

# Fieldnotes from Cape Verde: On Deported Youth, Research Methods, and Social Change

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## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I address pertinent issues regarding post-deportation studies, with respect to methods, positionality, and social change. In particular, I ask what can we make of the elements that consistently appear in post-deportation studies? I will do so by drawing on deportation data gathered in 2008 during a brief field visit to Cape Verde. This chapter has afforded me the opportunity to dig back my field diary and interview transcripts and reflect on what the data gathered so long ago may suggest and where it may fit in the existing literature. The data presented here were collected for a project that never took off. Not because it was uninteresting or unviable—quite the contrary, but on account of change

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I. Hasselberg—The paper was written when the author was working in University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

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on my personal circumstances. Yet, the days spent in Cape Verde, the people that I met and the stories they told me have remained with me. I will start the chapter by overviewing some ethical and methodological concerns over deportation studies. I will then provide a narrative of my time in Cape Verde conducting field research on deportation. Here, I will also present data collected and reflect on its insights and limitations. I will close the chapter by raising some questions for further consideration and discussion.

## OVERVIEW

Ten years ago, Natalie Peutz called on anthropologists to pay attention to the practices of forced removal quickly becoming normalised tools of border control across the world. She made a call for an anthropology of removal, that is, an anthropology that would “make its contribution to the endless but vital interrogation of the ‘natural’ order of things” (Peutz 2006, p. 231). In her seminal article, she argued that deportation is not a simple event that (forcibly) relocates one individual from one country to another. Drawing on her research among Somali deportees, she revealed how deportation is in fact a process that spans over long periods of time and geographical areas—what later Heike Drotbohm and I have termed as “deportation corridor” (Drotbohm and Hasselberg 2015). Deportation is not limited to the encounter between the deported person and the deporting nation-state. Rather it involves a variety of people and institutions, from deportees, their families, and communities to civil servants, border agents, immigration lawyers and judges, prison and immigration detention staff, bureaucrats, civil society organisations, security personnel, activists, and the media. Subsequent studies have provided further evidence to this (Drotbohm 2011; Hasselberg 2016; Kalir 2015; Fischer 2015; Coutin 2015).

Peutz’s call has not gone unnoticed. The past decade has seen a rise in ethnographic studies of deportation from a variety of perspectives and located at different moments and places of the deportation corridor. Yet, there are a rather limited number of methodological accounts of studies of deportation in general and post-deportation in particular. This is surprising given that deportation research often appears as an ethical and methodological minefield. Peutz herself warned about possible difficulties. To start with, she argues, and whether the focus is on those deported following a criminal conviction or an illegal stay, social

scientists should be aware that in constituting deportability as a self-limiting field of knowledge, they may be (even if unwillingly) reinforcing the criminality and illegality that was enforced upon their subjects by a nation-state (Peutz 2006; see also De Genova 2002). Furthermore, deportation is a sensitive matter, where issues of trust, vulnerability, and do-no-harm are particularly poignant. Not only deportees are likely to have been interrogated numerous times on account of their deportation, but also deportation may entail matters of criminal conviction, illegal stay, family relations, stigma, resistance, destitution, and lost hope.

As a non-spatially-bounded social phenomenon, deportation presents other challenges. Deportees are removed elsewhere, taken away from the (deporting) countries they have called home. Experiencing deportability in the host country also often renders foreign nationals immobile and invisible, with deportable migrants frequently developing strategies of active invisibility (see Talavera et al. 2010; Willen 2007) in an effort to avoid the authorities. Furthermore, the increasing use of administrative detention and the criminalisation of immigration offences results in an ever-growing number of foreign nationals under penal or administrative incarceration—sites that are difficult for researchers to access (Bosworth et al. 2016). Once removed to their country of origin, deportees may be spread over large geographical areas, which may translate into difficulties in identifying and locating people to participate in the study. Social scientists studying deportation may very easily find themselves with nothing to observe and no one immediately available to talk to (Hasselberg 2016).

In post-deportation studies in particular, multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) is increasingly used to enable a better understanding of the experience of removal for individuals, families, and communities between and across nations. Heike Drotbohm's (2015) study of deportation of Cape Verdean citizens from the USA is testament that the post-deportation is not confined geographically to the countries that receive the deportees. In visiting the US families of those deported, her study shows how the forced removal of an individual leaves an absence in their family and community. An absence that is made present by changing family power relations and social inequalities produced by deportation (see also Drotbohm 2011; Golash-Boza 2014, 2016; Schuster and Majidi 2013; Gerlach this volume). Multi-sited research is however highly demanding on time and resources and thus not always a feasible option (see Candea 2007). I have argued elsewhere that in the context of deportation, ethnographic research often demands a creative use of a combination of

different methods and positionalities to identify and access both the research population and the institutional sites that form part of their experiences (Hasselberg 2016). Sarah Turnbull (this volume) for instance, has *followed* her research participants in their journeys from immigration detention in the UK to either release to the community or deportation to the country of origin. Through the telephone, email, and social media, Turnbull gained an understanding of the experiences of forced return following a period of administrative incarceration. Nancy Hiemstra (2012, 2014), has, likewise, completed a fascinating study of the reach of the US detention estate, while in Ecuador, equipped with a Skype connection, assisting family members locate Ecuadorians detained in the USA under immigration powers.<sup>1</sup> Where to conduct research might no longer be as important as whom to reach and otherwise engage might.

Peutz's influential work underlines how important it is that the practice of deportation does not go unnoticed (see also Walters 2002). It reminds those of us studying deportation that efforts should be developed towards a public debate of deportation policies, and that revealing how deportation is lived continuously by deportees, families, and communities at both ends "would at the very least resist the removal of these individuals from academic spaces, if not from physical ones" (Peutz 2006, p. 220).

Ten years on, and a growing body of studies on (post-) deportation have shown that forced return deportees, and their families left behind, face a number of problems and challenges in adjusting to their forced removal. Their deportation may be taken socially as a failure (Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2015; Zilberg 2004, 2011) or a normalised outcome of routine border crossing (see Galvin 2015; Schuster and Majidi 2015; Khosravi 2016), but it will nevertheless bring hardships. These tend to be experienced with regards to integrating into their alleged home communities, in dealing with people's conflicting expectations, enduring family separation, adjusting to different cultural settings often with its own gender rules (Drotbohm 2011, 2015; Turnbull this volume; Zilberg 2011; Peutz 2006), or even in attempting to safeguard income-earning activities and assets that were left in the deporting country (Galvin 2015). The data presented below further support these points.

## RESEARCHING DEPORTATION IN CAPE VERDE

When I visited Cape Verde in 2008 deportees were depicted either as a problem (as in US government documents, and most Cape Verdean media outlets), as victims (as in Cape Verdean online-community/

diaspora newspapers) or as potential beneficiaries of programmes aimed at easing the adverse impacts of deportation in Cape Verde. My idea in visiting the small island nation was to develop a research project that would recognise deportees not as problems, victims or beneficiaries, but rather as active agents, who were reacting to their removal, developing their strategies and (re)formulating their own aspirations. Truthful to the anthropological gaze, I wanted to view deportees as subjects who carried their own cultural agency and identity. Therefore, I set off to Cape Verde for a brief period of preliminary fieldwork. The idea was to get a sense of the daily circumstances of deportees in order to develop the research project and better prepare its actual fieldwork. I spent some time in Praia, the capital city of Cape Verde, and some time on the island of Fogo where most deportees from the USA are originally from. The fact that the majority originated from one specific small town on Fogo further helped my fieldwork efforts.

At the time, concerns were being raised that gang-related violence and behaviour were being exported to Cape Verde with the deportees and indeed, existing statistics showed that in 2007 the majority of Cape Verdean deportees (86%) from the USA had been deported on account of their criminal records. The perception that deportees were responsible for the rise in crime and violence in Cape Verde was prevalent among politicians, media, and the public at large (see also Weber and Powell this volume). Whether or not deportees were responsible for the (real or perceived) rise in crime and violence, the fact remained that this perception influenced people's actions and their behaviour towards deportees, resulting in stigma and suspicion towards them.

Deportation of Cape Verdean citizens is not a recent phenomenon, but it has changed significantly in the past decades.<sup>2</sup> Until the mid-1990s, Portugal and France were the major sending countries, with causes for forced removal typically falling under immigration offences (in particular, illegal stay) and drug-related offences (Instituto das Comunidades 2003b). Since the early 2000s however, deportations from the USA have overtaken all others combined. Deportees from the USA also tend to have a different profile from those expelled from Europe. Mostly they are young adults who migrated to the USA at a very early age and were deported following a criminal conviction—more often than not related to gang-activity (Instituto das Comunidades 2003a, b; Carling 2004).

Upon arrival these individuals faced particular challenges. For the most part, they had family links to Cape Verde but little memory of the country itself. For many this was their first time in Cape Verde since their migration to the USA. They spoke Creole and/or Portuguese poorly if at all, and had few qualifications in a country that offered already limited employment opportunities. Furthermore, they were met with increasing suspicion (Instituto das Comunidades 2002, 2003a, b; Carling 2004). They also landed in a country where most of what they took for granted in their lives was gone. This was so not just in relation to their families and social relations, who remained in the USA, but also with regards to daily life as they knew it: as any resident of Cape Verde, they were faced with unreliable or inexistent power and water supply, limited employment opportunities, poor health care, lack of access to services, commodities and entertainment, and so on.

Over the course of my preliminary field trip to Cape Verde in the spring of 2008, I visited two government bodies that were directly addressing “the problem of deportees” and interviewed some of their staff. I met with two Catholic priests who were developing programmes with deportees in Cape Verde and awareness on the risk of deportation in Boston, USA. On Fogo, I collected five life-story interviews with deportees. Furthermore, the days I stayed on Fogo were spent in the company of deported youth. With them I hung around, went to basketball games, and sat around many hours doing nothing, for there was nothing for deported youth to do. I say youth as that was how they were constantly characterised by the media and people at large, and in fact, the majority of those that I engaged with were in their 20s, although I also talked to a few deportees in their 30s and 40s. According to a census carried out among deportees in 2002, the average age of male deportees was 35 years old. This was however based on their age in 2002 and not at the time of deportation (Instituto das Comunidades 2002). In Praia, and on Fogo, I also spoke to numerous Cape Verdeans about their thoughts and concerns over the arrival of deportees.<sup>3</sup>

### FAMILY, SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, AND URBAN MYTHS

In preparing my trip to Cape Verde, back in 2008, I tapped into my networks and immediately received the invitation from a Cape Verdean friend to stay at her sister’s where my friend was currently staying. I arrived in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, at a time of great importance

to her family. My friend was temporarily back from the USA, her younger sister was returning to Praia after many years of residence in France, and her father, who lived in Portugal, was visiting in order to celebrate his 80th anniversary. We were all staying at the older sister's house, along with her husband and children. It was a full house, lively with the joys of family reunion. The time spent with them was instrumental in gaining an understanding of Cape Verdean transnationalism on the one hand, and the importance of family on the other (see also Åkesson et al. 2012; Carling 2004; Drotbohm 2015). It became clear very quickly that I was not merely their guest, but rather part of the entourage. Where the family went, I was not only invited but expected to go, too. Given the particular circumstances detailed above, the time that I spent in Praia was rather too-filled with daily social and family gatherings. Mostly, there were lunch or dinner events, but there was also the occasional afternoon family visit and the evenings when guests would come in, musical instruments would come out, and the flat was alive with music, joy, and nostalgia.

I remember well the conflicting feelings I had about such circumstances. I was grateful, of course, for such warm and extended hospitality and for the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful family and the access to all the social interactions that came with it. As an anthropologist, I could not have asked for anything better. However, I also had a list of people who I wanted to talk to while in Praia and data that I needed to access, and the commitments I had towards the family were leaving me little time to pursue with my research agenda. It took me sometime to realise that the conversations I was having with the many people that I was encountering illuminated how people saw and reacted to (or against) the presence of deportees on the island.

All those social interactions as part of the family meant that I talked to a large number of people from all walks of life about their perceptions of deportees. Over the course of that week I heard how deportees were wrongdoers used to a life style that stood out in Cape Verde; how they “stole” all the girls who were lured by their “Americanness” (see also Peutz 2006; Schuster and Majidi 2015 on deportees as agents of cultural pollution); how they were criminals in the USA and remained criminals in Cape Verde; how they were not really deported on their first offence but need to repeatedly offend to be deported and how that was good reason for concern over their dangerousness; that they didn't do time in prison, but were rather deported straight away. Many of these

perceptions were incorrect or misguided, but seemed to be ingrained in people's conversation about deportation. Several times people described to me what they perceived as chancy encounters with deportees—incidents that seemed to reveal more about people's fear of and apprehension towards the deported youth, than their dangerousness.

One other common theme was how Cape Verdean immigrants in the USA did not really know how to raise their children in such a setting where they were not allowed to punish or physically discipline them. Children were then raised by the school and by the streets, and not by the parents, they would tell me. Numerous stories were told of parents who brought their children from the USA on the pretext of a holiday in Cape Verde only to then leave them in the country without documents so they couldn't go back to the USA—an attempt to set them straight and take them off the streets (Peutz (2006) also describes incidents of “deportation” by parents). Several people narrated one particular story on different occasions, almost like an urban myth, generating much laughter and implicit approval: the father who beat up his teenage daughter for all her accumulated misbehaviour in the USA as soon as they passed the border control at the airport in Praia. Such stories often developed into heated discussions on the difficulty of keeping children, and in particular teenagers, off the streets in the USA, and the moral and social benefits of being raised in Cape Verde. Overall, these stories emphasise what was seen as the corrupting arm of American life on young immigrants. They justify how fellow citizens became criminal wrongdoers while at the same time they remove responsibility from the parents (born and raised in Cape Verde) over their children's behaviour.

The government's efforts in assisting deportees were received with mixed feelings. In 2002, the Instituto das Comunidades—the government body responsible for promoting and executing policies related to Cape Verdean communities abroad—established a working group that was to set up a programme to ease the “social integration” of deportees. The rationale being that given the criminal background of most of this youth, proper social integration was of vital importance not just to their rehabilitation but also to the well-being of the overall country. Later, three bureaus were established in the islands of Brava, Fogo, and Sal that sought to assist deportees in numerous ways: improve language fluency, obtain national identification documents, obtain certified copies of qualifications attained abroad, find relatives, and so on. Of more importance, these bureaus also assisted deportees, logistically and financially, through

loans and expert advice, in developing professional projects such as opening small businesses, farming, developing skills in carpentry or mechanics, and the like.

The deportees that I spoke with on Fogo really appreciated the efforts and support of the staff at this bureau. If nothing else, the project acted as a countermeasure for the stigma attached to them there, and helped them devise a plan for their future. They felt valued and somewhat “cared for.” However, many local people that I talked to were sceptical about these projects. They claimed that young people used to easy money in the USA would not settle for a low income derived from a hard-working activity in Cape Verde. Others were bitter that such efforts and resources were deployed in assisting deportees when so many other citizens deemed more deserving were in need of help. While some others yet considered these as a justified and indeed necessary way to minimise the impact of the deportees in the country.

### AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF BOREDOM?

I soon left Praia to fly to Fogo where I stayed for the remainder of my time. When on Fogo I made my way to a small town where the majority of deportees from the USA originate. The town had a population of about 400 inhabitants, with a further 9000 living in the surrounding rural areas. On Fogo I was no longer endorsed by a local family. I was a newcomer and a stranger. I was just a researcher wanting to talk to deportees. In such a small and quiet town, my presence did not go unnoticed. I was often approached on the street by people curious about me. Between their knowledge of Portuguese and my extremely limited Creole, communication was, for the most part, possible. Soon I was somewhat known to most people.

In this small town, people were more ambivalent towards deportees. Those who had been forcibly returned were part of their daily life and for many, part of their families. Local people appeared more understanding of their circumstances even if still suspicious of them. As one woman told me:

Each of them [deportees] is a relative of someone here that we know well. It's a small town and we see them every day. It's quite all right. But a few days ago a mobile phone went missing and suspicion immediately fell upon deportees.

The deportees also did not go unnoticed and it did not take much effort to find them. They were visibly identifiable on account of their baggy jeans, tattoos, dreadlocks, the way they walked and moved around. All of which appeared in stark contrast to the local youth. To say that they stood out is an understatement. I was very quickly introduced to two young men recently returned from abroad, and with their help, I met others in the days that followed. Every other day I went with them to basketball training—the only (self-) organised activity they participated in, and one that was much valued. The basketball field was a one-hour walk away from the centre of town. Together we walked and talked, sometimes we were lucky and got a ride.

However, for the most part, I spent my days with them, doing nothing. For there was nothing to do. Therefore, nothing was most of what they did. My initial fears that deportees might not want to talk to me were dissipated as soon as I met them. My presence was a much welcome distraction. The fact that they could speak to me in English, and act towards me as they would towards an American woman was much appreciated. I spent most of my time with this group of young men, who were still trying to come to grips with their new circumstances. Some had arrived a few weeks previously; others had been there for a couple of years. Most of them knew each other in the USA prior to deportation, and all were deported following a criminal conviction. They were now in their mid- to late-twenties, dependent financially on their families in the USA, and unsure of what to do with their lives in Cape Verde. Most had some knowledge of Creole even though all had grown up in the USA. Many of the young men had children and/or partners who remained in the USA. With this group of young men, there were always two other young men from the USA eager that I understand that even though they looked like deportees, on account of being American, they were only there on holiday visiting relatives. I also met with a few others who had been deported long before and had established families and secured some level of income.

They all knew my interest was on their deportation, but I made an effort not to ask them much about it. I would have the interviews to concentrate on that. Indeed, when we hung out we did not always talk. When we did talk, I did not dictate the subjects. We discussed the shark-infested waters and the (volcanic) black beaches of Fogo, soccer, the weather, and hairstyles. They shared numerous anecdotes of life in town, its small-mindedness and lack of sophistication. They told me of the lack

of opportunities on the island and how they missed their families back in the USA. Most had left children behind. They discussed how they felt trapped on the island, not being able to emigrate elsewhere. They often talked of moving to Europe and how great that would be, although what they longed for was the impossible return home—to the USA. They day-dreamed of eventual income-earning opportunities. Some talked of their intention to start selling American goods that their families in the USA could send them, and heated debate over which commodities would sell better kept the hours going. Others talked of farming and growing organic vegetables. Others still had great tourism ventures in mind. Mostly, they commented on the lack of activities and entertainment and tried to convey what was like to feel bored every day for most of the day, and of having little to look forward to. One young man, who had been deported from the USA the year before, told me:

I wake up, I put on a movie, sometimes I jog a little, eat breakfast, walk around, I hang around. That's it. I'm waiting for my diploma from the States, cause my friend said they would try and give me a job teaching here, teaching English. I would like to get a job up there [the local school]. To give me something to do. I just sit around doing nothing all day.

One particular hot issue regarded their adaptation to the local gender expectations. David, a deportee in his mid-20s who had recently arrived in Cape Verde, told me:

Girls here just want to get married so they can live off their husbands. The man is the one who has to provide, you know. I can never tell if a girl really likes me or if she is just looking for me to support her, cause they think we from America have money.

The others nodded in agreement and mentioned how they also found that hard to deal with, and how they missed being able to hang around young women on their own terms. Linda, the one female deportee in town also struggled with local gender expectations. As a woman, she saw her movement, choices, and activities rather restricted, and her contribution to society devalued.

I also conducted five formal interviews. These were taped and lasted one to three hours. Apart from Linda, who I visited in her home, all

others were conducted in cafes or quiet, yet public, parts of town. The men were well aware that having me visiting them in private or in their homes would not be appropriate and would reflect poorly on me, and thus encouraged our meetings always at public places that could afford some privacy so that the interview could proceed without being overheard by others. I had met with all interviewees at least once prior to the interview, so some connection had already been established.

Despite my intention to collect life-story interviews, these interviews ended up being mostly focused on their lives after deportation. Although often I would ask questions related to their migration to the USA, their upbringing, their lives in the USA prior to deportation and so on. These were, for the most part, quickly answered so that deportation could be resumed as the topic of discussion. It could be that interviewees saw these issues as unrelated to their deportation and, as such, of unimportance to me; it could be that talking about their home, their families, and their now lost lives was just so much more difficult; it could be that I was simply asking the wrong questions. These interviews were both a frustrating and rewarding exercise: frustrating because as life-story interviews they failed miserably; rewarding because through them I was able to gather much important data nevertheless. In outlining two of these narratives here, my intention is two-fold: I wish to contextualise the (post-) deportation issues I have addressed thus far, and I wish to provide a venue where their stories can be told in a way that does not restrict their self to a deportation subject. I chose Linda because she was the only female deportee and David because he was the most recent arrival of the five.

Linda was six years old when she migrated to the USA with her family and had never returned. In 2005, at the age of 43, she was deported to Cape Verde. "My first visit here," she told me, "was on the courtesy of the US government." In the USA Linda left her (adult) children and her family and life as she knew it. Her father, still in the USA, had always retained land and livestock on Fogo. Linda now looked after his estate. She felt lonely and, after three years, she was still struggling to adapt. Linda had been arrested on minor drug-related offences a few times prior to deportation. Three months here, six months there. Prison was hard, but she knew she would eventually be out. The last time she was arrested, Linda tried to remain sober. From that prison, however, she never went home. Instead, she was taken to immigration detention, and deportation proceedings against her were set in motion. Her mother

hired a legal representative in an effort to prevent deportation, but Linda said immigration detention was too much and she could not handle it. She gave up and “agreed” to return to Cape Verde.

Speaking of her life in Cape Verde Linda’s words were angry, frustrated, and at times, highly ironic. She particularly felt the local gender norms as intruding her way of being. “A man here can do hell in high water,” Linda told me, “but a woman—your place is barefoot and pregnant! I didn’t grow up like this!” Linda was exasperated with the lack of employment opportunities for women and the idea that she, as a woman, was to be supported by a man, i.e., a husband. In addition, she found socialising difficult. She found people judgemental and fond of gossip. Women were not supposed to have male friends, nor supposed to smoke or drink.

Three years after deportation, she dearly missed speaking in her own language—English. With socialising limited, Linda read a lot. Her mother sent her an American bible. Linda read all the English books she could find in town. They were her distraction and her connection to the language. She told me how she missed everything in and about America, and how only now she realised how much she had lost. In the USA, she could go out and have a drink and smoke with her friends, independently of their gender. There was unlimited supply of water and electricity. She had access to 24-hour shops and could buy her meat already cut and packaged in the supermarket, as opposed to having to wait until someone slaughtered a pig or a cow. Linda regretted everything that led to her removal to Cape Verde. She regretted her drug addiction and the offences that led her to prison. Mostly she regretted not getting citizenship. Her mother urged her, repeatedly, to apply for American citizenship. She never cared. She was well aware now that citizenship was a precious asset. “The saddest part,” Linda said, “is like I used to say ‘Boy would I love to live in a country where it is always hot, near the water’, you know what I mean? But I did not mean it like this. I did not mean it like this. And I have to stay here for now. I don’t know what the future holds for me.” Although she tried to accept this new reality and move on the best she could, sometimes she still found it hard to go on.

As the only female deportee in town Linda felt there was no one around who could understand her way of being in the world and her pain at having to adjust to such a different social world. Male deportees on the other hand, often counted on each other for support and company. Although they too had to adjust to local expectations and society,

as males they enjoyed a larger degree of freedom. Furthermore, many of the male deportees knew each other from the USA. For David, a younger male deportee who recently arrived, it made it easier for him to see many familiar faces upon arrival in Cape Verde, even if he would not wish any of them deported. It was mostly with them that David spent his time. He did not know many people from town yet and truth be said, he did not feel very comfortable around local people. He felt American and was not yet sure how to be American in Cape Verde.

David moved to the USA with his parents and siblings when he was three years old. He had no recollection of his early years in Cape Verde. At the age of 17, he dropped out of high school to “run the streets.” The following years he was in and out of prison on several accounts. At the age of 22, he moved to Florida to start a family and move away from the streets. The following year his son was born—by that time, he had already taken to the streets in Florida too. Again, he was arrested. He obtained his high school diploma while in prison and applied for community college, only to drop out short after. For David, as a teenager, running the streets selling drugs was the “normal thing” to do, as he put it. That was what his friends were doing, and what he grew up around: life was supposed to be hanging around with friends, making easy money, wearing the nice clothes, driving the nice cars, being with girls. His mother was always scared. She knew what he was up to and tried to dissuade him of that life, but David would not listen. He was not thinking about the future, that was just day-to-day life. Sometimes it was violent; a few times, it was very violent. However, no one was ever thinking about it. People just ran the streets. Now, looking back, David wishes he could have changed it. He wished he would have stopped to think about this life and his future. He looks back and sees all the opportunities that were there for him, all the things he could have taken advantage of but did not. He sees all the efforts his parents did to provide for him, to support him, to be there for him, and he blames himself for the choices he made.<sup>4</sup>

David got used to spending time in and out of prison. Laughing, he told me that jail was almost like college campus, only with no women: there were always others from his neighbourhood; they went to the gym, played basketball, listened to music, etc. Things changed however when he was sent to immigration detention. There was nothing but a little dayroom with a couple of televisions to hang about in, all day. So when he was given a court date and the opportunity to contest his deportation, David chose not to. Much like Linda, David could not stand

much longer in detention. He also thought that perhaps in Cape Verde he could stay out of trouble, get away from that life. He did not consider much what his life in Cape Verde would be, rather he was focused on what it would not be—no more ins and outs of jail. Now he is told he can never go back to the USA. When we met, he had been in Cape Verde for only a couple of months and he was “checking things out” but life there was not looking “very promising,” he said. Therefore, he considered going to Europe, perhaps Canada, but he was well aware how difficult it was for Cape Verdeans (as citizens of the Global South) to obtain visas.

In town, he was adjusting to the different culture, to living without (reliable) power and water supply. He missed the variety of foods in America and desperately craved Starbucks coffee. He did not “feel comfortable” around local people because he was always unsure of what was going on. His uncle worked for the local government and his family was well known, so people in general were friendly. However, he soon found out that people had different opinions of him when he was not around to listen, and that made him uneasy. David had strong links to town. He left for the USA when he was three but, unlike Linda, he had returned a few times on holiday. The last time he was in Cape Verde prior to his deportation, he was already a young adult and ended up staying for six months. He was comfortable with the language. Yet, he could not bring himself to say that he was from Cape Verde. “I don’t consider myself from here,” David told me, “they put me here against my will. Against my wishes. This is like a prison away from prison. I still consider myself in prison cause I don’t want to be here.”

Linda and David, much like the others I spoke to, show regret for past actions, resignation about their situation, and longing and appreciation for their families left in the USA. On Fogo they are learning how to live again. Much of what they took for granted back home has vanished. They were learning to live away from their families, in a town where they had little to do, and where gender expectations constrained their movement and social interactions. I wonder what has become of them.

## POSITIONALITY, CHANGING NARRATIVES, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Thus far, I have presented narratives from Linda and David, from the young deported men and the villagers on Fogo, from the people I engaged with in Praia, and of course, from myself. We each had

something to say about deportation and perhaps inevitably each of us was bounded by our own positionality. The reader may have noticed how I sound sceptical of the narratives of deportation I heard in Praia, but not of the ones I heard first-hand on Fogo. Yet, none is more valid than the other is—they rather reflect different perspectives and positionalities.<sup>5</sup>

Such is the narrative of time in Cape Verde in the spring of 2008. The data are limited in depth and breadth—it is hardly sufficient to present findings or draw conclusions. However, that was never the intention of the fieldtrip, or this chapter. The aim of the fieldtrip was to raise research questions of relevance and to consider what such an ethnographic study would entail. At the end of my time on Fogo I wondered what sort of ethnography I would carry out if I were to return. An ethnography of boredom, perhaps? Alternatively, perhaps one of resilience? How would it feel to spend one year in that small town, in that small island, in the middle of the Atlantic? What would such an ethnography of deportation resemble?

Unlike my subsequent studies of deportation and border control in the UK and Portugal, on Fogo research participants were easily identifiable and accessible. They were clustered in a small town, available to talk to me. Civil servants made time to see me and answer my questions, people at large were curious about me and open to talk to me, and the deportees themselves were visibly identifiable as such (through their appearance and manner). There were many to interact with and talk to, and much to observe. It was a short fieldtrip, but looking back, I do not think this ethnography would have presented great challenges when it comes to research access. Yet, I wonder about my research approach and my own positionality, and that, in turn, makes me wonder, in addition, of the approach and positionality of many of those who have been conducting research on post-deportation for the past decade. Is it odd that for the most part post-deportation studies are conducted by female researchers (there are exceptions, of course, as evidenced in the work of Michael Collier, Shahram Khosravi, and Evin Rodkey, in this volume, and Brotherton and Barrios 2011)? Is our own positionality as (generally) educated middle-class (white) individuals inviting particular answers? Is deportation being addressed from all relevant perspectives? Again, here I restate the point made earlier in the chapter on the lack of ethical and methodological accounts in post-deportation studies. Given the political and ethical dimensions of border control *and* border research, it is hardly controversial to suggest that more space should be

given to in-depth reflections of researchers' positionality, approach, and motivations in researching post-deportation.

What strikes me when I look at the data that I presented here is how consistent it is with findings from other post-deportation studies across the world: regret, isolation, stigma, gender constraints, strained social interactions, family separation, financial dependency, immobility. Had I carried out this research, would it have become a replication of existing studies? Or was I simply asking the wrong questions? Looking back, and despite my efforts to contextualise deportation, I see that I was nevertheless too focused on the experience of deportation, boredom, and resilience. Heike Drotbohm's (2011, 2015) ethnography of kinship in Cape Verde shows not just the experience of deportation of these young men, but equally important, it reveals and examines the position and role of deportation within local everyday transnational lives. Her study is instrumental in that it goes beyond deportation, and towards everyday life. It is also testament that the framework each of us chooses to utilise will emphasise particular elements of (post-) deportation. Post-deportation studies have revealed a variety of situations across a multitude of geographical locations. Despite the original contribution of the different studies mentioned so far, there is a significant number of elements ever-present in the post-deportation literature. This is important. By now, we know better than to take deportation as the end of migration. We know deportation starts well before removal and its legacy endures long after. We also know that it not only affects those who are deported, but also their families and communities at both ends of migration. For the past decade, several studies have documented not just the suffering, vulnerability, and precariousness of life after deportation, but also the agency, resilience, and subjectivity of those involved. So, I wonder how can we make such consistency of findings more visible. And would doing so trigger action towards social change? How much more evidence is needed to make government bodies, civil society, and communities at large recognise the impacts of deportation policies and practices? Can we, and should we, as social scientists, strive to move towards social change?

It is not my intention to just set an activist agenda in raising these questions, but rather think how we can and whether we should, address them. A pessimistic perspective could argue that people just do not care. That perhaps we are indeed living in the age of *necropower* where instruments of sovereignty seek to create "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life

conferring upon them the status of living dead” (Mbembe 2003, p. 40). Should that be the case, keeping our gaze set upon deportation would most likely head us towards a pornography of suffering. Yet, whether we like it or not, suffering, destitution, and vulnerability are part of many local realities—they should not be ignored. I would rather take on an alternative perspective. I started this chapter outlining a call for action from a fellow scholar. I end it with a call for action from another. In a recent edited collection on approaches to border control, Leanne Weber (2015a) and her colleagues wonder what peace at the border would look like. They collectively argue for a rethinking of border control, calling on scholars and other parties involved to adopt a “preferred future” methodology. That is, an approach that moves beyond narratives of suffering, hardship, inequality, and punitiveness at the border, towards an engagement with alternative outlooks on a potentially different bordered world (see also Sanchez 2016 on this call). A *preferred future* methodology distances itself from *possible futures* or *predicted future* approaches in that it assumes from the start a particular outcome, thus allowing us to focus on *how* this *preferred future* may be achievable, rather than *why* it should be so (Weber 2015b, p. 9). “This seems to be,” Weber writes, “a more suitable method for articulating a political and ethical project aimed at promoting more open and equitable international borders, while still incorporating some empirical observation” (Weber 2015b, p. 9).

In this chapter, I have sought to underline the need to question how our positionality in the field and our own research approach may impact on research findings. This is a rapidly growing field of studies. When examining policies, experiences, and interests in (post-) deportation scholars may also want to consider how their research approach can mobilise change, or at the very least, how consistencies found across (post-) deportation studies may be articulated in a more visible way.

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## NOTES

1. Hiemstra's study is not seeking to examine detainees' experiences. Instead, she examines the US detention estate and its far reach. Being located in Ecuador became a very suitable location to examine US detention practices and its transnational reverberations, while at the same she was able to conduct traditional fieldwork among those already deported and the families of detainees.
2. For in-depth approach to deportation in Cape Verde, see Drotbohm (2011, 2012, 2015).
3. I was also fortunate that my time in Cape Verde coincided with country visits by two experts on the field, Jørgen Carling and Heike Drotbohm, with whom I met and learnt much from.
4. David, like others that I talked to, took responsibility not just for his immigration ordeal, but also for his criminal behaviour. Despite the structural problems that they faced, in their narratives they point also to an element of choice in such behaviour. In David's narrative, this is very clear: he talks of street life as the natural thing to do, what everybody did, but also of his parents' efforts in providing him with alternatives to it. Alternatives that, at the time, he did not care for.
5. I am grateful to Heike Drotbohm for pointing this out to me.

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