Chapter 35
Cape Verde 2013



Monday, March 4, 2013, Praia, Cape Verde

This is another IEDP (International Economic Development Program) trip with students from the Ford School. The country selection this time was Cape Verde, a country that I had only vaguely heard of and had no idea of its location when it was selected. To be accurate, the students first selected Pakistan, and I as Associate Dean, advised by various other faculty, vetoed that on security grounds. After much discussion and unhappiness, a new election was held, and Cape Verde was chosen over Cambodia, India, and Bulgaria. Cape Verde had the advantage of a Ford School student, Andrew Bracken, who had served here in the Peace Corps and talked it up.

For those who don't know, where is Cape Verde? It is a group of ten or so islands about 500 km off the coast of West Africa, just opposite Senegal where we traveled four years ago. It shares a similar climate, but not much else. For one thing, it was uninhabited prior to colonization in the 1400s by the Portuguese, who used it as a base for the slave trade. The population is African, but it is mixed with more Portuguese blood than you'd find on mainland Africa, and the people speak both Portuguese and a local Creole.

The islands have essentially no natural resources, hardly any water, and therefore only very limited capacity to grow food. As a result, its history includes frequent famines that killed off large fractions of the population. It became independent of Portugal without much of a fight in 1975, and it was extremely poor at the time. Since then, its economy has grown remarkably well, with much help from national aid and international institutions. It recently graduated from the ranks of "low-income countries" to "lower-middle-income countries," a fact of which people here are very proud even though it reduces their eligibility for help from abroad.

Cape Verde's proudest achievement, and probably the reason that it got so much help, is that it became something of a democracy at independence, and then in 1990 it became a genuine multiparty democracy that has functioned extraordinarily well, as it still does today.

Another distinctive feature is its population. There are only about 500,000 people in the country, about half of whom are in or near the city of Praia where I am now. But the voting population includes another half million expatriates in a diaspora around the globe. Much of that diaspora is in other Portuguese-speaking countries, but a big chunk of it is in the US, near Boston. That's where Cape Verdeans apparently first began migrating to in the 1700s, when they traveled there to use their skills as whalers. This diaspora provides remittances to Cape Verde that comprise a substantial fraction of its income.

Perhaps that's enough to tell you about Cape Verde, at least for now. The reason that I know so much about it is that, unlike on my previous IEDP trips, this time I taught the course, and therefore had to learn a lot about the country. You'd think that might also mean that I have lots of duties as the organizer of the trip, but a nice feature of these trips is that the students do all the work. They've done a great job. The main organizers – Komal, Bilal, Jessica, and Jimmy – do seem rather exhausted and stressed out. But I'm delighted with how well they did and how well the trip has gone.

It's not been simple. The only direct flights from the US to Cape Verde are on its national airline, TACV, out of Boston (due to the diaspora). Because of the high cost of flying Detroit-Boston with Delta (which has a near monopoly in Detroit), we flew to Boston from Cleveland instead of from Detroit. That meant chartering a bus for the group from Ann Arbor to Cleveland. So, the whole trip consisted of leaving Ann Arbor by bus at 11:30 PM, arriving Cleveland airport before 3:00 AM (because we'd allowed lots of extra time in case of bad weather), flying United Airlines to Boston at 6:15 AM, spending an expected 13 hours in Boston, and finally flying on TACV at 9:30 PM Friday to arrive in Praia Saturday morning at 8:30 AM. In the event, the TACV flight was delayed two hours, so it was even longer than that.

As we approached Boston, I was thinking that I'd really like to spend the day in the Delta club, to which I belong, rather than rattling around the airport outside of security (since we wouldn't be able to check in until much later). Just off the plane, we were heading toward a door to baggage claim, which I knew would put us outside of security. So as almost everybody else went through the door, I veered to the left hoping to find my way to the club. Amazingly, I succeeded. Along the way, I ran into one of the students, Anna, who had seen what I did and followed me for the same reason. So, she was my guest at the club for the day, where both of us got several much-needed hours of sleep.

The flight on TACV was, as I've now learned to expect, not very full. It's a very poorly run airline, but for our purpose all that room was ideal. Initially I was in a row of three seats, the middle unoccupied and with a student, Bilal, at the window. But before we took off, he noticed completely empty rows further back in plane and moved there. I

shifted to the middle seat and had as comfortable a ride as I've ever had outside of business class. The seats themselves were upholstered in black leather and very cushy. It was amazing. Even the food was decent. No wonder TACV is losing money.

Thursday, March 7

We've now finished almost all our meetings for the week. I have just one more this afternoon, with a couple of free hours before that. I wouldn't be writing in this journal right now, though, if the internet were working in the hotel. I paid $12 for 500 MB of internet access back at the start of the week, and I've used about ¾ of that during the occasional times when it was working. But it's not working now, so I might as well do something that doesn't require it.

On Saturday two people met us at the airport: Harold and Becky. Becky works for the US Embassy here, which has played a big role in helping us make connections. Harold has played a much, much bigger role, however. As we understand it, he is employed by Bridgewater University in Boston (of which he and many other Cape Verdeans are alums) to facilitate visits by students to Cape Verde. He viewed helping us as part of his job, even though we pay him nothing. He's extremely nice and efficient.

He had arranged two vans plus a small truck to take us from the airport to our hotel, the truck to carry most of the bags. Our hotel, Santa Maria, is in the Plateau section of Praia, and it fronts on a street that has been made into a very nice pedestrian mall. A cross street dead ends at the mall just 30 feet from the door to the hotel, so dropping us there, as well as collecting us later for various meetings, has been very convenient.

The hotel was apparently remodeled not long ago, and it is very clean and bright. There is no elevator, however, so I was glad that I was placed in a room on the first floor (i.e., one flight up). The students have double rooms, but John Chamberlin (the other faculty member along) and I have singles. The room is very small, but no smaller than needed. Unlike today's fancier hotels, it lacks a hair dryer, so I've had to get along without that. It has a shower, but the water is cold. The huge sprayer is high up at the center of the small shower stall, so it is impossible to stand outside of the cold water. I have therefore taken only three showers while I've been here. Aside from that, I've been very happy in this room. The air conditioner works well and is easy to adjust, and I've slept well every night.

On Saturday after we'd checked in, they took us to a nearby restaurant for "brunch." There, all 27 of us sat at a long string of tables and were brought various local dishes. The best was cachupa, a mixture of hominy, beans and meat that reminded me of corned beef hash. It even is served with a fried egg on top. Less good was couscous, a thick loaf of cornmeal that they brag about but that was too dry to eat, in my opinion. I know there were several other dishes, but I forget them now. After brunch, we were free for the rest of the day, but I didn't do much except nap and then have dinner with John.

On Sunday we went by the two vans, at mid-morning, to a place called SOS. This is a compound on the outskirts of the city where children are housed. The organization that runs it is German, and it has such installations in many countries. Its purpose is mainly to take in orphans and other children whose parents are not available. Here in Cape Verde, I gather that such children would not fill the compound, so they are open to housing children whose parents are available but just very poor. One can see why this would be attractive, because the facility is very nice. The kids live in separate houses, each of which holds 8-12 of them, in four rooms with some bunk beds. Each has a nice living room and kitchen, and a "mom" who lives with them and cooks for them, plus "aunts" who come in daily for other purposes. Everything is brightly painted and well kept.

There was a playground that served as a soccer field, and several of our group (not I) formed a team to play the kids, while the rest of us watched. Our guys and gals played hard, and even were ahead for a little while, but eventually youth won out and they lost. At least two of ours also managed to get huge blisters on their feet.



Soccer with the kids, from trip



John and I, from trip.

From there, Harold had the vans take us around the outskirts of the city so that we could see more of how it was laid out, including viewing it from the top of a bluff overlooking most of it. The city is on the sea, of course, and we could see the port not far off. Harold pointed out various areas of the city and told their histories. The Plateau, where our hotel was located, is on a high piece of land, apart from the city center. The small US embassy is there as well, just a block from our hotel, even though both the Ambassador's residence and most other embassies are down below nearer the water. I gather that we are not all that far from the water, however, since the students walked to two beaches from the hotel later that day.

The plan had been that we'd visit SOS and that would be all, for Sunday. I'd planned to spend the afternoon reading the students' papers, to give them feedback before we started our meetings. But with the tour of the city, we didn't finish until after 4:00 PM, so I only got a little reading done. I finished the rest on Monday evening, probably too late to be most useful to some of the groups.



Overview, from trip

On Monday we started our meetings, of which we had several each day including today. The idea is that we meet with people from government and other organizations to learn more about the policy issues that the students have been studying. For this trip, because of our serendipitous connections with the Ambassador and Harold, we were able to meet with several Ministers, as well as their staff. In addition, we had one meeting with an American government organization that is funding a project here, several meetings with nongovernmental organizations, and so on. These meetings generally consist of me first giving a quick explanation of who we are, them giving a short (or not so short) presentation, and then spending the rest of the time with questions and answers. It's that last part that is most important to the students, since their research has given them all sorts of questions that they'd like answered for their papers. For the most part, this has worked very well, although in at least one case the students wanted even more and arranged a second session on their own.

In past IEDPs, these meetings have been held all over the city, or even outside it, as we would travel to the offices of the groups we were visiting. Here, in contrast, Harold has decided that it would be easier for the locals to come to us. He reserved a small auditorium in the Cape Verde University, just across a square from our hotel, and most of our meetings have been held there. There were a few exceptions, including the one I'll be attending later today, for which we'll take a taxi.

Saturday, March 9, *en route* Boston-Cleveland



Auditorium for meetings, from trip.

We are on our next-to-last leg, flying Boston-Cleveland, where we'll take a bus to Ann Arbor. Our flight from Praia to Boston was on time and smooth, and our arrangement to stay in a Comfort Inn near the Boston airport worked perfectly.

Back on Monday, we met first with Ambassador Adrienne O'Neal and her staff, who welcomed us. Then we heard from a local spokesman for the Millennium Challenge Corporation. MCC is a US initiative started under George W. Bush to fund projects in developing countries only after they have met a long list of requirements for good governance and other indicators that the money will be used well. Cape Verde is very proud that it was one of the first countries to qualify for this, for a project that dealt with an important need of theirs: water management. They've now completed that project and recently qualified for a second one. I was impressed, and I think the students were, with everything this guy told us, both about MCC and about Cape Verde.

I've forgotten now all the meetings that we had through the week, and their order, so I won't try to review them. We met with the staffs of several ministries, including some ministers. Each time we were to meet with a Minister, Adrienne was obliged to join us, since she needed to show the respect of the US government. I can't tell how much of her time she normally spends in such meetings, but I gather that showing respect in person is a big part of her job.

One meeting that we all particularly liked was with NOSi. I don't know what that stands for, but it is a government agency that has been working to connect Cape Verdeans with information technology, especially the Internet. They've accomplished a lot. They have completed undersea fiber optic cables connecting all the islands, which must have been a major undertaking. Their network now provides free Internet access in parks throughout the city, and I think also in much of the rest of the country. Our group took full advantage of this, spending time in two nearby squares with laptops and smart phones. I did less of that than some, as I bought the WiFi access in our hotel and used it from my room, although it only worked about half the time, if that. Anyhow, this guy who talked to us from NOSi not only told us things that were very good to hear, but he was a lively fun speaker whom we all enjoyed.

The pattern in all these meetings was that the speakers would give a short presentation about their policy area, and then the students would use the rest of our time asking questions. They had spent the two months of our course preparing for this, including draft lists of questions that they planned to ask and that they ran past me for suggestions.

It is always important in these trips that the students make a good impression, not only with their attitudes and interest, but also with their knowledge of the policy areas. It's my impression that this group did extremely well, as we heard repeatedly from our speakers after these sessions that they were impressed with the students' knowledge and engagement.

My role in these sessions was small. Typically, I would say a few words at the start, just to clarify for the speakers who we were and what our purpose was, since they didn't always know beforehand. After that, at least in the initial meetings, I just listened and made notes of which students were participating actively. I left it to the speakers to call on them during the Q&A, and that worked fine at first as not too many would raise their hands. Part way through the week, though, perhaps because the students became more comfortable with the process, the number of hands raised at a time became more than the speakers wanted to negotiate, so it fell to me to select among them. Since I was keeping track of who asked questions, I did my best to call on those who had asked the fewest, and that seemed to work OK.

Perhaps the most interesting session was one that I didn't attend, but that John Chamberlin told me about. It was with the Praia Chamber of Commerce. The woman they met was very dynamic, apparently, and funny. Most importantly, she said that most of what we'd been hearing from people in government was all wrong. The government people were claiming that Cape Verde is doing well, but in fact, she said, it doesn't really have an economy at all. Instead, it has prospered from international aid and remittances, but these are declining, and the country shows little sign of being able to prosper on its own. It seemed clear that she overstated her case, perhaps for effect, but the point that she made was a refreshing counterpoint to much that we had been hearing. I missed that session because I was with a different group of students talking to the agency for international investment. That was not nearly as interesting.

Another time that I missed some of what the students were hearing was on Tuesday, when I was invited to speak to an assembly of Cape Verde's leaders in a panel on how to improve the University of Cape Verde's school of business and government. I'd been asked, the week before we came, if I would do this, and at first, since it sounded like it was just about a business school, I said I knew nothing about business schools and declined to participate. That prompted a phone call (from Harold, as it turned out) to explain that the school here was also about government, and that they'd welcome my thoughts about the structure of a policy school. I said that I would do it and simply tell them what I could about the Ford School.

The event was held not in the university but in an auditorium in a building downtown owned by a bank. When I arrived, the Prime Minister was addressing the audience, in Portuguese of course. I sat near our ambassador and her staff, and I was given a set of headphones to listen to simultaneous translation. By the time I figured out how to use them, however, the Prime Minister was ending his remarks, and we broke for a coffee break. The ambassador took me forward to meet him, and he explained that he has a son attending Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

After the coffee break, I took my place on the stage with the moderator and one other of the panelists. They then introduced me, and I gave my talk. It's always hard to tell how well such a talk is received, since even if I get appreciative comments, those could just be politeness. Two of our students were in attendance (Komal and Bilal), and they were enthusiastic. But that could be the same. Nonetheless, I had the feeling that I had done well, and after listening to the other speakers, translated through my headphones, I was pretty sure that I did better than they. Unfortunately, I think I may have fallen asleep during one. I was sitting in the front row at this point, and I don't know whether I should be glad or sorry about that.

There was one speaker whom I enjoyed listening to. She was from Barbados, originally, but she works for Singapore Management University, and they had invited her to share her thoughts about that institution. She did it well, but it seemed more of an ad for her school than anything else. I'd like to think that my own presentation gave them some good pointers about how to structure an effective program.

Another break from the meetings came on Wednesday, when the ambassador had invited John and me to lunch at her home. This was in her dining room, and the other guests included the presidents of the two main universities in Cape Verde, plus two others, one of whom seemed to be something like a Secretary of State. Others all deferred to him, and he had the most to say. The lunch was good, although I cannot now recall what we ate. The ambassador's home was of course very nice, although I gather it is small as such residences go, probably reflecting the small size and therefore limited importance of Cape Verde as a country.

Contrary to what we'd been led to expect, several of the lunches during the week were provided for the whole group out of IEDP funds. In other IEDP trips, that has not been the case, but those trips have always included quite a nice formal dinner near the end of the trip, and we didn't have that here, saving us some money. The first group lunch was at the Panorama Restaurant, on the top (3rd) floor of a small hotel. We reached it by a small elevator that could only hold 4 people, so it took us a while to make it up there. There were stairs next to the elevator, but these stopped short of the top floor, so the elevator was the only option. We learned later that there was another outside entrance at the back of the building with a usable stairway, but we didn't know that the first time.

The food was provided in a small sort of cafeteria that was squeezed into an end room of the restaurant. With all 27 of us there, plus several other customers, it was jammed and chaotic, as we all tried to get our trays, plates, and utensils before joining the line. But it worked. When we reached the cashier after collecting our food, we put our plates on a scale and she noted the weight and added our charge to the group tab, which Bilal later paid when we were finished.

The choices included several cold salad items, which looked good but that I was suspicious of because of Cape Verde's low water quality. The hot items that first day seemed to be preparations of chicken, and various grains including rice. There was also a

heap of whole, cooked fish, each about ten inches long, that I passed up. John later told me these were sardines (adults, apparently, whereas what I'm used to are the babies), and he said they were delicious. For the next several days, as John and I went out to eat together, we'd try this same restaurant in John's hope that they'd have the sardines again. We tried twice and failed to get into the restaurant, finding it – we thought – closed. We'd climb the stairs at the back of the building, but find the door there locked. At some point a student mentioned having the same experience, but they managed to get inside and, even though the place was empty of customers, got served a meal.

On our third try, we used the elevator to go up, and sure enough that took us inside what seemed to be the deserted restaurant. Except that there was one man working there, and he said they were open. We took our seats at a table, and soon he brought us a single menu. The menu had many empty plastic pages, plus a single sheet of paper with five items handwritten on it. These were the choices, apparently, and we each ordered what turned out to be a perfectly satisfactory dinner. John had chicken and I had pork. There were no sardines.

We ate there again for lunch both Thursday and Friday, with a similar buffet to what they'd had before. On Thursday there were no sardines, but they had a lasagna that I thought was wonderful. Then on Friday they had sardines, so I tried one. I had feared lots of bones, but that was not a problem, and the meat pulled away from them easily. However, I thought the meat was dry, and not very flavorful, so I don't understand why John liked it so much.

On Thursday evening the entire group was invited to the ambassador's residence for a reception, 7-9 PM. This was held out back of her house, overlooking the sea, a very peasant setting. She had invited quite a few locals, including again the two university presidents. She had also invited more than a dozen alums of Bridgewater University. That's something I need to explain.

Bridgewater University is in the Boston area, and it has somehow become the most popular place in the US for Cape Verdeans to get their higher education. Harold did his degree there, and he works for them in Cape Verde handling student visits. Bridgewater therefore provides an important link between the Cape Verdean diaspora in America and the local population. Many of the students who get their education there return to Cape Verde afterwards, so Praia has a substantial contingent of Bridgewater alums. Adrienne had invited them to this reception thinking that we'd all like to meet each other. She was right. I know that some of our students both enjoyed talking with them and learned things that they will use in their papers. I too talked with several of them and enjoyed that.

One of them, when asked what he was doing now that he was back in Praia, said he was starting a business. This is something that our group had learned repeatedly to be needed in Cape Verde, so I talked with him quite a lot about the difficulties he was having. His plan is to start a store in the mall in Praia (which I'd seen but not visited), a store that he would pattern after Staples. He has the location for the store lined up, and much of the

other arrangements, but right now he is seeking a loan from a bank to get it started. He seemed optimistic that he would get it, but troubled by the long time that it was taking. I suspected that his optimism might be unfounded, since lending to a recent grad to start a business seems like a pretty risky action for a bank. But in further conversation, he mentioned that he had a brother attending Western Michigan University. So yes, he is the son of the Prime Minister. That must improve his odds of getting funding, if not of succeeding with the business.

As we left the reception and piled into our two vans, Bilal came around and told us of an opportunity available the next morning. We had all heard of the "Old City" but had not seen it. There would be a short side trip to it on Friday morning, leaving at 7:30 AM. How many would like to go? Several in our van raised their hands, but John and I notably did not. I'd have liked to see the old city, but I was tired enough from the day and the week and really didn't want that additional effort.

The van took us back to the hotel, but on the way, it stopped at a place where most of the students got out for a night on the town – music, dancing, and drinking, I presume. John and I declined this opportunity as well, as did only one student in our van, on the grounds that he was feeling ill.

On Friday morning we had yet another meeting in the auditorium at the university, this time just with Adrienne who wanted to get our reactions to Cape Verde and suggestions for what she and her staff might do there. I was not sure that the students would have much to say, but they did, and I had to cut off the discussion when the time came to end it. We got photographs of the group with Adrienne and her staff, then went off to lunch and, later, to the airport for our flight to Boston.

The trip home – to Boston, overnight in a hotel there, then to Cleveland, and by bus back to Ann Arbor – was largely uneventful. This was quite a contrast to what I remember from our trip back from Senegal four years ago, when we had all sorts of problems getting past the authorities in the airport and then, in Atlanta, found ourselves stranded due to snow. This time everything went smoothly, even though it was more complex.

One small glitch occurred as we arrived in Cleveland. The plane from Boston was too small for most carry-ons, so these were tagged and left by the gate to be picked up when we arrived. At that point, many of us lined the sides of the jetway waiting for the bags to appear, then took them and walked off. I was focused on my iPhone as other passengers collected their bags and walked past me. When I got to the front and found my bag, I quickly noticed that it had a bright orange ribbon tied to it. My first thought was that somebody had tied the ribbon on my bag, but then I realized that this wasn't mine. Instead, two bags had looked exactly alike (which is a surprise, since I've never seen another bag exactly like mine, or even very similar), and another person had taken mine even though it lacked their orange ribbon.

I went out and told the gate agent, and she immediately announced to the whole concourse that people from our flight should check that they had gotten the right bag and

return to the gate if not. Two of our students charged off in search of somebody with my bag, though without – I thought – much chance of finding what they couldn't identify. The bag I had taken had a leather tag for a name and address, but it was empty. The gate agent proceeded to open the bag and dig through it for the identity of its owner. She found something and then started paging that person by name. We waited a while, with no response, but the agent had been able to look up the woman's reservation and thus knew that she'd be leaving next on a flight to Miami from a gate just down the concourse. We started walking toward that in hopes of finding her. Just before we got there, however, the woman appeared with my bag, and with our two students accompanying her. One of them, Mark, had somehow been able to identify her as she stood in line to get food. I asked how he knew it was her, and all he said was that he knew my bag was green. Anyhow, the lady apologized, we traded bags, and all was well.

Our final leg was the bus ride from Cleveland to Ann Arbor. I spent most of it listening to music, but I did notice at one point that we were traveling back roads instead of the toll road. When I asked Bilal about that later, he said he thought the driver was trying to save himself the cost of the toll, which had been included in what we'd paid, and that he only returned to the toll road after Bilal complained. I presume, therefore, that we got back to Ann Arbor a few minutes later than we should have.

No matter. I was glad to be back. I offered one of the students a ride to his home, and we walked together to the parking structure, where I found that my battery had died. I called for two taxis, and he and I said goodbye as we went our separate ways.

I'll close with several more photos from the trip, posted by the group.



From trip



Group, from trip



Group, from trip



From trip



From trip



Wind power, from trip.



Solar power, from trip.