

‘Poverty..., of course we have it...’ Notes for the analysis of an institutional conscience about poverty and micro-violence in Cape Verdean contexts¹

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Abstract

Based on testimonies by Cape Verdean individuals with different social condition and institutional responsibility on one hand and, on the other hand, on the consideration of the historical burden and the policies adopted after the independence, this article is focused on the creation of a social conscience about poverty and the manifestations of micro-violence through the action of institutions and NGOs committed in the eradication of poverty and prevention of behaviors potentially generating and perpetuating micro-violence and social exclusion. The political environment and the perception of an involvement of Cape Verdeans in a common destiny are deemed crucial to the achievement of these purposes.

When landing at Fogo Island, paying attention to the landscape formed by magma rivers, steep riversides and blackish-brown rocky soil, one asks himself how the local population survives. However, at the town of Sao Filipe, one starts to understand the agricultural potential of the island, which, owing to its ecologic diversity, supplies the Santiago market and aims to invest in exportation. In a way, the discovery of economic potentialities under a closer look resembles a metaphor to account for in the analysis of Cape Verdean realities, much diverse from island to island and, occasionally, inside each island.

Despite the micro-insularity, the study about the prevalence and recent evolution of poverty and micro-violence manifestations in Cape Verde demands, as premise, the recognition of this immense economic and social diversity which, besides causing some perplexities, also complicates a comprehensive analysis.

In some of the poorer islands, we can find, perhaps, an incidence of more acceptable social indicators and fewer social issues. In other words, find facts that, for a lack of visible social repercussions or for being related to local idiosyncrasies and principles, are not seen as social issues. In contrast, there will be fewer expectations for personal fulfillment. The richer and more populated islands, with more opportunities on account of their economic variety, have issues caused by an accelerated urbanization and high unemployment, which was around 18% in 2006². In the long-term, this figure denotes an improvement, since in 1980 and 1990 the unemployment rates were respectively 28.8% and 25.9%³. The unemployment is high and, as acknowledged, has an influence on the roots of a resigned attitude, also anchored in the expected support from the family. It is simple to find people, in particular youngsters, who manifestly don't have a job or claim to not have employment opportunities, since there is *work only as civil*

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¹ It concerns an exploratory text, resulting from the project Poverty and Peace in the PALOP, constituting a starting point to a posterior research.

² Cf. data quoted by Monteiro (2008: 93).

³ Cf. Grassi (2003: 131).

servant. If one does not work in the public service then one does not have a *job*, similar to not having a guaranteed survival. Some live off occasional work, whose availability varies according to season or according to the economic conjuncture. It is said that, in spite of the unemployment, the education has been narrowing the acceptable labour opportunities. Indeed, the rural jobs, although scarce, are usually rejected, as also are any poorly paid construction works. This explains the deployment of migrant labour force in the construction sector.

The economic circumstances diverge from island to island, representing their identity-generating narratives, in addition to the particular social configurations provided, for instance, by the repercussions of the migratory fluxes initiated in each island. This feature is clearly noticeable in Fogo, an island that has contributed much to the migration toward America. Purportedly, Fogo is supported by revenues provided by the emigration, which in some manner will influence the creation and reproduction of certain behaviors and cultural standards – for example, concerning the construction of family bonds in the rural regions – with larger incidence in this island than in the most urbanized.

In a territory which, until recently, had been unanimously considered devoid of natural resources and besides afflicted by droughts, the economic endeavors are quite assorted and far-reaching. For example, in some islands was made a strong effort on tourism which, according to rentist reasons, prevents the tourists from acquiring land and opposes the dynamics of local accumulation. Following this endeavor, appeared a slum quarter in Boavista where resides the migrant labour force deployed in the construction of touristic enterprises. In the aftermath of the recent international crisis, some of these immigrants lost their way to earn a living. In Fogo, as the town of Sao Filipe grows, there is a proposition to return to irrigation-based farming, as an agricultural advantage for the island. The social environment in Sao Filipe is completely distinctive from Praia, whose growth is derived from its political centrality.

In opposition to this economic diversity, there is a relative institutional agreement which intends to achieve more cohesion, by means of policies of social support performed by public institutions and NGO. The efficiency of these efforts to provide social integration is favored by the current political⁴ and cultural⁵ background.

The courses of politics and governance are targets of scrutiny and theme of discussion in spaces of daily socializing. In informal conversations, Cape Verdeans tend to agree they are fortunate for the governance of their country, following principles of pragmatism and aptitude in the management of public resources. Such commentaries

⁴ Such does not imply the acceptance of the absence of economic restraints and resistances and political and institutional inertias which oppose the purposes of social integration, laboring in favor of the reproduction of inequalities and, therefore, of social exclusion itself. However, focusing on the conscience of poverty and fight against poverty, it is being performed by individuals with ethic and social motivations or by those who have become committed to some principles and social programs.

For that reason, during this research we talked to persons who fight everyday for their survival and with experts from institutions who have an inclusive conscience, not necessarily technocratic or instrumental, about these social issues.

⁵ Iolanda Évora gives attention to the weight of cultural factors, for being historically rooted – namely, the need for composing solidarity manifestations amid precariousness and social inequalities – which allow for a belief in the principle of institutional performance (2009: 8). Without devaluating the relevance of history, it is however necessary to emphasize that, independently from the political color of the several regimes, former administrative practices have maintained most of the trust asset in institutions. Thus the possibility of reaching the purpose to transform attitudes and behaviors, which until recently would be part of an immobile idiosyncratic path.

incorporate the importance given to politicians, attributable to the international prestige of Cape Verde since its independence, for instance manifested in their willingness to consider this country as a partner for (defining and) preserving the international order, and for some more particular goals, such as fighting the illegal drug traffic. In any case, this is the result of the creation of international partnerships that reinforce the autonomy of the institutional performance at distinct stages, somehow implementing a managerial ethic recurrently opposing the eventual subservience and the clientist instrumentalization in accordance to particular political and economic interests.

Clearly, this interpretative summary could be invalidated by examples of casuistic decisions of alleged fostering, for instance, based on personal acquaintance. Neither the recognition of circumstances of populism and autocracy in local governance nor a few odd accusations of corruption announced in the media have permanently damaged trust in the State or wrecked its social performance.

It must be said that, also on account of the structural frailty of the productive fabric, the State is expected to assume liability for fighting poverty. So, the outcomes from this fight depend primarily on its idoneity, plus on those of their respective agents. The same cultural background that reinforces the State is similarly encouraging the constitution of NGOs engaged in fighting poverty and promoting social changes as well.

The political confliction is maintained within democratic standards. Actually, with the Cape Verdeans' effortless demeanor and welcoming reception, those who are familiar with the archipelago's recent history will be surprised by its violent process of transition. In fact, this process was not as pacific as expected from the diffusion of independentist ideals by the Cape Verdean elite⁶. As time went by, the (indisputable) Cape Verdean cultural identity did not transform, immediate and unconditionally, into an independentist dream and it hasn't embraced at all the independence promoted by Guinean fighters. In any case, the violence which occurred in the transitional period – mostly imprisonments – has not turned into a canon for the single-party regime, which was characterized by a somehow forced tolerance during its narrow course of survival. In effect, despite the voluntarist feature of the PAIGC (later PAICV) leadership, such tolerance was the outcome of a caution to avoid convulsions and fissures in times of economic and social hardships. Perhaps, it was likewise originated by the mitigating effects resulting from international aid and mostly from emigration. Founded on affective impulses (anchored in customs and traditions that should not to be derogated by revolutionary political choices, censured as well in the welcoming countries, particularly the USA) and on personal interests, the emigrants' judgment may have been much less paternalistic and condescending than the judgment of international donors. So, besides symbolically priceless, the emigrants' contributions were no less valuable than the international aid, because they were directly oriented to the people.

During the single-party regime, conflicts related to a proposal for agrarian reform and, at a given time, a turbulent youth contestation against the monolithic socialist orientation of the PAICV were not enough to withdraw the notion of social and political peace experienced since the independence. After the political overture, most formal rules of a representative democracy have been followed and some allusions to a lesser

⁶ It is not discussed the Cape Verdean cultural identity nor the disseminating yearn for independence. But for that reason, it must be registered that an africanized independence was achieved at the cost of violence – just as the trail of contact, sometimes tense, between these two mythicized identity poles for the Cape Verdeans, namely Africa and Europe, was almost erased – which justification was based on the fight for national liberation.

transparency during electoral processes do not challenge – neither to the emigrant communities nor the international partners – the political normality and, more significantly, the notion of growing institutional capacitation, with the purpose of attaining good governance.

There have always been manifestations of micro-violence – some culturally rooted others product of the *development* – but there is not an historical record of political violence. In other words, if some have an certain arrogated intrepidity – for instance, there is a saying that goes “the Fogo people give it all for a good fight”, akin to the alleged recollection about the legendary bravery of famed individuals from the inland of Santiago, for whom the instrument of revenge was the knife – composes a conflicting idiosyncrasy of the Cape Verdean which has no replication in the political evolution. The verbal incisiveness of the partidarian struggle does not translate into physical violence.

The inexistence of a trail of political violence is considered relevant for two reasons: first, to reinforce the State as the only institution able to legitimately use force while preventing and repressing violence and maintaining the juridical and social orders, and second, only apparently redundant, for a perception of micro-violence as an illegitimate and punishable incident.

Considering the previously mentioned variety of circumstances from an economic and social perspective, the characterization of the country’s evolution cannot be mechanically transposed into an analysis of occurrences such as micro-violence and poverty. Actually, just as the normality of the political action does not reveal tensions at the birth of independence, neither the relaxed social relations and the *morabeza* let perceive the small criminality in the streets (minimized by visitants or exaggerated by residents who find this behavior hard to handle) and even less the asymmetry of gender relations or the heterogeneity of family relations, with significant social consequences from the stance of both poverty and social exclusion⁷.

To increase its complexity, the analysis will take into consideration the processes of social change. For example, during the last decades, Fogo’s migration flux contributed to subvert the former social order and change of the social landscape of São Filipe that had, meanwhile, been *occupied* by people of rural origins, formerly declassified for being *outsiders*. The rural exodus from some islands toward others and the accelerated urbanization – mainly in the city of Praia – have deepened asymmetries and increased difficulties for the people living in urban peripheries where, also on account of the populational growth, are expected to be found ways to make a better living than in their homelands.

It is said that *the development brings it all*, which seems to insinuate the perception that the negative features of this *development* come from the exterior. Anyway, the rather striking specificities of some islands, particularly the rural ones, support the notion that social control not only prevents hunger as in addition, perhaps more importantly, maintains the local idiosyncrasy opposing the dissemination of behaviors deemed

⁷ The pertinent question is whether these features have their own characteristics and social weight. The asymmetry in gender relations is not specific to Cape Verde. But, attending to the historical and social singularity of the archipelago, the asymmetry and heterogeneity of family bonds are present in all discourses about poverty. The association of these phenomena to poverty comes up empirically sustained by the banality of male unreliability toward their children, which by itself already affects individual trajectories, particularly in the lower social ranks.

antisocial⁸. In reality, the social changes are quite unbalanced, quite prompt in some islands, in others ably accommodated into everyday routines.

The perception that *development brings it all* is challenge by a commitment, mixed with militant consciousness and technocratic efficiency – for instance, the Instituto Cabo-verdiano da Criança e do Adolescente (ICCA) – Cape Verde Institute for Children and Adolescents) sends text messages to mobile phones, calling for the denunciation in case of child abuse and mistreatment, the *absolute priority!* – according to the social regulation, consensual with the agreement in relation to human development. Part of the social conscience, induced by institutions and defined by a few volitional traces, is militating on behalf of poverty eradication and gender parity. Perhaps as a result of the notion of explanatory obstacles resulting from the varied emotions involved, the agents of these goals – some young professionals supervising projects – have a clear perception of being involved in a short-term assignment.

Domestic and gender-based violence are culturally and socially entrenched⁹ – for the reason that it is a hard to approach theme – and don't intersect into the political evolution¹⁰. On the contrary, political consensus and strong institutions could decisively configure the behaviors which have been supposedly at the origin of serious social issues. In addition, the promotion of human development conducted by institutions and NGO might produce behavior changes and to a more mature citizenship, further demonstrating the ethics of social behaviors, such as the belief of those who engage themselves in fighting poverty and antisocial behaviors.

Based on the testimonies of Cape Verdean participants from different social backgrounds and agents from public services and NGO¹¹, the purpose of this exploratory text is to set down some questions for future researches in relation to the micro-violence manifestations and the collective and individual impoverishment paths¹².

⁸ The notion of being “in trouble with the law”, expressly referred to outline the conducts of youths, does not enclose the whole specter of what, with unavoidable subjectivity, are considered to be young people's antisocial behaviors, namely rejecting values as, for example, making a living or accepting parental authority.

⁹This is how they are known by official authorities, who talk about a “high incidence of gender-based violence”, cf. for example, *Documento de Estratégia de Crescimento e Redução da Pobreza – II*, Ministry of Finance and Public Administration, Cape Verde, May 2008.

¹⁰ Unlike violence derived from large conflicts, it is difficult for people disposed to talk about everyday attitudes which shame them in a social environment where one can not remain anonymous.

¹¹ The field research was produced in two stages – November 2008 and June 2009 – in three islands, São Vicente, Santiago, and Fogo. Beside the testimonies from individuals with diversified conditions about their trajectories shaped in different degrees by factors like poverty and violence, searching to find the sensibilities of individuals engaged in institutions – Cape Verdean Institute of Children and Teenagers, Cape Verde Institute for Gender Equality and Equality, Victim Support Council, Casa de Direito law centers, Institution for the Professional Employment and Training among other institutions –, the NGOs, social institutions and “projects” involved in the fight against poverty (in these circumstances, “projects” refer to individual initiatives with a determinate temporal continuity without institutional sponsorship).

¹² Some authors disregard the connection between impoverishment and violence, for example basing on the evolution of violence in urban surroundings with distinctive economic trajectories, such as Bissau and Praia (see ROQUE and CARDOSO, 2008). In fact, other than poverty, the mechanisms for integration and, in the background, for contention are crucial, as shown by the situations experienced in the different islands of Cape Verde.

The institutionalized conscience of social issues

The assistentialist approach, restored during the final years of colonialism, was prolonged into the first years of independence. It concerned mostly poverty, from which in principle all other issues were derived. Recently, this assistentialist perspective is being replaced with an institutional conscience, at once plural and integrated –therefore, interested in the actors’ participation – about the social issues. This conscience also entailed a different perspective, which is to attack the multiplicity of social issues without expecting them to dissipate because of the decrease in poverty. As a result, issues such as gender inequalities have turned into factors of poverty and social exclusion¹³. The promotion of social integration has developed into a goal and an instrument for fighting poverty and preventing micro-violence manifestations. For that reason, while it is complicated to qualify unprivileged persons and make them able to follow their own way, must be undertaken an effort in favor of individual capacities and local potentialities. In this manner, the mentality of dependency on assistentialist practices would be removed.

Some years ago, the Millennium Goals, the human development goals and the international cooperation targets contributed to a new kind of approach relating to social relations. More consensus, more voluntarism, closer interventions, in the sense of performing on several dimensions of the individual and collective lives, and concurrently less ideology, similar to believing not as much in the transformation of attitudes by effects of mere ideological motivation. The credibility of these local organizations’ performances comes not as much from the pertinence of their action as from a political environment that affords credibility to several extents of its institutional performance. In the absence of a minimum level of trust in the political performance, then these institutions and NGOs’ actions would become more complicated and, in a way, rather wasteful.

As stated before, the most notorious feature in the approach of social issues in Cape Verde – for instance, domestic violence¹⁴ - is the development of an institutional conscience regarding several facets of human development and, consequently, the eradication of poverty. Related to the notion of human rights and to some concrete features of personal lives, this institutionalized conscience leads to the perception of a necessarily deliberate change, involving every citizen into some stage of civic commitment. Concomitantly, the social issues are reflected upon more comprehensive approaches. For instance, “women’s condition” has evolved into “gender parity” and, as consequence, the sensibilization actions – like those in healthcare – are now directed both at women and men.

In addition, due to some financial availability, were created the conditions for a widespread conscience on social issues. With support from international partners and the State, this conscience, seized in situations of social deprivation, will be reinforced

¹³ As an example, the situation of the *street children*. Besides a perspective able to provide social control, more specifically police control, it is the existence of an institutional conscience and, through it, of several dimensions of actuation that, for example, support the avoidance of reactive behaviors funded on stereotypes which, by rule, societies are prone to demonstrate and whose effects would not be anything but the reinforcement of social exclusion and the increase in social disruption.

¹⁴ This subject may be submitted to statistical analysis. But a qualitative analysis may allow explaining the conditions on which domestic violence thrives and becomes persistent and damaging, particularly in regards to the reproduction of poverty. In any case, surveys of qualitative nature which permit to get life narratives afflicted by domestic violence are time-demanding and it is also difficult to obtain and validate narratives of violence in micro-spaces such as the islands.

through the deed of numerous organizations and individuals. Although initiated by institutionally accepted values, the society is revealing its plurality and are emerging (and perishing) NGOs committed to several facets of the communitarian life or to the support of specific groups, mostly women and children.

It should be said, taking into consideration Cape Verde's particularities and considering that in some islands these are effectively conditioning the mentioned conducts to follow a professed patriarchal culture, some ingrained behaviors would not change in the short-term, despite the voluntary actions of NGOs and public agents. However, either the opening to the world or the institutional performance's consistency – an example being the selection of counselors for victim support in police stations – are giving citizenship's worth to certain matters of civic rights which have gradually been integrated into the daily arrangement, bringing out issues that had been until recently private matters. Associated with the emergence of an institutionalized conscience is the media's socialization of issues that once would remain in the shadows, the natural environment for their reproduction and, thus, the perpetuation of social asymmetries and exclusion. For example, few years ago women would not go publicly into television to afford visibility to the abuse. It is unlikely this would happen, on one hand, without political and institutional support and without going through some steps toward openness to the world and social change, on the other hand.

It is quite difficult to establish connections between micro-violence (domestic violence, street violence) and poverty, during a stage of decline. At the largest urban centers – Mindelo and in particular Praia¹⁵ – the street criminality seemed to disturb everyday life at any given moment. In islands like Fogo, where the conservativeness is more extensive, street violence is also less frequent, probably due to social mechanism linked to local connections that balance the lack of family relationships and familial control.

It will hardly happen something dissimilar with the domestic violence, a more disseminate and certainly more resilient phenomena. For a long time, gender-based social roles would have been seen as natural and imprescriptible. In the edge, it has leaded part of the population to embrace their subalternity. These days, domestic violence (in a wider physical and verbal definition, predominantly inflicted by men on women) has become the target of social disgrace. The incidence of domestic violence is hard to estimate¹⁶, but is acknowledged as a socially transversal occurrence. Men haven't put aside their authoritarian stance, and the notion of leadership received during childhood does not fade *per se*. When not materialized in strict control over women, the notion of household's leadership translates to a conviction in their superiority and, therefore, in the arrogated arbitrariness of male behavior.

¹⁵ Frequently, the informants, especially those from other islands, talk about Praia as the example of a violent town. Concerning this popular perception, which may be founded as much on stereotypes as on subjectivity, without a doubt the accelerated urbanization of the capital is linked to the changes in behavior identified as an increase in violence; about the implication between urbanization and the increase in violence, see ROQUE and CARDOSO, 2008.

¹⁶ In 2007, it was estimated as almost a quarter the percentage of women victims of violence, a figure that, according to the statements of Minister Cristina Fontes would place Cape Verde in a position equivalent to other countries, cf. <http://www.panapress.com/freenewspor.asp?code=por006028&dte=30/03/2007>, consulted in July 2009.

Poverty, for sure

In addition to being a colonial legacy, poverty will be, in regards of recent times, the result of a compilation of unprotective behaviors in the middle of families and their near social surrounding. The public institutions and NGOs seek to perform in this area.

Throughout decades, poverty was considered immanent in the archipelago, a product of adverse ecologic conditions and apparently scarce natural resources. Affecting living conditions, droughts were an excuse that allowed, during the colonial age, the manipulation of economic conditions and social strains to perpetuate the Cape Verdean population's impoverishment. Only during the very last years of colonialism, when were implemented social policies, have the hungers ceased to cause victims¹⁷. Having changed the relationship between men and environment, it has become less binding and even less determinant of the country's progression.

For centuries, the Cape Verdeans' existence has been a struggle against poverty or, more precisely, a harsh struggle for survival. Contrary to the skepticism of the independence stage, Cape Verde has managed to become a middle-income developing country. However, since the development does not necessarily convert into eradication of poverty, the country has pockets of extreme poverty. According to records from 2000, 45% of residents were considered poor, with 30% poor and 15% very poor¹⁸. From these, about two thirds lived in rural locations.

The visitants can notice old people, mostly unaccompanied old women, catching and packaging grinded rock. Children and teenagers can be seen carrying beams of firewood, and perhaps transporting water to homes without water supply systems. Poverty, for single mothers most of all, may be equivalent to eat less than sufficient and to live in a dwelling that instead of providing shelter *expels* the family members into the streets. Urban poverty, manifested in *container-houses*, seems in some cases more grievous and harder to fight than rural poverty.

Around the time of the independence, poverty was a matter of survival. Policies were directed by the imperative need of preventing hunger. In effect, since the independence's beginning that hunger had become a target for power and an apology for pragmatism. Just like happened during certain periods of colonialism, several work fronts were launched after the independence. At the time, the international aid was not given but was instead sold for a symbolic price to prevent, for still unclear motives, a dependency mentality from taking roots. It is doubtful that such mentality has been prevented, remaining a target of occasional criticisms. In any case, what is being criticized or discarded is not so much the almost absolute dependency on social support, unavoidable in some cases, but mostly the dismissal from searching and proposing solutions for these social issues, on account of expectations centered exclusively on the State's social action.

Poverty is no longer limited to survival, it is also perceived in an inclusive and manner, consentaneous to the perception of a changing world. The poverty factors are being

¹⁷ In fact, the launch of public endeavors, such as road construction, had composed the practice of the colonial administration until the beginning of the last century. In few words, the growing racism and the interest in taking advantage of the Cape Verdean labor in the farm of Sao Tome and Principe that allowed the impoverishment of the population, so to force them into the farms, mostly during the middle of the 20th century. In the end of the 50s, and even more so in the 60s, this policy of indigenization of the Cape Verdean residents was reverted: the doors for emigration for other destinies were open and there was a return to large public works which have mitigated the effects of droughts.

¹⁸ Data from the UNDP, quoted by GRASSI, 2003: 150 and 280.

identified, namely the lack of instruction or the high number of dependents. *A poor person is a person without instruction or with a large family*, for instance, submitted to the forced contiguity of several generations inside the same dwelling, from great-grandparents to great-grandchildren.

The circumstances have changed and, in addition to a growth-inducing macro-economic evolution, the purpose is to alleviate poverty, nowadays no longer categorized as lack of food, but as deprivation from basic living conditions or from affordance to essential services. Despite the controversy in the statistics, it cannot be denied that Cape Verde has been following a path toward the reduction of poverty¹⁹, in a more obvious manner in Santiago and São Vicente than, for instance, in Fogo and Santo Antao, where a third of the population is considered to be extremely poor.

In spite the nearly unavoidable discrepancy between the projects' results in reports and in the field, There is a deserved pride in the benefits related to the promotion of living standards, especially the provision to a large number of people of water and electricity supplies– the goal is to reach 95% of the population until 2011 and have universal supply by 2015²⁰ –, education and healthcare. This set of accomplishments has led many participants to declare that nowadays nobody is starving in Cape Verde, particularly in rural regions where the family and community solidarity networks give assistance in the most extreme situations. In reality, such does not impede the occurrence of hunger situations, but it is understandable that the progress attained causes many Cape Verdeans to believe hunger was eradicated in the archipelago.

The economic evolution does not dissipate the difficulties, mostly those occurring from conjunctural fluctuations. For example, the deficiency of resources, such as natural gas, may increase the consumption of firewood, the energy source most used by poor people, are having consequences on the arrangement of everyday life and eventually, causing school abandonment (which affects more girls than boys, resulting from the prejudices about men and women's social roles). With reference to the demographic growth, the state or the Cape Verdean market will hardly absorb its impact. However, it provides for a better social conscience and, consequently, for some effort, both volunteer and professional, in projects for combating poverty and in behalf of the promotion of personal and social competencies.

Moreover, there are presently more products and opportunities than before. The economic and social diversity, while advocating dynamics of local accumulation, also allows for small advantages in matters of survival, this being a reason for the endorsement of the informal market. For the institutions, the matter goes beyond the eradication of poverty, entailing the creation of welfare for the entire population, which obviously entails the management of human resources and, in consequence, an efficient and ethically consentaneous regulation, in accordance with the contemporary social ties. Then, the breach between economical growth and the endurance of incidents such as domestic violence and child abandonment is further emphasized. Such breach divides the prognosis along those who believe in the change of traditions and those who believe that certain conducts – like child abandonment – will persist beyond any social disapproval.

¹⁹ From 1988 until 2002, the population living in poverty has decreased about one quarter, down to 36.7% (cf. DECRP II, 2008:80), despite the negative evolution in the decade of 1990, when the poor population may have increased from 30% to 37% and the extremely poor from 14% to 20%, cf data by the DECRP from 2004, quoted by ÉVORA, 2009: 4.

²⁰ DECRP II 2008:161.

Diversity of family relations

We are facing distorted domains of complicated categorization, whose connection to other facets of the collective life are ruled by a relative indetermination. For that reason, it is quite difficult to generalize the situations mentioned below.

With reference to gender relationships, they can be inscribed into supposed archaisms. For instance, as a habitual phenomenon in nearly enclosed rural regions, where the material deprivation is mixed with a reverence of the powerful, not only is maternity the core of women's status as also occurs the *sale of girls*, which is the loan of daughters to wealthy individuals. In reality, it's not hard to find many examples of similar family arrangements in other social and historical contexts²¹. It is equally noticed that the relationship between youths goes through or entails performing rituals – for example, the (dramatized) coercion to sexual intercourse, after an initial (and somehow fake) resistance from the girls, who are expected to be respectful and not *shameful*. While this occurs in some more isolated rural environments, if isolation is in question, the female resourcefulness is the clearest feature in the contacts among youths, in the streets and public places.

Anyway, gender relations will not change by mere empathy with the modern rules of equity and gender parity, neither are ensured results from the women social promotion. There is a clear awareness that the capacitation of women won't repeatedly change the dependency connection, nor it will eliminate any subservience toward men, even by women actively engaged in such capacitation. For that motive, starting with a pragmatic approach, rooted in the confirmation of many unions' precariousness and in the juridical issues resulting from their dissolution, are adopted precautionary measures to avert, for example, the transference of houses loaned to women to their spouses. The multiplicity of issues suggests several preventive responses, to reduce the unbalance in gender relations.

Social changes, shattering of customary roles and claims for equality might all originate violence over women. Actually, the cultural changes may become a starting point for conflict and domestic violence – physical and psychological – sometimes ending in fatal outcomes, whose dimension is inflated by intense personal interactions in the midst of small surroundings. It is no wonder that, though less frequently, a couple of devaluating discourses about domestic violence ignore the asymmetry inherent to gender relations and instead endorse causes more closely connected to the conflicts than to the women themselves. After all, it is easier to process a change of roles in the political stratosphere than do it in the real world.

Apart from personal testimonies and official records, it will be very complicated to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence, which only recently has become a visible occurrence and, more significant, socially disapproved. In the past, the social acceptance invalidated any impact violence domestic might have, since being neighbors entailed abstaining from any evaluative appreciation regarding other people's lives. Until recently, *that family thing* and *the old mentality* assisted in occulting conflicts and reproducing behavioral frames that are no longer tolerated, *women cannot take anything*

²¹ The fact that this practice is noticed is a sign of change. In some opinions, such practice configures an unacceptable derogation of individual freedom, in circumstance, the freedom of modernity, incompatible with the personal submission to links and ties that would precede him/her and would restrict their options, like happens in these familial setups.

nowadays, they cannot deal with their husbands (...) it was usual for him to get another woman, the wife should stay quiet at home waiting for her husband, she shouldn't have this attitude.

Even though socially transversal, in large measure the violence over women²² derives from their dependency, an assessable condition but also an interiorized one, a reality so much more complex because sometimes that interiorization is bonded with the acceptance of the familial responsibilities that fall upon women.

This is the same as declaring that the social conceptions based on individual accomplishment and an unequivocal assumption of equality have helped to delineate a social frame that hopefully will be proscribed, for being incompatible with the requisites for human development. The institutions and NGOs are committed in the sensibilization and instruction of individuals who, in turn, progress from denying to accepting of their subordination, to which they occasionally return. Nevertheless, the mentality changes, mostly rebalanced gender relationships, create a politically supported goal, pursued by many institutions and increasingly gaining social acceptance. A paradigmatic change in gender relations was accomplished, as some women refuse to accept subordinancy anymore.

A core feature of these gender relations is polygamy – either for the rank it occupies in social representations or on account of the much debated economic and social aftermath –, a subject predictably avoided by the social scrutiny.

Expressions of departure from determinate tributary conceptions of patriarchy and paternalism, defending that *even women are chauvinist against other women... even women condemn other women...*, are the result of interiorized inequality and subordination, whose utmost effect could be, for instance, the conflicts among women themselves.

In the words of Cape Verdean women, society – in which they are included – accommodates polygamy, since *maybe it made part of the culture*. Likewise, from the women's perspective, violence is blamed on polygamy, considered a cause for family deregulation, paternal negligence and, ultimately, for poverty. Although polygamy may be listed as inducing poverty – mainly due to the common unreliability toward children, causing a decline of living standards and school abandonment –, such connection is neither immediate nor necessary.

It is inaccurate to typify and, in a distorted manner, to judge gender relationships, in particular those of polygamic nature. It must be stated that cases of sequential (or serial) polyandry, partly resulting from the search for a companion and support for the children, are fairly widespread. Even when men have other families, some women recognize them as support sources. To assume as truthful situations repeatedly depicted by women involved in the defense of their fellow female citizens' citizenship rights, some women become accustomed to the existence of second wives, mostly due to the impracticality of having an independent life.

Meanwhile, the paradigm of women's subalternity, extended to conceptions about sexuality and maternity, is shifting. Nevertheless, akin to the reproduction of women's social subalternity not forcefully being a poverty inducer, it is not clear that the emancipation of women results in social promotion or decreased poverty. Without

²² The ordinary conception of masculinity will sooner turn men the target of laughter than grieve his, after all, unusual condition of victimhood.

forgoing the correlations between, for example, polygamy and poverty, there are no linear causal connections between gender relations.

It is consensually established that occasionally the family fails to constitute a secure network for social reproduction and socialization. It is often said that the organization of family resources in any home is dependent on implicit deliberations, resulting from more or less engrained visions of the male and female roles. The adjustment and accommodation may be established, consistent with internalized and possibly undeclared codes, *a woman would get the food, waiting that her companion would share the expenses with the house and the children; this woman's other companion would ask her for her wage straight away...* In many cases, these women don't have a sway over the income of their companions, which may place them, and in particular their children, at a disadvantage

Since family is not an unequivocally secure platform for the social integration of youths, in fact, the individual trajectories are fulfilled by deploying the previously mentioned aids from relatives, even distant ones. An absent father may occasionally give financial support for his children. It must be said, the opinion of men about their paternal responsibilities is very much reliant on the appreciations they have subjectively made about the living conditions of mothers and children. Apparently, owing to several reasons besides economic ones, women not always proceed with judicial actions on matters of alimony.

Although not constantly, family relationships are extended to not so close relatives and to emigrants and, at its most, are stretched among the neighborhood. It is taking into account the solidarity of extensive family relations that the single mothers are able to calculate their prospective future, *one kid, we can manage...*

Despite the resilience of families and the extensiveness of solidary practices, in a approximately immediate future the urbanization, mundane values and the demographic growth might change this extended solidarity, which has been functioning until now. Social mobility, improved living conditions, lesser reliance on local and familial conditions and individualism might finally fade that solidarity.

Micro-violence prevention

Notwithstanding the appearance of institutions committed in victim support, claiming for domestic violence be declared a public crime, or demanding the adoption of restrictive measures to guarantee the victims' physical integrity, the prevalence of poverty is more easily acknowledged in Cape Verde than micro-violence, as a result of historical and cultural motives. In any case, domestic violence is becoming increasingly intolerable. The institutional promotion of a social conscience about poverty and micro-violence has created conditions for the awareness of issues that in any other way wouldn't cross the threshold of personal drama. Therefore, the indication of a minimum moral target is implemented, becoming a premise of the equality and the fulfillment of development goals for the citizens. On account of multiple support actions, focused on particular facets or specific groups, which intended to reverse deprivation conditions or to prevent risk behaviors, the political discourse about domestic violence and other types of violence is finally gaining some moral strength.

To talk about violence implies talking about phenomena that no longer fit into this reality channeled by ancient cultural codes, which, if not preventing, at least ensued

imprecise and accommodated conflicts²³. Furthermore, despite coming from the *outside* or being a product of *development*, micro-violence collides with its *morabeza* (welcoming) image. Regardless of accounts about the legendary courage of some Cape Verdeans and the appreciation for their physical intrepidity, there are some difficulties in acknowledging the course of violence in the midst of a micro-insular society since, as stated, it contradicts the external public image of Cape Verde. Within this mutant and complex cultural frame that matter should be taken into consideration the most dissimilar opinions on this matter.

Episodes of violence against street children seem to collapse into more comprehensible approaches concerning the social roots of this foregoing phenomenon. The compactness of housing quarters or the vicissitudes of family life are said to drive the children and youths to the street life. The children talk about having to *do chores*, performing tasks like fetching water, reasons for preferring to be taken to institutional shelters. Not necessarily every instance of street life involves abandonment, but occasionally because of rough family circumstances, the street environment becomes more alluring. In some cases, street life becomes permanent, at least in the sense of tracing a glass ceiling of opportunities for these individuals.

Although not quite adequately, children have become the target of support measures and are being secluded in public and private sheltering centers which provide them some sort of assistance. These shelters don't eliminate the risk of unemployment, marginalization or alcohol (increasing among women) or drug addictions and, perhaps, *troubles with the law*. But its purpose is for the children not getting stigmatized by violence and poverty, going from victims of exclusion to youngsters "in trouble with the law".

Believing in these accounts, drugs appear as a disturbing feature, for the reason that it incites robberies and creates fear and suspicion in the local society²⁴. Tranquility is gradually disturbed, whereas to the visitors the scenery is seemingly peaceful. Naturally, the living experience must be taken into consideration, since in São Filipe there is hearsay of how dangerous Praia can be. In the islands afflicted by small criminality, the institutional voices are encouraging a pretension that they can ensure the *freedom* of having tranquility in the streets and the predictability of everyday life, since the touristic industry²⁵ is reliant on it.

To bear in mind that it isn't clearly perceptible the relation between, on one hand, micro-violence – domestic and street-based – and, on the other hand, other hypothetical factors, such as the archipelago's scarcity of resources. Anyway, micro-violence (in this instance, more domestic or gender-based violence than street criminality) has more enduring effects than the armed conflicts occurring within temporally delimited intervals.

²³ For example, the event of *kasubódi* has social and symbolic significances radically diverse from the emotion-based conflicts, as portrayed in the book *Os dois irmãos* (Two brothers), by Germano Almeida.

²⁴ See also Roque and Cardoso (2008).

²⁵ For this reason, there are investments made on the sensibilization needed for the establishment of a civil society or a public opinion which does not tolerate corruption or any other kind of criminality (potentially) damaging the State, such as for example, drugs trafficking.

The fight against poverty

From the macroeconomic perspective, the efforts for eradicating poverty seem a safe bet, less in the sense of what was achieved (as, it shouldn't not be forgotten, the economic situation is very diversified) than in the sense of what seems achievable. It is usually affirmed that *poverty will be eradicated*. In keep with the economic conditions for Cape Verde, the eradication of cases of extreme poverty comes up as an attainable goal, either through the State's performance or through solidary actions of the familial, communal and institutional sorts. It is deemed perfectly possible to minimize the material poverty of the population. The symbolic gains resulting from this perception are priceless and impel the commitment of the institutional actors engaged in social projects.

In effect, fighting poverty is not restricted to a macroeconomic conduction, but also concerns the people's empowerment. Beginning with an integral vision of human development, it is then made a distinction between spiritual poverty and material poverty²⁶. The last one is considered the most serious, for it collides with the individual ability to search for opportunities in life.

It is attributed large economic significance to women, as the result of their entrepreneurial mentality, quite the opposite for instance of the eagerness to hold risk-free jobs in the public sector²⁷. This *search for a life* is partially motivated by poverty, which afflicts mostly women and in particular single mothers. As the locals say, poverty is feminine, among other reasons because women take on all *responsibility* for raising the children, in most cases renouncing any demands for the paternal share in this responsibility. Not unlike the experience from many other societies, a substantial part of the reproduction of families and society itself rest on women's shoulders²⁸.

An example of leverage for fighting poverty is the housing rehabilitation, by linking the houses to public services providing water and electricity supplies, or building brand new social housing intended for women and their respective families, under the sponsorship of programs for socio-communitarian development. Although is demanded some co-participation, for instance, in the construction materials, such endeavors help to make dreams come true, principally the dream of finishing a house which was fought for in a daily basis and that many times are brought to a halt in the stage of finishing the rooftop. It is expected from the women who are afforded the housing to change their lives, which is to believe that an improvement of the material conditions will have repercussion in the social promotion of women and, consequently, their respective family units. Nevertheless, the social integration resulting from these improved living conditions will not be secure or immediate, yet on behalf of many people, it simply must be endorsed.

The expectations regarding the important role played by women in this society collide with the impending subalternity to which they are routinely submitted. For this, women

²⁶ As demonstrated by its naïf feature, such expressions don't occur from theoretical acquisitions. They were, actually, used by people without any other instruction than the skill from years involved in associations from the promotion of development, solidarity, etc. However, these expressions show a practice converging toward the theorizations about the involvement of the poor and excluded in outlining potential life paths.

²⁷ For example, see GRASSI, 2003: 108-109.

²⁸ Significantly, in the FAIMO, already over 80% of labor force was female; about this topic, see Grassi (2003: 151).

The evaluation of FAIMO is not unequivocal; about FAIMO – also about emigration – as a mechanism for the eventual perpetuation of poverty in rural regions, see Évora (2009: 5-6).

are elected as a group to further support and, according to a conception of gender relationships ruled by equality, to endorse an awareness of their social worth. So, in conclusion, *women need an organization*. In other words, without losing sight from the prized long-term benefits for the whole society, it is given a preferential assistance to women and not necessarily to family units, for believing women are the fundamental actors in this mandatory social change and finally understanding it does not exclude and rather entails a rebalance of gender relations. The purpose is to cause changes in gender relations that avert the subjugation of women and, more significantly, provide symbolic and social value to their economic contribution. For that, with different degrees of involvement in accordance with the public institutions and NGOs, it will be followed a strategy (with growing relevance) for, at least, sustain the prevailing tendency amid the poorer social contexts of gender differences having harder repercussions against women.

From the NGOs that found their performance on these judgments, microcredit is mostly ascribed to women, though it is also accredited to men. These days, in two NGOs, there are amounts from USD 30,000 up to USD 300,000, available in exchange of an avail approval. The concession is aimed at several business activities, according to the economic and social background and location/island. In some cases, the concession entails basic formation training in microcredit management. The reimbursement rates are applied over 80% of the approved capital. Some people will reimburse with delay and, it must be said, under mentorship. In both NGOs, there was never need for judiciary appeals. As a rule, microcredit is not afforded to persons whose poverty situation is extreme.

Besides the influence of the conjunctural evolution, given the diversity of social contexts and the ethical environment prevailing in Cape Verde, there is a possibility that the microcredit may constitute a small advantage with respect to the eradication of poverty. Microcredit demands a proper social environment, mostly to envisage economic performances that are not submitted to robbery, theft, etc. Although in larger numbers than a few years ago, the manifestations of micro-violence in the streets are not an impediment to small-scaled economic enterprises. Other than this feature, much determined by political circumstances, the economic growth and diversification of needs are equally crucial to the appearance of several distinctive market niches and other facilitating opportunities for economic initiatives of small dimension, regardless of having a non-neglectful social impact.

The attack against poverty unfolds into many diversified approaches²⁹. In some islands, the economic platform for the reduction of poverty entails investments in the rural development, in order to increase the agricultural activities' worth, as well as to reconstitute the rural fabric. It is expected, with the dissemination of equipments for social support and technologies for the daily life, on one hand, and with the upgrading of accessibilities, on the other hand, that the revalorization of rural surroundings will attract people to the agricultural islands and to the rural areas. This purpose does not effectively challenge the assertions made about the urban surroundings as the "main world"³⁰, synonymous of the place where decisive social mutations occur, in opposition to the loss of the rural world. Undoubtedly, the urban surrounding have the most possibilities for creating value, however the archipelago is composed of diverse

²⁹ Based on the evaluation of economic evolutions, these institutions will adjust the offers of professional training. The *traditional areas*, such as carpentry and woodwork, which no longer have guaranteed employment, are substituted by electronics and skills for building construction.

³⁰ Évora (2009: 6).

opportunities, making certain endeavors in the non-isolated rural world more profitable than holding non-qualified jobs in the city.

The economic and social diversity is favorable to individual and collective enterprises, since it has propitious condition for researching ways to overcome situations of deprivation and poverty, for instance, starting with the valorization of local resources. Among the possibilities to fight poverty are the processes of communitarian and regional development. Nevertheless, these are not continuously replicable, because the success of a case may not be submitted to perpetual reproduction, taking into consideration, for example, the market's limitations.

Alongside an articulation with larger economic contexts, the processes of communitarian and regional development require favorable economic and social environments, without which it becomes much harder, if not impossible, to support the ability to determinate their personal and collective destinies.

By way of the growth and development occurred in these last three decades of independent existence, poverty has ceased to be considered a fatality in Cape Verde. There are even some sectors for which poverty is not part of future equations, though the survival conditions are still tight and might sway according to the economic conjunctures.

Constructing expectations about the future

Poverty is no longer a fatality. In the field, institutions and NGO exert their effort on human training as a process to prevent poverty, so that, notwithstanding the lexical renovation, the Cape Verdean people may pace again the trails of the historical "tradition" of this archipelago. The human training – the question is: according to whose ethics? – is seen as the solution for the prevention of poverty. In effect, *investment in training* has become a common expression, in the belief that fighting poverty (and social exclusion) will be achieved by fighting against social and symbolic deprivation. There is a clear perception that the changes in attitude will not occur immediately, but they are part of the country's and its common citizen's future. In reality, for example, since it the small gains in the lives of the most impoverished were acknowledged, the institutions and NGO have attempted to link material supports and sensibilization, for it is believed that training also depends on the creation of a public opinion more favorable to behavior changes.

It should be taken into consideration that, though within a liberal social and cultural frame, training and sensibilization (for instance, in essential domains for the shaping of gender relations) are dealt with indifference and, possibly, a veiled resistance to social change which has been, progressively, defeated. Before, it would not be possible to talk about family planning. In the sensibilization sessions, men would attend in fewer numbers and, whether to control or to feign distance and superiority, they would keep themselves apart. In any case, the acquired information could result in a contestation of the hierarchy existing inside their homes and, in the edge, could represent a manner to defraud roles and codes, such as those of conjugal fidelity or maternity. All this illustrates the complexity of connections between poverty, cultural standards and social change.

In any case, contrary to the opinions against social change, the prevailing perception is that the country will improve, all depending on investments in training. Removed from eventual geo-strategic considerations related to the prospect of exporting qualified

labour or providing services in the region, training is believed to increase the possibilities for personal choice, thus being a method for empowerment and poverty reduction. Together with the supposed universality of values that inspire those who, in the field, commit to fight poverty, it is also a widespread belief in the advancement of Cape Verde's society and people. True or false, this belief is motive for the actions of institutions and their respective agents. And this institutional action is delineating the social and political environment.

The common person does not think about the future in a political manner, just fight for survival and hopes things will get better. *Get on with life...* not only represents a certainty, but mostly represents everyday's rush (comparing to the hard life of the past, there are some who defend that it has been established an assistentialism-dependent mentality). The search for a living is reliant on individual initiative and it frequently requires small gains, through the satisfaction of needs and wants that become attainable every day, even for the most indigent. This is no minor contribution to the effort in support of social cohesion. Actually, it is still quite interesting that, in many families in a poverty situation, food is not listed as an immediate need³¹.

The social differences accentuate and some of this poverty persists, without being felt, a diffuse social acrimony³². Unrelated to the processes of social differentiation – there are those who point out a high level of concentration of wealth and of social inequality, which is not hard to believe, given the poverty of a significant part of the population and the apparent prosperity of others – intervenes the perception of being implicated in a destiny common to rulers and citizens for which, as in other circumstances, the ethic of the rulers is crucial

The construction of a cohesive social fabric – defined by parity and social regulation – is based on the performance of institutions, starting with the State. For instance, even when after accepting the impossibility of achieving the required goals – for example, completely putting an end to situations of child abandonment – what remains crucial is the sign these institutions are giving out to society. The performance of the State and other institutions widens the social conscience about certain political and ethical consensus. This performance is decisive to fight against manifestations of poverty and, more significantly, of social marginality. And it seems decisive, mostly due to the micro-insularity, to the physical contiguity and to the (imaginary) personal knowledge of other fellow citizens.

Removed from past ideological designs, social integration has become a new goal. The minimalism of this desideratum makes it consensual. The institutional supervision, partly induced by international aid³³, replaces the former sociability and social

³¹ Cf. DECRP II, 2008, p.49.

³² Although aware of the subjectivity load, it must be said that the absence of social acrimony is noticeable when, for example, comparing Cape Verde to Sao Tome and Principe, notwithstanding the affability of most Santomeans. Such difference may be explained by an intuitive interpretation, based on the recent economic evolution of the country and on an appreciation, as grossly and biased as it may be, of its leaders' ethic.

³³ This is a reality that is immediately emphasized when, in the field, one gets in touch with institutions engaged in putting down or lessening several social issues. However, the social conscience of the Cape Verdean politicians, also suggested by the hard living conditions and by the scarcity of resources in this country, in many circumstances the State (including public institutions) and international institutions interact as partners. If in other political contexts is referred an appropriation of the State, of privatizing its social functions and losing sovereignty, in Cape Verde such issues don't seem to bother, unregardingly of unavoidable divergences in every institutional trajectory. Quite the opposite, the partnerships have

interaction which, although geographically circumscribed, would still be relevant. Proposing to mitigate the inhumanity of poverty and to provide the bases for escaping poverty, the social support action is directed at familial and communitarian frames. Using some voluntarism to slightly enforce the reality – as well as a normative structure and values at one undefined and implicit – family and community will become nuclear and polarizing institutions exerting efforts in the intended rearrangement of the social fabric. Naturally, it is possible to notice, within the social fabric, some resistance to the behavioral changes proposed by these institutions. The effort to assemble families – from the past, the present, both extensive and dispersed – inside the model of nuclear family has to deal with social inertias and the vicissitudes of individual, familial and collective stories that take place in a landscape of fast social change. This entails an engagement in individual training and, for some actors, a belief that this will wield a normalizing function over social family ties. In any case, and as it always happens, the behavioral changes are less dependent on a volitive component than on social evolution.

Following the independence, poverty – and in particular hunger – was chosen as an event to eradicate, a priority purpose in managing social exclusion, regarding which has prevailed a sense of minor pressure. Nowadays, it is a known fact that, just as poverty is not eliminated by the economic growth, the elimination of poverty does not immediately lead to the suppression of social exclusion. Concerning this matter, a new path is being explored. The ideological perspective from the independence stage, in some way lined by a paradigm of economic growth, has been discarded. The instruments for analysis and management have become sophisticated and the cultural openness provoked a more lucid analysis, on occasion contrary to prejudices induced by the socialization of land or family, concerning the social relations.

At first sight, the distinction made by the individuals involved in social promotion between material poverty and spiritual poverty – as mentioned before, a rather naïf version of more comprehensive perspectives on the subject of the binomial poverty/social exclusion – seems quite factitious. However, it translates the consciousness that the fight against poverty will not be consequential without combating the various manifestations of social exclusion resulting, for example, from the prevalence of alcoholism – for some experts, a serious social and public health issue – which, among other circumstances, are aggravated by social deprivation. Having said it, several agents working in institutions for social support have a clear awareness of the need for an enduring and continuous investment in human training and that, in spite of this, it will be impossible to prevent every form of exclusion and every social risk.

The connection between poverty and micro-violence is not linear. It is possible to envision the economic growth without eliminating the subalternity of women and the marginalization of underprivileged children and youths. By itself, a decrease in poverty will not necessarily encourage an intense change of these behaviors, which are presently reproached for being incompatible with the human development. In Cape Verde, this poses one of the main challenges.

Conclusive notes

It is hard to produce categorical considerations, either on account of the exploratory nature of the investigation or because this subject demands a pluridisciplinary research,

reinforced the extension of the state's administrative action, making it multifaceted. As such, while being intervener and proactive, the State does not necessarily appears as just a tutelary and customary authority.

pertaining to the multiple Cape Verdean contexts. In Cape Verde, it might be possible to associate singular trajectories of extreme poverty to child abandonment (having repercussions, for instance, in school dropout) or to the asymmetry in gender relationships. However, there are no discernible univocal correlations between these two occurrences. This means that, if the domestic violence was eventually to be eliminated, this wouldn't entail the eradication of poverty and the end of poverty does not accomplish an inexistence of social marginality.

However, there is a commitment in the resolution of social issues, and among the persons engaged in the management of social support projects there is a conviction – somehow reducible to the bias of the institutional position – in the solution of social issues. These days, there is a political, social and cultural environment favorable to a basic institutional commitment that operates as leverage for social changes and in favor of the combating the numerous forms of deprivation. This sophisticated vision of the world, on one hand, and the social and individual condition in itself, on the other hand, are not related to the capacity for verbal elaboration of the Cape Verdean residents, both rich and poor. Part of this vision may be constructed from the repository of accounts, experienced and perhaps narrated by the older citizens. It may be also constructed from the migration's cultural *inputs*, or just from the socialization afforded by the media. No matter what, the vision of the world is favorable to change, if we want, to the absorption of ideas and values that are becoming imperative and guides for the social and collective action which is advancing the world.

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