

Awkward engagement? Development, return and entrepreneurship in Cape Verde

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This paper deals with connections and disconnections between different actors that engage with the same theme, yet often seem to talk past one another. The theme I discuss here is development, return migration and entrepreneurship in Cape Verde. The actors engaged in this subject matter have extremely different positions in relation to the exercise of power in the global world order, and hence to the relation between return and development. The first actor I will discuss is the EU and its position as expressed in the Union's mobility partnership with Cape Verde, which gives considerable importance to the link between development and return. The second actor is the Cape Verdean government, which runs some projects intended to benefit returnees' businesses. The third actor, or rather groups of actors, are Cape Verdean returnees, people who have returned to the islands after many years as labour migrants in Europe or the USA. Thus, the aim of the paper is to trace different actors' approach to Cape Verdean return and small-scale business, and to try to determine the extent to which these actors actually are engaged in the some problems and are pulling in the same direction. A reason why I am focusing on return and entrepreneurship is that the EU, the Cape Verdean government and individual Cape Verdeans all believe that the establishment of small-scale businesses is an important key to development in Cape Verde, particularly with regard to the pressing need of providing more employment opportunities for the young generation.

In looking into how differently positioned actors engage with the same theme I am inspired by the anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and her book *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2005). In this book Tsing develops ideas about how we can understand the diverse and conflicting social interactions that make up our contemporary globalizing world. In particular, Tsing advances the metaphor of friction for describing the interconnections between processes and actors that interact "across difference and distance" (2005:2). Central to Tsing's argument is the idea that we cannot make a distinction between on one hand dominating global processes and on the other hand local "effects" of these processes. Instead, she says, "The specificity of global connections is an ever present reminder that universal claims do not actually make everything everywhere the same." (2005:1)

In this paper I will, however, not focus on the metaphor of friction, but instead depart from another and related key concept in Tsing's book, namely "awkward engagements". "Awkward engagements" take place in zones "where words mean something different across a divide... These zones... are transient; they arise out of encounters and interactions. They reappear in new places with changing events"(2005:xi). In this paper I understand the multi-layered efforts to turn

migration and return into something that is positive for Cape Verdean development as such a zone of “awkward engagement”. Tsing, furthermore, says that the only way she can think of studying such zones is in a way that is “patchwork and haphazard” and that reflects “the learning experiences of the ethnographer” (2005:xi). This is also true for my paper, as I will not attempt to give a total picture of the Cape Verdean return – development nexus, but rather explore the “awkward engagement” between some key actors as they relate to this nexus. The question mark after “awkward engagement” in the title of the paper indicates both that we are dealing with different degrees of awkwardness and that the engagement between the actors sometimes may be of a more coordinated character. The degree of awkwardness is, thus, an empirical and open question.

Yet another concept in *Friction* that I use in this paper is “universal claims”. Such claims “justify coercion into internationally mandated standards of progress and order” (2005:9). Universal claims are closely related to (neo-)colonial thinking and the belief that only Western reason can “gather up the fragment of knowledge and custom distributed around the world to achieve progress, sciences and good government” (2005:9). Universal claims are presented as if they stand beyond variations and critique, whereas in reality they are historically specific cultural assumptions. The European Union’s assertions in relation to migration and development are examples of such claims, and here I will explore how they are expressed in the EU-Cape Verde Mobility Partnership.

The mobility partnership

In 2008 the European Union and Cape Verde entered into a so called Mobility Partnership. Besides Cape Verde, also Moldavia and Georgia have signed Mobility Partnerships with the EU. In theory, migration, development and return is a leading theme in the EU – Cape Verde partnership. As in the other Mobility Partnerships, the migration – development nexus is one of the three main components, and the introduction to the agreement states clearly that EU and Cape Verde are to develop “genuine cooperation” in this field (Council of the European Union 2008). Return plays an important role in the section on migration and development, as two out of the totally three paragraphs deal with return and the assumed positive effects of return migration. These paragraphs link the development potential of return to the skills and capital that migrants supposedly have acquired abroad. In order to make use of migrants’ and returnees’ knowledge and economic resources the partnership aims to “contribute the development of entrepreneurship and strengthen the legal framework for investment and business” (Council of the European Union 2008:4). The agreement, thus, establishes that entrepreneurship and business are important for Cape Verdean development and return migration.

The emphasis on return in the main document is, however, not reflected in the annex where the EU member states participating in the Mobility Partnership with Cape Verde (France, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain)¹ propose the projects that shall carry the agreement into effect. A list of 29 concrete activities appears there, but only two of these directly concern return migration, and they are both quite vague in their

¹ The Netherlands did not sign the declaration, but joined later in 2008

formulations. Portugal promises to contribute with “information and assistance services to Cape Verdean migrants wishing to return to their country of origin to pursue employment or self-employment there”, and France declares a willingness to “promote productive investment” and “support local development projects” in Cape Verde. The vagueness of these commitments contrast not only to the importance given to return in the main declaration, but also to the more detailed and concrete character of some of the other activities in the annex. This is especially true for the activities listed under the heading “Cooperation on border management, identity and travel documents, and the fight against illegal migration and trafficking in human beings”. These activities are clearly defined and the bodies responsible for the implementation of the projects are pointed out. One such activity is the cooperation between Frontex and the Cape Verdean Police in the area of joint return operation. Another project concerns negotiations for an agreement on readmission of illegal migrants including third-country nationals and stateless persons.

Accordingly, when it comes to the so called fight against illegal migration and the securization of migrants the agreement is concrete and specific, whereas it rather seems to pay a hypocritical attention to the importance of migration and return for development of Cape Verde. How can this be understood? A first explanation is that the “partner countries” have little possibility to influence the drafting of the Mobility Partnership agreements. An evidence of this is that the EUs Mobility Partnerships with different countries are similar in their content (Chou and Gibert 2010). Secondly, Meng-Hsuan Chou (2009) describes the formation of the Mobility Partnerships as defined by two competing EU policy objectives - security and development, and she argues that the European migration ministers’ concern with the securitization of migration has come to dominate, and that they have captured the development discourse for their own ends. This discourse has then been used as an incentive to encourage third countries to cooperate on achieving EU migration objectives, rather than taking their interests into account. Chou shows in detail how national migration officials strategically used the development discourse in order to achieve the objective of orderly migration flows. They improved their capability to persuade sending and transit countries to control migration through establishing a win-win-win scenario. According to this scenario, the countries of origin, the migrants and the EU all would benefit from less illegal migration, more circular / return movements and increased attention to the migration - development nexus. Chou notes, however, that although the Mobility Partnerships are supposed to be in line with EUs “comprehensive migration approach” addressing political, human rights and development issues in origin and transit countries (*ibid:7*), in reality the Partnerships prioritize “EU migration control above the economic development in and political stability of the countries of origin and transit” (*ibid:11*).

In line with this, EUs Mobility Partnership with Cape Verde reflects the dominance of the migration control agenda. In recent years, Cape Verde has become a transit country for West African migrants trying to reach the Canary Islands. In the Mobility Partnerships “Cape Verde is clearly asked to manage not only the migratory flows constituted by Cape Verdean nationals... but, perhaps more importantly, to provide assistance in fighting against the illegal migration flows coming from third countries

and especially from West Africa” (Chou & Gibert 2010:10). In practice, this includes an extended cooperation with Frontex (the European Border Agency) and Europol as well as negotiations on readmission agreements (Council of the European Union 2008).

Why, then, has Cape Verde accepted the task of assisting EU in keeping prospective national and non-national migrants away from Europe? An important reason seems to be that the Cape Verdean government wants to move closer to the EU (Reslow 2010: 14). My impression is that the government actually nurtures a secret hope of one day joining the Union. Cape Verde’s mobility partnership contained a promise for closer links between that country and Europe, as it is part of a broader special relationship established with the EU (Chou & Gibert 2010:10).

Another reason was probably the expectation that that the Partnership should provide some openings for legal migration to Europe. High rates of unemployment, especially among youths, in combination with dependency on the inflow of remittances imply that continuing high rates of out-migration is attractive to the Cape Verdean government. However, when examining the Partnership agreement it is clear that EU promises next to nothing in terms of facilitating legal migration. Instead of creating new opportunities for legal migration, EU promises to support the dissemination of information about living and working in Europe and measures to strengthen the integration of those already living in the EU (Council of the European Union 2008). In the annex Portugal and France agree to admit “certain” categories of Cape Verdean migrants, but this is not an added value of the Partnership, as these proposals already are included in existing bilateral agreements between these two countries and Cape Verde. Thus, in terms of legal migration the Partnership offers very little.

Summing up, the EUs engagement in development, migration and return in Cape Verde seems mainly to concern increased possibilities of returning illegal migrants, including third country citizens who have been in transit in Cape Verde. The development aspect seems to be more of a rhetorical device that is included because it makes the Mobility Partnership more palatable to the Cape Verdean government.

The Cape Verdean government’s approach and activities

The Cape Verdean government has been late to recognize the potential link between return migration and economic development, probably because it prefers that migrants stay abroad and continue to send remittances. In Cape Verde, emigration has for more than a century been the primary way out, first from draught and failed harvests and later on from unemployment. Today, the Cape Verdean diaspora probably outnumbers the population in the national territory.² Since independence in 1975 the government has seen migration as a natural part of Cape Verdean economic and social organization, and the migrants as distant members of the society who can be expected to return only when they are supported from abroad, i.e. when they have gained the right to a pension. Remittances have for decades been an important

² There exist no reliable statistics on Cape Verdean migrants.

part of the national income, and they are included in the national balance of payments.

EUs agenda on migration, development and return and the Cape Verdean government's attitude to the same theme can thus be characterized as an awkward engagement. It is uncertain whether the government really welcomes an increase in returns, and it is equally uncertain whether EU really cares about the effects of migration and return on Cape Verdean development.³ Thus, none of the partners seem to have a genuine interest in this field, but despite this in the Partnership agreement both EU and Cape Verde demonstrate a concern with return and development. Both parties officially declare themselves willing to promote the return of migrants' and their engagement in productive activities, such as entrepreneurship.

The Cape Verdean government's limited interest in promoting the return of migrants is reflected in the nearly total absence of projects and activities directed at returnees. One concrete activity, however, are the business plans launched by the *Instituto das Comunidades* (The Communities' Institute), which is the department within the Foreign Ministry that is responsible for governmental politics in relation to migration and development. The *Instituto das Comunidades* (IC) presents on its web-site a short outline of 20 concrete business plans (<http://ie.ic.cv>). A returnee or a migrant who finds any of these plans interesting can contact the institute, and get a more detailed plan for free. The short presentations of the business plans on the web give me the impression that they are quite well tailored to demands and possibilities on the Cape Verdean market. They depart from local consumption patterns and preferences and combine these with demands in the growing tourism sector.

IC's business plans seem to fit well with the ideas on migration and development that shortly are mentioned in the EU Mobility Partnership. The aspirations are the same; through innovative entrepreneurship the migrants and returnees shall contribute to economic development in Cape Verde. The EU and the government seem here to be talking the same language. When it comes to the link between IC's business plans and those who are supposed to make the investments, however, this can in Anna Tsing's language be termed a "zone of awkward engagement", basically because there is so little contact between the two actors. IC is not a well-known institution outside governmental circles in the capital of Praia and the leadership of the most prominent diaspora organizations. In Cape Verde IC has representatives at the municipality level, but they do not seem to actively promote the institute. Few of the returnees I met and interviewed had heard about the Instituto das Comunidades, which naturally prevented them from seeking any information from the institute. Moreover, only a minority of the returnees had access to Internet, and they would hardly use their surfing time to visit the official web page of the IC. Therefore, most returnees thinking about how to invest their money will never will come across IC's business plans.

³ Boccagni (2011:5) argues that migrant sending and receiving countries often have different interests and motivations with regard to the return of migrants.

Another example of a bigger scale, but with similar problems is ADEI *Agência Desenvolvimento Empresarial e Inovação* (The Agency for Business Development and Innovation), which is placed under the Ministry of Economics. ADEI's main function is to support new businesses with development of plans and financing of investments, through finding business partner and guaranteeing collateral securities for loans. According to the official I interviewed at ADEI the agency also works with small enterprises. ADEI's possibilities to support financial solutions should be of great interest for returnees who want to pursue entrepreneurial activities because one of their major constraints is the lack of credits for investments. Interest rates are high, periods of repayment are short and demands on securities are excessive. Again, however, there is a gap between the government organization and the returnees prepared to invest. Due to the centralized organization of Cape Verdean governmental institutions, ADEI has had difficulties reaching out to entrepreneurs outside the capital of Praia. In similarity with IC, ADEI is with few exceptions unknown to my interviewees. One of them, though, tried to obtain some support for his advanced business plan from ADEI, but gave up after some two years because, according to him, "nothing happened".

Thus, both IC's business plans and ADEI's stated goals are in line with the universal return and development agenda reflected in the EU - Cape Verde Mobility Partnership. The problem, however, is that these efforts will have few practical effects as long as they do not succeed to engage those who actually are supposed to make something happen. Both the Partnership and the Cape Verdean government talk past ordinary diaspora members and returnees.

Returnees and entrepreneurship

In the beginning of 2010 I carried out 26 interviews with migrants who had returned to the islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão. The following discussion is based on these interviews, but also on my insights and experiences from earlier periods of anthropological fieldwork. Since 1998 I have carried out altogether 19 months of fieldwork in Cape Verde, divided into nine different visits.

In order to organize my presentation of Cape Verdean returnees' approach to entrepreneurship and small-scale business I have divided them into four different categories: the pensioners, the highly educated, the unsuccessful and the entrepreneurs. This categorization is primarily based on how the returnees are positioned by themselves and those around them in the local society. The four categories are quite distinct in the Cape Verdean social landscape. From an analytical perspective this categorization also reflects differences with regard to the role the returnees play for local development.

The pensioners

Probably the majority of the returnees belong to this category.⁴ "The pensioners" have worked abroad until they gained the right to an old-age pension, or, less common, to an early retirement pension because of disability or sickness. In fact, many Cape Verdeans claim that it is impossible to return before one has obtained a

⁴ There exist no reliable statistics on Cape Verdean returnees.

pension. The retired returnee is a standard figure in Cape Verdean discourse, and everybody is familiar with how the traditional labour migration trajectory leading up to a secure economic existence as a pensioner should unfold. The typical retired returnee has few years of schooling and left Cape Verde in his or her early twenties. The majority are male, but there are also quite a few female retired returnees. Many have worked abroad for 30 or 40 years, the men typically in activities related to shipping or in a factory and the women as care workers or domestics. Their jobs have seldom required the learning of new skills or given them access to influential social networks. The segregation in countries of destination has sometimes made it hard for them to create social contacts outside the local Cape Verdean diaspora community, which among other things has implied that they never have learnt the local/national language in the country of immigration.

House construction is by far the most common investment for retired returnees, but beside this some of them are engaged in other economic activities. Male returnees commonly invest in small-scale transports or grocery shops. As many of the retired returnees have chosen to invest in these two economic niches they are both characterized by market saturation. In urbanized areas there is an empty shop and a waiting taxi in every corner. If female elder returnees set up a business they typically do the same thing as Dona Zenaida, who I introduced in the beginning of the paper, that is open a tiny clothes shop in the ground floor of their own house. Again due to market saturation, this kind of shop attracts few customers. Zenaida and other female shop owners I interviewed described their business as a pastime rather than an economic activity.

The story of Dona Zenaida both fits the standard life story of a female retired returnee, and differs from it. As many middle-aged and elderly Cape Verdean women Zenaida has only a few years of schooling and her primary reason for migrating was her need to support her children, a motive shared by many female migrants. Her migration trajectory, however, is by local standard unusually successful. She migrated to the Boston area, where many Cape Verdeans live, and managed through hard work to return as successful migrant after “only” 22 years abroad. In the US she worked in a factory, as a cleaner and as a maid, always two jobs at the same time. At night she took care of her two daughters, who had joined her, and she also studied English. Eventually she managed to advance to a job as a nurse’s assistant at a cancer clinic, a job she said she “loved”. After twenty years she decided to return to her husband in Cape Verde. This meant that she had to leave behind her daughters who both by then had acquired a college exam. When Zenaida returned she had managed to save quite a lot of money and to build two big houses in Cape Verde, which she lets out.

In principle, Zenaida does not need to earn money as her income from the house rents, her pension from the US and her husband’s salary is more than enough for making a decent living. After half a year of inactivity, however, Zenaida started to feel *fokôd* (suffocated) and opened her little clothes shop just in order to meet more people. She does not believe that her shop contributes in any way to “the future” of Cape Verde, but she would like to use the skills she gained as a nurse assistant to

support children in need. Zenaida does not have any concrete plans for accomplishing this, but she says that when she next time visits her daughters in the USA she will meet with her former colleagues, and they will help her with ideas. “I have only been back here for eight months, but I’ll try to accomplish this in the future”.

In general the retired returnees play an unobtrusive role in the society, but some Cape Verdeans maintain that they were important for the development taking place in first decades after independence. By then, the migrants introduced new materials and new techniques for house building, and their investments in taxis and grocery shops were needed in a country which had suffered from extreme poverty and neglect during Portuguese colonial rule. One reason for the want for innovative projects among today’s retired returnees may be the lack of an entrepreneurial tradition. Traditionally, poor people have worked in agriculture or as manual labourers. Members of the small traditional elite have often been employed by the state as teachers, doctors or lawyers. Thus, working outside agriculture has largely meant being employed by somebody else. To start up a business of one’s own is to many Cape Verdeans a foreign undertaking.⁵

A question I always wanted to raise in my interviews was whether the returnees themselves believed they “made a contribution to Cape Verde”, but when talking with the pensioners I sometimes hesitated to ask this. Most people in Cape Verde believe that elder returnees have the right to enjoy the fruits of their hard labour abroad in peace and quiet. Many people know that most labour migrants work under hard, often exploitative, conditions in the US and Europe, and that they suffer from stress and racial discrimination. Those who have been able to return are seen as people who have undergone much privation in order to fulfil this dream. To ask such a person to be responsible for the development of Cape Verde is considered quite offensive. Thus, this is another example of how universal claims sometimes clash with reality in the contested field of migration, development and entrepreneurship. The universal claim that migrants have a “natural” desire to support their country of origin is not reflected in the attitude of many elder returnees who feel that they have worked enough.

The highly-educated

In similarity with the retired labour migrants the highly-educated returnees are a well-known category in Cape Verde. During colonial times families belonging to the small Cape Verdean elite sent their sons, and sometimes daughters, to higher education in Portugal. After finishing their studies some of these young people returned and took up a position in the colonial administration or in one of the few local companies. After independence young people have continued to go abroad for studies, as there until recently has not existed tertiary education in Cape Verde. This means that qualified jobs in Cape Verde nearly exclusively are occupied by people

⁵ With regard to “entrepreneurial spirit” the island of Santiago, where the capital of Praia is situated, differs from the islands of Sao Vicente and Santo Antão where I carried out fieldwork. On Santiago petty trading and informal business is somewhat more common.

who have returned after studies in e.g. Portugal, Brazil, Cuba or an Eastern European country. In the last decades many of the students have stayed abroad after obtaining their degrees, mainly because it gradually has become more and more difficult for them to find a qualified and well-paid job, or any job, in Cape Verde.⁶ All students who finance their studies with a grant have signed a contract stipulating that they must return to Cape Verde after having graduated, but as one former student said: “Many, many stay abroad. I don’t know why the state tries to force students to come back when there are no jobs for us.”

Besides the return of young Cape Verdeans who have studied abroad, there is a new and small inflow of a special kind of highly-educated returnees: the “second-generation returnees” (King and Christou 2009). They are labour migrants’ children who are raised and educated abroad, and who have decided to move back to their parents’ country of origin. They are probably few – there exist no statistics – but at least in Praia and Mindelo, the two largest towns, they have started to make a presence.

Both those who return after studies abroad and “second generation returnees” sometimes find it difficult to adapt their knowledge and qualifications to Cape Verdean realities. Many of the students have exams that are incompatible with the demands on the Cape Verdean labour market. It is, for example, difficult for all those who have studied humanities to find an employment. Inadequate knowledge of languages may be a problem for “second generation returnees”. Although Cape Verdean Creole always is used in everyday conversations, Portuguese is the official language in Cape Verde, and a good command of written and spoken Portuguese is seen as an important indicator of a person’s education.

Earlier generations of tertiary educated students returning to Cape Verde were more or less guaranteed a public employment, which before 1975 implied working in the Portuguese colonial administration and after independence being employed by the Cape Verdean government. This pattern still serves as a model, and few students dream of returning and starting a business of their own. Accordingly, in similarity with many labour migrants the highly-skilled returnees do not see themselves as business-oriented and innovative entrepreneurs.

The unsuccessful

To return without savings and a house of one’s own is nothing but a social catastrophe in Cape Verde. Unsuccessful returnees are generally described as unwise, wasteful and pathetic figures, but people are often less judgemental when the unsuccessful returnee is a family member or friend, and may then in detail explain why an individual failed to follow the prescribed migration trajectory. In fact, such stories are commonly told as nearly everyone knows an unsuccessful returnee. Despite this it was hard to find someone belonging to this category to interview. I heard stories about people who had returned because of illness, abusive husbands, prolonged unemployment and strong homesickness, but none of these

⁶ According to the World Bank (2011) two thirds of the tertiary-educated Cape Verdeans live abroad.

persons wanted to talk to me. “It is too shameful” was the common explanation. In the end it turned out that people who had been deported, i.e. forced by immigration authorities to return, were more willing to talk to me than those “unsuccessful” who had returned for other reasons, although these reasons could be equally compelling.

The deportees I interviewed all said that they had been forced to leave the country of destination because of undocumented residence. To them it was utterly important to make clear to everyone that they had not been deported because of criminality. Some people in Cape Verde believe that all deportees have committed a crime. Many Cape Verdean migrants manage to stay abroad for long periods of time without residence rights, which makes some conclude that nobody is deported just because of illegal immigrant status.

A major problem for deportees is that they have no influence over the timing of their return. They may have been able to save some money, but not enough for building a house or starting an enterprise. This means they become dependent upon other family members, living either in Cape Verde or in the country of destination. One of the deportees I interviewed was supported by siblings still living abroad; another had been helped to find a job by family members in Cape Verde. In a third case, the deportee was unemployed and received no remittances. It was obvious that she suffered much from being a burden to her family in Cape Verde. These cases together demonstrate that only those who return voluntarily and therefore can plan the timing of their return are capable to start up entrepreneurial activities. In extension, it also shows that the Mobility Partnership’s intention to intensify the involuntarily return of migrants to Cape Verde may be detrimental to local development, as there is a high risk that these returnees become a burden to the society rather than agents for development.

The entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurs are a small but growing category of returnees. They are people who have worked for many years abroad, and then returned to Cape Verde to set up a business. The entrepreneurs as well as other people in the country underline that this is not an easy accomplishment. A critical obstacle is the time factor. As mentioned, it is almost impossible to obtain bank credits for small and medium-scale business activities, which implies that capital for investment has to be secured before return. At the same time, it is important to come back when one still is young enough to be able to develop the new business.

José, who is a successful returnee and businessman, told me he was proud to have accomplished to return after only 16 years abroad. José left Cape Verde with a strong intention of coming back as soon as possible, and after two years as a construction worker in Luxembourg he started his own construction company, which at one point employed as many as 120 persons. José’s successful career as a business-owner in Luxembourg is an exception. Most migrants have to save for an eventual return from a badly paid job. Another advantage for José was that he never resided illegally in

Luxembourg. Undocumented migrants have to accept the exploitative salaries on the informal labour market, which makes it hard for them to save money. José run this company for 14 years, and during his years abroad he bought three apartment houses in Cape Verde and what locally is considered to be a lot of rural land. On this land he has bored wells and constructed water cisterns, and now he grows a wide variety of products, among them sugar canes out of which he makes home-made rum. He has also invested in an import-export business, and altogether he employs “more than 25 persons” all the year around. The majority of them work in José’s different agriculture projects.

The successful entrepreneurs I met had either started up a business activity that was new to Cape Verde or set out to improve the quality of already available services. An example of the first kind is Martin who in Europe worked as a mariner, factory worker and barman. After more than 20 years abroad he returned and became a vegetable grower. Agriculture is nothing new in Cape Verde, where more than 40 % of the population still live in rural areas (Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2009), but Martin introduced both new sustainable cultivation techniques and new sorts of vegetables that nobody else grew, such as spinach, egg plants, leek and pak choi. The last mentioned vegetable, a kind of lettuce, Martin produces specifically for the community of Chinese shopkeepers who recently have established themselves in Cape Verde. Martin said that the first years were hard as few people were interested in changing their diet and trying his “strange” vegetables. Gradually business became better, however, thanks to people’s improved access to mass media and health care. Persons who suffered from illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure learned from the television and their doctors that it is healthy to eat vegetables. Rumours about Martin’s healthful vegetables spread and today demand is higher than what he manages to produce, although ten persons work all the year around for him.

The second option, to offer products of a better quality, has been pursued by Sofia who has opened a restaurant in the town of Mindelo, after having worked for many years in Europe as a waitress. There exist already quite a few restaurants in that town, but according to Sofia they mostly offer the same kind of food, which, moreover, are dishes that everyone cooks at home. Sofia has introduced international “ethnic food” with inspiration from Turkish, Thai and Senegalese kitchens, and this attracts a steadily raising number of costumers. She has also trained her four employees to offer a new and higher standard of service through i.e. meeting costumers at the entrance door and showing them the way to their table. Another successful novelty at her restaurant is the possibility to order only a single glass of wine, instead of a bottle.

José, Martin and Sofia have started their businesses without any support from the government. When I mention this to José, who is a member of the local government council, he says that the government actually has no visions for the migrants’ investments. My conclusion is that the efforts made by the Instituto das Comunidades and ADEI (The Agency for Business Development and Innovation) to directly support returnees have had little effect. The positive structural development

that has taken place during the last decades has, however, attracted the return of enterprising migrants. During 2004-2009 there has been a strong economic growth in Cape Verde with real GDP averaging more than six percent (World Bank 2010). This growth has largely been driven by the booming tourism industry. Moreover, the state has during the last decades succeeded in establishing a basic infrastructure in the sectors of transport, energy, sanitation, health and education. This has been accomplished with the support of international development assistance, which Cape Verde has attracted partly through its reputation of “good governance” (Baker 2009). Thus, the government has played a positive role for the returnees’ investment, although in an indirect way.

Conclusions

The European Union’s engagement in the Mobility Partnership with Cape Verde seems primarily to be dictated by an aspiration to prevent Cape Verdeans and West African migrants in transit on Cape Verde from trying to enter the territory of the European Union. Another important motive is to open up for a dialogue on Cape Verdean readmission of undocumented citizens and third country nationals. Thus, in relation to return the EU is mainly interested in arrangements that facilitate the return of migrants who are unwanted in Europe. The Cape Verdean government’s interests are the opposite; the preferred scenario is that the migrants stay in Europe but continue to remain loyal to the country and to send remittances. Despite their opposed interests, the EU and the Cape Verdean government talk the same language with regard to return and entrepreneurship; both parties expect returnees to act as innovative small-scale businessmen. This coincidence can be explained by the makeshift conflation of diverging interests: EU wants to make the Mobility Partnership acceptable to partner countries through introducing wordings on migration and development, and the Cape Verdean government is willing to accept that *if* migrants have to return then they shall be useful for development. Thus, there are reasons for these awkward bedfellows to formulate common aspirations.

Thus, the universal claim that returnees are able and willing to act as “the new developers” through innovative entrepreneurship is endorsed both by the EU and the Cape Verdean government. The Cape Verdean returnees themselves, however, are not always responding to this claim. They may be too old, too poor or simply too comfortable to consider starting up a business. Some of those who still invest in an economic activity choose the do the same thing as many other have done before, which implies that the market becomes saturated. Entrepreneurial creativity is not a given capacity just because a person has spent some time in Europe.

As I have shown, however, there are some returnees who are successful entrepreneurs. This, however, has little to do with return policies from above. José’s, Martin’s and Sofia’s thriving businesses are not related to the promises made by the Cape Verdean government and the EU to support returnees. Instead it has been possible for them to return and start a successful business because they are creative and capable individual and because of comparatively beneficial structural conditions. In Cape Verde there is today little corruption, a stable democracy, a functioning basic infrastructure and economic growth. Such preconditions, rather

than policy declarations and short-term projects, are important for returnees' entrepreneurship.

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