

**Ties that bind, boundaries that exclude.
Long-distance nationalism and the
experience of racism among Santomean
migrants in Portugal**

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Structure

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The presentation's context: studying Santomean national identity in Lisbon

- **This presentation is part of a broader study on national identification among Santomean immigrants in Portugal now coming to its (provisional) conclusion. With Angola, Portugal is the main destination of Santomean immigration. Lisbon Metropolitan Area is their major place of residence**

The presentation's context: studying Santomean national identity in Lisbon

- **S. Tomé e Príncipe, a former Portuguese plantation colony acquired its independence in 1975.** Afterwards, Portugal became a main destination for migrants.
- **The main objective of my research among Santomean in Lisbon is to study how their national identity – or *long-distance nationalism* (Anderson 1998; Skrbis 1999; Glick-Schiller & Fouron 2001; Dieckhof 2017)- is sustained and reproduced.** Besides this peculiar case, **this study tries to make a contribution to current debates on the links between globalization, belonging, identities and nationalism.**
- ***Although taking into consideration the role of the Santomean state and other agencies in shaping feelings of national identification, theoretically my endeavour is based on contributions who place the emphasis on *interaction* and *boundaries* as constitutive of ethnic and national identities (Barth, 1969; Triandafyllidou 2006; Jenkins 2011; Skey 2015).***
- **The sustaining and reproduction of their sense of forming a (national) community and their attachment to “homeland”, derives both from processes of inclusion (*the ties that bind*) and of exclusion that demarcate them from the “natives” in Portugal (*boundaries that demarcate*).**

The presentation's context: studying santomean national identity in Lisbon

- **Other analytical tools come from works on *banal and/or everyday approaches to nationalism* (Billig,1995; Edensor, 2002) - “national identity is grounded in the everyday, in the mundane details of social interaction, habits, routines and practical knowledge’ “(2002: 17).**
- **Main theoretical contributions are provided by studies on **social or collective memory** (Halbwachs 1925, 1950; Connerton 1988; Mistzal 2003, 2010; Zerubavel 2003a, 2003b; McAuley 2015) as remembrance, narratives and commemorations are main ways of sustaining a sense of common identity and of constructing a common past and present in a diasporic context.**
- **And from **the literature on race and racism.****

Long-distance nationalism as product of ties that bind: Experiencing and reproducing identity through formal and informal ways

- Ties that bind: *formal* and *informal*
- **Formal: Commemorations** – *Independence Day* (12 of July), *The Santomean Women Day* (September 19), *St. Thomas Day* (December 21). Festivities where official national discourse is heard, with all the paraphernalia linked to nationalism: display of flags, singing the national anthem, performing national/traditional dances, consuming national food (callaloo). Commemorations afford for the keeping of the same national time common to homeland in the so-called “host-country”.
- **Even in formal events, informality is important.** People come for meeting family and friends, for commensality, for joking and staying with each other, making the same type of arrangements – picnics – that are usual in the archipelago. In short, these are “regionalized” contexts – i.e., secluded - where automatic national *habitus* can be displayed.
- **National identifications are sustained through mundane sensory practices**– like the ones involved in music, dance and food. **These practices take place in secluded urban spaces where their *national habitus*** – revealed in music, dance, conversation (in creole) and cuisine -**can be freely deployed among their equals** (Hage 2010).

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- **Informal: most of the time national identifications, the sense of belonging to a homeland (Guibernau 2013) is sustained and reproduced in a non-conscious manner, both in public in private occasions.**
- **Remittances**, being a private, family affair are also part of the sustaining of transnational ties.
- **The importance of memory: narratives are crucial to national identities.** Both the family and the migrant's association are *social frameworks of memory* (Halbwachs) or *mnemonic communities* (Zerubavel) where remembrance takes place. Memory is constructed in the present.
- **Remembering the homeland at the Association** (an “uninterrupted” conversation): **History – the state of the plantations as historical metaphor;** confrontation between the past (**the Golden Age**) and the present; **Geography:** the evocation of the space of homeland;

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- **Homeland** is evoked in narratives that remember sensory experiences revived to express at the same time difference (with Portugal) and attachment (to homeland).
- Besides the felt climate differences, they evoke and revisit home through conversation, pictures and videos. *The contrast between here and there is more than described, acutely felt.*
- Remembering includes vivid descriptions of the environment, like one of dawning in S. Tomé, where the “singing” of the roosters was mimicked by a Santomean. This was a bodily performance, where voice and discourse were mobilized in the nostalgic evocation of a homeland dominated by nature very different of the urbanscape now inhabited in Portugal
- **Nature, environment, climate are *nationalized* in this way.**
- **Nostalgia** (“a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations” – OED) **Nostalgia solidifies and augments identity, regenerates and sustains a sense of meaning and buttresses and invigorates social connectedness** (Sedikides et al. 2004).

Boundaries that separate and exclude: the importance of racism.

- *National identity* is mainly sustained through socialization in families and interactions with a *Significant Other* (Tryandafillidou 2005), the Portuguese “autochthonous” population.
- Separation from the majority is linked to boundaries – political (citizenship, Skey 2015), nativism, cultural, and “racial” that keep them apart.
- **The widespread experience of racism** in Portugal, that also adds to discriminations linked to poverty, **is deeply resented**.
- This helps to produce difference and to keep the people mainly connected through the networks of their own national community. *Difference and exclusion nurture (internal) cohesion*.
- **Belonging to a nation besides providing “ontological security”** (Giddens, 1990); can be a source of joy and have “libidinal value” (Skey 2013).





