The aspirations and constraints of masculinity in the family trajectories of Cape Verdean men from Praia (1989-2009)

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Transformations in male and female gender performance have been determinant in shaping the family trajectories of five men from Praia over the last twenty years. These men's gender identifications have been performed through a hegemonic masculinity genre. Among the main elements that have affected their performance are the redefinition of social spaces, the various forces boosting women's autonomy, their aging, and the Kriol narratives around the Cape Verdean collective identification. The propensity of men to depart from the genre learned early in their lives, or the depth of their conservatism depends on whether their aspirations and opportunities take them to social spaces where this genre is actually challenged or constantly re-enacted.

KEYWORDS: masculinity, gender, performance, imagination, family.

Aspirações e constrangimentos da masculinidade nas trajetórias familiares de homens cabo-verdianos da Praia (1989-2009) ◆ Algumas transformações na performance de género masculina e feminina foram determinantes nas trajetórias familiares de cinco homens da cidade da Praia ao longo dos últimos 20 anos. As identificações de género destes homens realizaram-se por meio de um estilo de masculinidade hegemónica. Entre os principais elementos que afetaram a sua performance contam-se a redefinição dos espaços sociais, as várias forças impulsionadoras da autonomia das mulheres, o seu envelhecimento e as narrativas crioulas em torno da identificação coletiva dos cabo-verdianos. A propensão destes homens para se afastarem do estilo que interiorizaram em novos ou, pelo contrário, para o conservarem profundamente depende de as suas aspirações e oportunidades os terem conduzido a espaços sociais em que este estilo é efetivamente posto em causa ou, em vez disso, constantemente reinstituído.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: masculinidade, género, performance, imaginação, família.

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"My billy goat is not to be tied up (*Nha bode ka ta marradu*)" [Man, 47, Praia, 2009]

"C'est ainsi que nous sommes constitués en tant que sujets: Le genre n'est pas notre essence, qui se révèlerait dans nos pratiques; ce sont les pratiques du corps dont la répétition institue le genre" (Fassin 2005: 15).

THE CAPACITY OF AN INTERACTIONIST APPROACH TO PROVIDE knowledge about human "societies" is often confronted with the challenges of linking phenomena whose agency is not found in the immediate surroundings where observed interactions take place. The point is that it is exactly through interactions that "macro" phenomena, or non-micro phenomena (a really non-relevant distinction), interact with individuals, and that they become real or exist (Sharrock and Watson 1988). In other words, our understanding of the phenomena we observe and participate in are the product of extremely complex chains of interactions, that the ethnographer should try to trace. His/her discourse, explanation and meta-narratives should be based on these chains and should avoid gaps in the chains (Latour 1996).

At the time of my first fieldwork in Praia, in the Cape Verdean islands (1987-1992), I was struck and intrigued by the boastful discourses of the young men of my own age with whom I was socializing, friends and inter-locutors, and by their attitudes towards women: deep respect and affection towards older women, very quiet and concerned about their kin, very engaging and humorous, or even charming, towards women met in public or semi-public spaces, and quiet, tough and often aggressive towards the women they were dating. Interested in the way they defined themselves in their daily interactions (Massart 2002), I noted that one central and recurrent identification was *ser ômi em tudu kuza*, being a man in all things. The *ser ômi*, being a man, implied attitudes and specific relations in which "being a man" was constantly reproduced.

This identification was to be performed, displayed in "everything", in all social settings. This specific conception of the self, gendered as it is, to be performed, is what I name "an hegemonic masculinity" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). Its hegemony "is a matter of the capacity to impose a specific definition over other types of masculinity" (Almeida 1996: 163); the hegemonic characteristic refers then to the "most honoured or desired form of masculinity" (Cornell 1998: 5). Sticking to my intention to track men through time, in my view, hegemony refers not to the domination of men over women, but the domination of specific ways of "being a man", of enacting an identification, of being and behaving in daily interactions. In this case, the hegemonic masculinity is best rendered by the triple complex of *engana* (to fool one), *abusu* (to take advantage of), *vergonha* (shame). It produces self-respect rooted in a deep sense of independence.

Ideally, one cannot tolerate being fooled. One is smart (*spertu*), and is knowledgeable, in the sense of being tactical; one knows and cannot be fooled by another. If fooled, one can be taken advantage of, can be exploited (*abusadu*). This situation generates shame (*vergonha*). Shame is a deep emotion, resulting from a common understanding and integration of these individual values. Anyone failing to be smart, to be hegemonic, hence powerful, feels shame.

These aspirations sustained by norms, fuel a movement, an imaginary dynamic, in these men's lives; one has to be constantly on the move: *pa ka fika paradu* (not to remain stationary). If one can convince an interlocutor that one did not give up, stay stationary, *fika paradu*, one has already proven his or her masculinity, and for that matter his or her humanity. The men I worked with are not satisfied with their achievements, as they were not satisfied with their social conditions twenty years ago. They faced immense challenges in making a living; life is often referred by as a battle or struggle (*luta*). But they make a point of showing that they are still fighting and still believing that they will keep on achieving. In this sense, this imaginary engine, which creates order, is utopian.

From my perspective, masculinity is therefore a genre performed in daily life, to be repeated again and again (Hanks 1996), as routines are activated, relied upon, re-enacted in similar situations. As a genre, masculinity involves producing discourses and values. It entails specific clichés and situations, such as constant verbal duelling (Dundees 1978: 79), hence, tones of voice, body postures; it also involves specific aspirations and emotions (Schechner 2002). I believe the reader will discover these elements of the genre within this text, and in the echoes of his/her own experience. The masculinity genre applies to relations between the different genders, as to other types of social relations, political and economic (Massart 2000). It is a narrative of the self, inserted in larger identification narratives and including larger collective identifications, as argued in Pereira's (1984) reflections on the psychology of the person from Santiago (the main island of the archipelago where Praia, the capital city, is situated), or connected to larger popular narratives of the formation of the Cape Verdean society (Anjos 2000, 2011; Rodrigues 2003), or even to larger ideology narratives, as Pina-Cabral dares to suggest (Pina-Cabral 1989), bringing it to the genesis, literally.

As performance, masculinity is inevitably specific to spaces where the genre is effective, relevant, where one succeeds in re-enacting a valorised self. The performer is therefore always a reflexive spectator of his/her own performance, and this is achieved through the observation of the reactions of the others present or imagined, in dialogue (Bakhtin 1986; Mead 1934) with the performer. Obviously, it implies that one will seek spaces where one succeeds in being a "man". Consequently, seeking masculinity can confine one to very limited social spaces, avoiding interactions or confrontations where he/she will lose face.

Throughout this article, I argue that Cape Verdean masculinity, as a hegemonic genre of gendered performance, draws its dynamics from its internal tensions, its contradictory injunctions: the ideal masculine man is a conqueror of women, a predator, a prestigious man as well as a provider and protector of the respectability of others, is a realised man, stable and someone always on the move, making progress. These masculine tensions echo in this genre the ambiguity of women as agents of production of a new *kriola* society, as family heads or as resistant, potential threats to order (Anjos 2011). Therefore, in these situations and perspective, gender is much more than a social category, it is a dynamic structuring principle (genre) of the imagining of the selves. Once these dynamics are recognized, it becomes easier to understand the dynamics of the gender relations, men's behaviour and their difficulties to perform how they feel they should in Cape Verde.

I want thus to look at the evolution of the masculinity of the men I have worked with, since the end of the 80s. How have the drastic changes that Cape Verde has gone through during these last twenty years affected their masculinity, if at all? Which changes have affected the actual daily behaviour of those boastful yet modest men? Has this genre reproduced? How has it changed? Sticking to my initial statements, claims of interactionism, I will trace the gender performance of those men from the 80s until 2009. This endeavour is meant to contribute to the study of social changes through the self and its identifications used by Cape Verdeans. In the transformation of masculinities, the economies of social spaces and of collective identifications are key interpretative elements. Moreover, imagining and its emotional dimensions appear central in connecting self and society. I want now to turn to a period I observed, concentrate on the cases I studied and look at what has orientated or constrained the family trajectories of my privileged interlocutors since 1989.

QUESTIONING

What, during the last twenty years, has orientated the family trajectories of five men who were living in the same neighbourhood (*bairro*), in Praia, in the late 80s, early 90s?

I will look at what orientated their decisions, their behaviour towards the people whom they call by kinship terms, whom they share their lives with and whom they call "family" (*família*). I understand the Cape Verdean *família* as a network of people who maintain caring relations with each other (Carsten 2004, 2006), a very pragmatic approach to the notion suggested by my empirical data. These care relations imply reciprocal exchanges, or at least put at the disposal of both parties resources that can rapidly be turned into capital (social, human or economic). Those care relations evolve. The people they are "responsible" for, and who depend on them, change. As Drotbohm (2009)

finely analyses, people come and go from the network. The flexibility, fluidity of the network of care relations, and its constant evolution over time depends on life and death, on sentiments, on the economic faring of the members of the network and the resources they are able to mobilize, as well as their geographic positions. I will consider how my interlocutors have used the term "family" during those years.

Among the identified constraints, how have changes in lived gender relations contributed to orientating their family lives? Have gender relations changed in Cape Verde over the last twenty years? They certainly have. In 2002, after quite a long absence from Cape Verde, my field notes are full of the complaints of my interlocutors about how women, mainly young and educated women, are carefully and strategically controlling the access to their company, and eventually their bodies, a practice recalling similar processes observed in nearby urban Senegal (Biaya 2001; Fouquet 2007). Among my interlocutors, the expression "punch in the face" (*soku na rostu*) flourished on everybody's lips: women were becoming tougher in the negotiations of their sexual favours, conditioning their access to clear retributions. From the men's point of view, this fact implied multiple relationships orientated by material advantage. The women were literally said to be punching men's face and/or the image they had of themselves. Women were tearing to pieces the men's imagined selves. In this context, the *pixinguinhas* (Anjos 2005), juvenile girls engaged in multiple sexual relations, became the metonymy of the women challenging publically, not only the capacity of men to provide food and security, but their sexual ability, and therefore a sexual order rooted in larger narratives of the national, *kriolu* identity (Rodrigues 2003).

As in Biaya's (2001) description of the changes in the sexuality of young women in Dakar, my male interlocutors complained about forms of polyandry lived by the women, their new ways of seduction and their strong negotiation skills – body for money. The women's performance of their sexuality does alter the way they are gendered, and it affects directly the capacity of men to perform their hegemonic masculinity. It is interesting to note that the way people live their sexuality, practices, choices, terms of the exchange, alters their gender. This alteration in sexual practices creates "gender trouble" (Butler 2005). This has encouraged me to argue that some women in Praia were adopting the masculinity genre, and acting within its register, escaping from the classical feminine stereotypes of reproduction, *domus*, stability, family (Massart 2004).

The fact that men were being "punched in the face" by (potential) partners does entail a redefinition of the capacity of men and women to perform their self. This implies that the imaginings of the self have changed. This one significant factor has constrained my interlocutors' decisions concerning their family trajectories. In more theoretical terms then: gender is performed, it is not a natural given which comes to light through practices, but rather practices

institute gender (Fassin 2005). Changes in women's practices have directly affected the capacity of my interlocutors to affirm, to perform their gender. Consequently, it altered their capacity to reproduce their hegemonic masculinity. Gender is a performance re-enacted in various situations in which one is asserting him/herself. I defend the proposition that men seek spaces where they can perform their hegemonic masculinity, i.e. mainly in peer groups, among groups of men who are potentially their equals, in the terms defined by the specific Cape Verde genre (*engana/abusu/vergonha*). As a performance, masculinity is a genre that members of society and the ethnographer can identify. I use the notion of genre to encompass the different communication elements of this performance: the tone of voice, the norms it produces, the identifications it entails, the body postures… The performance shapes the performer, it creates specific self perceptions and ideals. That is the performativity of gender (Butler 2005). The subject is constructed through the genre learned from others; it renders possible a specific way of speaking of "I" (Butler 2005: 269). It orders the social reality in a specific way, generating specific emotions (shame, pride, rage, passion), it shapes the desires of the individual, and it legitimates his/her aspirations. The genre reproduces itself, gets inscribed in the performer's body, as routines, making sense of the individual's decisions and therefore orientating them.

The inscription of the genre in the bodies of individuals is easily observed in the differentiated behaviour of parents towards their male and female children. For example, the young girl is combed and plaited by her mother before going to school in the morning, whereas her brother jumps out of bed, eats and splashes his face with fresh water before running to school. Boys are charged with errands outside the house (*mandato*), whereas girls are regularly scowled at to remain in the immediate vicinity of the house, except for going to the local grocery store. My reference to childhood is purposeful; it highlights the duration and construction of subjectivities through time, insisting thereby on the process of incorporation and construction, through dialogue, of the self (Mead 1934).

In the end, there are benefits for the men who have a good gender performance, as they are rewarded by self-esteem and/or by the relaxing effect of pleasure; it literally institutes a safe zone for the performing actors. The social pressure and the benefits concur in the reproduction and the inscription of the genre.

From the recognition of these effects stems another question: if the performance of a genre of hegemonic masculinity moulds aspirations, identifications, body and discourses in such a way, is it possible for those people to adopt other genres, other ways of performing their masculinity, of altering their sexual practices, altering their gender? Can anything alter hegemonic masculinity?

This question calls in time dimensions. The young human being is educated into becoming a subject by external forces through actual interactions with other people and objects. She/he learns to act, react adequately, even to oppose, through this learning qua performing process. This interactionist view brings back the question of the specificity of given "generations". Manheim (1990) in his landmark article on "the problem of generation" defends the predominance of first impressions in socio-intellectual transmission. Each transmission mobilizes an interpretation in consonance with the situation faced by younger generations; contents are therefore transformed in the very transmission process (Zarca 1992: 133). Spencer states that "each generation in Mannheim's formulation is the repository of prevailing ideas" (Spencer 1990: 19).

Subjectivities would then be specific to situations and periods. Does this mean that significant changes in gender relations are generational changes? In other words, under what conditions do adults change their performance of gender? From my analyses and information, people do alter their usual performances; several women I knew did just that. Since I began sharing the lives of these men, I have witnessed several women adopt "manlike" behaviour such as violence against their partners, and in several of those cases, their very humanity was questioned. They seem to trigger fear, and they are vehemently condemned through expressions of disgust on the face of the narrator, swear words or their identification with the devil (*diabu*), or yet compared to animals, when called *kabra* (female goat). The very dissymmetry reflected in the use of *bode* (billy goat, as in the initial quote of this text) and *kabra* is insightful as *bode* is taken in its reproductive, sexually conquering function whereas *kabra*, when associated with women, marks the animality and seems to correspond more to the Portuguese *cabrão*, referring to an unmasculine, cheated husband. The resistance to sexual domination, to the dominant sexual order, disqualifies its author as a non-human; her sexual behaviour endangers the very social order.

Those were the rebellious, young girls "who would learn"... But today some women continue to assume their individuality, do not feel compelled to submit to a man's rule to survive, they manage sufficiently well economically (or more probably, with great difficulties) and harshly negotiate their relations with men. Although of approximately the same age as my male interlocutors, and of rural origin, these women perform their gender in new ways, are more active in the public sphere. Hegemonic agents are then more conservative than subaltern?

Finally, we are facing the question of the relation between self and society, and its articulations, which comes to questioning the very common sense notion of society and self, as results – narratives – structured by an imagined order. How my interlocutors produce social order will then be the last question. How do they deal with change and various orders? The deep social changes during the twenty years of my regular presence and exchanges with the interlocutors considered in this article will allow us to observe the conditions of

gender change. This takes us a long way from the synchronic view of a social order articulated by institutions dictating norms, and enforcing them. Norms reproduce in discourses and practices, and they orientate aspirations and desires. The incapacity to live according to them does not produce a loss of self, but rather gets imaginary processes going, led by aspirations and desires, informed by a rich popular imagining of what society is. Practically, this turns the multiple social spaces in which one participates into a key element in shaping life, through aspirations.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC LINE: THE ACTORS CONSIDERED

My fieldwork in Cape Verde actually started with "youth", in 1989. In 1990, I engaged with four of my friends in elaborating systematic life stories. As Paulo, one of them, said recently, thinking of our circle of friends: "*Nós é ômis di konviviu*" – we are men who spend time together, going out together. I thought of this flexible cloud of people, that I was frequenting as much as possible, as a *grupo de malta* (an affinity group of similar ages). As I represent it, there were four of us in the core of this group, friends (*amigus*), people you would visit if you did not see them for a couple of days, people you would spend time with if they were sick. But there were many others in the network. I left Cape Verde for a year in 1990-91, and stopped residing in Cape Verde in 1992. The three years spent "*na konviviu*" with this group of people created strong ties. I went back to Cape Verde in 2002 for a refreshing fieldwork of two and a half months, then in 2005, and several times in 2008 and 2009. During these years, we have met, discussed and spent time together in Cape Verde and in Europe.

These analyses are based on the lives of five of those people, all males. It is important to stress that I am working on longitudinal qualitative data. I have not worked on the gender practices of younger or older people, at least not systematically.

Contrary to the present multi-sited and polymorphous trend in ethnography (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 2008; Ong and Collier 2005), this is the fruit of a companionship of a group of people over time, informed by a long familiarity with Santiago Island and Cape Verde in general. This ongoing contact with the "field" orientates my theoretical questions, which I presented above. It allows me to study the performance of the self through time and its relations to changes, as well as the reproduction of an order linking the self and society. Furthermore, it allows for an empathic attention to the actual experiences of people of modest origin, through upsetting times. Processes, constraints, obligations and aspirations gain ground in my analyses (Bensa 2008).

Indeed, my interlocutors have gone through two very important ruptures for Cape Verde as a nation and a State: Independence in 1975 and the political opening (*abertura política*) of the early 90s. In 1991, Cape Verde inaugurated

its second republic with free elections which put in power the then recently created MPD (Movimento para a Democracia), relegating to the opposition the until then unique party, PAICV (Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde). This launched a rapid wave of economic liberalisation of the national economy, an era of significant investments in services (education, telephone, water and electricity) and formal democracy in Cape Verde. These factors will be developed at greater length later in the text. They inform the following brief presentation of the five men.

Among these five men, one came to Praia from a rural zone in the interior of Santiago in 1979 (Paulo), two came from Fogo to Praia in the 80s (Manel and Milan), one came to Praia from his native Fogo Island at the age of two (Azedinha), and one was born in Praia (Tito).

Paulo, born in 1962, grew up in a rural area in the interior of Santiago Island. His grandparents raised him as a young child. Following regular and heavy beatings from his uncle, he went to live with his parents at the age of 12. Paulo quitted school after the four years of primary school and became an agricultural worker when he was 15 years old. Later, he went to Praia in search of more "movement", self-promotion, a better job. He eventually was hired as a factotum, in a restaurant where he learned what would become his profession, cooking. Since then, he has worked as a salaried cook in various Praia restaurants, until his dismissal without compensation, in 2008, from his last employment. He is now concentrating on developing his own business, a small shop of primary goods combined with a small restaurant and bar in a recently built popular neighbourhood (*bairro*) of Praia. Paulo's trajectory seemed to have been orientated by his stubborn aspiration to have his own house. He raised its first walls surreptitiously when what would become a *bairro* was just a few concrete boxes in a peripheral area of Praia. All his savings, his bank credits have been spent on blocks, steel, sand, water and cement. That is where he is now: he is developing his business, and is still building, extending his house. He is married and shares his house with discreet Ela, who is very religious, a member of a protestant Church, and a very quiet woman. They live with their three children. Paulo has six living children with four different *mãe di fidju* (literally, mother of child). One child died as a baby in 1987. Regarding his relations with Ela, Paulo has a very pragmatic view: they depend on each other, since his pursuit of his aspiration of being fulfilled, realised (*realizadu*), requires Ela's proximity and participation to take care of his children and to help him develop his business and his house.

Manel is an electrician. Born in 1962, he came from Fogo Island to migrate to the USA, but was unfortunately called up under the Cape Verdean flag for military service, and thus lost the opportunity to emigrate. He settled in Praia, in an old, popular neighbourhood where he still rents a small apartment. Manel lives by himself. He has five children with five different mothers, and another

son he "adopted" from a family in his *bairro*. As he says, "I take responsibility for him": he covers some of the expenses related to the boy's education, and he also serves as a resource for him, orientating his decisions and his mother's, counselling him. He has authority over the youngster. This son also has free access to Manel's apartment.

Milan is Manel's younger brother. Born in 1965, Milan came to Praia to study. He finished his secondary schooling and technical training in office administration. Manel paid for his studies. They lived together during those years. After his training, Milan went to work in the administration on São Vicente, another island where he met a young Cape Verdean woman, originally from the Island of Santo Antão, but later living in the Netherlands. In 2004, he finally decided to emigrate to the Netherlands, to live with her. They have two children. He has found work in the Netherlands.

Azedinha came to Praia from Fogo as a young boy. His mother and her children settled in the same *bairro* as Manel. After primary school, Azedinha trained as a plumber. He worked for several years for the public hydraulic agriculture services, but lost his job in the 90s after the suppression of this service by the new, liberally-inspired government. His mother emigrated to Portugal and then to the USA, leaving Azedinha as head of the household. He married Gina in the late 80s before his mother's second migration. They have two children of their own and an "adopted" girl from Gina's rural village. Although not a "daughter", she is part of his family, and Azedinha paid for her studies. Gina left Azedinha in 2002, for a Cape Verdean man residing in France. At this time, Azedinha had no fixed job and had some difficulties in managing as an independent plumber. In fact, he was spending most of his times with "friends and whores" (*amigus i putas*), and drinking local rum (*grogue*). In 2003, he left his two children in the care of his adopted daughter and emigrated to the USA, from where he has not returned.

Tito was born in Praia in 1965. He is a civil servant. One of his father's uncles helped him to get a job in the State administration. He has since completed his secondary education and started studying for a university degree. While working as a public servant, he has gained experience and been promoted. He has a stable and reasonably high salary. Tito's job has taken him away from Praia, for several years. He now lives in São Vicente with Zabel, a schoolteacher in her early thirties, and one of his sons from another woman. Tito has six children from four different mothers – three in Praia, one in the USA.

FAMILY?

In his 1991 life story, Paulo told me, "I do not have my own family [*família*], one in which I am like this [he joins his two index fingers], of which I am part [*ki mim é incarradu nel*]". This comment had a tone of regret, transmitting that

the integration of the "I" is linked to the capacity to have one's own family. What kind of integration does a family produce, and how? The joining of the fingers seems to indicate equality, as well as a couple [*casal*], as a relationship between two people, central to the family. Here and repeatedly in time, the family appears as an aspiration, as a restricted group, where relations differ from other social relations. The family appears as a utopia, a new space, not yet in existence, through which he can perform who he wants to be.

He also said:

> "In '76, [I am] in the fourth grade. Independence. Cape Verde is full of enthusiasm: a free and independent country. But I had nothing to do with that: I was a citizen without culture, without sufficient schooling, without any well off [*bem di vida*] kin to try to offer me a future [*ki é pa tenta instalam num futuru*]".

Here the family appears as a capital (he has not), a capital that can project him into the future. In fact, for Tito, Milan and Azedinha, "family", their kin have been very instrumental in allowing them a future: to enter the civil service, Tito got support from his father's uncle; Milan could get an education in Praia thanks to the support of his brother Manel, who was himself an immigrant to Praia; his mother and her kin (*familiares*) took Azedinha to the USA, and through them, he obtained a visa and found a job in New England.

In a recording Paulo made for me, after receiving the transcripts of his life story, in 1991, he said: "I would like to meet a girl, with whom we get along well [*nu ta da fixe*], because, I have no family [*família*] close by [*ao pê*], I have no kin [*familiares*] close by, and then, to live [*para viver*] it is a bit expensive." For Paulo, to have his own family is an aspiration and it is instrumental in his life.

In a telephone call a few months ago, Paulo was telling me that he had gone to a patronage festival in the interior of Santiago, he said he went "with the whole family", that was with Ela, and their three common children. A nuclear family, a very normative model, probably akin to the representation of the family Ela's church wishes to reproduce, very akin to the implicit models encountered in the *telenovelas* from Brazil and Argentina, or from Portugal, but very different from the flexible networks formed by care relations that I observed during the last twenty years. When I invited Tito to join me at a music concert, he suggested taking "the whole family", i. e. his son, his partner, and himself.

In his life story, Manel recommended that before forming a couple (*casal*), one has to know how the girl (*menina*) behaves, with you and your family. Speaking of girls, and relationships he has had in the past, he gives examples of girls from *famílias bondosas*, families famous for their good temper and generosity, or from "one of these knife-wielding families (*família ki ta da ku faka*).

Several of my friends living in Cape Verde have close relations with migrant members of their "families": *primos* (cousins), *irmãos* (siblings), *compadres* (godfather of one's child or father of one's godchild), with whom they maintain regular relations and exchange services. These services often consist in taking care of migrants' investments (real estate) or representing them for bureaucratic purposes.

Pragmatically, one finds four main uses of the family in everyday life.

Firstly, a *família* is, in my interlocutors' sayings and practices, a frame, a place, a stage, where one can find stability, where one can integrate, or better can be "realised" (*ser realizadu*). To be fulfilled, "realised", is exactly what it says: to perform oneself in a specific situation, in an environment under control, where one's position is valued, where one is in charge; to be realised is to embody and display the conformity of one's behaviour to the hegemonic masculinity genre. To have their own (*própria*) family and home (*kaza*) has been an aspiration since their youth. The home appears as the indispensable material element of the space where specific social relations can prevail. It guarantees an aspired stability inseparable from the performance of ideal identifications embedded in a specific masculinity genre. It is a norm, by which the value of the person is evaluated. When Paulo and I were discussing Manel a year ago, Paulo said: "He [Manel] doesn't even have a house nor a woman to live with". This desire and indicator has strongly orientated their decisions.

A "family" and its members (*familiares*) are resources. The kind of capital they offer is protection, money, but also contacts, connections, which appear really important in the case of migration. It is a group of reference, a name, a memory, a collective identification and often a guarantee of one's worth, a profile. The identification of an individual to a very specific group, a genealogical identification is a current practice in everyday life, at least for my interlocutors.

A family also appears as a set of relations of reciprocity; respect allows for protection, submission gives tenderness, support, peace, and sexuality. The continuity in the flow is what defines at a point in time a group of persons, characterized by trust, exchanges, clear identifications resulting in clear behaviours, and that group of persons is called *família*. All my interlocutors reasserted the obligation to assume one's responsibility for one's children, to make sure the mother or the youth receive regular sums of money, usually monthly, but sometimes every once in a while, or when one is solicited to send it. It is very common for conflicts in partners' relations to result from the failure of the men to meet their obligations, in terms of allocation of resources, but also in sexual activity and "respect", which means to maintain an appearance of fidelity and to restrain from shaming.

If, in fact, the family is a network of (evolving) care relations, existing through their fluxes and intensity, it is also, from a less material perspective, a

crucial source of capital, identification, and a specific ideal, the ideal of a stable unit around one fulfilled, "realised" man. It is the *locus* (symbolically), the scene (performatively) and the arena (politically) of a continuous dynamic, fed on the recurring tensions between movement and stability, a crucial engine of the Cape Verdean imaginary. The flexible family is the result of the combination of its material and imaginary performances.

THE CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING THE FAMILY TRAJECTORIES

My use of "constraints" draws on Foucault's conception of power as a guiding force, framing the performances of individuals and groups. Identifying the forces that orientate my interlocutors' decisions, actions, and constraints compels me to the discipline of tracking the chains of interactions that precede actual behaviour (Ginzburg 1989, Latour 1996, Mead 1934, Bakhtin 1986). This permits the powers active in the studied phenomenon to be highlighted.

Since our first meetings and discussions of the late 80s and early 90s, some basic aspirations of my interlocutors have remained the same: they want to gain a recognized professional identification, providing regular and satisfactory revenues. They want to have their own network in which they are central, their "own" family. They want to create spaces where they can assume the role of a man, ruling a group. To have one's own house sometimes seems to overlap or to be complementary to or even a warranty for securing a family. The house is important as it entails a proximity group and the capacity to produce capital. In this sense, one understands better the failure joked about by his peers and somehow Manel's own despair and his integration into a friend's family close to his own apartment, where he eats, watches television and spends his free time.

These men want to remain curious, to discover "new things", if possible "to study more", just as they are looking for *"movimento"*. They are looking forward to constantly opening up their world, that is, intellectually as well as actually. This desire for knowledge is central to the masculine performance of the self. Furthermore, it has become a general, public belief: acquiring education allows one a better life. This widespread discourse of the individual and financial benefits of education has been important in motivating their decision to invest in their dependents' education and their own. Knowledge is key to the fulfilment (realisation) of individuals. Under the expression *ser realizadu*, to be realised, one perceives a folk psychology. The verb *realizar* conveys how to be is to perform what one thinks one should be, or should be seen doing, or should do. The result of complying with imagined ways of being brings an emotional state of satisfaction, to be at peace (*tranquilu*).

Those men explain their trajectories first and foremost by their failure (and the pleasure they draw from this incapacity) to harness their desires, their "nature". With this explanation, they are acting out, being conquering and

powerful males. They will smile and tell you with a self-pitying look that "what-ever you do, a man is mischievous (*traquinu*), explaining away their quests for sexual experiences, their continuous performance of charm towards women they meet in public spaces, praising their beauty or joking. A man likes to play, and sex and seduction are a game where gender is performed. Men are caught in this circle of being criticised by their partners for running after women, preferably younger ones, and maintaining several sexual relations at the same time; they know this puts their wish to have a stable family in jeopardy, but they also feel that being a conqueror keeps them young, active, strengthens their self. In this situation, the tension is resolved by the submission of the partner; she has to endure and perform, as Ela does. When women have more means (human, social, economic) to fend for themselves, and more ideological support (from their own family, from peers, religious groups, civil associations), they are much less likely to submit; they will flee, negotiate, exploit this con-quering desire of men. The pretexts mentioned for ruptures between partners extend to other activities of typical male practices, enacting their masculinity.

The *konviviu*, leisure time spent among peers, in semi-public spaces such as local bars or someone's yard, is often accompanied with the drinking of *grogue* and card-playing, or watching football. This intense social life, taking men away from their homes, taking their money, is often invoked as a reason for separation and physical violence. Alcohol is also a force known for turning a man away from his obligations and away from the pursuit of his realisation. Furthermore, the partner often denounces the lack of sexual activity: "He just falls into bed and snores" (*El ta kai na kama i ronka*), said some women.

Obviously, the ruptures and the difficulties between "men" and "women" and the conflicts between men are also related to the shortcomings of men. Sexual activity has appeared an issue in men's conversations and daily life. Their aging and the transformation of their bodies are also at stake. White hair, beer bellies, fat bodily envelope, problems of health (*saúdi*) related to drinking or smoking, all these physical transformations of their bodies take them away from the performance capacity of their imagined youth. One major worry of men is to stay "young" (*nobu*). To stay young, a man will strive to appear "fresh" (*fresku*), going to the barber, dressing up when going out, show-ing compulsive gestures to remove their hanging shirt from their protruding bellies. They sometimes doubt their own performance, and are conscious of but deny their loss of seduction abilities. Their aging, they know, is also linked to the very instrumental relations younger potential sexual partners (*meninas*) are prone to impose on them. Besides poor sexual performance, physical vio-lence is often linked to excessive drinking of *grogue*.

In all those aspects, these experienced men are more and more conscious of their growing responsibilities and their restricted capacity to perform the regular hegemonic masculinity genre. In this respect, their financial capacities

are important: more money will help them to fulfil different obligations; less money obliges them to arbitrate between priorities. In this situation, the tensions between different constraints induce a constant movement, a constant quest. This should get them moving, exploring new, different genres of self. I will come back to this question.

Besides the constraints linked to their aging and its impact on their bodies, my interlocutors point to the weight of their strict obligations to "assume their responsibilities", that is essentially giving money to their children, and making sure they live in good conditions. In fact, their contributions are sometimes very irregular, and this often causes conflict with the child's mother or caregiver. At this stage of their lives, they are very likely to have pending debts with banks that they have engaged in to invest in the building of their own homes.

In 2002, I met with Banda, one of my old friends, in Praia, with Manel, Tito and Paulo; he eloquently summed up the perception of the group in a confidential tone, with the usual openness among us: "The main problem is this: conflict at home. The woman wants to do as she intends, to drink, to go out, go to the disco. That is it! Catches one, catches another. That is how life is [...] Everyone in their own level" (*Maior problema é keli, guerra dentru di lar. Mudjer krê fazi di sel, ta bebi, ta sai, ta bai boite, Pronto. Pega um, pega outro. Assim ke é vida. Difícil. [...] Cada um na si nivel*). The "*cada um na si nivel*", is hard to render, as it conveys not only a sense of specific trajectory but also of social space, a specific form of individualism associated with specific positions and therefore spaces.

During this 2002 visit, I was struck by the numerous stories I heard from my interlocutors on two themes: the growing negotiation power of women and the zoning of the city. Men deplored one and the other, since they both entailed loss of access for them: men were thus restricted in obtaining sexual favours and company from women, and their physical movements in the city were also constrained.

Factors altering the performance of women's gender are to be linked to a large array of changes: changes in the discourses about rights, equality, couples, responsibilities which grew out of the opening of the media space in Cape Verde. Television (Brazilian, Portuguese and national channels are the most often watched) is an omnipresent actor in the home, in the women's domain. In fact, the general "climate" of democracy following the 1991 free elections pervaded all sectors of social life. The liberalisation of trade has allowed for the emergence of a strong woman figure, the *rebidantes*; in fact, several women I have known have engaged in various forms of trade endeavours, importing goods by going to Dakar, to Fortaleza, or receiving goods through family members living abroad. The development of the education sector and the involvement of girls in education has been both an ideal and an actual change. These factors have participated in altering the performance of women's femininity. These

conditions help to understand my male interlocutors remarks that women were adopting the masculinity genre when they said that today's women "punch in the face". The adoption of man-like behaviour by women seems to question men's masculinity (Perry 2005) as gender categories are blurring. Women are acute in negotiating their company against money, services or goods. From passive, victimised beings, women have become perpetrators.

How my interlocutors experience their restrictions in access to space is a complex process. It suffices to hint at a simple fact: the city of Praia, where they were roaming freely 15 years earlier, at whatever hour of the day, has become another imagined city. Physically, Praia's population was half its contemporary size in the late 80s (from 60 thousand it has grown to more than 112 thousand in 2009). Numerous new *bairros*, both rich and poor, have appeared, very distinct in their aspects and equipment. My interlocutors' vantage points have changed, as they were then young men, avid for *movimento*, exploring their youth and imagining their future. Besides growing, the city population has diversified, with the continuous arrivals of Cape Verdeans from Santiago and the other islands, but also new immigrants from the African continent and China.

The narratives about spatial restrictions basically evoke two phenomena related to urban areas. Some of the popular areas they usually frequented or crossed are now famous for being occupied by youth gangs – "*thugs*" – or simply frequented by thieves, looking for some cash, performing the "*cassu bodi*" (from "cash or body"). These areas are said to be "dangerous, mainly at night". They avoid them. As for the richer, newly built real estate by private enterprises and individuals and by public institutions, they do not frequent them, except for professional reasons, although they find the new areas of villas and condominiums west of the capital "nice" (*bonitus*). One can see how the implantation of various banks and their credit policies has affected the shape and the forms of Praia.

For my friends, these transformations have restricted the number and type of partners that they can hope to meet and to build a relationship with. These restrictions on their access to spaces in the city translate their confinement, their social status. These are restrictions to this now impossible ideal person. They oppose their present constrained situation to the imagined city they roamed when they were young and conquering young males, occupying the stage, young men consuming women (Biaya 2001). In fact, the ideal man is young and moving.

The resources they are able to obtain are key to their decisions related to family life. Structural, personal and conjectural economic changes affect their income: losing a job as happened to Azedinha, following the liberalisation frenzy after the first democratic elections in 1991; being fired after being suspected of sleeping with the boss's lover; losing a market for an independent

worker; these events limited their capacity to develop their families as they wished. They need to concentrate their efforts, arbitrate. Manel has an uncertain income, and he gave a lot of support to Milan, his brother, and to his numerous children; furthermore, he manages his income poorly, and has supported the constant high costs of the life of a *mudjerengo* (a ladies' man). His resources have not allowed him to build a house; he is living the life of an aging polygamist, whose sentimental life seems a long chain of conflicts from which he is running away.

Finally, the family story of each one has been important in constraining their own family trajectories. In the above quote, Paulo pointed to this fact. The family is a polymorphous capital; it provides or deprives one with/of identity and different resources: heritage (real estate, land), social capital (persons who can put them in a future), human capital (parents educating children), financial capital, and so on. Milan got an education thanks to the support of his brother. This allowed him to get a job, to move, to meet new people and eventually his partner, thanks to whom he migrated and found a job. Conscious of the importance the family into which they were born had on their own trajectories, those men strive to reinforce and to invest in their "own family" ("*família própria*"), in their own immediate social networks, tied by emotions, obligations, blood, benevolence, reciprocity, in order to pass on capital to their own children and those they care for.

A MASCULINITY GENRE ORIENTATING DECISIONS

According to Butler (2005), the performance of gender is the performance of a specific self. The performance of the genre crafts the self, hence, the performativity of gender. This performativity is to be observed in how the performance of an imagined gendered self orientates, enables specific decisions and actions. The question stemming from this theoretical construction which guides me in this account of the evolutions of the performances of gender by Cape Verdean men is whether other performances appear, whether an alteration of the genre happens, and how.

The hegemonic masculinity with which I got familiar twenty years ago affected the possibilities that these men considered and chose in their family trajectories. My interlocutors do not only still display this genre, but it provides them with norms to assess other men's behaviour. The multiplication of the mothers of one's children (*mãe de fidju*), as we have seen, is very much the consequence of being a man, respected in a society of peers, a conquering man who conquers bodies, roams territories and controls the respectability of women he feels socially in charge of, who take part in his proximity network. The relation to space appears central in all their decisions. Spaces are to be explored, controlled. Exploring spaces and the spatially spread out Creole

world has been decisive in the lives of Azedinha, Paulo, Milan, Tito and Manel – all of them. Masculinity is but a regime, an imagined ordering of the social network, the self and the space, a regime in which men "command", provide, protect and enjoy. Ideally, it is all about performing an independent self, one who knows, requires respect, and is strategic (*engana/abusu/vergonha*)…

When facing difficulties in fulfilling his professional, sexual, family aspirations, the old performance of the man among his friends appears more like a refuge, constraining him to very familiar spaces where he is recognised by his peers and often taken in a vicious circle of heavy drinking. This has happened to Manel, this has happened to Azedinha, a situation he was rescued from by his *familiares*, living in the USA, who took him over there. The confinement to those close, familiar spaces tends to sculpture very intolerant selves, incapable of making the required concessions to women, trapped in their own genre and gender.

Tito decided not to take a credit with his partner Gina to build a house that would then belong to both. Commenting on his decision, Tito explained that he already has a lot of "responsibilities", with his children and four *mãe de fidju*. Then he said, "I want to be free [*livre assim*], you see. This is what I really want". Paulo, commenting on his difficulties in getting enough money to progress with the construction of his house, told me, "You know, this is the problem with Cape Verdean men, many children!" But, as Tito, as Manel, as Azedinha so often say, "men are *traquinus*".

My experience with those men has been the same for the last 20 years: when we get ready to go out, not only do they dress up, change their daily clothes, but their whole body sets itself out for public display: they are attentive to their immediate environment, eyes wide open, mindful, scanning the environment for known people to greet loudly, with whom to exchange a few words. However, they are prone to greet girls and women in a lower voice, as if establishing right away a confidential, intimate dialogue, scrutinizing the girl's appearance, a smile on their face as in a predatory *ante facto* delight. I have already described this behaviour in previous texts (Massart 2000).

For one thing, time is an enemy. In fact, the ideal "man" is young, strong, charming, socially respected, and can impose himself and his voice, in social spaces he controls. Their imagined "man" sometimes translates in their efforts to "do sports", jogging, swimming, to get a good hair cut, which helps them feel "presentable" (*apresentável*), younger (*mas nobu*), "fresher" (*mas fresku*). But physical aging, years of hard work, of consumption of *grogue* for some, have marked their bodies, much different in look and capacities from twenty years ago. Is it surprising that the poorer, Paulo and Manel's bodies are the more affected? A good masculine performance is ideally associated with youth. The relations to time are central in the dynamics of these men's sense of self. I will come back to this.

Without the means to assume their conquering pretentions, to satisfy the requirements of potential partners, men are constrained to a rather domestic life, where they reproduce around a familiar group (whether their "own" or not) a classical masculinity greatly orientating their social performances. If they have the means, they pursue quite an agitated life, on the move. But in all situations, they are unable to fulfil the requirements of a good performance of their genre. It is a tough life to be a "man". This does not mean that they are thrown in anomy, a crisis; they merely are in difficult situations, for an imaginary dynamic (performativity) has shaped their specific worldview, the future and their place in both. They are sustained in their effort by a strong utopian drive and a very pragmatic strategy of reproduction, through closely tied groups imbued by trust, entertained by reciprocity. But I am already hinting at my conclusions before answering my last question.

MASCULINITIES, GENDER, GENERATION AND CHANGE

Biaya convincingly argues: "Progressivement, les femmes cherchent à sortir du statut d'objet dans lequel les avaient confiné les hommes. Elles effectuent des choix stratégiques en se muant en partenaires consentantes de la sexualité. Elles pèsent, de ce fait, sur les nouvelles définitions de la masculinité" (Biaya 2001: 79). These lines could apply to the Cape Verdean situation, provided we keep in mind that the "definitions of masculinity" are continuous processes. The questioning or, better, the challenging of their masculinity by women's practices (including but not restricted to sexual practices; cf. Anjos 2005) is effective; one wonders whether that implies that men alter their masculinity genre.

In other words, can the genre inspiring men's gender performances be altered? Boys are associated with the tasks of their father, who regularly challenges them on what the child knows and does not know how to do, putting pressure on him to learn fast. Whereas men joking with boys will often bully them about their girlfriends, they will interrogate girls about their mothers or their school grades and look at them as objects of desire as they mature physically. Boys are allowed to roam more freely in the *bairro*, meeting peers. Thus from an early age they develop an intense and quite specific inter-peer life. A young boy is either at school, or rendering some service to adults, or doing homework or "roaming around with his friends". Boys are constantly challenged by their fathers to behave like men, as they tell them to behave.

I made clear that the questioning of their masculinity can result in some kind of confinement to specific, self secure, groups, networks. Is the performativity of their masculinity so powerful that it fixes, so to speak, usual and legitimate ways of acting and being gratified, that such fundamental changes can only happen between generations? Are men prisoners of a genre that they have learned to perform since their early childhood? Women are also constrained by

the feminine posture they learned, but they appear able to gain more freedom. In the same *bairro* as my interlocutors, I observed the changes in my women friends' performance of gender, in their displaying of their bodies. In 2005, I was discussing this with a friend from a village outside Praia, in his early 40s, whom I had not seen for a few years. He asked me whether I had seen "how girls were showing their belly buttons in Praia nowadays".

Women's affirmative position towards the men they let into their lives, their economic independence and/or initiatives have brought me to write that women were adopting the hegemonic masculinity genre (Massart 2004). They are perceived as more active, with greater agency. In Cape Verde, where single-headed households have been common for a long time, this situation leads to more separations between partners and to specific sexual practices. In fact, sexual practices have to be considered in a broader description and analysis of contemporary sexualities in Cape Verde.

In harsh economic conditions and situations, yes, with little capital, men do stick to their usual performances. They strive, are at great pains to reproduce the masculine order without much success, they reckon, and with a serious enemy, time – a constructed and non-linear time that allows them to shift their utopian projections from themselves to their kin and mainly children, from a physical to a more social and economic performance.

This observation allows me to put into perspective arguments such as those articulated by Aboim highlighting sexuality "as a crucial element for self-assertion as a man" (Aboim 2009: 219). One of Aboim's concluding remarks states: "The newness here is that instead of being combined with other forms of control, many young and urban men are making use of their sexuality as the sole and direct means of recreating a positive identity" (Aboim 2009: 219). If there is no doubt that in Cape Verde, the masculinity genre and its performances have entailed a conquering, predatory-like sexuality, narrated through often violent terminology referring to the sexual act as a male performance, and often a mechanical one – make love as *mata porku* (literally, to kill a pig), as *dá-l* (give it to her), or as *siridja-l* (from *siridja*, to file, evoking the mechanical back and forth movement of penetration). My own analysis defends the view that if a genre of hegemonic masculinity is reproduced, the actual forms of its performances vary according to the person's times, both while aging and in that she belongs to a generational group. In fact, a good masculinity performance allows a man to remain young. Plural forms of masculinities are produced, and these are best distinguished by characterizing them from the vantage point of the individuals and groups of men and women concerned, vantage points defined as a position in imagined time and space (Anjos 2011).

This leads me to defend the view that a phenomenology of spaces and times in Cape Verde remains central to the understanding of its contemporary transformations and of the dynamics of gender performances. This phenomenology

requires that intentionalities associated with specific notions of space and time as they evolve in Cape Verdean history and vary (or not) among different social groups be trailed, followed, pursued, inquired into, through a detective-like sensitive inquiry (Ginzburg 1989) into the chains of intentionalities, following on in an uninterrupted movement. I suggest that gender will show to be a central structuring principle in those phenomenologies, embedded in local narratives of identities; as gender performances change, possible alternative imaginings of the personal and collective selves evolve and vice-versa.

The majority of my interlocutors recognise changes in their own behaviour towards the members of their proximity care group, sometimes called *família*, and especially in their behaviour regarding their children. In an informal discussion with Tito in 2011, he said that he was not behaving towards his last son, who was living with him at the time, as he had behaved towards his first-born child, a girl, with whom he now had an irregular contact as he had for a long time taken a strong authoritarian attitude towards her, the very few times they met. This he recognised was "bad" (*mau*). Their daily interactions with their partners have also changed: Miranda and Tito confided that they were more tender (*mais karinhosu*) with their current partners than they ever had been with their previous ones. They even accept the eventuality of another gender, homosexuals, which in the classical genre was unthinkable as the whole order created by hegemonic masculinity rests on the exclusive pair men and women, where, therefore, homosexuals are denied masculinity and sometimes humanity, as they are considered without proper gender. These transformations are akin to their capacity of composing with educated women, with women whose seduction strategies have changed. These two elements let us foresee that these changes in their gender performances entail the imagining of other sexual practices, or their diversification.

Basically, one can write that changes or accommodations in the performance of gender are happening according to time (their aging), social positions and interactions with space. In this sense, yes, changes are more likely to materialise among the specific groups that are educated in those changing times. Access to resources allowing the opening and familiarisation with other realities, other situations, through education, travelling, migration, explorations, are central as they create other situations in which they have less spaces to perform the classical gender divides and attitudes. This is particularly central as the contemporary changes are accompanied by a diversification of the experiences of relations to time and space.

The hegemonic masculinity genre remains a register all of my friends activate in specific situations, among peers, in confidential situations, in minute dealings, decision making in daily life, in familiar socializing situations. This genre has in fact shaped their way of presenting themselves since their childhood. Furthermore, it is a resource enhancing strong proximity ties and a

proven survival strategy of relying on them. In my view, it is the most powerful genre that, by shaping their self and its performances, orientates their life because it is so instrumentally connected to the larger discourses and phenomena they have been growing with. As I wrote in notes coming back from my 2002 stay in Praia, after a long absence: "Everything changed and everything remained the same."

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