fell silent and after a while Ivone recalled that a white car had driven 'up and down the road' several times that morning 'with two women inside' – she guessed they were social workers.

Residents were constantly aware that white strangers moving in Topia could be furtive agents attempting to gather information. 'Entering people's houses', 'taking pictures', riding in unmarked cars, moving 'up and down the road' were compounded as actions of undercover agents. The work of police officers and social workers again appeared conflated in people's minds. Caldeira (1996) and Low (2007, 2001) observed that, in closed gated communities, repeated talk and concern about the pervasiveness of crime actually increased anxiety and reinforced the boundaries between 'us' and dangerous 'others'. Crossing these boundaries led to 'aggression, fear, and a feeling of unprotectedness' (Caldeira 1996, 324). The same held true of Topia: 'everyday discussions' of institutional agents moving about strengthened 'rigid symbolic differences' between neighbours and dangerous outsiders, conceptually assimilated as a group (*ibid.*). Territorial practices (chapter 7) and expressed concerns about the risk posed by these agents furthered the 'construction of inflexible separations in a way analogous to city walls' (*ibid.*; see also Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 35). Although no mention had been made of social workers, talk of undercover agents reminded Ivone of the women she had seen riding up and down that morning. Both institutions (housing office and police station) had nearby official quarters and they were perceived to operate together, at times undercover. The clearest perceived difference between them was gender: white men were policemen, white women were social workers.<sup>164</sup> The interaction above again demonstrated residents' permanent watchfulness against white outsiders, readily taken as potential government agents and ostensibly monitored through hostile 'controlling' gazes from street corners.

Residents' suspicion also extended to phone calls from unfamiliar or unmarked numbers. It was difficult to make sure who was on the other side, and people seemed to

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<sup>164</sup> This gender division was relatively accurate. Although one policewoman worked at the station at some point, male officers formed the large majority, and social workers in Topia were all female.

fear unwittingly disclosing private information. Amália once complained that her husband received calls 'every day' from undisclosed numbers, which he did not pick up. She recalled one such occasion: the caller had introduced herself as working for his mobile provider and conducting a phone survey. After asking for his full name she hung up, proving the call as a hoax to get his personal information. Amália shared this story to substantiate her mistrust of strange calls and the dangers of picking up the phone. Like her, many people simply did not answer unknown callers, or found ways of ensuring they could not do harm. One afternoon, Diana's land line rang and her neighbour Denise answered. Someone asked for Diana's uncle. The uncle did not live there, but Diana sent the message through Denise that he was away on holiday and they were unsure of when he would return. When Denise hung up the phone she remarked the call must have been about a debt, because it was 'a *Tuga*' calling. Diana guessed her uncle must have given her address 'because of trouble'. When I asked Denise where they had called from, she admitted she had not asked. Their assumptions immediately linked a strange *Tuga* calling with debt issues and 'trouble' for her uncle. And so Diana took precaution to prevent harm to her uncle: in this case lying. Later that day, Diana received a call on her mobile from a land line. She claimed never to answer land line numbers on her mobile and asked me to take the call and enquire who was calling. When I realised it was a neighbour she promptly took the call. I witnessed similar strategies by others. I had set up an interview with Luzia but fell ill in the meantime. I did not have her number to reschedule, but was able to get it through someone else. I called several times but she never picked up. Recalling people's mistrust of unknown numbers, I sent her a text message explaining it was me and how I had obtained her number. She sent me a missed call later that day, and when I returned it she had her child answer the phone and ask who was calling just to make sure. Only after all these precautions did she take the call, and began by declaring she 'forgave me' for obtaining her number (which I had not thought of apologising for). Suspicion of strangers illicitly gathering private information took on sweeping proportions.

Outsiders in general were approached with some distance and mistrust. However, it was not until they entered the private space of people's lives – neighbourhood streets, their homes or private numbers – that they were perceived as a direct source of risk (Mitchell 1998, 90). Skin colour undoubtedly played a part here. It was *white* outsiders who were most readily and recurrently the targets of suspicion.<sup>165</sup> Racism and an 'oppositional identity' contributed to create distance and mistrust among Cape Verdean residents towards Portuguese society in general (chapter 5). However, white outsiders were not seen as direct

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<sup>165</sup> Though a Cape Verdean anthropologist researching a shanty town with a majority of Cape Verdeans confessed to me that he had also been a repeated target of suspicion, as an outsider asking questions.

threat (potential agents) until they entered the 'heterotopic' space of the neighbourhood.

An interesting reversal was thereby operated. In the same way that neighbourhood space was 'stigmatised', tarnished by transgression, so the outside, when it crossed over into Topia, personified covert institutional control. Just as all residents in Topia became, by living *there*, potential law offenders in outsiders' eyes; so all outsiders turned into potential undercover agents inside Topia, suspected of gathering information which could be used against residents. The space of Topia was saturated with (a dual) risk. In it, insiders were overall suspected of illicit behaviour, while (white) outsiders were mistrusted as possible government agents.<sup>166</sup> Alongside ethnicity, space became prominent in 'simplistic' mechanisms of categorisation (Anderson 1990, 181). The threat existed (for both sides) whenever people were *there*.

In outsider's minds, space homogenised residents as accomplices in law-breaking (either directly or by defending neighbours/relatives). It made everyone accountable. Which was why young men could be harassed by police by simply 'being there'; why Fabi was wary of entering the dealer's girlfriend's car; why middle-aged women were aware of police raids and the importance of carrying an ID. And by a perverse effect, outsiders in Topia were similarly homogenised by residents simply for 'being there'. Because being inside Topia, walking the streets, entering houses, calling people, simply going 'for a cup of coffee' enabled surreptitious collection of private information. This sheds further light on why suspicion was manifest about strangers in neighbourhood streets, phone calls or formal house visits, as opposed to private events such as parties. As argued in chapter 7, the estate was a 'heterotopia', at the cross between public (access) and private (living) space. Anyone could enter the estate, walk the streets, go inside cafés, dial a number, and (in the case of authorities) knock on doors. In this sense, the estate was public space. However, it was also the place where neighbours lived and socialised, obtained resources, exchanged information, raised children, often made a living. Unlike most other estates in the Município, street corners effervesced with neighbour sociality, visits were frequent, gossip was widespread and secrets and resources shared. Residents felt the streets in a sense as their property, because private business and family life overflowed outside the home. Intent hostile gazes followed 'intruders' along the way – they might 'try to learn something'. In this sense, Topia was private space: penetrating it posed a threat.

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<sup>166</sup> Although most elements of stigma (labelling, stereotyping, loss of status and exclusion) also described how white outsiders were portrayed inside Topia, the concept of 'stigma' did not apply here. As Link and Phelan (2001) noted, stigma requires the 'stigmatiser' to hold power over the 'stigmatised' (so as to create serious practical social discriminatory consequences for them), a power that residents did not hold over outsiders except in a 'weaker' sense (Scott 1985; cf. Cohen 2000, 10).

### 3. Institutional intervention

#### 3.1 Lecturing, advising, reproaching

Relationships with institutions in Topia went beyond the housing office or police. Institutions servicing the estate included the school, projects promoting employment and training, literacy classes for adults, leisure activities for children and youth, homework tutoring, IT skills, sexual and reproductive health awareness, assistance with citizenship and documents (cf. introduction). Local institutions kept a degree of collaboration, mainly on specific events or cases. However most of the time they worked solo. Some were based in facilities inside Topia, others in close vicinity. Many residents were not familiar with all of them, especially those operating in the lower streets of Topia or outside the estate.

People's relationship with these institutions varied. Different people understandably had different needs, interests and involvement in the services they offered. Some regularly visited one NGO or more, others used services over limited periods of time or dropped by occasionally to solve specific problems, still others had no involvement in any. The cultural association and a worker from the housing office held a long-standing relationship with a number of residents since the time of the shanties. For this and other reasons, based on past personal interactions, some institutional workers held the trust of individual residents. These often came to ask direct favours of the person they trusted inside the institution.

Although individual relationships with institutions varied, I noticed some things were common: aside from the cultural association and NWIV (each employing one Cape Verdean resident), all staff were composed of white outsiders.<sup>167</sup> More importantly, their attitudes towards residents revealed a high degree of what I will refer to as 'pedagogy': shared ideas and standards of what life and behaviour should be in an urban setting, against which residents' behaviours were often found lacking; and a notion of intervention based on transmitting those ideas to residents in order to change their behaviour accordingly (Rose and Miller 2010). At times it became clear that rehoused residents, having come from shanties, were 'viewed as people with peculiar living habits which conflict with modern urban standards of living' (Horta 2000, 117). In line with Donzelot's (1980) argument about state intervention in the family, institutions continually worked to promote certain codes of sanitation, education, budgeting and family ethics, all-the-while championing the liberal ideal of people's 'autonomy' as opposed to dependency on state goods or assistance (Rose and Miller 2010, 285).<sup>168</sup> From a foucauldian perspective, it was

<sup>167</sup> There was a recent exception, a woman of Angolan origin who came to work in one of the institutions inside the estate in the middle of my fieldwork. Yet she was referred to by residents as an outsider. 'I don't like her!' – Maria complained one morning – 'I don't know her, I don't know where she came from!'

<sup>168</sup> The granting of *RSI* (Social Insertion Income), for example, depended on the beneficiary and his family

their mission to instil in citizens 'self-regulatory techniques' which would domesticate and 'align their personal choices with the ends of government' (ibid., 286; Appadurai 1995, 215). From NGOs, to the school, to medical staff, institutional approaches to rehoused tenants rested at least partially on teaching them how to act appropriately for their own good: in this sense they shared a *pedagogical* model of intervention. It was not necessarily a conscious or acknowledged one. But it was one manifest in interactions with residents, through frequent verbal admonitions, lecturing, criticism and advice of various sorts.<sup>169</sup>

In an unprecedented event in June, fourteen representatives of local institutions were brought together in one room to discuss and share their experience and perspectives on the main problems affecting Topia (Abrantes 1994, 50-51; Gregory 2003, 284-285). They sat for three hours exchanging views on what they thought was wrong in the neighbourhood. Alcohol, drugs and domestic violence were mentioned first. But for the rest of the meeting they focused on two other issues. One was the financial struggle of families, caused by high unemployment and individuals' low schooling. It was also due to what these workers saw as a 'lack of preparation' to live in buildings in an urban consumerist society. Coming from shanties, people had become 'dazzled by buildings' (chapter 3), buying all sorts of commodities to furnish them. They had also been 'dazzled' by brands and technology, spending money on expensive goods. Workers argued that rehoused tenants were not ready to have monthly bills or credit, because they spent more than they earned and later had to face debt collectors (chapter 10). A second severe problem, in representatives' views, was that mothers left children unattended for long hours (see Wall 2008). Low qualifications usually directed them to late-hour jobs and weekend shifts, which meant they were not around to supervise children outside school hours; and because they gave birth too young, grandmothers were still of a working age, and aunts had their own children to care for. Fathers in turn did not take responsibility and were absent from children's lives. As a result, children failed to study, abandoned school and spent their time on the streets, feeding the cycle of delinquency and low prospects.

These explanations ultimately traced the cause for social problems to individuals' fecklessness: they abandoned school early, gave birth too soon, did not take responsibility, spent money they did not have. They lacked 'preparation' to live in an 'urban' setting, to

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committing to a 'social insertion programme' defining a set of obligations (e.g. to look for work, undergo training, attend classes) 'aiming to create conditions facilitating those people's access to social and economic autonomy' (Law 196/97, July 31, Art. 2, line c, my translation).

<sup>169</sup> I use the term 'pedagogical' rather than the more Foucauldian 'disciplinary' (Moffatt 1999, 223) or 'regulatory' for two reasons: 1) the rhetoric used by institutional workers was that of 'teaching' what residents purportedly did not 'know'; 2) I mean to focus not on the aims of such an intervention nor its alignment with state agendas, but rather on the ways in which it was perceived and resisted (for positing a knowledge/competence asymmetry) in interactions between workers and residents.

budget earnings and plan for the future. This sort of message was conveyed to residents themselves on countless occasions, trying to advise or instruct them on what to do and not to do in specific situations. Workers' institutional 'expertise' in specific fields authorised 'claiming the power of truth, and offering to teach them [residents] the techniques by which they might manage better, earn more, bring up healthier or happier children and much more besides' (Rose and Miller 2010, 285-286). The problem with institutions' implicit claims to 'truth' and expert knowledge about (ultimately) how to live was the converse statement they implied: residents' ignorance and incompetence in those same fields.

### **3.2 Pedagogical interactions**

Approaches based on lecturing, reproaching and correcting residents' behaviour amplified the asymmetry between them and institutional workers (white middle-class educated outsiders). Workers assumed a paternalistic stance which relegated rehoused tenants to a position of inept or child-like citizens. It was apparent that people often lacked the knowledge, skills, motivation or resources to plan ahead, navigate bureaucracies and deal with certain rules and structures outside the neighbourhood. When volunteering at NWIV, I could not help but notice that I tended to share the same patronising pattern of interaction with residents. It is not my aim here to discuss the merits or flaws of such a model or suggest alternatives, but only to examine its effects in Topia. In an atmosphere marked by hostile suspicion to white outsiders, a type of encounter which repeatedly stressed residents' subordinate or inept status expectedly amplified tension and resistance. I will provide examples of what I mean by 'pedagogical' encounters, before analysing (in part 4) the defensive strategies that residents adopted daily in response to them.

Coming from shanties, the most basic concern of the rehousing was teaching people how to live in buildings. The housing office in Topia illustrated in an interview the kinds of situations to be handled and corrected through meetings with residents:

Resident meetings worked to teach so to speak people to organise as a building: cleaning issues, how they worked. Because many people lived in a shanty, so there wasn't this need to cooperate to a common end. And indeed one of the requirements when people live in a building is at the very least to organise to clean, right? It was more about cleaning matters, the management of space, of [pause] practices they had in the beginning that [pause] well it was convenient that they lost: the fact that they threw their rubbish out the window: bags flew from windows here in the beginning. That's why in the beginning there were also so many mice. Because rubbish, well it

attracts mice! ... In the beginning there was much awareness-raising about rubbish issues, not putting things in the toilet. Which still [pause] goes on. There is much sewer clogging, because people put diapers, tampons, cotton swabs, ... I've seen dish cloths. I don't know if children [pause] Also dolls, yes dolls. Because there must also be an educational effort with the children, that they can't put things in the toilet right? I don't know if kids flush it, or if parents see it but don't want to put their hands in the toilet, I have no idea. But there has in fact been much awareness raising to that effect. (Interview transcript with social workers at the housing office)

Neighbour relations also became a focus of intervention and awareness raising. Shanties were mostly autonomous living quarters. Buildings now forced people to share common areas, generating tension and numerous quarrels (chapter 3):

Many people have quarrelled over it, over cleaning matters, over breaking something inside the building ... or on account of noise, or because 'my neighbours drag furniture late at night', or because 'they throw leftovers through the window and soil my clothes', or 'they dripped bleach on my clothes' ... People in fact did not get along. And many presently still don't. There's no building where we can say all neighbours get along. There isn't. ... People had their ground shanties, 'This is my space, this is yours. I take care of mine, you take care of yours.' There was no common space to take care of. And that still hasn't been apprehended by many people here. ... Many things haven't been internalised yet. ... Until people get used to the space and realise they have to live [pause] with some harmony between them, it takes time. That's why in the beginning council estates are always very problematic, and as years go by things are appeased. ... People grow. It's not that problems disappear, but they're soothed. (Interview transcript with social workers at the housing office)

Even after basic rules of building life, space, and relations were 'apprehended' and 'internalised', many areas of living remained to be worked on. Bills and financial issues were another major concern. A woman came to ask an NGO worker one morning to help her cancel payment to her cable service so she could change to another provider. The worker patiently but firmly explained that she could not simply interrupt payment: she must check the length of her contract and request cancellation in writing before switching to another provider. After the woman had left, the worker confided this was a recurring problem in Topia: whenever people wanted to quit a service, they simply stopped paying it. Providers and firms let people's debt accrue for a few years and then appealed to judicial courts, where people's assets were warranted confiscation until debts were settled. 'Haven't

you seen those big trucks driving into Topia to collect furniture? Those are confiscations' (*penhoras*). The worker added that firms granting easy credit made fortunes in 'places like Topia', illustrating that an unemployed single woman with several small children and meagre benefits had bought a china set worth €3000 on credit. I knew of similar cases. The worker argued that institutions should provide training sessions to 'teach' people about these things: 'that and family budgeting' – another priority concern.

The notion that people lacked basic knowledge and skills for a modern urban setting spread to other domains. A health team visited Topia periodically to distribute contraception, deliver medication and set up appointments for residents at the local health centre. I accompanied a young woman there one afternoon. She wanted to show the nurse her son's medical tests and set an appointment to have her contraceptive implant removed. As we sat down with the nurse, the woman told her about her four-year-old son still wetting the bed, unresponsive to potty training (the reason why he had been tested). The nurse was in her late thirties/early forties. She was cheerful and friendly, and spoke to the woman in a patronising tone, as if gently reproaching a child. After seeing the boy's exams and asking some questions, the nurse told the woman she simply must toilet-train her son, and then reprimanded her for having missed some of his vaccinations. The confused woman checked the boy's vaccination record, arguing in vain that the due date for these vaccinations was not noted down, she could not have known. The nurse insisted that 'Next time I see you I want to see his vaccinations are up to date.' When they came to the matter of the implant, the nurse enquired why she wanted to remove it before time. The woman nervously justified that her husband wanted to have a baby now, and that it was also making her put on weight. The nurse reminded that she had 'explained very well' how the implant worked when the woman decided to put it in, and that implants were expensive and could not be inserted and removed just like that. She implied the woman had not thought her decision through: 'I advise you to talk to your husband', she settled the matter. As for the extra weight, she briefly lectured the woman on the dangers of 'speedy diets', prescribing exercise and a balanced regime instead. She ended the interaction by setting up the appointment for the child's vaccinations, cautioning: 'I'll check to see if you attend.' The nurse was never rude, aggressive or indifferent. On the contrary, she was cordial and warm and seemed genuinely concerned. However, she focused on the problems she identified (the delayed vaccinations) rather than those the woman wished to solve (the potty training and the implant). She familiarly addressed the woman by her first name and often repeated her sentences in a mocking tone, as if doubting their accuracy. She did not respect her concerns (the boy not responding to training) or decisions (to remove the implant),

dismissing them as lack of effort or judgement. Throughout this encounter, despite her best intentions, she kept a condescending stance, lecturing and gently reproaching, keeping low expectations, as if dealing with a child who above all needed patient guidance.

Although individual styles of interaction varied, I witnessed similar attitudes across different institutions. They patiently advised people on being punctual, keeping course schedules and appointment times, actively searching for jobs, taking initiative and being pro-active in their work, training, health, family planning, budgeting and most areas of life (Donzelot 1980; Rose and Miller 2010). Alice, an unemployed Cape Verdean in her thirties, had enrolled in one of the NGOs for a professional course to start in May and was waiting to be called. On May 12 Alice came in to enquire about it since, she argued, all others she knew had been called. The NGO worker called the school and they informed her the course was full and had already started, claiming they had tried to contact Alice. Alice remembered apologetic that her phone had been off for a week or so. The worker insisted she should have come earlier, stayed on top of things, especially if her phone was off and her friends were being called. Alice left grumbling to herself, 'I knew I wasn't gonna get anything coming here...!'; while the worker remained indignant at her irresponsible lack of initiative: 'She should've come ages ago!'

Arguably much has improved in people's conduct since the first days of rehousing, as the housing office and other institutions testified.<sup>170</sup> However, substantial work remained to be done, and 'pedagogical' efforts were frequent and ongoing. The fact that after a decade or so of rehousing the same ideas were still being continually reinforced was a strong suggestion that messages put across to residents were likely being resisted.

#### **4. Resisting asymmetry**

##### **4.1 Silence**

Despite many people seeking out and benefiting from different sorts of institutional assistance, responses to institutional action were often defensive. Besides institutional power and covert information gathering, people also used a range of protective strategies against institutions' overt and well-intended efforts to help them. The fact that they were repeatedly lectured to and reproached (and came to expect it) led to combined behaviours of avoidance, complaint and confrontation, over a background of neighbour complicity.

I noticed early in fieldwork that residents reacted to most of what I said or asked in the same way: they conspicuously ignored me. They kept silent, looked away, adopted

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<sup>170</sup> Even though some aspects have worsened: according to council data, the number of due rent payments and of tenants indebted to the council rose steadily over the period of 2006 to 2010.

distant and aloof postures until I gave up.<sup>171</sup> But there were exceptions, harmless questions or conversation topics people seemed willing to engage in. It was difficult to discern a pattern. Four months into my fieldwork, I went jogging with a group of young women from Topia who were interested in dieting and losing weight. One of them quickly felt tired and lingered behind, and I took the chance to walk with her and chat about things which interested me. I first asked about something I had heard them mentioning earlier, about women marrying foreign immigrants for money. She kept silent and ignored me. I realised this was a sensitive topic and changed to a more neutral one, asking about her mother's recent trip to France. She still avoided replying. I switched to talking about dieting and exercise, sharing some notions about food and metabolism I had recently read about. This was sure to interest her. But there was still no reply. I had no idea where to go next. To my surprise, she took some interest when I asked where to buy some jogging clothes, and we ended up going shopping a week later. One of her friends caught up with us and the two of them started a lively chat in Creole about dieting. Later that day, I walked in on her explaining to another friend in Creole the same things I had told her earlier about food and metabolism. It was clear she had paid attention after all, although she wittingly hid it. Her attitude puzzled me. On a different occasion, I escorted Diana to the supermarket. In the yoghurt aisle, she complained her children only liked the expensive brands with bits in them – 'And they don't even eat the bits!' I looked around for a cheaper brand with a similar product. She ignored my suggestion without a word, dropping the conversation and taking the expensive ones. Clearly the topic was not the issue: I was ignored even when picking up on people's expressed concerns. At the lunch place, Nívea, Adelaide and Ivone (a smoker) began complaining one afternoon about the habit of smoking and how to drop it. Ivone claimed to have tried nicotine patches without success. The others stressed the importance of willpower, 'because addiction grabs on to you'. Quite by chance, I had kept a brochure with anti-smoking treatments from a visit to an institution. When I began listing options from the brochure, they all fell silent and looked away, blatantly disregarding me. When I dropped the subject they regained their previous posture. Again, it could not have been the topic: *they* had started the conversation. I was obviously doing something wrong.

It took some months of being systematically ignored to begin to notice a pattern. I knew that people did not appreciate questions that probed their privacy or extracted personal information. So the woman's mother's trip to France (in the first example) was not a neutral subject as I had imagined. This was easy to understand given the concern with protecting information from outsiders. But not all questions were unwelcome: I could ask

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<sup>171</sup> The same strategies, described in chapter 3, used to avoid granting inconvenient requests.

where to buy jogging clothes, because that was impersonal. Similarly, asking about recipes or cheap shops was always a safe bet. But what truly puzzled me was that seemingly harmless topics (dieting, yoghurt prices, smoking treatments) could still meet resistance, even when they clearly interested people. It took me long to realise that the issue was not the topic, but my implicit position in the conversation – and their history of interacting with people in positions similar to mine. Even though I lived in Topia and my presence had become accepted by some, I was still a white educated 'outsider': my status as a neighbour was recent and only partly granted, and I was moreover known to 'work' at an NGO. So when I spoke about dieting, budgeting or smoking treatments, my discourse sounded familiar: I was lecturing, teaching them how to act, like most institutional workers did. In those situations – unlike when asking for recipes or cheap stores – I was not meeting them as an equal, and they refused to acknowledge me or my message. I was behaving like a 'social worker'. It was not the content they resisted, but an interaction which placed them once again in the position of pupils or inept adults.

For the same reason, residents often lied or omitted their actions (such as missing appointments, not using contraception or asking for credit) in front of institutional figures, to avoid being lectured to. They seemed aware of the areas of behaviour (finance, health and sanitation, education, family planning, employment) that could invite pedagogical attempts, and steered clear of them. Moreover, they often avoided asking clarification when they failed to understand what workers explained to them, refusing to acknowledge ignorance or inferiority in interactions with literate outsiders and protecting themselves through silence. When I contacted the head of a youth leisure project about meeting a group of young men to ask for interviews, he warned me: 'Explain things very clearly to them, because they'll keep their questions to themselves, they won't ask you anything. But then they'll come ask *me* when you're gone.' I noticed similar attitudes in others. In time, as I became close to a few of them, their reluctance about asking me questions relaxed and they more easily admitted – 'I didn't get that' to something I said. Diana and Fabi even requested my presence in encounters with other white literate outsiders (lawyers or health professionals) to clarify with me afterwards whatever they failed to understand. The literacy gap remained between us. What changed over time was my status as an outsider: I was no longer in a removed asymmetrical position of telling them how to behave. Moving further inside (and making a conscious effort to avoid 'lecturing') brought me closer to an equal position, or at least a two-way exchange: seeing others' problems but also sharing my own, giving advice but also receiving it. In time, even references to budgeting or diet came closer to a swapping of helpful tips among neighbours, than to a lecture from above.

## 4.2 Language

On rarer occasions, some residents adopted the reverse strategy. Instead of silent refusal, when talking to anonymous white outsiders on the phone or outside Topia some young people assumed an especially polite and agreeable tone of voice and used formal convoluted wording, mirroring the kind of language they heard workers use on them. The finer way of speaking stood to confirm their equal standing in the conversation. Language also allowed for another local defensive tool, already mentioned: Creole. It dominated talk among Cape Verdeans and was regularly used in front of white outsiders to keep conversation contents from them. A resident once insulted me to another in Creole in my presence, assuming I did not understand it. A social worker reported a similar experience:

I was seeing a woman, it was about her rent debt so she wasn't pleased with what I had to say ... The phone rings, she picks up, it was her brother. She spoke in Creole the whole time but I understood everything she said. And she spoke ill of me to her brother, in front of me, but she thought I didn't understand her. And when she hung up, I reprimanded her that it took a lot of nerve to speak ill of me to my face. And she was like 'So you understood?' 'Yes I understood everything you said.' She didn't know where to hide ... she came to reason: just because I'm white doesn't mean I don't understand Creole. (Interview transcript of a social worker at the housing office)

People acknowledged it was rude to speak Creole in the presence of white outsiders, and sometimes apologised for it. Nevertheless, most Cape Verdeans did it most of the time, either unwittingly (simply not bothering) or purposefully to exclude others from the conversation. A case in point happened at a live television show, where a resident from Topia (a middle-aged Cape Verdean immigrant) was invited with his wife to share his life story. The wife was visibly uncomfortable about being on television. The (white) show host had a surprise for them and during the show phoned their relatives in Cape Verde, whom they had not spoken to in years. The host asked them to speak in Portuguese so the audience (and himself) could follow the conversation. The man abided, but when his wife's turn came her first sentence on the phone was to instruct her relatives to 'speak Creole', much to the embarrassment of the host, who kept insisting they switch to Portuguese. Her conversation in Creole had no hidden messages, merely asking how each family member was doing. Her intended use of Creole can be seen in contrast to her husband's attitude: he was happy and proud to be on television, carefully phrasing his tale in formal wording and

looking displeased when the host interrupted him. On the contrary, she was too awkward to utter a word, keeping silent with her eyes down while her husband beamed, sharing his deeds with the audience. When she was handed the phone, she shielded herself by excluding all others from the conversation, even against the host's requests: she spoke in Creole, instructing her relatives to do the same. Here, as in Topia, Creole was used as a defensive weapon. Because long-term white neighbours understood Creole, it was effective against white *others*: just as hostility displayed in eye-behaviour, Creole excluded outsiders from the neighbourhood, reversing its own social exclusion (chapter 7). As Cidra (2008a, 118) concluded in his analysis of music in the Cape Verdean diaspora, 'Creole is conceived as a language of autonomy and resistance against the "outside", namely against the forms of exclusion affecting the descendants of African immigration in Portugal.'

### 4.3 Criticism and confrontation

Defensive attitudes and denial of asymmetry in encounters with institutional workers was complemented by daily criticism of those institutions. Neighbours privately voiced their discontent at purportedly unhelpful services, poor housing infrastructure or unfair rent. Above all, they complained about specific interactions, blaming perceivably ill-intended, lazy or disrespectful staff (individually or as a group) for failing to get them what they needed. One morning at Baker's Star café, a white middle-aged woman shared with Amália and Eva her views on the Food Bank.<sup>172</sup> She claimed to dislike them because according to her, 'the people working there, people with money, they take all that's good for themselves and just send expired goods to needy families'. She claimed to have taken an opinion poll on their work where she stated that: 'Social workers there are all whores and cows. And the interviewer agreed!' A popular target of criticism was social security, especially when austerity measures reduced families' child support, inflaming mothers' outrage (chapter 9). Local institutions in Topia were also frequently censured. People pointed their failed promises to keep busy the unemployed, youth and retired: 'They never do anything.' They also denounced a lack of honesty and transparency, and employees' laziness and negligence: 'that's the kind of job I'd like to have, sitting around all day...' Often they complained about services and resources being granted in a seemingly arbitrary and unfair manner. The same woman who complained about the Food Bank asserted that social workers had the means to give and do things, 'a way to reach in', but she claimed 'they only do it for the people they like'. Their withholding was seen as deliberate: 'it's

<sup>172</sup> A NGO collecting food from donors to redistribute to deprived families nationwide. Family needs and requirements are assessed not by the Bank itself but in each case by a network of local institutions.

because they don't want to'. Women around the table agreed and shared other 'injustices' they had witnessed, namely in the granting of council houses and welfare aid.

Aside from private criticism, tension and resentment towards institutions was sometimes expressed through aggressive confrontation. Children were a common trigger: parents at times considered unacceptable the way institutional staff treated or disciplined their children. Tales circulated (some boastful) about parents, especially mothers, angrily quarrelling with school or NGO staff for disrespecting their children. Amália took pride in having gone to the school to hit her daughter's teacher after the teacher had physically punished the child. As argued in chapter 7, these fierce protective behaviours were linked to an overall complicity between neighbours against outsiders, and to local codes of 'not showing fear'. It was true that institutions could be used as weapons in neighbour disputes (like when someone called Luzia's worker to denounce her unreported earnings). Nonetheless, family and close neighbours usually stood behind one another and supported each others' claims against outsiders, even when these claims were clearly unjustified. So when a man skipped a medical appointment and as a result his sick leave payment was interrupted, his family criticised welfare for not paying him what he was due. When her son was suspended from school for a week for hitting another student, Luzia dismissed it as 'kid's stuff', complaining about the other boy not being suspended as well. And when NWIV called Luzia about the same thing happening during their activities she denied it, lying that his son had been with her at home the whole time. When NWIV insisted, Luzia lost her temper, growling she was done receiving complaints about her son and threatening to remove him from NWIV. Although the boy had a history of troublesome behaviour, Luzia refused to take the side of institutions, never admitting his blame. One morning at Baker's Star, a Cape Verdean woman whose son was also enrolled at NWIV declared she demanded respect and good behaviour from all her children: she instructed them 'only once' and on a second strike punished them physically. But when just a few weeks later she walked in on a NWIV worker reprimanding her son for misbehaving, she snapped at the worker, confronting her aggressively for disrespecting the boy. At stake here was clearly not an idealisation of children's behaviour (this woman claimed to hit hers whenever they called for it). The issue was again about residents' relationship with institutions, identified with outside control and paternalism.

Institutions' powers of information and resource control generated fear and mistrust, and their pedagogic vocation materialised in unequal interactions, triggering silent refusal and different protective strategies, supported by neighbour collusion. In local responses to institutions and their staff, space (entering Topia) again acted to homogenise white literate

outsiders and build inside complicity and resistance against them. Moving about Topia turned white outsiders into potential government agents, operating overtly or undercover with an ultimate goal of 'policing the poor' (Moffatt 1999, 233): through direct disciplinary measures (police), information-gathering tools (social workers), and pedagogical efforts. In an interesting reversal, by the sole fact of belonging to 'stigmatised' spaces rehoused residents were by similar acts of categorical simplification identified by outsiders with certain collective undesirable attributes (Link and Phelan 2001): the risk of criminal offence and a feckless conduct on key areas of life. Space played a central role in these processes of categorical homogenisation: those who lived in Topia (and before that in shanties) were contaminated by territorial stigma; outsiders who entered it became tainted by the dangers of government power. Resistance became a collective and territorial enterprise (Gorringe 2006): hostile gazing defended the streets from trespassing; language and silence prevented asymmetrical encounters with outsiders; neighbours stood by each others' disobedience against institutional codes. 'Territory' and 'place of residence' – being *in*, or *from* Topia – took on powerful meanings and assumed far-reaching human consequences.

## **9. The street corner : 'You do nothing around here'**

Topia had a busy street life. As soon as cafés opened in the morning, they were quickly filled and emptied by batches of residents leaving for work. The unemployed and retired stayed on, joined by men gathering outside to smoke, drink, play cards, sell drugs, hang out and control the movements of passers-by. Daily street-corner bustle has been described in detail: men outside cafés, white women gossiping, regulars at the lunch place and vending hub, young people, unemployed mothers and elders in building entrances and 'the sun'. At most times in the day, streets and corners in Topia were stage for interactions and exchanges. Even if these people were engaged in the 'intense production of sociality' (Raposo 2007, 156; Gell 1996, 211), their visible and continued presence on the streets supported a locally prevalent conception that people in Topia were idle and 'did nothing'.

As argued above, territorial stigma ascribed 'undesirable' features to inhabitants of Topia (and other excluded spaces) as a whole. I will examine these negative stereotypes here, focusing on residents' practices and discourses of work and income (in this chapter), money spending and life planning (in chapter 10), and how they contributed to outsiders' stigmatising representations of Topia residents. Part 1 will describe prevailing discourses about street dwellers 'doing nothing' (section 1.1), teenagers' protest against boredom (1.2), and local obstacles to finding employment – which, I will argue, went beyond structural constraints to include moral values and behaviours towards work and income (1.3). Part 2 will examine the moral discourses of first and second generations in the estate: older migrants' praise of the virtues of hard work (section 2.1); second generations' prioritising of income and choice (2.2), namely in alternative livelihood options (2.3), and claims to the right of subsistence (2.4) and state aid (2.5). Finally, in part 3 I will draw on Bauman (1998) to frame these discourses and attitudes (summed up in section 3.1) in light of post-industrial social dynamics and work ethics (3.2). I will argue that the complex interplay of material constraints, wider social ethics and local work morals contributed to a threefold moral exclusion of Topia residents in outsiders' eyes (3.3): at once unwilling producers ('undeserving'), flawed consumers ('useless') and criminal offenders ('dangerous').

### **1. Perceptions of idleness**

#### **1.1 'You do nothing around here'**

Residents shared the notion that people in Topia did not make themselves busy

(except by minding others' business) and often dawdled away aimlessly through the day. Based on the 2010 municipal survey (Table 2, chapter 2), residents not studying nor working – including the 'unemployed', 'disabled to work', 'retired', 'pensioners' and people only doing 'odd jobs' – amounted to 555 individuals, roughly 37% of rehoused tenants. The participation of even a fraction of them in street life, joined by men working night shifts and teenagers leaving school in the afternoon, provided a compelling picture of inactivity. The permanent visibility of street dwellers combined with resentment over 'the atmosphere' of neighbour gossip (chapter 3) to support a normative discourse condemning pervasive idleness in Topia. 'What are you gonna learn in this neighbourhood?' – Alice asked rhetorically when I told her about my research. Maria concurred: 'Nothing! Nobody wants to do anything!' One morning, Ivone persuaded me to ask a woman she knew for an interview. Our efforts were largely unsuccessful, with the woman turning away, pretending not to listen, occasionally asking with suspicion, 'What's that for?' 'Interview for what?' Ivone at one point suggested I wanted to know about 'the life of Topia'. At this the woman finally faced us, appearing sceptical: 'The life of Topia? Here no one does anything!'

Besides conventional discourse, the unemployed and retired personally complained about having 'nothing' to do. They regretted 'standing still' (*ficar parado*), staying home 'looking at the walls'. Women, whom I observed more closely, had the burden of tending alone to the home and children. But after finishing house chores and when no bureaucratic demands (welfare appointments, literacy classes) required their attention, unemployed women still had hours of the day to fill before their children returned from school. This was aggravated for women with their children grown-up or living away and without a domestic partner. Even more so for unemployed men, whose main role as bread-winners left them little responsibilities outside paid work.

Another municipal survey was conducted in 2008 among eighty-nine people (of all ages) living alone in Topia. Their choices to pass the time were mostly limited to watching TV (90% of respondents), walking about (*passear*) (62%), visiting relatives (57%) and friends (47%), hanging out with neighbours (40%) and going to the café (26%).<sup>173</sup> Computers, internet, game consoles or even books were rare sightings in Topia. Cars were also scarce. For poor, illiterate, unemployed residents with much time to kill, leisure at home was basically limited to watching TV or listening to music.<sup>174</sup> Luzia and Ivone both complained of being 'tired of doing nothing', admitting they often fell asleep on the sofa when children were at school. Ivone asked if she could start coming by my house and play

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<sup>173</sup> Gardening, getting sun, religion and hand crafts were clustered together as 'others' (mentioned by 26%).

<sup>174</sup> This explained families' investment in cable TV, even when beyond household budget (causing other expenses such as rent to be delayed and cable services sometimes cancelled for lack of payment).

cards to pass the time. There were days when I shared my informants' tediousness: participant observation at home involved much standing around doing (and watching) 'nothing'. In this scenario, residents mostly sought entertainment outside the house.

Retired men spent time at Club café, playing cards or a Cape Verdean board game (*ouril*), catching glimpses of the TV inside and drinking beer. Under suitable weather, elder Cape Verdeans tended to their gardens, a way to 'keep busy' after retirement. People visited neighbours and had meals at each others' houses. But the perceived barriers embedded in buildings and closed doors (chapter 3) limited those visits and as a result, much social interaction was transferred out onto the streets. Idle people met up at habitual corners to chat, watch the movement and enjoy the sun in some company. Residents without cars spoke dreamily of getting out of Topia to 'go to the beach' or see the sights (*passéar*). 'Here you do nothing, that's not good' – but for lack of a better alternative Adelaide admitted to spending most mornings at the lunch place chatting to neighbours.

## 1.2 'It's rotten!': youth in search of entertainment

Frustration about lack of entertainment was especially visible among teenagers.<sup>175</sup> After school, teenagers often stopped by NWIV complaining of having 'nothing to do'. Cape Verdean girls were given regular house duties and so enjoyed less spare time than boys. Although a handful of girls had a usual presence at NWIV, most of its users were male.<sup>176</sup> Their favourite occupations were unremarkable for their age: playing football, shopping (limited by money constraints) and navigating the internet.

Football was a very popular activity. Boys played it at school breaks, on Topia streets outside school hours, and some in a local football-coaching project.<sup>177</sup> Despite football's popularity, teenagers tried to diversify their leisure options. They enjoyed shopping for clothes, shoes, more rarely technology items (mobiles, games consoles) at the local shopping centre, or simply snacks and candy from the supermarket or corner shop. They devised their own strategies to make money: keeping change from shopping errands they ran for adults; asking for compensation for favours they performed (namely for NGO workers); buying candy to sell at school at a higher price; snatching money from home.

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<sup>175</sup> Although this was a common complaint from early adolescence to men in their early twenties ('youths' [*jovens*] in local terminology), in this chapter I will refer only to the subgroup (ages twelve to sixteen) I observed closely at NWIV, referred to here as 'teenagers'.

<sup>176</sup> An exception to my difficulties in accessing the male world in Topia.

<sup>177</sup> Implemented in 2010-2011 by a network of foundations, government institutions and commercial sponsors, it meant to reduce school absenteeism, failure and misbehaviour through 'motivational' activities: sports, IT, maths, journalism, field trips, events and prizes. According to the project's internal report, although some passing rates improved slightly, the project in Topia was largely unsuccessful.

But most of the time, teenagers' purchasing power was limited or non-existent. They were usually restricted to admiring products on catalogues or shop windows or buying cheap snacks. Computers and internet were also rare assets. This explained why the internet room at NWIV was always packed with boys and girls playing Facebook games or watching Youtube. But as soon as their turn at the computer ended, they quickly became idle again.

NWIV's priority was getting teenagers to do homework and study – responding to local rates of school failure (chapter 10). Studying understandably raised little enthusiasm, and most teenagers, especially boys, successfully resisted it. But even outside studying hours, teenagers constantly protested against the lack of interesting activities. NWIV owned a small TV with cable service, some board games and arts materials (for drawing, colouring, collaging, etc.). A 'sociocultural facilitator' (*animadora sociocultural*) organised arts projects for them: making posters with their photos, seasonal gifts (Easter eggs, Christmas and Halloween cards) and miscellaneous items (e.g. key-rings, felt brooches, wool scarves). Her projects were clearly more popular among young girls (eleven to twelve years old), but even they showed limited interest in them. There were also repeated attempts to recruit teenagers to play board or word games. Here I noticed a pattern: whenever a new game was introduced at NWIV, it stirred enthusiasm for a few days, with teenagers arriving to call promptly for it. But their interest was short-lasting and they soon called for something new. On most days they simply left NWIV shortly after arriving (checking that none of their friends were inside), rarely finishing any project or game they started. On fewer occasions, more dynamic activities were set up to engage them, including ping pong (on an improvised table), beach rackets or film showings. But even these produced limited participation. Not being interested in these activities or feeling bored and unsatisfied with their options was not in itself surprising: being teenagers, it might be considered trivial. More interesting was the way they exhibited their frustration at NWIV.

A fifteen-year-old boy walked into NWIV one afternoon, looking for his friends or something to do. A worker suggested watching a film. The boy complained: 'In that tiny little TV?' He left shortly, criticising NWIV for being 'rotten' (*pôdre*) – a teenage slang term for things unsatisfactory or disappointing. He probably could not find more suitable alternatives outside, because some time later he came back and considered playing a board game. When I volunteered to play with him he changed his mind, bemoaning there was 'nothing good to do' (*nada de jeito para fazer*), reiterating that NWIV was 'rotten' and protesting out loud: 'I'm going home!' After a couple of hours, still alone, he came back a third time. This time some of the other boys had arrived and were inside playing a game. He refused to join but sat watching them play, joking and making remarks about the game.

The other boys decided to leave in the middle of the game, leaving it scattered on the table.

These uncooperative and antagonistic reactions were frequent, especially by boys. They arrived with a demand: to be given 'something to do'. When this failed, they responded with open protest. They had realised that NWIV had attendance targets to meet. As such, leaving NWIV (if only to come back later) or constantly threatening to leave was a powerful weapon. They knew their presence was valuable, and repeatedly used it as a way to claim their unmet demands. They did not simply make a choice to be absent. After months of frequenting NWIV, teenagers had a fair idea of which games and activities were available. Their automatic choice was the computer room, on an adjoining door in the building. But when it was closed or full they still made a point of entering NWIV (sometimes more than once a day) only to inform the workers they would be leaving for lack of interesting occupations.

This sequence became familiar. It was re-enacted again on the celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. The party was supposed to begin at 2 p.m. some streets up from NWIV. After lunch, five teenage boys arrived to NWIV in search of occupation. The workers set up the ping-pong table, brought out the beach rackets and drew a hopscotch diagram on the floor outside. The boys refused all of this and left to sit outside on a bench, looking bored and complaining about having 'nothing to do'. They left a number of times to check impatiently whether the party had begun up the road, only to return disappointed and assume the same position on the bench, right in front of NWIV, refusing to be recruited for its activities.

There were other ways to express their dissatisfaction. Accusing NWIV of being 'rotten' and having 'nothing good to do' was a simple one. The fact that these interjections were voiced in Portuguese rather than Creole (their usual communication language) confirmed they were mostly directed at NGO workers, to make their discontent known. But a far more effective means of protest was to sabotage ongoing activities. A common strategy was to accept a task or game and then conspicuously fail to carry it through, all the while complaining without abandoning it. This could involve a sequence of disruptive actions: starting a game but not paying attention, making other players wait, teasing and verbally abusing younger or weaker players, protesting against rules or breaking them, shifting attention to other games (not completed either), switching on the TV in the middle of the game, finally leaving without finishing it or tidying the pieces. These behaviours were met with workers' loud reprimands and attempts to make them behave, threatening to bar them from the computer room or call their parents – with only limited success.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> By the ages of fourteen or fifteen, local codes of confrontation and not showing fear (including towards workers) were already understood and adhered to namely by boys. Additionally, parents kept a distance or often took children's side against institutions, making workers' complaints largely ineffective.

There were other activities more popular among teenagers. Once in a while NWIV organised field trips to local businesses or leisure sites, sometimes in collaboration with the parish council. Unlike NWIV's routine games and projects, these initiatives were widely well-received. Teenagers volunteered to participate and the prospect of being allowed on these trips (which had limited places) was used as incentive to motivate them to study and behave. However, field trips were also used to vent frustration against boredom. Unable to leave (because trip sites were far from Topia), teenagers again made their dissatisfaction known through loud criticism, refusals to participate and attempts to disrupt activities. They protested aloud against the failure of institutions to give them proper entertainment.

Their aim to state their discontent loudly and clearly became obvious on a trip to a waste treatment plant, guided by Armando, a middle-aged white facilitator from the parish council. This was part of a series of trips to environmental sites to raise awareness about recycling. We travelled in a nine-seat van driven by Armando. The teenagers were visibly excited to leave Topia. Armando pointed out environmental facts and explanations as we drove through different landscapes. In the back, teenagers made a point of speaking loudly over his voice, joking and chatting about trivia, plainly disregarding Armando. But every time he mentioned topics they found interesting (like dinosaur archaeological prints) they promptly tuned in and asked questions, returning to ignoring him as soon as he shifted to less appealing facts. When we reached our destination, everyone left the van and Armando guided them through the plant, explaining the life course of different types of waste. Teenagers were visibly bored, and again made a point of showing it. A girl sighed audibly over Armando's voice, puffing and whining, 'I'm getting bored!' 'Is this it?' A boy walked in fast circles around Armando while he explained things, bemoaning audibly, 'Well, I've got nothing to do!' Others looked in opposite directions to where Armando pointed, turned their backs to him, chatted among themselves. They were visibly disrespectful, and well aware of it. The fact that they complained in Portuguese showed their protests were meant to be heard, and the phrasing of the boy's complaint – 'Well, ' (*atão*) – suggested objection to a virtual reprimand, justifying actions he knew to be inappropriate. For bored teenagers, defying authority could arguably be fun, a way to exercise power and keep a high status among peers. Amusement and peer-pressure certainly played a part here. But the fact that they voiced the same reactions when alone or when they stood to lose something important (weeks in the computer room or field trips) confirmed these reactions were not just about teasing or tormenting workers, but also about exhibiting frustration at being bored. In their eyes, institutions had a duty to give them appealing occupations, and their failure was felt as severe. Through loud protest, they claimed their perceived right to be entertained.

### 1.3 'They can't take the first step': constraints to job searching

Idleness was a perceived negative feature of Topia itself: a place *where* people 'do nothing'. Unemployed residents, retired migrants, bored teenagers: they voiced similar complaints about idleness, irrespective of age and occupation. Teenagers' blaming of NWIV was not surprising. It reproduced local perceptions that institutions were partly responsible for providing appropriate leisure activities, especially for the young and elderly. Because the occupation of leisure (especially of 'youths') was a stated goal of some of these institutions, including NWIV, it was taken as a promise and used to condemn them for breaking it. Institutions assumed here the role of 'the foolish stranger' or the 'exploited' outsider: locally allowed responsibility only to be collectively blamed for failure (Cohen 2005, 610-611). When prompted for their thoughts on the neighbourhood, some interviewees suggested that institutions should do something to get the young and elderly busy and help adults find jobs. A few proposed the creation of a community centre with leisure facilities and equipment to keep residents off the streets (Abrantes 1994, 53-54):

It's a shame there isn't a place, a venue for youths [*jovens*], a venue with a bit of everything ... With table football, with computers, with a place to search for jobs, with someone to advise them, someone with life experience, experience of having gone through the same things. There are young people who leave prison, they don't have a place to seek help! ... We're in a good location, but we don't have what the neighbourhood needs. We don't. What, cafés? How does that help? Many people here are alcoholics! Cafés won't help at all. ... For example during school holidays many kids here stay on the streets until 11 p.m., midnight, because mothers leave work at midnight, 1 a.m., sometimes mothers work nights. A way to search, I don't know! Some initiative, somebody, who supports youths, to do something with those kids who are outside on the streets playing throughout the holidays. It's almost three months of holidays and they do nothing! (Interview transcript of a twenty-nine-year-old woman from Topia, formerly involved in a cultural association in the estate)

Besides leisure, employment and training were repeatedly pointed out as ideal ways to get residents occupied. Institutions were also attributed a role in facilitating this.<sup>179</sup>

The neighbourhood's a bit er still [*parado*]. (Ana: In what way?) Few [pause] It needed, How to say? A social centre [*centro de convívio*]. Because this neighbourhood

<sup>179</sup> Even though these services were already being provided in Topia, namely at NWIV.

doesn't have a social centre. [sighs] People, to inform a bit more the people who live here. Because many people here, It's something I've seen in this neighbourhood: many people here, no matter how much they want to, they don't know where to start. They can't take the first step. To look for a job, to do a course, to [pause] To not stand around, 'Coz I think, twenty-four hours, for a person to stand around twenty-four hours, the entire day, not doing anything, many times I wonder: 'How can that person eat, or drink, or – what?!' ... I see many people here who don't [pause] Some really don't want to, but others I see don't know, they don't know how to move in the world today. They lie there stagnant [*estancados*]. There must be more people to try, to support these people a bit more, those who want to. (Interview with a thirty-four-year-old Cape Verdean self-employed man from Topia)

For poor unemployed residents complaining of boredom, finding a job could appear the obvious course of action. Several people talked about it: 'I wanna take on some hours, I'm tired of doing nothing.' 'I gotta go to [NWIV] get some help [finding work], I'm sick of standing around doing nothing.' 'I'm applying to the parish, see if I can get anything.'<sup>180</sup> Some people I saw 'standing around' eventually found work (even if temporary) and stopped frequenting street corners. For young males this turned into a familiar cycle, as one of them described: 'They get jobs for a while, then they leave, when they're tight on money they get a job again.'

But more interesting were cases of people repeatedly mentioning wanting a job, complaining about short earnings and boredom, but in the end failed to find one. The interviewee cited above suggested that 'some really don't want to' find work. I found no reason to contend with that. People have diverse priorities, and it will be the case in Topia, as anywhere else, that some people are not interested in being employed. But whoever has witnessed the energy and time put into helping family and neighbours on death occasions will find it absurd to explain away high unemployment in Topia with 'laziness' or 'irresponsibility' (Liebow 1967, 19). One factor to consider was the ongoing job shortage, namely the effects of the international crisis on the construction sector, a major source of employment for male immigrants (chapter 6). Combined with systemic racism (chapter 5), this painted a bleak picture of reduced job options, especially for Cape Verdeans. But these broad explanations overlook a number of more local constraints I observed in the field.

NWIV enabled my access to people's (young to middle-aged) job-searching behaviour. A minority of them came in regularly, for a short time, until they found work. Conversely, most users I observed came to look for jobs sporadically, seeking a gap when

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<sup>180</sup> The parish and municipal councils employed men from Topia as roadmen or drivers, namely at night.

workers would be free to help them write CVs and make online applications. Most residents did not have e-mail accounts and were unfamiliar with basic IT skills like checking their in-box, attaching a document or searching for online offers. These were big impediments to autonomous job-search. Another basic obstacle was limited phone credit. Many residents adhered to a *moche* tariff (chapter 2), which meant they usually lacked spare credit to call numbers outside the plan.<sup>181</sup> I watched people trying to call potential employers to interrupt the call each time the number was not a *moche*.<sup>182</sup> Practical constraints were aggravated by low qualifications: very few had finished school, a requirement for most available offers.

Important material and educational constraints were intrinsic to life in Topia. And at a more micro-level, there were additional obstacles to consider: health problems; dependant children or elders to care for; substance addiction; advanced age (CNRM 2002c, 35, 40-49). Even if more jobs could be available, 'not all situations are amenable to insertion' in the job market (*ibid.*, 56). But structural and material determinants alone were insufficient to account for people's actions and choices. Liebow (1967) illustrated this in his classic study of black street-corner men in a poor area of Washington. He began his account with an image of men idling about on a street corner, refusing a day's work from a passing pick-up truck (*ibid.*, 19). Liebow challenged the simplistic reading of 'lazy, irresponsible men' to explore deeper explanations, lying not only in socio-economic deprivation or the cognitive traits of a 'culture of poverty', but at 'the intersection of economic forces, social values and individual states of mind and body' (*ibid.*). Bourgois (2003) similarly acknowledged, in his detailed account of Puerto-Rican dealers in East Harlem, the limitations of either side of the 'structure-versus-agency debate' (*ibid.*, 18). He readily admitted the role of 'class exploitation, racial discrimination, and, of course, sexist oppression' in daily hardship (*ibid.*, 16). But he also recognised that 'a focus on structures often obscures the fact that humans are active agents of their own history, rather than passive victims', instead calling attention to 'the lives of people who live on the margins of a society that is hostile to them' and 'shape their own futures' (*ibid.*, 13, 17).

In Topia, deprivation, illiteracy and exclusion alone also fell short of telling the whole story. An array of values, expectations and priorities were integral to people's choices regarding work, even if they might also be tied to structural constraints. Liebow (1967, 23) found that behind his informants' motives to refuse or quit work there was 'a complex combination of assessments of objective reality on the one hand, and values,

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<sup>181</sup> It allowed free calls to phones with the same plan. Most residents with mobiles subscribed to this bundle and could call neighbours for free while the top-up lasted (€5 for ten days), but outside calls were costly.

<sup>182</sup> On the first seconds of the call, a voice alerted the caller in case the dialled number was also *moche*.

attitudes and beliefs drawn from different levels of [people's] experience on the other'. Besides practical lacks and wants, specific moral claims about work and idleness – as well as attitudes to time and planning (analysed in the next chapter) – prevailed in the neighbourhood. They stood alongside more structural factors to illuminate residents' approach to the job market, and life more generally.

## 2. Moral discourses of work and subsistence

### 2.1 'I've worked all my life': work as a moral claim

The fiercest criticism against young people's idleness came from older generations. First generations of African and Portuguese rural migrants upheld an ideal of life dedicated to honest hard work. Being hard-working and disliking inactivity were proudly self-reported traits of residents roughly over fifty. 'I've worked all my life', 'I never liked standing still', 'with me it was home-work, work-home' were satisfied statements repeated time and again to portray an active life of work. Work featured prominently in their life narratives: what they did for a living, how they struggled to get by and raise a family, and how much they enjoyed it in retrospect. Here is how some of them started their life tale:

I worked in cleaning, I raised my children through work. My children's father left me, I was left to raise them. Working, from there I got a breakdown I was taken to the hospital, I didn't eat [pause] My children, I raised them alone. Well now my life's a bit better, I'm retired. But I've suffered a lot, I'd leave home at 4:30 a.m. to work. They [neighbours] know! I worked at a beer factory, I worked down in [another parish] at Colgate, I was there many years. [Talks about how people there are still fond of her.] Now, now I don't work but I miss working, I'd like to get out of here [Topia]. If I could get something, taking care of some elders, or an old lady, or a home like that, something like that I'd go. I'd go. Really. What are we doing here, what is this, it's not in anyone's interest. ... (Interview transcript with Adelaide, sixty-eight years old)

My whole life? It's from thirteen years old. I started working at thirteen years old. But not here, in Africa. As a janitor [*continuo*], in an office. We called it janitor. Janitor. (Ana: What was it?) Janitor, it's like a postman. Taking certain amounts to the bank. With thirteen I already dealt with money. Praise God I never touched [stole] it. Then I ran errands on the plantations, I carried mail to the plantations, That was all from thirteen. Until twenty-one. At twenty-one, I came to Portugal. (Ana: What country were you in at the time?) Sao Tome. Sao Tome and Principe. Then I came to Portugal. Looking for a better way of life, yes? ... (Interview transcript with a fifty-four-year-

old male Santomean immigrant)

I started serving [as a house maid] when I was nine. I served until twenty. At twenty-one, I got married. Here in Lisbon. I came to Lisbon, I had turned twenty. I got married to my husband at twenty-one. I kept working, cleaning, at the house where I served. Then I had a bread sale, I had a milk sale, I had a tavern. I had many things like that, I'm the woman of all trades. Was! And I quite miss it. And so then I had my children, raised them without any help. It's something that strikes me [*eu estranho*] now, [women] saying they can't work 'cause they have the children. They were three. I never had anyone's help. Of course, I didn't have my parents here, I had siblings but they each had their own lives. Then we started selling on the street. Fruit. Fish, all in the street. [Explains where.] There we sold for many years. Many years. After that, we went next to [a] park, to a council market. Of the shanties. We were there for fourteen years! Selling. After that, I came to this one where I am now [i.e. until one year ago]. I was there [pause] some fifteen, fifteen-sixteen years, there. There in [explains where]. ... It's still there! But I left work at seventy-one. I left at seventy-one. I turned seventy-one in August, and I left in September. At seventy-one. ... (Interview transcript with a seventy-two-year-old Portuguese female rural migrant)

When prompted for 'the story of their life', older informants often began retelling the different jobs they had had. These transcripts illustrate the significance of work in their conceptions of their biography. Some began by narrating their first work experience, others structured their tale around the jobs they had performed. The central place of work in their lives was epitomised in the tale of a sixty-two-year-old unemployed Cape Verdean man:

Life? Working in construction. Carpenter. Otherwise [pause] Carpenter, and working in er gardening. Otherwise [pause] In the past, as a child, I gathered hay. With a hoe. And later, with sixteen, I was studying and working as a shop clerk. And that's it. Then the rest it's all here [in Portugal]. Until sixteen, I only did these three things. I ate *katxupa*, potato with fish – yes, poor man's things. Potato with fish. And er I played, I jumped rope and I played er with marbles, those things. That's it, with sixteen. The rest was all here. (Ana: And here?) Here? My life, it's just working on construction. Construction. That's my story. (Ana: How about other things in life? Like your family for example?) My family were public workers. They worked for the council. In the central registry. My mother was a housewife. That's it. (Ana: And how about other things, other than work?) Other than work? Other things other than work, [pause] I think there's nothing. ...

How migrants framed their views on life and work confirmed the two were closely entwined. They emphasised how early they began working, how long they did it for, how they raised a family 'through work' and still 'miss it'. Evidently these tales did not neutrally retell the 'facts'. They reflected how people wished to present themselves (Goffman 1959). Their selection, how it was structured and told projected a 'distinctive moral character', underscoring 'certain social characteristics' (ibid., 6). It carried a moral claim, confirming individuals' social virtue and worthiness before others: 'They [neighbours] know!' Claims to moral worth were based on being hard-working, work-loving individuals (Anderson 1990, 69-70). And their living example warranted criticism of others who came short of this standard: women 'saying they can't work 'cause they have the children', and idlers in general. Their protest against inactivity stood on very different grounds from teenagers' protest. Although both reacted negatively to 'doing nothing', their response was supported by distinct moral claims. While teenagers rebelled against others' failures to entertain them, implicitly claimed as a right, first generations reacted against idle individuals' failures to engage themselves in honest work, seen as a moral duty. Differently from both, second generations of working-age adults in Topia upheld their own values and priorities, which allowed choosing which occupations were deemed worthwhile.

## 2.2 'Choosing': desire and subsistence

According to the 2010 municipal survey, residents' declared 'professions' (irrespective of current job situation) were largely unqualified and concentrated in few sectors: mainly construction, cleaning, sales and restaurant services (Table 5).

SECTOR	REPORTED PROFESSION (NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS)	TOTAL (802)
Construction	Handyman (71), Mason (66), Carpenter (29), Roadman (28), Paver (11), Tiler (7), Painter (6), Ironworker (5)	223
Cleaning	Cleaner (178), Housemaid (14)	192
Sales	Shop clerk (54), Cashier (27), Fishmonger (9), Warehouse foreman (6), Operative Assistant (5), Peddler (5)	106
Restaurant	Kitchen assistant (44), Cook (18)	62
Others	Education Assistant (18), Factory worker (18), Office clerk (12), Driver (9), Hairdresser (8), Mechanic (6), Soldier (6), Security guard (6), Farmer (5), Nursing Assistant (5), Other (126)	219

Table 5: Reported professions of working-age residents, according to sector (excluding reported

Something NWIV workers pointed out at times was that users searching for work, even those with low qualifications and earnings, still 'chose' which offers were worthwhile. One of the workers looked concerned at a middle-aged Cape Verdean woman who dropped by from time to time: 'That woman's always looking for work, but she's only reached year four [at school]. And she chooses...' I could grasp what the worker meant when I helped others (mainly women) to apply for offers. Their personal preferences and assessments filtered the positions they considered applying to, even if not many options were left afterwards. One informant had been unemployed for long, had not completed school and constantly moaned over not finding work. She occasionally dropped by NWIV searching for offers, and one morning I helped her browse through job sites. Positions for her qualifications were difficult to find. Whenever we found one, I felt encouraged. But for her, finding CV-compatible offers was only the beginning. Selection operated both ways: she also refused offers based on her personal requirements. Other municipalities seemed 'too far', kitchen positions at restaurants 'too tiring', shopkeeping offers had to consider 'what kind of shop' it was. Geographic distance was a common rejection criterion (especially taking into account transportation costs), and so was the physical strain involved in the work: 'too far' and 'too tiring' were common reasons to reject applying to specific positions.

Women's conversations at Baker's Star often addressed work, namely the lessons they drew from past job experiences. They stressed the importance of a 'nice atmosphere' in their relation with co-workers and especially employers (Bourgois 2003, 115-119). They contrasted unpleasant work environments, which had made them quit the job, with favourite experiences in which bosses were especially lenient: 'He let us eat the cod, we'd be working and eating. We ate handfuls! He was cool.' 'In the end he let us take cakes home. I gave them to the kids and my neighbours.' 'My boss was cool, when I came late she didn't take it out of my pay. And if I couldn't make it that day she'd say fine, I could go another day.' Personal preference entered the job-selection process. Unlike their parents, for whom working was prioritised above the task or conditions it entailed, second generations quit or rejected jobs with undesirable features (distance, strain, bad atmosphere). Work satisfaction mattered. For them, work was not just a productive tool, but an object of 'pleasure' and 'choice' (Bauman 1998, 32).

Beyond satisfaction with the work itself, earnings were the highest priority. Salary was the focal point in applications: how much the job paid considering expended hours and

effort. In particular it must guarantee basic livelihood, or else unemployment would be preferred (Bourgois 2003, 130). Unemployed bread-winners, namely with children to support, did not take up job offers or paid training which did not ensure family subsistence. A 'subsistence ethic' (Scott 1976, 2), in this sense, influenced decision-making about employment and school (cf. chapter 10). A single middle-aged unemployed mother of six put it clearly in an interview. Her tale was not unlike others in Topia: she complained of not having money for 'anything', her rent being due for months, her children and herself being hungry. While I strived for an attentive-listening posture, trying not to judge or intervene (Hollway and Jefferson 1997), it was difficult to stay detached. I knew there were ongoing applications for a full-time paid training at NWIV, six hours per day, in the end granting a school certificate. It promised to pay roughly €150/month for eighteen months (and it could subsidise transport and childcare during the course). I told her about it, thinking it might relieve some of her hardship. Her answer was immediate and clear: 'I'm not gonna waste a day to bring home a hundred and something euros at the end of the month!'

Like Liebow's (1967, 26, 32) street-corner men, Bourgois's (2003, 98) crack dealers and Scott's (1976) Asian peasants, second-generation adults in Topia would not accept working for less than proper income, able to support them and their families. The woman's answer confounded me at the time. For someone who apparently had no other earning prospects, €150 certainly sounded better than nothing. I realised later the obvious flaw in my assumption: she might be unemployed, but she obviously had other options.

### **2.3 'You manage': informal economy**

A Cape Verdean woman was suspended from work at a supermarket due to a formal complaint from a client for receiving the wrong change. She was sent home for indefinite time until the legal department decided where the blame lay. Until they reached a decision, she could keep receiving her salary. The whole situation left her in apparent distress and she took every chance to vent about it. As we sat at Baker's Star one afternoon, she repeated the whole story to the people at our table. A young Cape Verdean man, also employed at a supermarket, commented that her situation was ideal: 'paying you to stay home and do nothing'. He hoped his contract, finishing in three months' time, would not be renewed: 'I see now that the best thing is not to work.' I teased that might be good if there was a way to keep earning money. 'You manage', he assured, 'stealing, or selling drugs...'. The woman retorted: 'And then you go to jail!' He contended: 'Jail is the good life! You eat, you sleep, you pay nothing.' She later suggested in private that his apparent unconcern

betrayed the fear of being fired at the end of his contract. He got a phone call and left shortly in a shiny sports car with powerful speakers booming rap music.

Residents clearly had other earning options. As the contracting labour market and demands for certified training left so many unqualified workers 'redundant' (Bauman 1998), people pursued livelihood through alternative means (CNRM 2002c, 56). In Topia, this often meant the informal economy.<sup>183</sup> There was a wide array of activities and trade in Topia. Some like food vending turned into virtual 'jobs', operating every day at roughly the same hours. Food for sale included pork rind, grilled chicken wings and thick bacon, fish pasties, cake slices, home-made candy, sodas and beer, and it successfully 'employed' three or four middle-aged Cape Verdean women. Informal work is able to 'adjust the level of employment', as noted by Grassi (2007b, 129, my translation). However, most economic exchanges were more sporadic and uncertain, reliant on neighbour demand. At large celebrations like the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, food and drink stalls multiplied and many residents took up vending for the day: *katxupa* stew, assortments of cakes, croissants and home-made pizzas, pasties and quiches, corn-on-the-cob, hot dogs, grilled meats, sardines and mackerel on buns, candy, caramelised apples, spirits and cocktails – a variety of products were added to the usual selection from the habitual vendors. In summer, two women made ice-cream to sell from home. And when sugar cane was harvested from the gardens, a couple of residents were able to make rum (*grogu*) to sell by the bottle.

Different products, other than food and drink, were for sale in Topia. Drug dealing was a noteworthy activity, its visibility confirmed in the 2010 municipal survey, where 23% of surveyed households identified 'substance abuse' (*toxicodependência*) as the most serious problem in the neighbourhood. A few residents also made a profit selling loose cigarettes and rolling papers for marijuana cigarettes. A destitute middle-aged man tried to sell whatever he could steal, from used clothes and shoes to shampoo bottles or mobiles. Some women took advantage of contacts abroad (in Cape Verde and other countries) to resell occasional products at a profit (cf. chapter 5).

Another profitable deal for women with Portuguese citizenship was to marry illegal immigrants in other E.U. countries, in exchange for large sums of money (Grassi 2006). An informant once estimated a fee of €4000 for the marriage, in addition to sporadic sums which women could demand of 'husbands' abroad in return for staying married for the time required for men to obtain residence papers. The marriage was maintained at a distance. In turn, when husbands needed something signed by their 'wives', they would pay to have

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<sup>183</sup> This had also been a popular option among first generations, especially in construction (for men) and street vending (for women) (Horta 2000, 161-162). But the situation changed with E.U. accession in the 1990s, due to tighter work regulations which closed off previous opportunities (Fikes 2009).

them fly over and sign it. I was told that some women accumulated more than one such marriage in different countries. Several women were considering this option during my fieldwork, although they complained immigration controls were getting tighter. Ivone mentioned having had 'many offers', but complained that SEF (Service of Foreigners and Borders, responsible for immigration control in Portugal) was investigating these women and putting them in jail. 'Money feels good at the time, right? But then you're gonna get it!'

Many other options existed in the service economy. Handy men performed odd repairs or painting, tended to others' gardens, installed illicit cable. When I complained to Ivone that my TV was not working, she mumbled something like 'leave it up to me' and appeared at my door early the following morning with a neighbour to get it fixed. One man complemented his income making tattoos and piercings at home. A few women made some money providing childcare, cleaning or ironing for others, or styling African hair. Others had sex for money. One particular woman explained how her father and she made a living by scavenging (*ir à gandaia*) for valuable materials (namely copper) in waste sites, which they resold. There were more serious illegal ways to make money. I heard mention to two cases of individuals kidnapped for ransom money.<sup>184</sup> Trading, doing odd jobs, stealing, having sex, getting married, selling copper, moving deeper into illicit activities: there were many alternatives to paid employment or training. Residents clearly had other options.

#### **2.4 'They're paying me not to work': double standards about welfare idling**

In several cases, welfare complemented people's odd earnings (CNRM 2002a, 38). Citizens' 'right to social security' is established in the Portuguese Constitution (Art. 63), for 'all situations of lack or reduction of subsistence means or of ability to work' (*ibid.*, line 3, my translation). Changes in social-security laws over the past three decades have followed, not unlike other European contexts, three broad tendencies:<sup>185</sup> increasing protection for children and maternity (Donzelot 1980); tightening selection criteria (based on means testing), inspection measures and positive differentiation for benefit granting (Bauman 1998, 49-50); and growing promotion of 'the virtue' of personal autonomy and proactivity (Moffatt 1999, 235), namely over insertion in the job market. In 2010, there were 158 cases in Topia of declared welfare benefits (out of 92% surveyed households). As mentioned in chapter 2, these included 45 individuals on unemployment benefits and 113 on means-

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<sup>184</sup> My position as a white female middle-class outsider impeded serious probing into these activities aside from brief out-of-context remarks. These supported the impression of ongoing underground activities, but were not enough to form a systematic picture of what they consisted of exactly, or who was involved.

<sup>185</sup> See 'Evolution of the System of Social Security' on social security's website: <http://www4.seg-social.pt/evolucao-do-sistema-de-seguranca-social>, viewed 11 April 2013.

tested subsidies (Table 6). The majority (94%) of the latter subsidies referred to Social Insertion Income (*Rendimento Social de Inserção*), *RSI* for short.<sup>186</sup>

TYPE OF BENEFIT	INDIVIDUALS
Unemployment	45
RSI	107
Survival Pension	3
Studentship	1
Dependency Complement	1
Other	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

Table 6: Types of welfare benefits received in Topia in 2010. Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

RSI is a welfare measure targeting households with low income, especially with young children, and consisting of two components: 1) a monthly financial benefit, calculated on the basis of household size, income and ages of its members; 2) a binding 'insertion programme' which household members must follow for the duration of the benefit. The goals of said programme are to foster the 'progressive labour, social and community insertion' of beneficiaries and their household (Law 13/2003, May 21, Art. 1, my translation). This is achieved through compulsory measures defined in the 'insertion programme', including among others (Art. 18, line 6): not refusing work, training or self-employment incentives, attending school, learning programmes, vocational guidance, rehabilitation, drug prevention or treatment, and activities which 'promote insertion in the job market or fulfil social, community or environmental needs' (idem, line c).

In 2011, the main requirement for RSI was the assessed economic deprivation of the household, as determined by social security. This favoured unemployed single mothers, especially those pregnant or with children in their first year (Art. 11), while its basic goal of 'labour insertion' meant that households especially difficult to integrate in the job market (namely people above fifty-five, illiterate and living alone) were frequent and sustained recipients (CNRM 2002c, 46-50). In Topia these two groups (unemployed single mothers and middle-aged women) were indeed the most common beneficiaries. In 2010, only a fifth of all means-tested-benefit receivers were men, and 74% of receivers were between the ages of thirty and sixty (40% were between thirty and forty). The daily sight of a group of women beneficiaries (mainly white) on a street corner fostered criticism against 'the atmosphere' of idling gossip they were seen to epitomise (chapter 3). Their visibility

<sup>186</sup> Formerly *RMG* ('Minimum Guaranteed Income'), repealed and replaced in 2003 with *RSI*.

contributed to a local association between receiving social benefits and wanting to idle about and 'do nothing', creating resentment among employed residents (Bauman 1998, 50). When a twenty-two-year-old man was laid off work, he voiced his frustration at the fact that he had 'worked like a dog for four years while everyone else fed on subsidies without budging'. That did not keep him from announcing it was now 'his turn' to enjoy unemployment benefits. Chatting to Luzia one afternoon, she expressed similar contempt for teenage girls in Topia who, according to her, got pregnant several times just to receive pre-natal benefits: 'and after they get pre-natal, they go ask for minimum income' (former name for RSI). At the same time, Luzia complained she had six children and on those grounds claimed the right to receive benefits herself. Just as Howe (1998) concluded in his research on unemployed men in Belfast, there was clearly a double standard in discourses about welfare benefits: individuals' asserted their own rights, namely when supporting children (as argued below); while condemning other receivers as idling opportunists.

Claims to the right to welfare rested on a moral primacy given to subsistence (Scott 1976). Aside from personal or family circumstance (age, illness, care for dependants), other factors entered people's choice of employment. Foremost among them was ensuring family subsistence. There were cases where welfare complemented by informal work came closer than available jobs did to providing secure family sustenance (CNRM 2002a, 38; idem 2002c, 27). In the beginning of my fieldwork, RSI amounts topped at €189.52 per benefit holder, adding €94.76 for each household minor and €132.66 for other adults.<sup>187</sup> A single mother with two under-age children could expect to receive up to €379.04 in monthly RSI. This could be supplemented by Family Allowance (*Abono de Família*) which depending on children's age ranged monthly from €140.76 to €26.54 per child, increased in 20% for single-parent households.<sup>188</sup> Keeping with the same example, if this mother found proper full-time employment, she would likely receive minimum wage (as most people in Topia did) of €485 in 2011, losing access to RSI, reducing Family Allowance and increasing her childcare expenses. Although the total aid given to her would probably be short to support a family, an addition of forty weekly hours of paid work would bring her family a very small increase in monthly earnings, or possibly reduce them.

Denise, a young Cape Verdean woman precisely in these conditions (single with two under-age children) once declared: 'They're paying me not to work.' This fit in nicely with neighbours' perceptions of these women wanting to idle about all day. But as in other cases, she struggled to make a living, always mindful of bargains and prices, often without money for simple things such as topping up her phone. She sporadically came to NWIV to check

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<sup>187</sup> With cutbacks in 2011 and 2012, amounts decreased to €56.86 for minors and €94.76 for other adults. Source: Social Security website, <http://www2.seg-social.pt/left.asp?03.06.06>, viewed 26 October 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Source: Social Security website, <http://www2.seg-social.pt/left.asp?03.04>, viewed 26 October 2012.

job offers, but hardly ever considered any of them worthwhile. Like many others, she 'chose'. The fact that she kept looking for work confirmed that by her remark she definitely did not mean she had a comfortable life living off her benefits. Social aid was not enough for a family to live off well (CNRM 2002a, 42). Nevertheless, an unqualified job position would make subsistence even harder: work 'paid' less and was often less secure (Bourgois 2003, 98; Anderson 1990, 57). Being paid 'not to work' did not imply that her situation was good, but only that 'to work' would make it worse.

The National Commission of Minimum Income (CNRM) was assigned to study the social impacts of RMG (later RSI) some time after its implementation, and to determine, among other things, whether it fostered situations of welfare 'dependency' (CNRM 2002c, 15-16). Against popular media discourses, it concluded that RMG rarely served as 'an impediment to work', often supplementing other earnings, and that it mainly provided a 'key complement to household subsistence', spent on basic and 'immediate' staples rather than 'superfluous' expenses (CNRM 2002a, 38, 46-48, my translation). One commission recommendation was precisely 'to combat the idea that receiving the RMG benefit is a path to laziness [*comodismo*] maintained by a situation of subsidy-dependency', since in most cases the benefit was scant and urgent (CNRM 2002c, 52, my translation).

In fact, contrary to the criticism that they stayed home 'without budging', social-benefit recipients often tried to find work to complement their benefits (CNRM 2002a, 38). For this they sought mostly informal jobs, without a contract or social-security rebates, in order to accumulate both earnings. These activities had to be kept a secret, lest social workers hear about them (chapter 8). The same woman who remarked she was being 'paid not to work' replied to someone who asked if she was interested in covering somebody's shifts for a few months: 'I'm up for anything without rebates' (*sem descontos*), and in fact took up the offer. This again confirmed income (rather than work avoidance) as her priority. With similar concerns, some female informants who heard I had internet at home nagged me to find them offers for unreported jobs. Private ads for house cleaners or elder carers were particularly favoured. Some women came to NWIV hoping for the same. For them the 'good life' was not 'to stay home and do nothing', but to ensure reasonable earnings. And this was hardly fulfilled on minimum wage or RSI benefits.

## **2.5 'Stealing to eat is not a sin': the right to children's subsistence**

While moving stealthily to combine unreported work with receiving welfare, young mothers in Topia defended the state's duty to support them and their children. In the earlier

days of RMG, the national commission found that African beneficiaries considered the benefit a 'favour' granted by the state, for which they were 'grateful' (CNRM 2002b, 54). This perception has seemingly changed. As the commission recognised even then, 'the existence of a supply of new social policies generates new demands' (ibid., 50), and the creation of RSI in particular has arguably contributed to make poverty more visible, and actors 'more aware of the exercise of their citizenship rights' (CNRM 2002c, 12). In fact, second-generation receivers in Topia no longer saw state aid and family allowances as a favour, but rather as a right.

A series of welfare cutbacks in 2011 unsurprisingly caused inflamed protest among mothers who had their benefits reduced. 'Some day people will stop having children!' – a thirty-four-year-old woman, mother of three, complained about her allowance being cut by a third: 'And I was tight before!' A twenty-five-year-old mother declared, on a different occasion, that in other countries this type of cutbacks did not happen: 'Only in Portugal do they take from the children.' 'If it's up to me', she concluded, 'Portugal can be a country of old people!' Mothers' claims on the state's obligation to aid them invoked a scale wider than their families' subsistence alone. It purportedly involved the future of the nation: they would 'stop having children' and the population would age.

Their indignation often turned into incensed (albeit empty) threats of calling the media to denounce unjust situations: the council, social workers or the government failing their responsibilities to the poor. While criticising other mothers, Luzia complained about not receiving the benefits she and her children were entitled to: 'I've gone to the saints [social workers], now I'm going to God!' – she proclaimed dramatically. 'Now they'll be afraid!' I asked what she meant. 'I'll write a letter to the president!' I enquired: '... of the parish council, of the municipal council?' She stated impatiently: 'Of social security!'

These excited protests and promises of action (even though lacking the means to fulfil them) testified to their feelings of indignant entitlement, as mothers, to be assisted by the state. Children could not be left without food. Social security's failure in this regard was felt as a moral one: it was wrong, unfair, unacceptable. It could rightfully trigger and justify desperate measures. Eva complained about not being able to afford her children's school books when her Family Allowance was cut. She threatened to remove her daughter from school: 'They can come with police, child protection, whatever they want! Let *them* give me money for the books!' Amália noted she should report the situation to the media. Eva agreed: 'I'll go on TV and tell Sócrates [the prime minister] and Cavaco [the president] to pay for the books! I'll put up my phone and bank account!' Some days later, the topic

was again brought up. Eva suggested 'They should call the IMF',<sup>189</sup> but Amália disagreed: 'Eva if they called the IMF you'd be breaking through this glass [café window] to be able to eat, you wouldn't have food. Even the police wouldn't react.' Eva challenged: 'Ah let them come. I could call them! First I'd go put food in my children's mouths. Then I could walk with them to the police station.' When still more cutbacks were announced, she again vented: 'Social security wants people to commit crimes! Well I won't leave my children without milk!' Women all around agreed.

For both Cape Verdean and white women, motherhood was the object of strong social expectations and investment. Ideals of femininity (chapter 2) and girls' chances for emancipation (cf. chapter 10) were deeply anchored in having children and providing for them (Wall 2008, 226-227; CNRM 2002c, 48). As such, mothers defended the inalienable right of children to be supported. Putting food 'in children's mouths' was wielded as a cause banner (Bourgois 2003, 246). It justified stealing or 'committing crimes' in its name (ibid., 249). But the moral claim to the right to basic subsistence went beyond children. When a sixty-year-old resident was taken by the police for stealing a chicken and a few supplies from the supermarket, a group of middle-aged neighbours discussed the case and objected to police sanctions. In their words, 'Stealing to eat is not a sin.' This explained not only neighbours' acceptance of others' legal transgressions, but also the moral compatibility between dealing in illicit activities and being a 'good' person.

Jessica, a twenty-four-year-old Cape Verdean woman, was a good friend and neighbour of Diana. One afternoon at my house, Jessica told Diana the sad tale of a young man she knew who had been sentenced to sixteen years in prison for 'doing [robbing] Prosegur cars'.<sup>190</sup> On the night he was caught, he was in 'a house full of money' when the police conducted a raid. His partner and he jumped out the window to escape them: the partner died and he was left crippled. According to Jessica, he tried to appeal against his sentence but his attorney 'ate all his money' and did not carry the appeal through. I found the conclusion to her tale striking: 'He was a good guy, an excellent person really.' I heard similar remarks about others currently in prison for serious offences. Another case involved a man who had been arrested twice for theft and currently served time for a fraudulent scheme with forged checks. His former wife, who had also been convicted for depositing one of his checks, spoke fondly of him: 'He's a good guy, his only problem is being a ladies' man.' Repeatedly cheating on her was a moral flaw in his otherwise 'good' nature. The normalcy of being involved in illegal activities justified them, granting them moral

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<sup>189</sup> This was before a financial bailout package was implemented in Portugal, from May 2011, with funds split between the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank.

<sup>190</sup> Prosegur is a private security company. Among other services, it transports valuables in armoured vans.

neutrality. In the words of a seventeen-year-old Cape Verdean male from Topia:

People aren't what everyone says around [*o que toda a gente fala por ai*]. They say this is a problematic neighbourhood, that there are only bandits [*bandidos*] here. But no, there aren't bandits here, there're only people who [pause] Well I won't say they're saints. They try to make a living as they know how, like selling things that aren't appropriate [*apropriadas*]. But they're making a living, they're not doing anything er [pause] dishonest [*desonesto*]. Nobody here's a saint. (Interview transcript)

Here as in Jessica's tale, legal offences were not condemned as shameful or wrongdoing. They did not affect people's standing as 'good' men or 'excellent' people. They might not even be considered 'dishonest'. Criticism would target other shortcomings (like cheating or idleness), but judgement was not passed on what they did to gain a living. The moral priority of subsistence allowed tolerance to non-conventional options of livelihood.

### **3. Moral exclusion**

#### **3.1 Work, income, leisure: generational perspectives**

Praising hard work or choosing job offers, demanding a right to subsistence, proper earnings or entertainment: residents upheld distinctive sets of values, priorities and moral standards regarding work and idleness. With exceptions, these differences were structured by generation. First generations commended the virtuous path of hard work, structuring their life stories around the jobs they fulfilled to 'raise a family' and criticising younger generations for standing around and not doing the same.

In contrast, second generations contemplated their options to choose the most worthy. 'Standing around' on street corners was still condemned as feeding Topia's negative 'atmosphere' of idleness and gossip, but criticism was always directed at *others* (CNRM 2002a, 43). Claims to the basic right of subsistence rivalled with more 'neo-liberal' ideas of thriftiness (Rose and Miller 2010, 298), to create a double standard: condemning welfare idlers while claiming for oneself the right to welfare (Howe 1998). Formal employment or welfare benefits alone did not provide enough for proper family subsistence. As such, people combined different livelihood options, some less licit than others. Contrary to their parents, illegal activities did not affect individuals' social standing among peers. 'Stealing' or engaging in other kinds of offences did not prevent them from being deemed 'excellent persons' (cf. Raposo 2007, 127-128). Against claims to the basic right to support oneself and one's family, threats to subsistence and welfare reforms were judged morally unjust.

They provoked incensed indignation and promises to right injustice through extreme means (calling the media) or illegal ones ('committing crimes'). Excluded from decently-paid jobs, second generations considered an array of options outside formal jobs – some of which entailed 'standing around' on street corners or, in a sense, 'being paid not to work'.

Third generations also reacted against idleness, but in yet different ways. Most were untroubled by the need to support themselves, nor did they bother much with school work. Instead, they sought their own modest ways to obtain money (which they promptly spent) and demanded, above all, proper recreation. Following conventional discourse in Topia, they regarded institutions' duty to provide them with leisure options, resisting NWIV's attempts to engage them in activities they deemed unappealing, all the while complaining loudly about having 'nothing to do'. They asserted a moral claim to be properly entertained.

People's attitudes and discourses revealed that work and idleness were morally laden issues. They were the site of righteous claims, indignant protests and judgement over others' conduct. Specific values, expectations and priorities underlay people's weighting of work (and idling) options. The moral claims of different generations converged, to an extent, around two overarching tenets: the wrongs of 'standing around' and the imperative of earning proper income. Even if these were basic points of consensus, specific ideas about income, work and idleness took on distinctive generational meanings and implications (cf. Raposo 2007, 161). As argued below, generational discrepancies followed social transformations in capitalist society's general work-ethics. How residents lived and ascribed meaning to this transformation, in particular attitudes towards work, contributed to further their stigmatisation and exclusion from wider society in specific (moral) ways.

### **3.2 Production and consumption: virtue, money and the 'happy life'**

In *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, Bauman (1998) described the passage of modern European societies from 'the work ethic' to a post-industrial 'aesthetic of consumption'. In his argument, the work ethic served the purpose, from the early stages of industrialisation, of getting ranks of poor urban dwellers to work and submit to factory discipline (Thompson 1967). It was enforced by social reformers in the growing industrial economies to ensure the commitment of labour masses to strenuous and lowly paid work. The work ethic asserted the moral primacy of waged employment. It defended that 'working is a value in its own right, a noble and ennobling activity' (Bauman 1998, 5). At its core, work 'marked the itinerary of life and retrospectively provided the prime record of one's life achievement or one's failure' (ibid., 17). As a result, unemployment and inactivity

were condemned as a state of 'abnormality, a breach of the norm' (ibid., 16).

These same values and assumptions were manifest in the narratives of first-generation migrants in Topia. Not only did they endorse the virtues of hard honest labour, but labour activities often structured their life stories. Work constituted their 'main orientation point, in reference to which all other life pursuits could be planned and ordered' (ibid., 17). It was the centre of migrants' self-presentation as moral and worthy social beings. And it justified their criticism of younger generations for failing to fulfil this role.

With the decline of the industrial sector in the West, the 'work ethic' was replaced, Bauman (1998) argued, with the primacy of consumption. For successful business enterprises, maximizing profit required downsizing and shifting from industrial labour to more qualified services. In 'present-day streamlined, downsized, capital- and knowledge-intensive industry', the costs of manual labour have become 'a constraint on the rise of productivity' (ibid., 65; Bourdieu 1998). Due to decreasing demand, a wide reserve of unqualified labour has become 'redundant' (Bauman 1998, 52; Godelier 1998, 11-13; Kelly 1995, 227-229; see Caldeira 2009 for a critique). In this new post-industrial scenario, people are no longer called to 'choose a life devoted to labour', because massive labour is no longer required for economic growth (Bauman 1998, 19; Anderson 1990, 110-111). Work 'no longer fulfils, for a large portion of the population, its integrative role' (CNRM 2002c, 21). Instead, people now become full and worthy social members through the exercise of consumption in market economies. Their part in the social order rests primarily on their role as 'consumers'. Disseminated through media and advertising, attractive commodities create a 'society organized around desire and choice' (Bauman 1998, 29, 40). Unlike factory-work regimes, the consumer market operates through 'seduction' rather than coercion, targeting individual appetites rather than their moral conscience. The call to consume appears under the guise of 'aesthetic interests' instead of 'ethical norms' (ibid., 32). However, its social imperative is not any weaker. This creates a problem for the poor.

Money is the gateway to participating in the consumer market. In post-industrial consumer society, the idea of a 'normal' and 'happy' life lies in the ability – 'duty' even – to exercise a wide and free range of consumption choices (ibid., 29, 38-39; Rose and Miller 2010). In Bauman's terms: 'the more choice one freely exercises, the higher up one reaches in the social hierarchy, the more public deference and self-esteem one can count on and the closer one comes to the "good life" ideal' (Bauman 1998, 31). Without money, that choice is limited or foreclosed. Poverty hinders fulfilling the social role of consumers: the poor are inevitably 'flawed consumers' (ibid., 1, 38). They are 'excluded' from choice and desire satisfaction, and so from a 'normal' life (ibid., 37; Anderson 1990, 135). Godelier (1998)

went so far as to argue that 'without money, without resources, there is no social existence or, ultimately, any kind of existence' (ibid., 12, my translation).

If their parents became socially and morally excluded through inactivity under the 'work ethic', second generations in Topia were now excluded for not having money. This elucidates the different generational priorities in Topia. While older migrants still defined a worthy life through active labour, their children, today's working-age adults, exercised a power of choice over their working options. Work shifted from an inescapable duty and life vocation to an object of choice and pleasure (Bauman 1998, 32). Like a commodity, it was evaluated on the basis of desire and satisfaction, and shifted from a productive tool and source of income to a means of personal fulfilment (CNRM 2002b, 40). As such, second generations selected available offers according to 'aesthetic' preferences (how 'tiring', how 'far', how pleasant the work 'atmosphere'), and above all, according to salary: the gateway into consumption and the 'good life'. Income took primacy over keeping occupied. A decrease in available jobs allied to new welfare options led to new strategies to guarantee basic subsistence. Even though residents did not enjoy sitting home 'looking at the walls', they might combine welfare benefits with odd jobs rather than take on full-time positions if the former option yielded higher earnings. They claimed the right to proper income and held the state responsible for ensuring children's basic subsistence. They considered taking on informal and illegal activities for the same reason. And unlike their parents, this did not mean losing the moral status of 'good people' or the social appreciation of their peers.

The moral transition described by Bauman, from producers to consumers, also helped to better understand the behaviour of teenagers. The key role of money in a consumption-oriented society excluded young people with no earning sources from leisure and entertainment options. Similar limitations and discontent were expressed by young urban rappers in the council estate researched by Raposo (2007):

Even participation in recreational and cultural activities becomes a problem, given the increasing financial demands, which substantially reduce leisure options ... To go to the cinema or walk on the beach or a nearby neighbourhood you need *paka* [money], even if just to pay for public transport. You also shouldn't date without some money in your pocket, even if just to buy a *pitéu* [snack] for your *dama* [girlfriend]. (Ibid., 66, 69-70, my translation)

In poverty, emphasis on consumption overwhelmed the experience of inactivity with boredom. Bauman (1998) drew from research on the psychological effects of unemployment. As in Topia, respondents described overall feelings of tedium: 'Certainly

the most popular word used to describe the experience of being unemployed is “boring”... Boredom and problems with time; having “nothing to do”...’ (ibid., 38). For Bauman, this again derived from ideals of the 'good life' in consumer society: 'A happy life, as defined by consumer culture, is life insured against boredom, life in which constantly “something happens”, something new, exciting, and exciting because it is new' (ibid.). But that again required money, to 'walk on the beach', go to the cinema, date, to afford travelling, frequenting shopping centres, buying technology items, even just snacks. In Bauman's terms, 'money is the entry permit to places where remedies for boredom are peddled (such as shopping malls, amusement parks or health and fitness centres)' (ibid., 39). Constant exposure to desirable new commodities meant for pleasurable leisure aggravated the burden of idleness among poor teenagers in Topia. The 'same' old games at NWIV quickly became 'rotten' and enthusiasm for new ones was brief. A 'tiny little TV' was not enough. Even field trips must remain entertaining or else meet non-cooperation and disrespect. Besides short intervals on the internet and time spent playing football, teenagers reacted against 'having nothing to do', and the shortage of leisure options was a constant disappointment. The strength of their moral claim justified (as in their parents' case) casting blame on institutions. NWIV's professed goal to keep them occupied was received as a broken promise and a moral offence: it denied teenagers' right to consume, choose, have fun, be entertained. Images of the good life were hardly realised in Topia. From early on, teenagers resisted their position as 'flawed consumers'.

### **3.3 Exclusion: 'useless', 'undeserving' and 'dangerous'**

Behind Topia's street-corner idler was a far more complex reality. The easy portrait of the idle poor hid changes in labour demand which created a 'redundant' reserve of unqualified workers (Bauman 1998, 52, 90). It obscured the post-industrial moral transition from productive work to consuming power, and its implications for poor urban dwellers thus rendered 'flawed consumers': refused full social participation and access to a 'happy' life. The simple picture of the idler also ignored second generations' claims to rightful subsistence, demanding state assistance and pursuing all available options, including illegal ones, to guarantee that basic right: 'Stealing to eat is not a sin.' It overlooked their claims to a consumer's right to 'choose' occupation on the basis of appeal and earnings, rather than be expected to 'waste a day to bring home a hundred and something euros'. The image of the street-corner idler also hid profound frustration and resistance to idleness itself, to the inability to access exciting entertainment, to the discrepancy between desire and reality, the

'good life' and the 'boring' life of the defective consumer.

This intertwining of structural, social and personal factors had wider consequences for residents' lives. Global and local constraints, attitudes towards work and idleness affected outsiders' perceptions of the neighbourhood and the terms of its inclusion in wider society. Older migrants, 'looking for a better way of life' and attracted to Lisbon from the 1960s for its high demand of unqualified labour were able to find a place in the productive economy. Living in poverty-stricken slums, with poor infrastructure and low earnings, they led morally satisfying lives, raising a family through work and sacrifice. State aid was looked upon as a 'favour' and in looking back they praised the path of honest labour, declaring to miss it. In Bauman's terms, they claimed 'the moral superiority of any kind of life, however miserable, providing it was supported by the wages of labour' (ibid., 12). And they fulfilled their social and moral role as producers. Talking about my research to a medical doctor from a public hospital in the Município, she shared her experience at the emergency room one Christmas: many young African males being brought in drunk, with brawl and stab injuries. She ventured: 'The older immigrants, I think they really came to work. But the younger generation, I don't know what it is, I think they're a bit lost...'

The job shortage, low qualifications and a shift to the primacy of consumption have foreclosed the option open to previous generations of fulfilling morally worthy roles through formal work (Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001, 94). There were of course satisfying jobs with good salaries. But they were not available to an unqualified work force. Work for the poor, before a 'normal' and 'individual' process, now became a 'social problem' to be managed by public institutions and programmes, aiming to reinsert poor citizens 'through labour' (CNRM 2002c, 21, my translation). Available jobs often failed to provide 'a liveable wage' (Bourgois 2003, 98), driving some people to combine odd jobs, social benefits and illicit kinds of activities. Although in a few cases these might allow a degree of successful participation in consumer society – buying branded clothes, a sports car, a plasma TV – for many the best available option was just the least bad one, hardly rising above 'defective consumption'. In the process, the life of the 'street-corner idler', the 'benefit recipient' or the 'criminal' were presumed as free choices in outsiders' eyes. As media images and discourses foregrounded the figure of the ethnic law-offender (chapter 5) or the welfare cheat, 'standing around' on the streets became powerful evidence of a purported unwillingness to work for a living.<sup>191</sup> Increasingly tight selection criteria and

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<sup>191</sup> For example between February and April 2012, *Correio da Manhã*, a widely read daily newspaper focused on sensational and lurid news, presented pieces with the following titles: 'State finances rich drug dealers' (*Estado subsidia traficantes ricos*), on 9 February 2012: <http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/detalhe/noticias/exclusivo-cm/estado-subsidia-trafficantes-ricos>; 'They have RSI and have been defrauding the country for 4 years' (*Têm RSI e burlam há 4 anos o País*) on 15 April 2012:

positive differentiation have made welfare benefits exclusively 'programmes for the poor', with waning support from the rest of society (Bauman 1998, 55-57). Contrary to prevailing neo-liberal ideals of autonomy (Rose and Miller 2010), state assistance is seen to foster abuse, dependency and laziness. 'Stigma' becomes attached to its beneficiaries, the 'irresponsible poor' (Bauman 1998, 50, 57-58). The old work ethic is still brandished to condemn, like older migrants in Topia did, adults' apparent inactivity. On July 8, 2012, the daily newspaper *Diário de Notícias* published this opinion letter from a reader (followed by a series of concurring comments by online readers):

How can there still be people cheating social security??!! There are cases of people who have never worked in their lives, never gave a step longer than their leg, never wanted to achieve any goals, and go on having children God knows who their fathers are, they go cry on the skirts of miss social workers and get the minimum income [RSI] so they can leave their children locked at home while they spend the morning in the cafés. These situations are revolting. Social security and the regional government are only working to increase thieves. Those who really need it many times don't ask for help. Review the cases better, before supporting people like this and as if it weren't enough they even brag in cafés that they don't need to work. 'Social security pays me to have this life', they say. (*Diário de Notícias* online, 8 July 2012, my translation)<sup>192</sup>

This comment and similar ones that followed illustrated popular indignant reactions against benefit recipients' purported unwillingness to work. It confirmed that the old work ethic could still be used to exclude the 'undeserving' (Bourgeois 2003, 243; Bauman 1998, 37). Separating those who 'really came to work' from those who 'spend the morning in the cafés' posited the latter's 'moral depravity' as the root of their own poverty (ibid.).<sup>193</sup> The idler and benefit recipient were therefore seen not only as socially 'useless' for not contributing their share to society, but as morally 'undeserving' of a full place in it (ibid., 65-68). For transgressing 'norms of independence and autonomy' they became 'suspect for personal, subjective defects or character' (Moffatt 1999, 234). The research commission on RSI likewise denounced the 'clusters of discrimination' targeting the socio-economic,

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<http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/detalhe/noticias/nacional/portugal/tem-rsi-e-burlam-ha-4-anos-no-pais>; 'They make up families to get subsidies' (*Inventam famílias para ter subsídios*) on 3 March 2012: <http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/detalhe/noticias/nacional/portugal/inventam-familias-para-ter-subsidios>, all viewed 10 November 2012.

<sup>192</sup> Viewed 11 November 2012: <http://www.dnoticias.pt/impressa/diario/cartasdo leitor/edicao-2012-07-08/333711-rendimento-minimo>.

<sup>193</sup> This type of 'blaming-the-victim' rhetoric has underpinned public debate on poverty in the U.S. from the 1970s, as manifest in concepts like 'culture of poverty' (chapter 10) or 'underclass' (Bauman 1998, 68-72; Harvey and Reed 1996). In Britain, similar associations of 'indolence and moral turpitude' have been linked to immigrants and the urban poor (Keith and Cross 1993).

ethnic and family profile of receivers (CNRM 2002c, 20, my translation). Even neighbours at times supported these negative stereotypes (Howe 1998). To the exclusion of poor urban dwellers from the world of money-mediated choice and consumption, this rhetorical exercise added a second kind of exclusion: the denial of their social merit and right to state resources. As both 'flawed' consumers and 'unwilling' producers, Topia's poor unemployed residents were classified at once as socially 'useless' and morally 'undeserving'.

Alternative money-making options taken up by some residents to advance their participation in consumer society caused a third type of stigma and exclusion. By moving into illegitimate trade and services – not so much informal vending as more serious and visible legal offences such as drug dealing – unemployed residents became associated, in the public eye, with images of crime and violence, aggravated by ethnic difference (Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 121-122; Keith and Cross 1993). Moral shortcomings of idling about and 'cheating social security' were supplemented by strong associations to illegality and deviance. Poor urban dwellers were deemed 'dangerous' and became 'feared'. When

the image of the idle poor is overlaid with the alarming news of rising criminality and violence against the lives and property of the decent majority, disapproval is topped up by fear; non-obedience to the work ethic becomes a *fearful* act, in addition to being morally odious and repulsive. (Bauman 1998, 76-77, original emphasis)

The interplay of structural economic constraints, social ethical values and local moral views on work and idleness, income and consumption, subsistence rights and state duties engendered distinctive discourses and practices among non-employed residents'. Some of those practices – spending time on street corners, receiving benefits, dealing in illicit activities – assumed particular prominence in the public eye, enhanced by the media. They gave rise to negative and oversimplified representations of urban ethnic poor as lazy welfare cheats and criminals. Although they implied deeply personal judgements of character, they were easily extended on the basis of class, ethnicity and residence. Spatial boundaries thereby became moral boundaries (Sibley 1995, 39). Removed from the local context of material constraints, social discourses and moral meanings, the visibility of these purported moral offences contributed to the social and moral exclusion of Topia and its rehoused population as a whole, in a threefold sense: as 'useless' curtailed consumers, 'undeserving' idlers, and 'dangerous' offenders.

## **10. The NGO: 'I'd rather eat a steak today, tomorrow I don't know if there'll be steak'**

Tuesday was Diana's day off work. That Tuesday she invited me to lunch and I spent the day at her house. We cooked, watched TV, chatted about trivia, and as 4:30 p.m. drew near, I watched a daily ritual unfold: finding a way to bring her children home from school. That morning Diana's mother had borrowed her bus pass to visit a neighbour in the hospital, and nobody else was home. It was a long walk to the children's school, and the bus fare was expensive. Diana mentally listed neighbours who had children in the same school, hoping one of them might pick hers up. After calling a few without success, her cousin's daughter's mother agreed to bring them. This problem solved, Diana still needed to get to her own school on time. She was taking a professional course at night to finish high school, and had to take two buses to get there. But with her mother out and most of her friends working, she contemplated skipping school for the day. That would go on her permanent record. She thought for a while and remembered her brother should be home around that time. She went over to borrow his travel card, thus solving her transport constraints. But another problem arose: by the time her children got home, there was nobody there to watch them. She again considered missing school. But then she reckoned her sister-in-law, living close by, might be in that afternoon. Diana left the children with her before heading to her course somewhat late.

A very noticeable thing in Topia was that people frequently arrived late or skipped engagements altogether. This of course varied according to how important they might be, but meetings skipped included medical appointments, parent-teacher meetings, course lessons, job-searching sessions, meeting up with neighbours, attending parties and celebrations.<sup>194</sup> The reverse was also true. Not only were plans made in advance often not kept, but many new plans sprang up at the last minute. Institutional staff in Topia, from mostly white middle-class backgrounds, frequently voiced frustration at their impression that people seemed unworried about long-term consequences and did not invest actively in their future, namely by missing training or job-seeking opportunities. In workers' eyes, residents systematically undermined their own chances of future success through feckless actions and decisions, fostering institutional criticism and incomprehension and adding to negative stereotypes about their idleness and undeservingness (chapter 9). Institutional

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<sup>194</sup> It would be simplistic to dismiss the frequent skipping of appointments as a display of resistance against institutions (chapter 8; also Meintel 1984, 106-107), since in many cases appointments such as medical or job-searching sessions were requested by users themselves rather than imposed by institutions.

explanations and 'pedagogic' efforts (chapter 8) attributed individuals' missed opportunities to their own passivity and unconcern for the future. These views resembled notions of a 'present-time orientation' put forth in early sociological literature on urban lower-class settings, namely as part of ideas of a 'culture of poverty' (Lewis 1959). This chapter will explore an alternative framework to make sense of residents' attitudes and behaviours towards time. Part 1 will describe four dimensions of local life where these attitudes were apparent: regular delays and unfulfilled plans (section 1.1); money-spending habits (1.2); attitudes towards schooling (1.3); and future life planning (1.4). In part 2, I will interpret these practices in light of the uncertainty of Topia routines. I will address the 'culture-of-poverty' debate (section 2.1), particularly the topic of time-orientation, to highlight the political baggage underlying 'cultural' explanations of persisting poverty and the troubles of balancing structural and cultural factors. I will draw on Bourdieu's (1979, 1-94) notion of 'objective possibilities', put forth to elucidate Algerian time-perceptions, as a worthy synthesis of structural and cultural aspects, complemented by Gell's (1996) model of cognitive time 'maps' (2.2). I will also borrow from Vigh (2009) to highlight the role of shifting and unstable material and social conditions in shaping local conceptions of an uncertain future (2.3). These frameworks will help to illuminate local causality beliefs – the 'maps' used to assess the 'opportunity costs' of future decisions – and make clear that residents' seeming investment in the short-term did not follow from a specific present time-orientation, but from a particular kind of present space-time: an uncertain one which foreclosed pathways to long-term agency and a planned desirable future.

## **1. Attitudes towards time**

### **1.1 'Letting it flow': delays and unfulfilled plans**

Residents in Topia had a peculiar relationship with planning. They rarely followed plans or schedules, including those set by themselves. Except for established routines (e.g. going to work, taking children to school) and for special engagements (like meeting with lawyers), people in Topia regularly arrived late or skipped appointed dates and times. A neighbourhood celebration in June (European Neighbour's Day) provided a clear example. The event was organised by local institutions, with music and dance groups scheduled to perform on a stage set in one of the side streets. Neighbours gathered around to watch the show, buying food and drinks from vending stalls. The first two performances were by children of the local school (from Topia and elsewhere): coordinated by teachers, they exhibited sports and music abilities learned over the school year. The other three scheduled

performances were by music and dance groups from Topia. The first group started performing one hour late (waiting for some members to arrive), and the other two simply failed to appear. Finally, a group of young male rappers from Topia and another settlement, not originally scheduled to perform, was called to step in and agreed to do it in short notice, rapping and improvising in Creole. In the end, actual performances diverted greatly from the programme. The only groups following the event plan were those coordinated by the school. Neighbours in the audience were not outraged or annoyed but simply went along with the changes. Whenever the stage became empty, children occupied it to dance and play while people around kept eating and chatting. The context of a big celebration made something ordinary exceptionally visible: at the last minute, plans regularly failed.

Another remarkable example was a trip organised in August by the parish council, to take children sight-seeing in Lisbon. NWIV enrolled four children from Topia who expressed a wish to go, and over the previous weeks secured parents' authorisation and fees (€2). When the day came, only one of the four showed up. NWIV was able to recruit a fifth child at the last minute, who rushed home to get his authorisation slip signed. We later learned that one absent boy had stayed home tending to his ill grandmother, and the other two never gave an explanation as to why they had missed the trip.

People not only failed to keep schedules appointed by institutions, but arrived late or skipped the dates and times set by themselves. When a well-connected resident invited me to a formal cocktail party with a former Cape Verdean ambassador (chapter 6), she warned me several times that I must imperatively be ready by 3 p.m. When I called her at 3:10 p.m. to know if the plan still stood, she expectedly informed me she was late, postponing it to 4:30 p.m., and eventually showing up at 5 p.m.

This was part of normal routine: from having lunch at someone's house to leaving together for a wedding. Residents seldom stuck to arranged times or warned when plans were delayed or cancelled. This was difficult to manage in fieldwork. Most interview appointments fell through when I set them for over a day away. I often prepared for visits or events that were cancelled at the last minute or simply failed to happen, and missed others arranged in short notice. This behaviour was both disconcerting and infuriating. My attempts to recruit Eva as a research assistant were constantly frustrated by her repeated failures to show up at our agreed time (chapter 1). Although she was unemployed, continually complained about needing money and declared she was 'excited' to help me, whenever I called her after being stood up she would be doing something else: 'Something came up.' 'I had to go the welfare office.' 'I had to help my son with a school play.'

People consistently followed more immediate priorities over previous engagements.

Neighbours came around asking for favours or dropping off children, others had to be tracked to get lifts, borrow phones or passes, important family celebrations could not be missed. A series of practical and social constraints were imposed, pressing and unannounced, on individual routines. Strong reliance on neighbour requests and short resources to devise alternatives made these unexpected demands both frequent and urgent. And they made it natural to accept, even to expect the same delays or failed plans from others. Although being late was phrased as such ('We're late! We must hurry!'), and severe delays were condemned and criticised by others, criticism often focused on practical issues rather than the lack of punctuality itself. When a bride arrived two hours late to her own church wedding, guests complained heavily about waiting outside the church for her. But a big part of their concern, especially for women, was the children present growing hungry. And when Leandra was called to help prepare a birthday party on a Saturday morning but only arrived mid-afternoon, the hostess was angry and made it clear her delay was seen as a personal failure: yet not a failure to keep time, but to be available to help out a neighbour.

Despite people's complaints, they rarely acted surprised or indignant about others' lack of punctuality. The fact that arriving late (or not at all) was the norm rather than the exception granted others reasonable tolerance in most situations, namely because it also meant that people rarely considered waiting around: if there were delays, it was often assumed that others were not coming. This was a common and acceptable excuse to cancel previous plans: 'You weren't here, I thought you weren't coming.' This also meant that criticism of others' delays was strongest in those occasions when people were forced to wait around (like in the wedding example above), which was not common inside Topia.

In contrast, local institutions routinely complained about people's lateness or absence, or their arrival without previous appointment. Some staff were particularly critical when residents failed to seize job or training opportunities, because these were primary areas of intervention. One example was free certified IT courses offered at NWIV. NWIV workers repeatedly called people at home to remind them of course schedules. Nevertheless, courses kept being cancelled because people did not show up – even when they apologised on the phone and guaranteed they would not fail next time. The same happened with job-search appointments. Staff privately criticised people for not making an effort to change their present condition. The fact that they did not appear to act with concern for the long term was interpreted as personal 'lack of initiative' and proactivity.

Another problem identified by institutions concerned citizenship documents. Although the 2006 law had made it easier for immigrants and their descendants to become Portuguese citizens (chapter 5), several children and teenagers born in Portugal from Cape

Verdean families still lacked citizenship. Staff privately criticised their families for 'not moving' (*não se mexem*) to handle paperwork, 'not worrying' and 'letting it flow' (*deixam andar*), thus hampering their children's futures. Other behaviours were interpreted by staff as the result of individual 'passivity'. One example concerned a young woman who had a standing debt of roughly €50 to her internet service provider. When her service was interrupted, she tapped into her neighbours' wireless connection for a while, but as this soon failed she was forced to settle her debt to get the service back. She called her provider to arrange a payment plan in instalments, and they sent her the agreed plan to sign. When the letter came, she realised she would not be able to afford the first instalment that month due to an unforeseen expense, and so failed to sign the agreement. Her debt accrued. Some weeks later, she asked me to call them to set up another payment plan. When I informed her of the due date for the first instalment, she again dropped the plan: 'I only get paid after that. Never mind then...' Unable to keep with each proposed plan, she kept postponing the solution, slowly increasing her debt.

Different kinds of decisions affecting people's future were constrained by present demands, namely insufficient income and resources. I did not see many people in Topia act or express worry about things far in the future. These were postponed until they eventually became pressing. Conversely, neighbours discouraged others from dwelling on troubles. Advice like 'don't think so much', 'don't be sad', 'forget about it' was given to those who seemed contemplative or preoccupied. Residents' actions often had to be improvised and plans devised at the last minute, because only then could resources be relied upon with certainty: be it passes, salaries or neighbours' favours. Seeming passivity and 'letting it flow' stemmed rather from the fact that immediate priorities and available material and human resources often overdetermined people's choices and actions – what the national commission on RSI (CNRM 2002c, 27) referred to as a 'primacy of the “reality principle”'.

## **1.2 Money: waiting for 'the end of the month'**

The same institutional belief that people avoided long-term planning also applied to spending habits, especially among second generations. Many spent most or all of their earnings before the month was over and were left to struggle until their next pay-check. Money was spent not only on so-called essential goods (food, transport, rent, bills), but sometimes more superfluous commodities (fashionable clothes, make-up, hair styling, eating out). Shopping was a favourite conversation topic: comparing prices and bargains, browsing through store and supermarket catalogues, sharing information on recent

purchases or commenting on others' expenses were preferred activities. As was shopping itself: hardly surprising given a prevailing 'aesthetics of consumption', which made shopping a requirement to validate social participation and access a 'good life' (chapter 9).

Access constraints in the field limited my observation mostly to women's shopping. Older women's preferences focused on food products and household supplies, visiting the farmer's market close to the old shanties or the local supermarket and prioritising good value in their purchases. Early in fieldwork, Eva declared that older Cape Verdeans spent most of their earnings on food and drinks. When I asked about non-basic goods she insisted: 'That's also food.' After some time in Topia this came to make sense: large families and close-knit neighbour ties multiplied the number and scale of parties hosted, attended or assisted by residents – all revolving around food. Furthermore, each month when getting paid neighbours were expected to show generosity and buy rounds of drinks or coffee at local cafés (chapter 3). Idle men also spent considerable time in cafés, which increased their spending on drinks. These expenses, combined with food, household supplies and essential bills, consumed a large slice of household income for older migrants.

Second-generation women, on the other hand, were chiefly interested in fashion, hair extensions and products, baby or child-related goods (diapers, baby food, children's clothing). In most interviews, when asked about their favourite store(s), young people (male and female) listed brand-clothing stores: Pepe Jeans, Stradivarius, Bershka, Zara, Nike, Adidas, among others. A selection of these stores existed in two nearby shopping centres, each a bus-ride away from Topia. 'Being in fashion' (*sta na moda*) or 'stylish' (*basofo*) was something valued among young people, especially Cape Verdeans. Young neighbours' outfits and purchases were praised and envied for being '*basofo*'. In browsing through catalogues or window shopping, comments like 'These are in fashion' or 'That colour's in fashion now' validated choices (or wishes) to buy certain goods. Women were usually very mindful of price differences and bargains in different stores. Good value was central to their decisions of where to shop for food, diapers or toiletries. However, prestigious clothing brands were highly appreciated and used to justify more expensive purchases (usually on sale): 'It's good value, they're Nike.' 'These Ray-Ban only cost €35!' The importance of *sta na moda* was evident at parties, especially big celebrations like weddings or christenings. These were occasions for hosts and godparents (namely women) to exhibit style: Diana told me that godmothers often changed clothes two or three times during the event to display different outfits. And women dreaded repeating the same dress at two parties because of berating gossip that would follow. Picture sessions on these occasions – known to be later shared and extensively commented upon on Facebook –

amplified the significance of dressing stylishly and not repeating outfits. These concerns extended, on a smaller scale, to children in the family. Women invested in clothing for their own children and (secondly) nephews. When shopping for clothes they always visited the children's section, and if there were good bargains they would carry a full bag to distribute in the family. Before special celebrations or the new school year, new outfits were also bought for children. Diana once declared that 'When African women have girls it's a joy', for how much they enjoyed dressing them: 'I loved preparing my daughter's layette, going shopping with my mother for the little clothes.'

The frequent parties, the compulsion to be generous, the importance of brands and fashion, ubiquitous talk and look out for bargains – all this helped to promote a haphazard pattern of shopping. Rounds of drinks should be offered to everyone at the table, clothes and brands should be acquired immediately (when on sale, or just before a party) or not at all. Beyond household expenses, purchases were not planned but followed unpredictable social demands and sale opportunities. In this scenario it was usual, especially for younger generations, to reach mid-month without any money and struggle until the next pay-day.

Residents' shopping followed a distinct monthly cycle: heavy spending on the first week after salaries or benefits were paid, gradually waning until it stopped. This was visible in local commerce, always busier around the end of the month (when salaries were due) and other key dates (mid-month for family allowances, near the 20<sup>th</sup> for RSI). When earnings were exhausted, people were left longing again for 'the end of month' – a phrase that became synonymous with having some money available. When a man appeared contemplative one afternoon at the lunch place, Adelaide asked him what he was thinking about: 'the end of the month', he sighed. Others around him laughed sympathetically.

This impatient wait was also a time for wishing, admiring and fantasising, while browsing through catalogues or gazing at shop items: 'I'll come back at the end of the month...' 'Oh if I could afford it!' 'Ah, when I get paid...' Another instituted ritual was the anxious looking out the window for the postman around the dates of welfare payment.<sup>195</sup> However, a large part of incoming earnings would be pre-allocated for different bills, fees and debts. An unemployed Cape Verdean woman at my café table one morning started complaining about the bill payments she had behind. I reminded her the end of the month was near, as I often heard neighbours reassure one another. She objected that all her money was already intended for other expenses: 'It comes in and it goes right out!' Some people resorted to buying supplies on credit (without interest) from local cafés and grocers, which they had to settle after being paid. A nearby supermarket had devised a card system for

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<sup>195</sup> There was no fixed date for welfare checks. People had a reference ('around the 12<sup>th</sup>', 'before the 20<sup>th</sup>') and would wait impatiently each weekday around that time of the month until their check was delivered.

deferred payment, which several young women from Topia adhered to: 'This way it's really cool, if I get halfway through the month and can't afford snacks for the children, now I can buy them and pay up next month.' Although this enabled residents to afford basic supplies throughout the month, it also meant that their remaining income after settling debts would always be too slim to last them the entire month.

This cycle of spending and longing meant continually alternating between indulgence and sacrifice. Having services interrupted, skipping a party, not affording Christmas presents, letting debt accrue, denying children a school trip, nagging others for alcohol or cigarettes, waiting around the lunch place to share neighbours' food. Frustrated intentions were a regular part of life. 'There's no money' was the most common justification heard in the estate for failing to act, move or acquire something (Bauman 1998).

Residents were aware of their intermittent spending cycle, and admitted to quickly squander their earnings. Diana and Simone (a neighbour her age, mother to a small child) chatted about family allowances one morning. Denise had received an extra €70 that month, stirring comments and enquiries among young mothers, until it was confirmed as a mistake by social security. Diana and Simone complained about child support being too short to even pay for children's nursery, and fantasised about also receiving extra money by mistake. 'But if you got extra one month, they'd take it away the next', Simone argued. She reasoned it would be better to get all child support in one annual chunk. Diana predicted: 'But then we'd spend it all!' They laughed, agreeing it was probably better to receive it monthly as they did. Ideas of saving, postponing and deferring made little practical sense in a setting where deferred or unfulfilled gratification was the rule by default. Getting paid opened a short gap of abundance where long-sustained wishes could finally be indulged.

The idea of not wanting to risk postponing material gains, not even to maximise them in the future, is not a novel one. Scott (1976) found that south-east Asian peasants close to the 'subsistence margin' valued material safety and reliability above long-term profit (*ibid.*, 13-14; in the Cape Verdean context, see Couto 2001, 267-268). When getting by near a 'minimum' subsistence level – one below which 'nothing is saved' (*ibid.*, 17) – the costs of failing were greater: not necessarily starvation, but the 'qualitative deterioration in subsistence, security, status, and family social cohesion' (*ibid.*). The high costs of deferring meant that whenever choice arose between present and future gains, it settled for present ones. As a result, peasants studied by Scott were averse to the risks inherent in capitalist ventures and preferred to stick to traditional agricultural practices. Even if riskier investments would see higher average profits in the long term, the odd years which would yield less would be too difficult to endure (*ibid.*, 18). There are clear limits to comparing

pre-capitalist south-east Asian peasants with migrants in a present-day Portuguese council estate. Traditional south-east Asian agriculture, subject to climate instabilities and natural forces, expectedly carried a great deal more uncertainty compared to urban life near a European capital in the twenty-first century. However, as Scott well pointed out, local subsistence levels are defined by historical and cultural context and people's previous experience (ibid., 17). Attending to local living-costs and material expectations, most residents in Topia arguably lived near the subsistence level 'below which nothing is saved' (ibid.). Moreover, heavy reliance on local request networks – precisely linked to unstable material conditions (ibid., 28) – and the social pressure to fulfil favours and obligations as they arose added a strong component of uncertainty to people's lives. The ability to carry out routine tasks (travelling, childcare, etc.) so often relied on neighbour availability that people could hardly be sure of their ability to fulfil future tasks. Likewise, priority given to pressing needs disposed people to make the most of money as soon as they got paid, before it was gone. Since money was always short, not spending it on desired commodities would predictably destine it to be consumed by bills, fines or unexpected expenses. There was no guarantee that waiving a purchase to save money would lead to rewarded gratification in the near future. And the immediate costs of doing so would be great: giving up on already long-postponed desires, indefinitely foregoing expectations of choice, consumption and 'happiness' (Bauman 1998). As Fabi once summed up: 'I'd rather eat a steak [*bifinho de vaca*] today, tomorrow I don't know if there'll be steak!'

### 1.3 Schooling: 'I want my things too'

What institutional staff saw as residents' unconcern and non investment in the long term applied especially to schooling, training and career planning, which despite people's constant struggle to find jobs were in many families not addressed as priorities. Most residents had low qualifications, with only 5.2% of respondents in 2010 having completed school, and 14.3% illiterate (Table 7). School failure and dropout (*insucesso e abandono escolar*) were identified by institutions as severe problems among children and teenagers in Topia. Data on failure and dropout rates by the local school supported these concerns. Although catering to children from other areas, the local school (teaching years one through nine) taught a considerable number of children from Topia.<sup>196</sup> In 2009-2010, the average failure and dropout rate at the school was 14.7% (Table 8), against 12.9% for the whole Município and only 9.3% for Greater Lisbon.

<sup>196</sup> Although I could not access data specifying the addresses of the students, most children I knew in Topia, and most of those enrolled for homework tutoring at NWIV attended the local school.

SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS	INDIVIDUALS	%
None	193	14,3
Reads and writes	111	8,2
Year 4	387	28,8
Year 6	350	26
Year 9	186	13,8
Years 10 or 11	44	3,3
<b>Year 12 (compulsory education)</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>5,2</b>
Professional course	3	0,2
Bachelor degree	2	0,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1346</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7: School qualifications of rehoused residents surveyed in 2010 (excluding children under six years old and thirteen non-respondents). Source: Municipal survey, 2010.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/2010	LOCAL SCHOOL	MUNICÍPIO	GREATER LISBON
<b>1<sup>st</sup> cycle</b> (years 1 to 4)	6,9	5	4,1
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> cycle</b> (years 5 and 6)	17,6	15,5	10,6
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> cycle</b> (years 7 to 9)	24,4	23,1	16,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,7</b>	<b>12,9</b>	<b>9,3</b>

Table 8: Failure and dropout rates for 2009-2010 (in %),<sup>197</sup> from years one to nine, respectively for the local school (near Topia), the Município, and the Greater Lisbon Area. Sources: Government education statistics and the local school website [\*].

High rates of failure and abandonment were often attributed by institutions to deficient parental support and disinvestment in children's schooling: not disciplining them to study, not getting involved with the school (namely parent-teacher meetings), not prioritising education as a step to future employment and success. A multitude of other factors arguably contributed to explain the above figures, namely: family origin, language and cultural expectations; parents' qualification and reading habits, socio-economic and citizenship condition, job and housing situation; leisure activities outside school hours, school curricula and assessment tools (R. Monteiro 2009, 52-71; Marques, Rosa and Martins 2007). And like other matters linked to long-term planning, residents' investment in schooling and training were bound by more pressing concerns and constraints.

I sat with Luzia out in the sun one afternoon, killing time to fetch her daughter from

<sup>197</sup> Percentage of students unable to progress to the following year, within total number of enrolled students.

school. I asked about her fourteen-year-old son. She sighed. 'He's failing school again.' She tried to excuse him: 'What he wants is money for his things.' I suggested she could enrol him in a professional course, that way he could start working earlier. 'But that's far away', she argued, 'I'd have to pay for his pass.' Decisions to invest in training were often limited by immediate material constraints. When an offer arose for eighteen months of paid training certifying high-school completion, Denise (unemployed and having reached only year nine) refused it, because it would interrupt her welfare aid. The amount paid at the course was roughly half of what she currently received. 'I'm not doing it if I'll be getting less!' – she reasoned as if the idea made no sense. I suggested she might get better-paid jobs after completing it. She pondered on it for a while, and considered course options: 'Not accounting, you need a good head for that.' She wavered: 'Sales sounds OK, I could work at a store. Childcare... I'm not patient with children.' She later concluded sales was too difficult and shifted back to childcare. I pointed out her change of heart. 'No, childcare's ok, I'm just not good at putting up with children.' I argued those were the jobs she would likely find after the training. 'Oh right...', she just realised it. In the end she did not decline the offer, but neither did she take it up. 'We'll see...' As time passed and the deadline for applications closed, the decision was made for her. Her decision-making process was interesting to observe. Again, the priority of subsistence overdetermined her decision, making economic risks appear greater and future rewards smaller (Scott 1976). When discussing what might be an investment in her professional future, she seemed primarily concerned with securing present gains: the pay she would receive over the eighteen months, how difficult or enjoyable the course would be. In the end, the costs of being paid less weighed more than prospects of getting better-paid jobs in the future, and a decision was made by default not to risk it (CNRM 2002b, 74-75, 79).

Not only material and financial constraints limited residents' choices. Family duties and chores were important parts of routine, including for children. Talking to the monitor of a leisure group who accompanied forty-two youths in Topia (ages ten to eighteen) over four years, he highlighted the excessive load of chores they were given at home.<sup>198</sup> Likewise at NWIV, teenagers (especially Cape Verdean) would often interrupt study or leisure activities or fail to participate because of family obligations. This often involved tending to younger siblings (Wall 2008): fetching them from school, watching them when mothers were absent or ill. These and other duties were expected of both sexes. Older boys became exempt with age, especially when girls in the family assumed these chores.

Some institutional staff linked young girls' obligation to care for younger siblings

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<sup>198</sup> Ninety-eight children took part in the project, among which forty-two were regular participants.

with their motivation for early maternity: 'To be taking care of others' children, they [feel they] might as well have their own.' Despite institutional efforts to raise awareness about sexual health and distribute free contraception, teenage pregnancies in Topia were seen as a problem. The phenomenon could not be explained away by a lack of care or information about contraception. The fact that four teenage girls (out of seventeen) in the same class became pregnant within short months of each other evinced that an element of personal choice was involved. Another girl from the same class confirmed this by confiding she also hoped to become pregnant. Bastos and Bastos (2008) compared types of family dynamics within different ethnic groups in Lisbon. Among families of Cape Verdean origin, they found that explicit cultural values of male domination co-existed with young girls' implicit strategies of 'emancipation' through 'erotic resources and assets' and 'early sexual activity' (ibid., 138, 150). Through these, namely through early pregnancy (and more pregnancies to follow), girls were able to effect 'a rapid ascension to adulthood', which granted them more freedom and a higher status in the family (ibid.; see also Wall 2008; Anderson 1990, 123-128). Their choice to rise to early autonomy as mothers rather than work for other women in the household interrupted long-term routes of schooling. As their pregnancies evolved, girls gradually missed more lessons until they stopped attending altogether.

Young people's efforts towards early autonomy also had a financial component. I met Marta (twenty-four years old) on the bus one afternoon on her way to work. I waved at her to sit by me and we rode awkwardly for a few minutes, trying to make small talk. At some point she praised her seven-year-old son for being 'smart at school', and a series of reflections followed. She told me she had quit school in year six: 'In year five I was already fed up with school, and then my sister got pregnant so I stayed home taking care of my nephew.' Soon her other sisters followed, and she tended to their children as well. Shortly after that she started working and never went back to school: 'I wanted to have my things too' (Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista 2001, 104).

Wanting 'their things too' could get in the way of schooling, especially when formal education was seen not to bring tangible benefits to their lives. Three teenage boys played a game at NWIV under my supervision. Each of them had a pen and paper with a table drawn on it. The first row contained a list of topics: 'first names', 'countries', 'cities', 'occupations', etc. The game progressed by filling each row with items beginning with a specified letter, and trying to do so before other players. After each turn, they received points for correct and unrepeated words. The boys often had trouble recalling items and I offered them hints. The current letter was 'G', and neither of them could find an occupation beginning with it. I thought of 'goalkeeper' (*guarda-redes*), and knowing of their deep

passion for football I suggested: 'It's something you boys would want to be when you grew up.' One boy promptly ventured: 'So it's bad?'

Institutions continually reiterated the idea that school was an important step to future employability and success. Teenagers were familiar with this discourse. However, as revealed in the boy's comment, they tacitly inferred from previous experience of others around them that they too would likely be meant for unqualified, lowly-paid, irregular-hour ('bad') jobs. Beliefs in merit-based success or upward mobility based on schooling were unusual among young people, despite institutional lecturing (Meintel 1984, 164-165; cf. Marques, Rosa and Martins 2007, 1161-1163). Without perceived control over future success opportunities, teenagers' priorities focused on more immediate gains.

#### **1.4 Life plans: 'When a person doesn't have, they just dream'**

I was chatting to a middle-aged NGO worker one afternoon about her views on community intervention. She had a long experience in the field and knew part of Topia's population since the time of the shanties. At some point, a young Cape Verdean man approached us. At the sight of him the worker stopped mid-sentence and greeted him effusively. They had not seen each other in years, since the old shanties, when he was only a boy. Although he lived in Topia, he worked night shifts and was usually asleep in the day when the NGO was open. She introduced him to me – Garra – commending his personal story as 'an example of bottom-up' intervention. Garra gladly told the tale of 'the mistakes he had made', dealing in drugs, going to prison. Then he had fathered two children and 'for them I got straight. I don't follow those paths any more.' He had found a steady job, working nights. The worker certified he would 'make section manager' some day. Their smiles and enthusiasm encouraged me to ask what he hoped for the future. Garra's face changed. His smile was there, but it was bitter and dispirited: 'I have no plans for the future.' His plans were 'to eat' and 'stay well with my family', 'day to day'. I found this shift striking and asked him why he made no plans: 'I have no schooling, what future am I gonna have?' He shrugged off the topic, reiterating his intention to 'work', 'have money for my family', be with his children and just 'be well'.

In residents' life stories, I noticed that the future rarely had a place (Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 128). In the few cases where life plans were spontaneously mentioned, they referred to the immediate future: to find work, or finish a current project. When I explicitly asked about 'plans', 'desires' or 'goals' for the future, interviewees produced a limited range of replies. They mostly listed things they wished to have in their lives, both concrete things

(most often 'a house' and 'a car') and more abstract values such as 'health' or 'happiness'.

What I wish for? Right now [pause] I don't know, let's see. To have a stable life, for me, for my children and er my boyfriend and all that. So we won't lack anything. And a car! And my driver's license! (Interview transcript with Diana)

(Ana: What are your plans for the future?) Right now, buying a house ... I want to see about buying a house, then er everything else from then on, it's good. (Interview transcript with an employed young Cape Verdean man)

Residents' imagined futures were anchored in present wants, namely subsistence-related, shaped by whatever was found missing in the now (CNRM 2002a, 53). Expressions such as 'right now' or 'at this stage' were often used when formulating personal plans and goals, setting them in contrast to individuals' current situation. So unemployed informants' life plans were usually to 'get a job' or set up a business; and employed residents 'planned' and 'wished' in the future to have certain commodities they now lacked, combined with vague ideals of happiness. Elicited visions of the future were filled with highly valued things and feelings, mixing immediate short-term projects with broad principles of well-being. 'So we won't lack anything.' Diana's words revealed the projection of present wants and needs onto an undefined time horizon. In fact, many interviewees seemed to be reflecting on these 'plans' for the first time.

(Ana: What are your life plans for the future?) To be happy. (Ana: And more specifically?) Plans [pause] plans er, To be happy and er to help my children grow up. Because I er, And have my driver's license! My life plan is just getting a driver's license, otherwise I have my job. [pause] (Ana: Ten years from now, how do you imagine your life to be different?) Er [pause] with health, to watch my children grow up. ... (Interview transcript with Fabi)

In a course assignment to describe her 'dreams, ambitions and future plans' Leandra produced an incongruous and repetitive paragraph combining: 'to take a catering course', 'to have health and joy', 'to complete high school' and 'to watch my daughters become women'. Leandra's answer, like most elicited accounts of future planning, was a version of listed desires she wished to see accomplished at some point, without any notion of a route or sequence of action to get to them: a 'possible imaginary', yet 'not compatible with concrete planning of desires capable of being fulfilled' (CNRM 2002a, 53, my translation).

Few interviewees made a connection between broad future goals and specific plans of action (usually taking a course or finishing school in order to find a good job).

(Ana: What are your plans for the future?) I'm thinking of taking [a] cooking course, to be a chef or something. If I can get a year-twelve certificate I can work on anything: a restaurant, hotel, anything. But I really want to be a first-class cook. Second-class [I] can also manage, but you really need a diploma, a diploma's what it takes. People sometimes know how to do things, [if] they don't have a diploma, it's the same as not knowing. ... This is really in every field: if you don't have a diploma you have nothing. (Interview transcript with a middle-aged unemployed Cape Verdean woman)

Foreseeing a pathway of agency to reach projected goals was rare in residents' accounts (CNRM 2002b, 72-79). Except for sparse references to training as a means to find employment, 'plans' and 'goals' rarely incorporated a thread linking them to the present or to actions people could undertake to achieve them. The future (other than the immediate one) was not conceived as a linear path of 'intentional rationality' leading forth from the present, as promoted by institutional workers, but rather as an indeterminate place where specific or abstract wishes ('staying well' or 'being happy') might come true (ibid., 72, 78).

(Ana: Do you have any dreams or plans for the future?) Well, I'd like to win the [lottery]! (Ana: And if you won, what would you do?) I'd give a million to each person in my family, and keep the rest. I'd go on a trip. [she laughed] (Ana: Where?) To the Canary Islands. ... But er from here on to the future, [she paused and shrugged] A person lives even without money, but without money living's not possible, you see. But my big dream was to win the [lottery]. (Interview transcript with a white unemployed middle-aged woman)

There was an obvious gap between what people could expect and what they wished to achieve – how a 'person lives' and manages, 'day to day', against what 'living' should be about. When I asked about the 'future', informants addressed it as either their immediate practical choices (*'right now'*) or as a distant fictional place where personal desires and ambitions could be expressed without any consequence or link to present reality. In that imagined realm, poor unemployed residents had jobs, houses, cars, health and happiness – all the things identified with a 'good life' (Bauman 1998). In older generations these wishes were still present, albeit projected on children (CNRM 2002b, 73; CNRM 2002c, 49):

A dream, yes, to give each of my children a house, a car, that they have their own business, that they have everything I didn't, although well! There's not much to say now, when a person doesn't have [*não tem*], they just dream dream. ... (Transcript of interview with Evandro, an unemployed middle-aged Cape Verdean man)

The absence of a future from residents' life-story accounts and the gap between present agency and elicited future 'dreams' reflected local social values and constraints. Dominant ('middle-class') consumerist social ambitions and life ideals (the house, car, happy family) were familiar and attractive, and shaped residents' desirable future scenarios (Jones 1995; Anderson 1990, 115, 243). Nevertheless, practical and social constraints (low earnings, low schooling, unqualified jobs, racism) limited people's possible pathways of action and their outcomes (Freitas 1994, 33). Against a lived background of material and social disadvantage, residents were aware of the futility of expressing these abstract ambitions. In Evandro's words: 'when a person doesn't have, they just dream dream'.<sup>199</sup>

## **2. Geography of opportunity and models of causality**

### **2.1 Present-time orientation and the 'culture-of-poverty' debate**

Constant delays and unfulfilled plans, irregular spending habits, weak investment in schooling and efforts to rise to early autonomy, absent future and planning from life narratives – a local complex of attitudes, priorities and decisions clearly privileged short-term aims and goals. Local institutional staff interpreted these behaviours as lacking proactive planning or concern for the future. Their explanations assumed social problems in Topia to be chiefly rooted in individuals' unreliability and ineptness to live in a modern urban setting and plan for the long-term – part of the popular array of discrediting attributes ascribed to people 'from neighbourhoods' (chapter 8). They were censured for not keeping time, not budgeting, not prioritising school, giving birth too early, not actively seeking work, 'not moving' to change their condition. Institutional rhetoric identified people's lack of motivation, responsibility or discipline to defer gratification as obstacles to solving their own problems and improving their lives. A similar kind of 'psychological reductionist and individualistic interpretation of the persistence of poverty' was upheld by proponents of a 'culture of poverty' framework in the 1960s (Bourgois, 2001, 11904).

'Culture of poverty' was a concept first proposed by Oscar Lewis in 1958 and explored in a series of his written works on the daily routines of poor Mexican, Puerto

<sup>199</sup> Much like Liebow's (1967) black street-corner men, for whom the gap between life ideals and practical constraints led to alternative goals (a 'shadow system of values') shaped by the 'possible' rather than the desirable (ibid., 213). For the Lisbon context, see Pereira, Silva, Baptista and Perista (2001, 100).

Rican and Cuban households (Harvey and Reed 1996, 467; e.g. Lewis 1959). It was an attempt to frame theoretically the kinds of attitudes and behaviours he witnessed (and richly described) in poor families' day-to-day existence. The concept encompassed a set of traits which Lewis saw frequently co-occurring in poverty (Lewis 1998, 7).<sup>200</sup> Some traits described forms of 'family structure' or 'kinship ties' common among lower classes, but many addressed 'value systems', 'time orientation' and other 'psychological and ideological' traits developed as reactions and coping mechanisms to hardship and deprivation (Lewis 1959, 2; Lewis 1998, 7). These included feelings of resignation and fatalism, a lack of control over impulses and the inability to defer gratification or plan for the future, a weak motivation for schooling and professional unpreparedness (Leacock 1971, 11; Valentine 1971, 209). Although developed as situational responses to poverty, these daily attitudes came to form, in Lewis's argument, enduring 'cultural' systems of values transmitted to children and reproduced across generations. Lewis has been criticised for focusing mainly on attributes deviating from purported middle-class ideals, producing a broadly 'negative' and 'dysfunctional' portrayal of the poor (Leacock 1971, 12, 17; Valentine 1971, 204; Bourgois 2001, 11904-11905). These traits were also seen as adverse to upward mobility, contributing to reproduce poverty across generations. Because these values and attitudes took on a life of their own, Lewis argued that 'the elimination of physical poverty as such may not be enough to eliminate the culture of poverty which is a whole way of life' and even recommended psychiatric intervention in the U.S. as a way to 'imbue' the poor 'with the higher middle class aspirations' (Lewis 1998, 8-9). This earned him accusations of 'blaming the victim' and misplacing the true causes of poverty from social structure to lower-class culture, stirring a prolonged debate which quickly took on political and moral overtones (Harvey and Reed 1996). The concept was subsequently misappropriated by conservative political agendas to support ideas of the poor as undeserving and reduce government responsibility in alleviating poverty, with harmful policy effects (ibid.; Bourgois 2001, 11905). The 'culture of poverty' concept was popularised in both scholarly and political forums even though it never developed into a fully integrated framework, remaining closer, some have argued, to an 'arbitrary' and 'sloppy' listing of traits (Bourgois 2001, 11905; Harvey and Reed 1996; Valentine 1971, 211). Although the merits and flaws of Lewis's argument have been largely pinpointed and discussed (e.g. Leacock 1971;

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<sup>200</sup> Lewis (1966) proposed six basic conditions under which a 'culture of poverty' would 'tend to grow and flourish', all of which applied to Topia: a cash economy; high unemployment for unskilled labour; low wages; absent social/political/economic organizations 'for the low-income population'; bilateral kinship (without kin-based collectivities such as clans); and 'a set of values in the dominant class which stresses the accumulation of wealth and property, the possibility of upward mobility and thrift, and explain low economic status as the result of personal inadequacy or inferiority' (ibid., xliii-xliv).

Valentine 1971), the wider debate has centred on a 'polemics of righteousness', reacting to ethically and politically objectionable ways to portray the poor (Bourgois 2001, 11906). Over the next few decades, Lewis was mingled with other authors seen to conceal the fundamental causes of poverty (social structure and racism) and blame the poor for their situation.<sup>201</sup> This criticism became a 'canonical' statement against studies focusing on cultural aspects of poverty (Harvey and Reed 1996, 474-476), hindering the theoretical debate and urging scholars to steer clear of 'blame-the-victim' accusations (Bourgois 2001, 11905-11906; Small, Harding and Lamont 2010, 6-7).

Despite the controversy, some authors in the 1960s were able to address distinctive lower-class values and attitudes, including of time orientation, without disregarding material conditions or falling into the traps of cultural determinism. Liebow (1967) and Horton (1967), researching poor black street-dwellers in lower-class neighbourhoods in the U.S., defended the role of context in explaining local behaviour. They denounced the reification of middle-class values of 'future orientation' as a taken-for-granted norm against which informants' actions were judged, even while simultaneously highlighting informants' intrinsic 'future orientation', 'individual initiative' and entrepreneurship (Liebow 1967, 64-65; Horton 1967, 8). By focusing on the 'positive' qualities and contextual 'rationality' of lower-class views and behaviours, they successfully avoided 'blaming the victim'. Their functional relativist framework suggested how lower-class behaviours 'made sense' in light of their context of deprivation. But ethical and political correctness do not necessarily translate into theoretical relevance. Discussion has (hopefully) progressed past that political predicament. It is no longer enough to see local 'culture' as responsible for reproducing poverty (as Lewis hinted at), nor to defend it as 'rational' against 'middle-class' prejudice. As Bourgois (2001, 11905-11906) argued, contending over 'imagery' has 'impoverished' social research on poverty from a theoretical perspective:

At the turn of the millennium, much of the world's population survives precariously in shanty towns, housing projects, tenements, and homeless encampments where mind-numbing, bone-crushing experiences of poverty engulf the socially vulnerable. Meanwhile, concerned academics continue to fiddle in their ivory towers, arguing over how to talk correctly about the structural violence of poverty (ibid., 11906).

Despite this highly charged baggage, the relevance of 'culture' in poverty studies

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<sup>201</sup> Significantly Daniel P. Moynihan, who in 1965 wrote a report (*The Negro Family*) on the disintegration of the black American family, and William J. Wilson, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged* in 1987, who argued that class superseded racism in explaining the persistence of poverty (cf. Harvey and Reed 1996, 471-473; Leacock 1971, 11; Small, Harding and Lamont 2010, 7; Bourgois 2001, 11906).

has recently been reappraised in academia, for both scientific and political reasons (Small, Harding and Lamont 2010). Some of the benefits supporting renewed attention to culture include improving policy efficacy and explaining local diversity in 'coping' responses to poverty (ibid., 9-13). Current studies of poverty reject former static, homogeneous or overly broad definitions of 'culture', in favour of more clear-cut concepts (e.g. 'values', 'frames', 'repertoires' and 'narratives') (ibid., 14-19). They also deny the habitual dichotomy between 'culture' and 'social structure', begging for detailed examination of how the two are integrated (ibid., 8). Properly reframed in analytical rather than political terms, the debate calls for a framework able to dynamically incorporate social structure and local culture.

## 2.2 'Objective probabilities' and 'opportunity costs'

Residents in Topia appeared to prioritise short-term gains and immediate constraints. Their plans and tasks stood or fell on the availability of resources, social and family obligations, present opportunities and demands. Concrete future-planning was not common or encouraged (except for the immediate future), and distant plans took the form of abstract fantasies of affluence and well-being in people's life accounts. The gap between immediate plans and more abstract future ideals mirrored a contrast put forth by Bourdieu (1979, 1-94) in discussing Algerian peasants' time perceptions, between the 'forthcoming future' (*l'avenir pratique*) and the 'indefinite future' (*le futur*) (ibid., 14). This distinction and related argument will help to shed light on time attitudes and behaviours in Topia.

According to Bourdieu, subjects' 'dispositions' towards the future result from their daily material and social existence, internalised by individuals through repeated experience as structures of 'objective probabilities' (ibid., vii). These form part of the subject's 'class habitus', acting as 'structuring structures' for his daily life and future plans (ibid.). A direct implication of Bourdieu's argument is that different socio-economic conditions produce different kinds of future hopes and expectations, since these adjust themselves to what individuals perceive to be 'objectively' possible (cf. Scott 1976, 17). The basis for Bourdieu's distinction between 'futures' lies here. Facing daily material scarcity, unstable income, 'insecurity' and 'accident' (ibid.), lower classes (like Bourdieu's and Scott's peasants) adhere only to the 'given present' (Bourdieu 1979, 50). Theirs is the 'forthcoming future', with its concrete, objective and empirically predictable possibilities: 'right now I'm looking for a job'. The more distant future became for them 'indefinite', filled with only the 'abstractly' and imaginably possible (Bourdieu 1979, 14): having a house, a car, 'staying well', 'being happy'. This model also predicts and explains poor dwellers' difficult social

mobility: the near future, reproducing expectations based on past 'objective' experience, offered them limited choices. At the same time, potential rewards for a calculated long-term future (e.g. investing in formal education) remained for them distant and unreal (ibid., 51). Informants' images of the future composed 'daydreams of escape' (ibid., 62-63). Like idyllic portrayals of their collective past in the shanties (chapter 3), future wishes were also a statement about the present, made against whatever was seen as missing from it: 'so we won't lack anything'. But neighbours were aware of the futility of fantasising, and especially of trying to operate in the long term. Without 'objective' means to act beyond day-to-day situations, their advice not to 'think so much' was but a 'systematic contraction of the field of aspirations' to avoid seeing them crushed (ibid., 28). In Jenkins's paraphrasing: 'What is attempted ... is, by and large, what is possible' (Jenkins 1992, 13).

Bourdieu's model successfully reconciles structural socio-economic factors (material existence) with cultural time dispositions (part of the subject's internalised 'habitus'). Acknowledging the role of structure at the root of short-term orientation avoids the usual accusations of 'blaming the victim'. And it does so without falling into cultural relativism (as Liebow and Horton did), which by justifying local beliefs with context confines them to self-referential units isolated from wider society. The idea of 'objective probabilities' incorporated from repeated experience into subjective time 'dispositions' is a fruitful theoretical metaphor for cultural causation and reproduction. On the one hand it explains how 'cultural' contents come to be internalised by a group (or class) subjected to similar conditions. On the other, as opposed to former homogeneous concepts of culture, it can account for individual difference (as subjects' experiences will be, to a point, unique).

But as most attempts to overcome classical dichotomies, in this case between 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' perspectives (Jenkins 1992, 12), Bourdieu's model fails in some respects. Although the subject is seen to internalise mere 'dispositions' (meant to 'structure' rather than *determine* action), causality between objective world and subjective perceptions is assumed as unidirectional. In practice, Bourdieu's model engenders a nearly 'deterministic' universe in which subjects lack an active role (ibid., 61). If people are 'disposed' to act in a certain way, how to account for the times when they act differently? His argument emphasises persistence over change (much like Oscar Lewis did), which explains enduring poverty but fails to elucidate the few cases of upward mobility. Change can only arise from changing objective material conditions. In a diametrically opposed view to Lewis's 'culture of poverty', Bourdieu's causal link between 'structure' and 'culture' implies that deprivation must necessarily disappear before its resulting habitus can change.

In his (needlessly) dense volume on the anthropology of time, Gell (1996, 149-328)

outlined a model of time cognition which adds to Bourdieu's view of 'objective probabilities' by recognising a greater role to individual agency. Gell's theory, which drew support from economics, geography, philosophy (namely Husserl's phenomenology of time) and psychology (Neisser's rendering of the 'perceptual cycle'), was built around the fundamental idea of 'opportunity costs' (ibid., 213). According to Gell, human time-cognition operates through a stream of continuous feedback between events perceived by the subject and his/her mental representational schemas of how those events work in the world. These schemas form subjects' 'cognitive maps' of time (ibid., 189; cf. Shore 1996): theories of causality and probability. Individual perception continually feeds *from* these maps (creating momentary anticipations of what to expect next) as well as *into* them (validating or correcting them accordingly). Gell's temporal maps resemble Bourdieu's habitus in recognising 'the very specific restrictions on the subjective definition of "the possible", which is imposed by historicity' (Gell 1996, 266). In other words, both authors regard subjects' models of causality as resulting from 'previous experience and inductive generalizations therefrom', shaped by history, culture and class (ibid., 188). But a significant variation in Gell's model is the role given to agents' decision-making process. Unlike habitus, time maps are not seen as internalised predispositions acting in automatic fashion, but rather as abstract cognitive representations which are constantly converted and adjusted by the agent into 'beliefs about the situation "now"', in light of which 'action is eventually taken' and which 'survive' only to the extent that they are 'experientially validated' (ibid., 189, 324). Gell criticises Bourdieu's exclusive emphasis on practice to also highlight 'cultural knowledge; the forms of the representations in which abstract knowledge is held, and the logic of the procedures through which this knowledge is applied in practical situations' (ibid., 300; cf. Shore 1996, 265-266). This leads to the idea of 'opportunity costs'. For Gell (1996, 249), the causal world is conceived of as 'a multiplicity of incompatible futures, between which we must choose'. Limited time and resources mean that each individual decision of a particular path of action will necessarily entail foregoing alternative ones, with associated costs. In agents' perspectives, whatever is given up by not pursuing alternate courses of action is an 'opportunity cost'. Estimating these costs is at the heart of decision-making, as agents consider which course of action is 'consistent with the attainment of multiple, competing goals with lowest overall opportunity costs' (ibid., 255). Gell's borrowing of economic ideas of maximising does not preclude anthropological awareness of the processual, complex and situated nature of knowledge and practice. In his view, what forms 'a "feasible" alternative world' depends on 'socially determined ideas not objective facts', requiring the 'study of culturally constructed,

ethnographically grounded sets of possible worlds' (ibid., 217, 232).

Besides acknowledging individuals' active role in pursuing their own choices, Gell's argument rejects conventional dichotomies, to which Bourdieu (1979) falls prey, between Western-specific rationalities of abstract time-planning and non-Western, more present-oriented views of time (Gell 1996, 286-290; cf. Horton 1967). For Gell, all human time cognition is both 'lived' and 'represented', embodied and rationalised (ibid.). An implication of this is that the diversity of human attitudes towards time cannot be explained away by different kinds of time orientation, resulting instead from different local 'time maps', the product of different experiences of causality, and as such 'founded on a distinct set of contingent beliefs' about what is possible, plausible, probable and necessary (ibid., 291).

Institutional workers and residents in Topia held very distinct beliefs about the 'opportunity costs' of choosing to answer neighbours' immediate calls rather than attend CV appointments; spending money on branded clothes instead of saving it; or having children and starting work instead of finishing school. Middle-class beliefs in merit-based thriftiness clashed with residents' everyday evidence of school failure and 'bad' jobs. Based on lifetimes experiencing certain 'objective probabilities', NGO staff and residents carried distinctive cognitive 'maps' of the 'possible'. Workers' interpretations of people's decisions (not unlike 'culture-of-poverty' theorists) implicitly compared to Western middle-class values and defined them in *negative* terms, by what they seemed to lack: initiative, self-control, planning skills and long-term thinking. On the contrary, Gell's model of decision-making based on 'time maps' encourages a *positive* definition of residents' attitudes to time, underscoring the local causality beliefs which stood behind individual assessments of opportunity costs – in other words: what 'maps' people used to navigate their day-to-day.

### **2.3 Uncertainty: across the 'seascapes' of Topia**

All human life is, to an extent, filled with imponderables. But life in Topia reached exceptional levels of unpredictability. Each resident juggled unforeseeable demands due to neighbours' requests or unavailability, children's needs, social events and obligations, bills or sale opportunities. All these were met with limited resources and time and so entailed assessing opportunity costs for each alternative, prioritising some demands over others. In the process many needs, desires and commitments were postponed or dropped altogether: a lesson skipped because nobody could watch the children; a debt left to accrue interest; a course forfeited for lack of a bus pass; formal education renounced to give birth and start working. On other occasions, desires were indulged and opportunities taken, postponing

other important obligations: money was spent on clothes, hair extensions, a new kitchen appliance on credit, a restaurant dinner or a round of drinks at the café – leaving behind rent payments and monthly bills, children's school trips, a much needed bus pass.

Scarce earnings combined with systemic racism and suspicion of institutions to help cultivate strong local networks of interdependency and assistance which supplied invaluable daily resources (food items, passes, phone calls, lifts, childcare, etc.). However, these networks were highly unpredictable, often not reliable or available (Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 406). And the success of regular tasks could easily depend on others' willingness and availability. In a scenario where most people were subjected to this kind of interdependency, the ability to plan ahead and structure action over the long term was seriously hindered. Residents needed to constantly adjust their plans to the unstable nature of neighbours' resource supply. Each individual or family relied not only on their own income, energy and time (so often insufficient), but on those of a number of others, who in turn depended on still others to fulfil basic demands. Whether people were at home or their phones on when they needed to be reached; whether needed items had been borrowed by someone else; whether money or passes were available, or a driver to get a lift with – these factors shaped people's shifting prospects and plans. In this complicated web, uncertainty and unpredictability were an intrinsic component of existence (CNRM 2002c, 25).

Henrik Vigh (2009), researching the daily survival of young men in urban war-torn Bissau (Guinea), argued that a successful analysis of decision-making encompasses more than the interaction between moving agents and their environment. A 'third dimension' is missing: the motion of the setting (*ibid.*, 420). In Bissau this was a prominent aspect of existence: agents must show constant flexibility in adjusting their courses of action to a quickly shifting terrain of rumours and warnings of conflict. Vigh directly criticised Bourdieu's theory of practice for conceiving action within implicitly stable and static social fields (*ibid.*, 426-427). The same flaw might be pointed to Gell's model, which seemed to imply an equally stable "territory" – the real layout of events in time – of which we, as sentient being, have to form representations' (Gell 1996, 235). Conversely, Vigh saw his informants as 'navigating' towards personal goals across turbulent 'seascapes': a term meant to emphasise uncertainty and constant change in their environment (Vigh 2009, 428). Instability did not lie, Vigh clarified, in the setting alone, but in the agent's position within it. It followed from the lack of individual control over compelling social forces (*ibid.*, 430): more means would allow 'navigating' the same terrain with lower levels of uncertainty.

The same logic applied to Topia, where everyday tasks rested on unstable social networks of supplies, and residents (unlike middle-class institutional staff) were devoid of

resources, namely money, to allow for alternatives. This constantly shifting ground, over which people experienced little control, fomented specific kinds of cognitive temporal 'maps', in Gell's terms. Constant material uncertainty fostered beliefs in the primacy of subsistence, asserted even in moral terms (chapter 9), and an associated aversion to risk (Scott 1976). In residents' views, possibilities of working towards (quasi-middle-class) goals and controlling their future seemed narrow. Ambitions which could be effectively acted upon were more immediate ones. There were only short gaps of affluence ('the end of the month') wherein money could bring them closer to longings for comfort, status or style; there were limited arenas of life (sex and reproduction) where future dreams of emancipation could be achieved by girls in the present. In this sense, teenage pregnancy or expensive purchases did not illustrate an 'inability to defer gratification'. They were rather evident manifestations of goal-directed agency in a 'present-oriented' scenario: one overdetermined by unpredictability, granting agents limited control over long-term courses of action. Cognitive models of a world without foreseeable future pathways, where life plans did not (could not) consider feasible routes of action towards wanted goals, did not afford missing chances to act whenever these arose: mainly in the present.

The priority of subsistence and beliefs in the unpredictability of long-term existence also explained the importance given to material security and stability (Scott 1976). It justified poorer residents' heavy reliance on mutual assistance networks, people's concern with not refusing favours, as well as persistent complaints about others' failures (chapter 3). The central role of these networks in ensuring support in times of need warranted residents' continual investment in them (ibid., 28). Helping to cook for a party, visiting a *stera* or watching relatives' children were acceptable reasons to skip job-seeking sessions or IT lessons. Refusing neighbours' calls presented higher 'opportunity costs' than arriving late or missing an appointment: it jeopardised support ties which people would predictably need somewhere in the future. Guided by 'maps' depicting a hostile society and an uncertain material existence, exchanging favours was the safest and most effective way to invest in the long term – even as it multiplied the uncertainty of daily routines.

In this scenario, present-time orientation was revealed not as a cultural trait adhered to in poverty-stricken settings (as Lewis and others intended), but as a culturally-mediated feature of unstable settings themselves. Through the idea of cultural and symbolic time 'maps', Gell's model underscores the basic interplay between the social and material setting and individual action. Patterns of past social experience made for cognitive renderings of Topia as a turbulent 'seascape' of short-reaching agency. A moving terrain of unpredictable social demands and resources, social life in Topia bred constant uncertainty and continually

obstructed foreseeable routes of action to future goals. The third dimension pinpointed by Vigh added an essential vector – motion – to a static landscape of material disadvantage. It rendered institutional advices to 'think' problems over, plan ahead or defer consumption moot. What was ultimately behind people's choices was not a different cultural *orientation* to time (although specific ways of coping with instability could be socially learned), but a different *kind of* 'spatio-temporal layout of the practical world' (Gell 1996), or to borrow Foucault's (1986, 26) term a 'heterochrony':<sup>202</sup> one lacking enough certainty or stability (integral to NGO workers' 'maps') to open routes to planned desirable futures. Rosenbaum, Reynolds and Deluca (2002) analysed the impact on low-income families of being moved from housing projects to middle-class suburbs. They described individuals' increased sense of control over their lives in the new setting, concluding that the 'attributes of neighbourhoods and the experiences provided by neighbourhoods have profound effects on people's capabilities and their ideas about what they can accomplish' (ibid., 81). What they reported was the result of a 'geography of opportunity' (ibid.). Dwelling places can shape inhabitants' life prospects by constraining their ability to act and succeed, and so their beliefs about agency and success. In residents' goal-directed navigation across the uncertain 'seascapes' of Topia life, schedules, plans, savings and schooling were regular 'opportunity costs' of investing daily in the possible.

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<sup>202</sup> A 'slice of time' of exceptional nature, often linked to a heterotopia (cf. Westwood and Williams 1997, 6).

## **Conclusion: Place matters**

Ethnography is tied up with a long tradition of exploring 'particular places' (Ward 2003, 80; Geschiere and Meyer 1998, 603), to the point where the practice of ethnographers in the field can itself be construed as 'place-making' (Pink 2008; Hastrup 2010). Recent academic exhortations to look beyond place – into wider scales of analysis in a global world – collide with a basic difficulty in doing (and thinking) without notions of the spatial and the local, especially in anthropology (Metcalf 2001). In the introduction, I outlined several conceptual proposals aimed at reformulating 'place' in light of global and transnational concerns. The shortcomings of these proposals indicate that they repeatedly miss something. I suggested that what they miss is the concept of 'place' itself (which they repeatedly try to eschew), and how place matters in fundamental ways in the experiences of people all across the transnational globe.

The aim of this thesis is therefore threefold. First, on an empirical level, it means to provide an original ethnographic account of life in a poor ethnic urban setting, adding to an established anthropological tradition of urban ethnographies of similar contexts. Secondly, on an analytical level, it stands to challenge the current 'transnational' emphasis in studies of migration in the social sciences, by highlighting the importance of spatial and territorial dynamics in the everyday experience of a particular group of people, who are 'mobile' in a double sense: as second generations of migrants (coping with a 'foreign' status and society's discrimination against them), and as former inhabitants of shanty towns forcibly relocated to a building estate. The prominence of mobility and cultural hybridity in the life trajectories of these people should make them an especially suited focus for a transnational approach. As I hope to have demonstrated, this was not the case. A focus on transnational issues would bypass prominent and substantial aspects of local life including, among others I discussed: neighbourhood ties, familiarity codes and assistance networks, moral subsistence claims, theories about social relations in space, oppositional identity-building, territoriality and resistance to government intervention and the host society, dynamics of socio-spatial exclusion, responses to unemployment and inactivity, local conceptions of probability and the future. A transnational perspective would hardly be illuminating of these people's concerns, priorities and strategies in coping with everyday scarcity, inequality and exclusion. In contrast, the third aim of this thesis was to put forth and illustrate in practice an ethnographic perspective alternative to transnationalism, better able to capture the different scales and factors (both local and global) that matter to agents

themselves. Through a focus on local practices and discourses of *boundary-making*, I have provided a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between residents (especially women) and the neighbourhood they lived in, what daily life looked like inside it, and how it was constituted and reproduced as a meaningful place. To the question formulated earlier in the introduction: 'how can we rethink place in a world so evidently marked by flux, transience and disjuncture?', I presented one possible answer, grounded in a case study of one migrant group: we should look at how people define place and its meanings through the complex everyday processes of boundary creation and maintenance which demarcate that place for them as a significant unit.

The rest of this conclusion will be divided into two parts. Part 1 will discuss at greater length the main implications of this study, including the shortcomings of transnationalism as an approach (section 1.1), the enduring importance of space, territory and physical proximity (1.2), some contributions to the debate on structure, agency and poverty (1.3), and the main implications of focusing on boundary production (1.4). In part 2 I will return to two important limitations of the research, namely my preponderant focus on women (2.1) and on second generations (2.2), and point to interesting threads of future research (2.3).

## **1. Implications of the research**

### **1.1 The limits of transnationalism**

A major implication of this research is the confirmation of some of the shortcomings in the current transnational orientation in migration studies. As explained in the introduction, transnationalism has been advocated from the 1990s as a productive way to look at the complexity of human and cultural phenomena in an increasingly mobile and interconnected globe. This perspective mostly came to react against former assumptions of a direct correspondence between particular groups of people, culture and places. To correct previous taken-for-granted views of places as confined physical units with correspondingly bounded cultures, stress has shifted instead to the 'unbounded' and 'deterritorialised' quality of cultural and social processes (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Given the complexity of spatial configurations and cross-border movements in the world, rejecting previous assumptions of territorial confinement has been a step forward. New phenomena have subsequently come under focus: how people everywhere cope locally with globalised inflows of people, cultural habits, products, transactions and discourses (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Appadurai 2008).

In today's world, transnational issues can hardly be disregarded. This was also true of Topia, where transnational forces and products had a marked presence. They were visible for example in the coexistence of mixed cultural references and habits in the neighbourhood – Portuguese, European and Cape Verdean (chapter 4), including first generations' family connections, trips and postal packages to Cape Verde, and second generations' family links, in turn, to richer European countries (chapter 5). They were also manifest in young residents' consumption of 'transnational' styles of music and dance (*funaná, batuku, zouk, rap*), produced and distributed across the Cape Verdean diaspora (Cidra 2008a; Monteiro 2008; Raposo 2007, 38-39). A more consequential example of global forces at play in Topia was the legacy of Portuguese colonial racism, which still carried profound effects for local identity-building (chapter 5). Finally, perhaps the clearest indication of transnational forces operating in Topia was the deeply felt local effects of worldwide capitalist dynamics – namely of industrial delocalisation and the cardinal role of consumption – on unskilled unemployment and families' economic distress (chapter 9). These local configurations of transnational factors are of course interesting and important to consider. But they coexisted with more circumscribed references, spatial practices and territorial dynamics which merit equal attention and discussion.

Looking at the global should not mean losing sight of the local. Social analysis should be able to reconcile the forest with the trees. Caveats against assuming the 'isomorphism of space, place and culture' cannot be replaced with equally inflexible assumptions of 'deterritorialisation' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 7; Metcalf 2001). That would merely replace short-sightedness with long-sightedness. It is not that ethnographers interested in transnationalism have failed to look at local phenomena: all transnational connections (even financial transactions and virtual communication) are to an extent situated or manifested in space (Harvey 1985, 149). Ethnographies of globalisation are interested in how global and transnational processes are lived and articulated *locally* (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Donner and De Neve 2006). However, their emphasis on movement and cross-border fluidity can overlook how people's appropriations of, or reactions to globalism can conversely lead to an exacerbation of the local as an increasingly meaningful reference (Brun 2001; Massey 1997; Erdentug and Colombijn 2002). My extensive account of the lives of a migrant population in Topia gave evidence to the limitations of a mainly global or transnational focus. Not only would a transnational discussion of Topia make for an impoverished ethnographic exercise, but it would also unquestionably downplay the significance of space, territory and physical proximity in residents' everyday lives and routines.

## 1.2 The importance of space, territory and proximity

Another important implication of this study concerns the enduring human significance of space and physical distance, even at an age of enhanced mobility, virtual communications and fast transport. Despite prevailing international flows of people, objects and information, my ethnography of Topia demonstrated how physical proximity – namely sharing a living space – can continue to be relevant for daily interactions and mutual assistance, at least until it becomes 'possible to transport a cup of sugar electronically' (Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 423). In particular, my analysis in chapters 2 and 3 highlighted how personal ties, material exchanges and social conflict, as well as people's ideas and expectations about them, can be shaped by the fact of living together and being physically close. In a related argument, chapter 6 confirmed how direct constraints on physical mobility (as basic as not affording bus fares) can contribute to structure people's everyday movements and networks of social connections, making clear how the burden of 'imposed immobility' can fall on the more destitute (Åkesson 2004, 54). On a different level, living in a relatively undifferentiated socio-economic space – enough for place of residence to become conflated with economic status in people's minds (chapter 5) – also has implications for what kind of expectations and aspirations people can hold in life. As argued in chapter 10, the way residents conceived the social world to work followed from how the immediate world around them was seen to behave. People's theories of causality and probability were shaped by their repeated experiences of the possible (Bourdieu 1979; Gell 1996). In a scenario of generalised material scarcity, uncertainty (compounded by primary reliance on neighbours), unemployment and school failure, the repertoire of the possible took on very specific forms. It worked to contract individual plans, priorities, investments for the future, contributing to reproduce situations of poverty and exclusion (Madanipour 2011; Rosenbaum, Reynolds and Deluca 2002).

In that sense, this thesis is also importantly about how social exclusion can be operated spatially (Madanipour 2011; Wacquant 2007; Castells 2004). Living or having lived in particular places ('problematic neighbourhoods') has effects on people's lives. As argued in chapters 8 and 9, space can work effectively as a conceptual device for human classification: much like 'race' (Hacking 2005), it can serve to homogenise its occupants, inhabitants or trespassers as certain 'kinds of people' (Hacking 2006), which impacts on how others (including media and the state) respond. The potential of space to draw conceptual distinctions between people can also influence possibilities for social change

and upward mobility, which may require more than simply making money: moving out of a 'problematic' neighbourhood (Rosenbaum, Reynolds and Deluca 2002; Kelly 1995, 226).

Spatial 'stigmatisation' was a defining feature of life in Topia (Wacquant 2007). However this did not entail, as Wacquant believed it would, 'spatial alienation and the dissolution of "place"', or the loss of informal neighbour support (ibid.; cf. Auyero 2000). On the contrary, I gave evidence that residents' physical proximity (chapter 2) and mobility restrictions (chapter 6), along with their mistrust of outside institutions (chapter 8), encouraged practices of communal assistance, local feelings of familiarity and safety, collectively 'shared notions and joint meanings' (Wacquant 2007, 69). Moreover, spatial exclusion worked to exalt oppositional definitions of identity – partly based on place of residence – and inflame resistance against the outside, contributing to demarcate and defend (rather than 'dissolve') the neighbourhood as a collective space and a stronghold of identity (chapters 5, 7 and 8). The practices and meanings of territoriality in Topia were fundamentally tied to matters of identity and the relationships between migrants and the host society – the exact sorts of issues bound to interest transnationally-oriented studies of migration (Vertovec 2007).

Examining spatial and territorial exclusion goes beyond an academic exercise. Analysing spatial stigmatisation can expose mechanisms of social injustice and their reproduction, and therefore inform projects of advocacy and civic engagement. Low (2011) called attention to this. In her words, 'theories and methodologies of space and place can uncover systems of exclusion that are hidden or naturalized and thus rendered invisible to other approaches' (ibid., 391). This is the case with council estates. Spatial planning often incorporates, maintains and reveals the operation of governmental, economic and social mechanisms of domination, subjugation and resistance (Lawrence and Low 1990, 482-489). Relations of class, race and culture are importantly 'reproduced in the built environment' (ibid., 486). The frequent association of poverty, social marginalisation and spatial stigmatisation is not coincidental (Kelly 1995). This usual conjunction can be confirmed by the fact that groups of poor urban dwellers so distant in space and time (e.g. Young and Willmott 1957; Liebow 1967; Anderson 1990; Bourgois 2003) appear to share strikingly similar loads and recurring problems (Lewis 1998). Bourgois' (2001) reminder that everywhere in the world today 'mind-numbing, bone-crushing experiences of poverty engulf the socially vulnerable', compounded still by the recent economic crisis and dire prospects of global warming, makes it urgent to account for how these injustices are spatially effected and reproduced and how people respond to them in locally specific ways.

### 1.3 Structure, agency and the 'undeserving poor'

Life in Topia, routinely marked by scarcity and material uncertainty, unemployment and government intervention, was visibly constrained at social and material levels. Agents navigated amid unstable resources, multiple commitments and coercions, to pursue personal and interpersonal projects, hopes and goals. They devised 'tactics' to bypass daily obstacles (e.g. chapter 6) or mechanisms to cope with them – namely through reliance on neighbours – even if these might bring new kinds of difficulties to manage (chapters 3 and 10). People's priorities, concerns and their responses to the strains of everyday life were shaped by particular cultural legacies – from rural Cape Verde, Portuguese colonialism and racism (chapters 4 and 5) – by moral claims to the right of subsistence (chapter 9), by urban expectations of consumerism (chapter 10). Their choices in turn contributed to shape society's response to them, fuelling opposition, discrimination and exclusion (chapter 5, 8, 9). Life in Topia (and its production as a place) involved the continual interplay of what people did, what was imposed on them, what they appropriated, changed and resisted. Here elements of structure, culture and agency could only be differentiated in artificial and superficial ways. Detailed ethnographies of settings like this (e.g. Bourgois 2003), including how different variables (material, cultural, personal) are involved in people's actions and concerns, can help bypass cumbersome dualisms between the objective and subjective, structure and agency (e.g. Jenkins 1992).

One impression I tried to convey in the ethnography is to what extent residents in Topia were, at once, victims and agents. Structural constraints on daily life were clear (of money, jobs, mobility), and so were people's creativity, resourcefulness and exertion to handle them. My position in the field afforded close observation of women. As a group subjected to asymmetrical gender responsibilities and male control, women's routines made this duality between agency and constraint all the more clear. In relation to men, women had a subordinated social position. Their daily plight to make ends meet while struggling with discrimination, social and economic exclusion was compounded by the burden of gender duties: to have several children and provide for them; to care for the household amid ridiculous (long and irregular) working hours; to assist neighbours in preparing and serving food for (frequent) special occasions; to limit their presence on the streets and handle partners' jealousy and infidelity. These women were clearly victims. Failing to acknowledge it would betray them by downplaying the devastating effects of material, socio-economic and cultural constraints on their lives (Bourgois 2003). But they were certainly not *passive* victims (ibid., 11-12). They were determined agents who manoeuvred

using certain and uncertain resources, criticising, circumventing, resisting or confronting the forces which oppressed them: by skipping institutional appointments (chapter 10); speaking Creole in front of outsiders (chapter 4); selecting which requests to oblige or avoid (chapter 3); dropping out of school and taking control of their sexuality (chapter 10); eating, dancing and having fun (chapter 7); getting driver's licenses (chapter 6) and buying nice expensive things (chapter 10); managing work and welfare, choosing between job offers and devising their own ways to make money (e.g. vending) (chapter 9). Personal diligence, local codes and meanings, social opportunities and constraints were intimately interwoven in women's routines. If structure and agency can be challenging to integrate and reconcile analytically, here they appear instead difficult to extricate.

My account of Topia also touched on an ancillary debate: on the 'undeserving' poor. As discussed in chapter 10, how scholars conceptualise the limits of, and the relationships between personal choice, cultural dispositions and socio-economic structure can influence public debate and policy (Bourdieu 1998). Blaming victims implies taking the burden of responsibility from society and governments to poor individuals themselves (Rose and Miller 2010; Donzelot 1980), spurring public reactions against social expenditure and the abhorrent figure of the welfare 'cheat' (chapter 9). On the other hand, blaming cultural dispositions for the reproduction of hardship (as 'culture-of-poverty' explanations did) can ultimately lead to suggestions of psychiatric intervention to tackle poverty (Lewis 1998, 9). The problem becomes how to reconcile a view of poor urban dwellers as both agents of strength and initiative *and* as subjected to ineluctable structural impediments. I tried to convey that both sides were integral to people's experiences in Topia. In that respect, I argued that daily life in this place (of concentrated deprivation and exclusion compounded by uncertainty) opened limited possibilities and paths to personal success (as measured through culturally shaped aspirations of consumption and family well-being), and the range of perceived options entered individuals' everyday calculations, investments and decisions: to spend money, look for work, have children, break the law, drop out of school (chapters 9 and 10). People everywhere choose to engage with the world around them in specific ways. But choices are neither infinite nor free. They incorporate desires, categories, theories of probability and success which are shaped by the cultural, social and material world around them, and which in turn contribute to shape that world. Marx's (2005, 1) maxim that 'men make their own history', but only 'under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past' also rings true here.

A third related point suggested by the ethnography is that urban poverty and material deprivation can take particular local shapes and meanings. However similar the

social concerns described by ethnographers of poor urban settings (e.g. illegality and imprisonment, drug traffic and addiction, teenage pregnancy, school failure), there are differing degrees, patterns and consequences of poverty (Lewis 1959). I repeatedly referred to 'poverty' and 'scarcity' in the context of Topia, even though everyone there lived in a flat, most residents had water and electricity, modern appliances such as washing machines and television sets, even mobile phones, many walked around and dressed their children in branded clothes, some individuals had cars, and a few owned computers. Glimpses of flats furnished in IKEA, plasma TVs, children's Nike trainers and Pepe-Jeans t-shirts can be difficult to reconcile with ideas of people struggling to make ends meet. They can even provoke indignation at people's perceivably 'self-destructive' or undeserving conduct (Bourgeois 2003). However, desired commodities often went hand in hand with empty bank accounts. As described in chapter 10, people had particular cycles of spending, beginning at pay day. There were short windows of abundance after receiving wages or benefits, alternating with more prolonged periods of scarcity. People took advantage of temporary affluence to realise some of the many desires and impulses frustrated or postponed the rest of the time. Normative advice (namely from NGO staff) to save money for emergencies or priority expenses (like rent) would likely make life even harder, by denying residents the few fleeting pleasures some still managed to obtain. Occasional glimpses of comfort did not obliterate people's continued material needs: not only for commodities and services themselves, but for job stability and financial security, social acceptance as consumers (chapter 9), personal fulfilment and the ability to plan in the long term (chapter 10).

#### **1.4 Looking at boundaries**

This thesis illustrates the benefits of analysing the relationships between people, social ties and place through the lens of boundary-making. There are specific implications to my proposal and use of this concept. 'Boundaries' was not a local concept in Topia, but rather an analytical choice. Adopting a local, culturally specific definition would limit the relevance of my perspective to the study of this particular setting (Barth 2000, 19), and invalidate my wider suggestion that place-making might be productively addressed across settings through the study of boundaries. Therefore, I adopted 'boundaries' as an open-ended analytical tool, helpful in focusing the ethnographic gaze on how agents shape and reproduce places. In this sense my thesis is not about how a particular group of people 'conceptualised' place or boundaries (Barth 2000), although this can be involved (chapters 3 and 5). My attention to boundaries was meant instead to capture how local social

practices, discourses, routines, interactions – in a nutshell, the flesh and blood of daily life – operated to produce and sustain specific spatial configurations, relations and meanings which had import on people's experiences of the world.

At a descriptive level, this embracing perspective has the benefit of a comprehensive grasp of local life. It is therefore well-suited for ethnography, defined as a holistic endeavour. Place boundaries can be produced through a variety of processes and dynamics, to be investigated in each setting. I tried to illustrate how the production of place boundaries in Topia involved a complex constellation of entangled social factors and dimensions, including practices, discourses, embodied and cognitive dimensions, material, symbolic, economic and institutional domains. My account exemplified how a focus on the social production of place boundaries affords a detailed and extensive ethnographic description of people's practices, experiences and routines in a specific setting, and how different variables and scales are locally articulated.

Focusing on boundaries also carries analytical implications for the study of places. In light of the many difficulties, outlined in the introduction, with current theoretical perspectives on place, the benefits of this approach are several. First, as a concept, boundary production is ample and flexible enough to embrace agents' specific definitions of the scales, relevance, methods and implications of local processes of inclusion and exclusion. The concept's indeterminacy avoids taking for granted the association between 'place' and confinement (cf. chapter 6) or attachment (cf. chapter 3), while it also avoids assuming the primacy of transnational levels of analysis (chapter 5). Looking at which social processes constitute, in each local setting, the distinctions and meanings of 'inside' versus 'outside' draws focus away from a static correspondence between cultures and locations, and onto wider, more interesting and pressing issues like belonging, participation, identity and exclusion. Enthusiasm about transnationalism can obscure the extent to which these matters can be directly tied to spatial meanings, territorial claims or government 'politics of "fixing"' boundaries (Geschiere and Meyer 1998, 605; Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005; Massey 1997). Looking at how boundaries are produced can correct both the old anthropological habit of taking for granted the 'primitive isolate'; as well as the new transnational penchant for a 'bird's eye perspective' (Geschiere and Meyer 1998, 603, 605). The focus on boundary-making permits reconciliation of all scales which matter for local agents: local (chapters 2 and 3), municipal (chapter 6), national (chapter 5), transnational (chapter 4) and global (chapter 9).

As explained in the introduction, a central dilemma in current studies of place in the social sciences is the trouble of devising a balanced viewpoint able to combine awareness

of how social phenomena today are importantly marked by flow and movement; with attention to the enduring significance of people's attachments to, and definitions of the local (Geschiere and Meyer 1998). An approach to boundary production makes a relevant contribution to this dilemma. As my ethnography of Topia illustrated, by looking at agents' definitions of what is relevant, dynamics of mobility and fluidity can be productively incorporated with meanings of stasis and confinement. Unlike a transnational perspective, looking at what constitutes a place – what defines contextually an inside versus an outside and insiders vis-a-vis outsiders – does not entail prior assumptions of what phenomena should be prioritised, their scale or nature. Instead, it pays attention to products and effects: which social processes result, willing or unwillingly, in the production of place boundaries which are meaningful or consequential for agents? Being true to all the movement and flow in the world inevitably has consequences for how space and places are analytically construed. But the predicament comes from taking this to mean that space and places are therefore inevitably fluid in themselves – when this can clash with basic evidence to the contrary (e.g. Connerton 2009; Metcalf 2001; Brun 2001; Massey 1997). As the case of Topia illustrates, local mechanisms, meanings and criteria of incorporation and exclusion can include both territorial configurations (chapter 7) and dynamics of travel and translocality (chapter 6). Acknowledging boundaries as dynamic creations can solve this quandary by reconciling the fluidity of the process (of place production) with the stability of the results: the 'retentive' quality and apparent 'perduringness' of places (Casey 1996). In other words, places can be conceptualised at once as fluid *and* static by considering how the fluid creation of boundaries can produce stable effects, meanings and experiences of place for local agents – thus overcoming the apparent contradiction between the two poles.

The ability of a boundary-focused perspective to reconcile fluidity with stasis in current debates on place and globalisation suggests another direct implication: that re-conceptualising 'place' in today's highly mobile globe may be as simple as re-conceptualising boundaries. 'Boundary', like 'place' itself, is a simple, familiar concept. It is used on everyday contexts to denote broad ideas of limit: anything that encloses, separates or divides. Anthropologists' old assumptions of places' fixed territorial confinement were logically tied to definitions of place boundaries as, in turn, fundamentally fixed and definite territorial divisions (Kirby 2009, 5-10; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997, 2-3; Sibley 1995, 32-33). As argued in the introduction, these assumptions about boundaries have long been explicitly contested (e.g. Barth 1969; Kuper 1972; Pellow 1996), and boundaries conversely seen as fluid, contextual, porous constructs. Yet implications of this more complex view of boundaries have strangely not been brought to bear on current

debates about transnationalism and place, where movement and boundedness still appear difficult to reconcile. This was also my project in this thesis. I have taken boundaries as pervious, 'disjunct' (Appadurai 2008), contextual and dynamic productions, and explored in practice how this richer understanding allows a comprehensive grasp of how one place (Topia) was constituted and reproduced in complex ways, and what significance it carried at multiple levels for its inhabitants. If taken seriously, this complex view of boundaries can help a more productive and sophisticated understanding of places. Seeing boundaries as multiple, disjunct and contextual products means there will not be 'one' line or criterion of place demarcation, but probably several; and that these may diverge, 'fluctuate' and 'overlap' without that posing a problem (Kuper 1972, 422). Places, like identities, are contextually defined (Barth 1969; Leach 2004; Evans-Pritchard 1940).

A third related attribute of boundaries is their porous and elastic quality. It makes possible interactions and exchanges across boundaries, and allows outsiders to penetrate them, either temporarily or more permanently. This was the nature of my own progress through fieldwork, gradually moving across several of these lines: as a neighbour and target of others' requests and assistance (chapters 2 and 3), a participant in Cape Verdean rites (chapter 4), a visitor to other Cape Verdean settlements (chapter 6), a 'friend of a friend' (chapter 7). But again the disjunct and fragmented nature of Topia's boundaries was clear – some lines I could never cross, namely those shaped by literacy and occupation (chapter 9), skin colour and, ironically, residence (introduction).

## **2. Limitations and future research**

### **2.1 Privileged voices: women**

My ethnographic account of life in Topia, although comprehensive of many levels, scales and dimensions, remains inevitably 'partial' (Clifford 1986). Some prominent silences and limitations of this study were discussed in chapter 1 (including constraints dictated by time, informants' suspicion and my concerns over anonymity). Here, I will expand further on the implications of two significant biases (where the partiality of my account is possibly most evident and consequential): my privileged focus on women and second-generation residents.

Unsurprisingly, my own position as a woman in the field granted me easier access to other women, which shaped my interests, foci and conclusions (Callaway 1992). Women were primary agents in practices of neighbour assistance and interactions involving food. They were alone responsible for caring for children and the household. Their presence on

the street was restricted to certain spots (like Baker's Star café or the vendor's hub) and times of day (outside working hours and meals), and their movements more closely controlled by men. Their chats and interests (e.g. recipes, supermarket prices, children's items) were shaped by their responsibilities and practical concerns. Despite local gender asymmetries and the burden of family duties, women were prominent and active figures in social life: as mothers, neighbours, partners, workers, housewives. Their experiences and daily strife are certainly worthy of attention. While many studies exist about women's experiences of migration (cf. Donato et al. 2006), I have come across few extensive ethnographies of ethnic urban settlements which were either conducted by female ethnographers, or which successfully avoided focusing mainly on male informants' perspectives (for exceptions see Lewis 1959 and Horta 2000). Conversely, several classical studies (Whyte 1943; Liebow 1967; Horton 1967), and more recent ones (Bourgois 2003), have provided a closer glance into men's behaviours, discourses, attitudes and moral codes: on employment and illegality, peer-groups, masculinity, street conduct, sex and relationships. My account of Topia, shaped by my position and access in the field (chapter 1), conversely paid closer attention to women's points of view. This was not an exclusive focus. I included in most chapters ethnographic material from observations and interviews with men. Nor was it a conscious decision from the start. On the contrary, I detailed in chapter 1 my (unsuccessful) attempts to gain deeper access to the male world. Regardless of the merits of giving voice to female informants in my account of Topia, this bias carries important consequences and limitations.

First, certain themes and social dynamics became especially prominent through observing chiefly female routines. That was the case with neighbour requests and assistance. Women were primary agents in favours, gifts and mutual support between neighbours (Weeks 2012b, 7; Plickert, Côté and Wellman 2007, 422; Gonçalves and Pinto 2001, 114). Their assigned role in household management, namely cooking, made them indispensable in assisting others on special family occasions (which importantly revolved around food), including celebrations and events of death. Childcare, for similar reasons, was also mainly asked of women. Informants' statements that in the old shanties women usually stayed at home possibly contributed to reinforce their privileged role in neighbour interactions and requests. It made sense, in this context, that it was mostly women who nostalgically longed for 'the open door' of shanty neighbourhoods (chapter 3).

Aside from neighbour support, other topics came to my attention mainly through my interactions with women. Women's shopping, for example, importantly contributed to shape my research interests. I observed their favoured purchases, their cycle of spending,

the way they managed finances and stretched out meagre earnings to meet family needs, amid subsistence demands to the state (chapters 9 and 10). In the end, female shopping also sparked my interest in practices of translocality (chapter 6), including the mobility constraints involved, as it sometimes involved travelling to grocers near the old slums. Women's visits and parties in other Cape Verdean settlements (which they often helped to prepare) complemented these practices and opened my eyes to the familiar and symbolic connections between Topia and other neighbourhoods. The female perspective was also salient in my accounts of local engagement in Cape Verdean rites (chapter 4) – in which cooking and preparation also played a major role – as well as residents' relationships with institutions (chapter 8), both inside Topia and outside (including social security, lawyers and medical services).

If my privileged contact with women encouraged and facilitated examining certain topics, my limited interactions with men, on the other hand, deterred access to men's viewpoints on the same topics, and the pursuit of a series of others. One important issue I was unable to explore was the practice of illicit activities, including drug dealing. The presence of drugs in Topia was known to me by passing mentions to the men selling them on the street (as well as statements about 'trafficking' in the shanties) or to neighbours who had been in prison for selling or carrying drugs across the border. The fact that drugs obviously played a part in the neighbourhood's economy, and most likely in men's street interactions, made this silence an important limitation of my research. The same way that a focus on women drew special attention to neighbour requests and assistance, so limited access to men likely downplayed the role of hierarchy, social differentiation, rivalry and social chains of respect, which can be prominent in the drug economy (cf. Bourgois 2003). As Bourgois (2003) compellingly described about East Harlem, the context of illicit street activities (including drug trade) can allow some individuals to ascend quickly in wealth, social prestige and respect, which can entail recruiting other men's loyalty and assistance, namely hiring them as subordinates and balancing public displays of generosity and violence (*ibid.*). I failed to gather more detailed information on local codes of masculinity and peer conduct on the streets because I was unable to observe men's direct interactions in these contexts. My limited access also prevented examination of men's views about family, children and sexuality, which I mostly gained insight into through their effects on women and women's attitudes, complaints and position in heterosexual relationships. Regarding some of the other issues which interested me, I was able to explore them in interviews with male informants. That was the case, for example, with young men's attitudes regarding police. However, despite recording interesting accounts, I missed the opportunity to get

richer data through direct observation. The same can be said of men's attitudes to work. Although different topics (including these) were probed in informal conversations, I could not reach the same level of detail in the case of men that I attained on women's activities, representations and priorities. Given this bias in favour of women, it may be considered surprising that I did not devote a chapter to gender or women's roles, but only referred to them in relatively brief passages (e.g. chapter 2). This was a choice determined by my focus on the production of place. Although this omission could be construed as a limitation in a purportedly comprehensive account, an encompassing grasp should not efface the point and focus of the research. My project was not to describe every aspect of life in Topia – although, as argued, looking at place-making did foster an inclusive ethnographic perspective. My research question was defined clearly: how was Topia constituted and reproduced, in multiple processes of boundary-making, as a significant place in residents' experiences? Although all social interaction, in Topia and elsewhere, is inevitably gendered (Callaway 1992), my account of boundary-making would not be greatly advanced by a specific discussion of gender patterns or codes. I therefore approached gender codes and relations merely to contextualise other aspects of local life, since they appeared not to contribute directly or significantly to the production of place in Topia.

## **2.2 Privileged voices: second generations**

My study contains another similar bias, regarding age. Again, my profile in the field facilitated access to informants close to my own age (in their twenties and thirties). This was decisive in shaping my research questions. However, unlike with men, my access to first and third generations of residents was not difficult. NWIV and their activities presented many opportunities to observe teenagers in Topia, and my female informants enabled observing younger children at home, parties and family events. Additionally, Domingas, Adelaide, Nívea and José were all first-generation migrants. My interactions with them and their neighbours, along with Diana and Fabi's parents, complemented by interviews conducted with other first-generation migrants (both from rural Portugal and abroad), ensured I had much information about older age-groups in Topia. In fact, this encouraged direct comparison of generational conceptions and habits concerning religious practice (chapter 4), transnational connections (chapter 5) and attitudes towards work, idleness and income (chapter 9). On the other hand, my predominant focus on second generations was also easier to justify. As described in the introduction, the rehoused population in Topia was fairly young (Fig. 4, introduction). According to the 2010

municipal survey, people aged twenty to thirty-four made up alone 25% of tenants (roughly the same figure as all tenants above fifty). As such, the practices and views of younger residents were especially salient in the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, just as with gender, my closer attention to second generations largely conditioned my focus, leading me to highlight certain topics, phenomena and viewpoints to the detriment of others.

This was significantly the case with identity-building among Cape Verdeans. As discussed in chapter 5, first and second-generation Cape Verdeans maintained very different interests in, and ties with Cape Verde, contributing to young people's distinctive mechanisms of identification. The nature of these processes, namely how they were tied to young Cape Verdeans' tense interactions with white Portuguese society, was key in the production of Topia as a place *in opposition to* the outside. The suspicion and territoriality displayed towards outsiders were also connected to the central role assumed by the neighbourhood (as a place of residence enmeshed with racial meanings) in younger residents' experiences. Therefore, my discussion of gate-keeping and territorial practices (chapters 7 and 8) was primarily grounded on the observation of second generations. Although every resident on the street had a part in 'controlling' the trajectories of strange whites inside Topia, second-generation men featured most prominently in hostile stances on street corners. Residents in their twenties and thirties were also the protagonists of the frequent Cape Verdean parties described in chapter 7. Although children were usually present and older guests took part in the cooking and eating on family occasions, it was mostly young men and women who participated in the drinking and dancing. This perception may have been biased by the fact that, for most parties I attended, my access was gained through Diana or Fabi (both in their twenties). In my account of these parties, I privileged my own viewpoint (of a participating white outsider) rather than theirs. However, the routines, attitudes and comments I described were primarily those of second-generation Cape Verdeans. As indicated in chapter 6, residents' trips to other settlements happened frequently because of these parties or family gatherings. Consequently, it was often the movements and footsteps of second-generation residents I followed in tracing translocal connections with other Cape Verdean settlements. Rap songs in Creole (which expressed these connections clearly) were similarly the appanage of younger men. My attention to these topics significantly focused my interest on the production of Topia as a place. Unlike limited access to the male perspective, which excluded important aspects and practices of place-making from the analysis, my concentration on second generations did arguably not have the same effect. Partly because of their preponderance in number (they formed the majority of tenants), but also of the distinct nature of their relation with the

urban consumerist society where they grew up (unlike their parents), second generations were the privileged agents in the reproduction of Topia as a meaningful place. But as their children grow up and become autonomous agents on the streets, their own perspectives will expectedly come to influence the relations between residents and the neighbourhood, opening up interesting paths for further research.

### **2.3 Future research**

My account of place-making in Topia remains inevitably limited and partial. Its shortcomings include favouring the perspectives, concerns and routines of certain groups of informants (women and second generations), but also constraints resulting from informants' suspicion and uncooperativeness, and my difficulties in building rapport in this setting (chapter 1). These limitations suggest some avenues for further research.

An obvious ethnographic gap to fill is the study of men's perspectives in Topia, including their economic activities, gender representations, status codes and peer interactions. It would be interesting to ascertain how these contribute to processes of spatial delimitation, incorporation and exclusion. The same could be said about third and fourth generations. It remains to be seen how they will come to develop their own ways to relate to Topia and Portuguese society, and what new meanings the neighbourhood may come to assume in their lives.

From a wider perspective, much could be gained from comparative ethnographies of poor ethnic urban settings like Topia. Even when distant in time and space, these sites share many problems, which their inhabitants tackle through specific strategies. Several attempts of comparison already exist, especially in the American context (e.g. Wacquant 2007; Freidenberg 1995). But while attention has been devoted to discussing alternative theoretical models and explanations for poverty (e.g. Susser 1996; Harvey and Reed 1992), much remains to be done on an empirical level. Ethnography is well equipped for this endeavour (Anderson 2009; Bourgois 2003, 12-13, 17). As a 'bottom-up' qualitative approach to local configurations, meanings and implications of urban poverty and agents' responses to them, ethnographic fieldwork 'enriches our understanding of existing theories and provides the groundwork for the development of new concepts' (Anderson 2009, 372; Auyero 2000, 99). Despite the inadequacies of the concept of 'urban anthropology', studies of urban poverty and socio-spatial exclusion can benefit from detailed ethnographies collected through long-term fieldwork.

My account of Topia raises several interesting points for comparison. A promising

thread of research is to investigate the relations and reactions of poor neighbourhood dwellers to wider society and its structures. How do people respond, in different settings and under different legal and institutional conditions, to overwhelming constraints of money, mobility, job stability and planning? How do women, in particular, understand and cope with their social role and family duties under harsh material conditions? What kinds of responsibilities are attributed to the state, and what reactions are deployed to its perceived failures? How do young people understand prospects of social mobility and merit under deprived conditions, and what claims do they establish to society's resources?

There are also interesting threads of comparative research on place and space, which entail investigating the relationships between urban dwellers (especially migrants) and places. How are lives spatially constrained or circumscribed? How are experiences of spatial attachment, belonging, isolation or dissolution locally lived? What meanings do people ascribe to places, and what are their implications? What determines where people feel safe and comfortable, and where they feel out of place or threatened? What mechanisms of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion are at play in everyday sociality? How are people's aspirations tied to living in particular places? A particularly promising avenue for future research, suggested by my approach to place, is to examine how places assume form in people's experiences through routine processes of boundary production. More investigation is required of the configurations, meanings and effects of processes of inclusion and exclusion in urban settings – as manifest in interaction, language, symbolic narratives, bodily performances, social gatherings and participation, tactics of avoidance and resistance. How are 'insiders' defined and demarcated from 'outsiders'? More globally, what are the human meanings and effects of 'place' (namely place of dwelling), especially for mobile or displaced populations? At a time when overwhelming cross-border movements and global connections coexist with advanced border enforcement and constricting spatial exclusion, it becomes crucial to examine, with particular case studies, the complex and diverse ways in which 'place' still matters.

# **Appendixes**

## Appendix A – Interview topics for life stories

### Open-ended request for life story

...

**Follow-up themes from the informant's life account** [jotted down during the interview]

...

### Follow-up questions

1. Who is your closest family? Where are they?
2. Do you have any family in Cape Verde? [or other home place]
3. How does Cape Verde [or other] enter your daily life and that of your family? (e.g. visits, phone calls, packages, remittances, family with a house there or who plans to return)
4. Do you feel any connection there?
5. Your closest friends, where are they? How did you meet them?
6. Where did you meet your husband/wife/partner? Where did your parents meet?
7. Is your building / street connected with who your friends are or which people you hang out the most? Which neighbours do you hang out with the most?
8. When do you usually meet up with your friends? What do you do together?
9. What do you like doing in your spare time?
10. What are your favourite foods, and food places? And shops? And places to go out at night? [depending on age/profile]
11. Do you usually attend any church service? [if not] Were you raised in any religious faith?
12. If you earned now a large sum of money/the lottery, what would you do first?
13. If you were granted one wish, what would it be?
14. What are your life plans for the future?

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15. **Regarding Topia:** what things do you like the most and least about the neighbourhood?

16. What are your views on the move from [slum name] to Topia – what were the best

and worst aspects of the move, what was gained or lost?

17. Do you still go to [slum area]? Where and how often?

18. Of all the places you have lived in, where do you feel connected to/identified with the most?

## Appendix B – Interview topics on ritual and spiritual beliefs

### Faze kriston<sup>203</sup>

1. What is it? What is it for?
2. Difference between *faze kriston* and *noti di séti*?
3. How is the ceremony prepared?
4. Who should be there? Where does it take place?
5. Who can conduct the ceremony? How is that person called?
6. Why water with salt? Why the white cloth?
7. What are the godparents asked?
8. Is there a difference between the *faze kriston* here in Portugal and that performed in Cape Verde?
9. What happens if you don't perform it?
10. Why should you baptise and confirm children?

### Wedding blessing

1. Who can give the 'blessing' to the 'bride on the chair' [*noiva no assento*] before the wedding?
2. What is said to the bride? And to the groom? What is the purpose of this talk?
3. After the wedding, when the couple returns home, how is the blessing to the couple? Who gives this blessing? What is it for?

### Catholic Church

1. What is the importance of sacraments for Cape Verdeans? Which are the most important ones?
2. Why do few Cape Verdeans get married?

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<sup>203</sup> These topics were initially shaped by literature on Cape Verdean religion and ritual, and then adjusted and detailed with the data obtained in Topia (including from attending a *faze kriston* and a few *steras*). The purpose of these interviews was not to gain an introduction to the topics, but to confirm or clarify details and unanswered questions.

3. Why the importance of fasting during Lent, even for non practitioners?
4. What are the most important saints for Cape Verdeans?

### **Stera**

1. What does it mean?
2. Who sets it? And who lifts it?
3. Which cloths are set, and in what order? Why the blue cloth?
4. What is the meaning of the white cloth around the cross?
5. What is the meaning of lit candles?
6. Why saying the rosary?
7. How is it lifted? Why do people have to leave the house?
8. What happens to the soul after the *stera* is lifted?
9. What happens when someone cries during the lifting?
10. Why is Cape Verdean crying sung?
11. What happens if you don't set a *stera*?
12. Is there a difference between the *stera* here in Portugal, and in Cape Verde?
13. Can a soul who leaves come back? What happens if it doesn't leave?
14. When a person starts convulsing, why is it?
15. Do you know any '*storias di finadu*' ('stories about the deceased')?

### **Spirits**

1. Are there spirits who do harm? What do they do?
2. Where do they come from? Where from/how do they enter?
3. Where are they usually? Is there a more dangerous place or time of the day?
4. How do you know when a spirit has caused harm? What are the signs?
5. Who do they cause harm to? (more to children / adults / women / men?)
6. What can you do when a spirit causes harm? Who can help?
7. How can you protect somebody so the spirit won't harm them?
8. Are there spirits who also do good?

### **Pregnancy**

1. How do you protect pregnant women or babies?
2. And after women give birth?
3. What must women do and avoid doing during pregnancy?

### **Evil-eye**

1. What is it?
2. Who can cast it?
3. Why do they cast it?
4. How does it get from the eye to somebody?
5. How do you know when it has caused harm?
6. How can you protect somebody from it?
7. Do you know any good 'witch stories' (*storia di feticeru*)?

### ***Korderu*** [a sorcerer who causes harm on someone's demand]

1. What are *korderus*? Are they the same as witches?
2. What do they do?
3. How can you know who they are?
4. What should you do when you suspect somebody?
5. How can you protect somebody?

### **Healing**

1. In Cape Verde are there healers [*kuranderus*]? Do you know any here in Portugal?
2. Where do they learn how to heal?
3. What can a healer heal?
4. What are the most important herbs or remedies to heal?
5. How much does it cost, is it expensive?

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Note: Pages 341-342 of the original reference list do not appear in this version of the thesis. This section of the reference list has been removed due to restricted content (for including the real names of the estate and/or city).