Securing networks or networks of security? Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees negotiate transnational positionings

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Abstract. The primary aim of this article is to analyze feelings of belonging and the notion of transnationality among descendants of Portuguese emigrants who have returned to Portugal. The key considerations of the analysis are the multiple interactions between place of origin and destination, transnational network constructions, and identification negotiations that often take place in the post-return. The study aims to understand how such interactions, constructions, and negotiations influence the behavior of these returnees and their life options, and also to understand the way that identities and senses of belonging are (re)molded once in Portugal. This article thus sets out to answer two overarching questions: (1) what are the impacts of return upon Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees and where does the return itself leave the returnees in the transnational stratum, and in their search for the “self”?; (2) how are social networks (re)negotiated in the post-return taking into consideration tactics of insertion and returnees’ transnational positioning? In order to reach conclusions, the findings presented in this article rely on interviews with 40 Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees from two source countries: Canada and France. This ethnographic fieldwork was carried out between 2008 and 2010, with a second round of follow-up interviews carried out between 2011 and 2013.

Keywords: Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees, transnational networks, identity; belonging, narrative analysis

This article sets out to analyze notions of transnational belonging among the descendants of Portuguese emigrants who have “returned”1 to Portugal. In the midst of spatial mobilities, it is often assumed that return migrations are, more often than not, unfixed processes, serving to strengthen the transnational context in which many migrants find themselves. In the state of migrancy, returnees, frequently, end up negotiating between two nations, ethnicities, cultures, and societies, all of which are very much present in the lives of these individuals, with the end result often being the reinforcement of their dual identities. A return to the ancestral homeland often ends up adding to the already constructed transnational self, introducing other social spaces and relations.

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That said, for this analysis, I consider the multiple interactions between place of origin and destination, transnational network constructions, and identification negotiations that often take place in the post-return. The study aims to understand how such interactions, constructions, and negotiations influence the behavior of these returnees and their life options, giving particular attention to the way that identities and senses of belonging are (re)molded once in Portugal. This article thus sets out to answer two overarching questions: (1) what are the impacts of return upon Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees and where does the return itself leave the returnees in the transnational stratum, and in their search for the “self”? (2) as socially embedded and active agents who influence and are influenced by the social contexts in which they are located, how do emigrant descendant returnees (re)negotiate social networks (local and transnational) taking into consideration tactics of insertion and their transnational positioning?

Empirically, the arguments presented in this article are situated within the transnational migration theory debate (cf. Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Faist, 2000; Glick Schiller, 2004; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1992; Kivisto, 2001; among others). It is pivotal to point out that identity constructions, when played out under a return scenario, are often constructed from the positioning of the migrant as a “cultural transient,” with individuals establishing themselves in transnational spaces (e.g., home, host, and local). This article thus sets out to analyze the identity and belonging bricolages constructed upon return (Sardinha, 2011a, 2011b), and to examine how such “transients” negotiate and/or maintain their transnationality and what means are utilized in such negotiations.

The analysis will also consider the fact that the social interactions in networks of returning migrants in the return setting frequently construct socio-cultural ties, connectedness, and cohesiveness, but not necessarily always coherence. This is due to the fact that such social interactions are seldom what the returnee had envisioned in the pre-return (Christou, 2004). To this end, it is illuminating to draw upon social interactions in trying to unravel the complexities of the social construction of identity and belonging, aiming to illustrate the multi-layered aspect of transnationality. Particularly key to such introspection is the outcomes of such transnationality; in other words, what resources or privileges are sought out through transnational interactions?

In order to reach conclusions on these issues, this article relies on fieldwork carried out with 40 Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees from two source countries—Canada and France (20 from each country). Delving into the narratives of 1.5- and second-generation descendants collected via in-depth interviews, this paper discusses the identity and belonging conceptions and negotiations of these returnees, as well as their construction of local and transnational networks in the post-return. I suggest that the descendants of Portuguese emigrants who have opted to return to Portugal will integrate in accordance with the expectations of the receiving society, keeping in mind that
rifts with the receiving society caused by differences in (cultural) values and habits will play a key role in measuring social, cultural, and economic integration. It is thus assumed that the degree of transnationality, and how this particular group engages itself within transnational spaces, will depend on these differences.

**Methodological considerations: Situating the ethnographic research**

The data presented in this article draw on ongoing, longitudinal fieldwork with members of the two aforementioned returnee groups in Portugal. Deriving from a larger ongoing research project entitled, *The Return of the Portuguese Second Generation to Portugal: Identity, Belonging and Transnational Lives*, the research commenced in 2008 and is ongoing. The interviews analyzed for this article, however, are derived from a first round of interviews carried out between 2008 and 2010, as well as specific follow-up interviews carried out between 2011 and 2013. Fieldwork has been exclusive to continental Portugal.

This research relies on the ethnographic qualitative method of in-depth interviewing as the primary form of data collection and basis of analysis. Having as the central aim the unveiling of meanings and processes encoded in the act of return migration in relation to both the social and ethnic construction and articulation of personal networks (cf. Christou, 2004, writing about Greek second-generation return), this research relies on collected narratives, centering debate on the conceptualization of nation, place, culture, and identity, as well as the dynamics of “home-host” constructs in the returned migrants’ network (re)building. Considering the positions of returned migrant descendants, it is thus imperative to listen to the voices of these individuals, giving particular attention to contexts of change involved in their returns.

Considering the goal of qualitatively observing transnational network negotiations and belonging as applied to return migrants, I turn to Christou’s (2004, 2006) two approaches of theoretical readings and empirical insights, both of which incorporate structure and agency in the construction and comprehension of social networks in cases of return migration. On the one hand, societal constructions of social networks focus on the collectivity as understood through a social prism of “home-host” categories and constructed within the collective sense of place and identity; on the other hand, migrant constructions of social networks focus on the individual as an “active-actor” who shapes and is shaped by “politics of identity” within hybridized notions of belongingness (Christou, 2004, p. 58). In their very essence, social networks imply trust, commitment, and reciprocity (Bashi, 2007; Portes, 1995), often the quintessence of survival for those closely knitted within such systems (Bashi, 2007). In the case of migrant descendant returnees, experiences and trajectories are highly embedded within socio-cultural constraints, as possibilities emerge either in opposition or in response to the local and (trans)national spaces (places of sending and receiving contexts) that shape such network building (Christou, 2004, p. 59). These same spaces and places, in fact, are also the same contexts
that often serve to define these returnees’ identities, drawing from both sending and receiving contexts.4

That said, the spatial constitution of social life, as it relates to return migration, has been articulated and shaped by the Portuguese-Canadian and Portuguese-French emigrant descendant returnees interviewed; the epitome of this is the very process of their identity construction, sense of belonging, and network building and maintenance in the post-return. The interviewees were asked to reflect on these issues, relating their actions, feelings, and thoughts to the wider socio-cultural context of their changing place, positionality, and self.

Ethnographic research is at the heart of this investigation. However, within the scope of the study, given that I, the author and sole researcher, am also a Portuguese emigrant descendant who returned to Portugal from Canada, an additional methodological issue bears consideration: the researcher/author positioning as an “insider-outsider-within.” The embeddedness of a researcher’s personal experiences and “rootedness” within the same social context as that of the individuals being studied (in this case, as a fellow “hyphenated returnee”) leads to the definition of the researcher’s work as auto-ethnographic. This kind of work brands the ethnographer as a boundary-crosser, taking up a dual role as researcher and subject.

As a number of authors have argued (Denzin, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Hertz, 1997), an auto-ethnographic methodology can provide an additional layer of authenticity, for it is reinforced by self-reflexivity and research awareness from an “insider looking in.” Beyond permitting a comparative and contrastive analysis, however, the “insider looking in” positioning also simplified the recruitment of interviewees. For this project, I drew from my own personal networks of 1.5- and second-generation returnees to find participants and referrals to other (potential) interviewees. In addition to personal networks and snowball sampling, an important secondary recruitment resource was the Internet, which I used to search for returnees.

A number of other methodological considerations are worth highlighting before delving into the theoretical debate that frames this article and the subsequent empirical analysis. First, before entering the field in 2008, a semi-structured interview guide was constructed with questions focusing on (1) integration issues, (2) identity and belonging constructions and negotiations, and (3) local and transnational network maintenance and/or creation. The second round of interviews carried out in 2011–2013 focused on the impact of the economic crisis in Portugal and its influence on current or future mobilities.5 In the field, the interviews themselves took place in various locations, including coffee shops, universities, places of work and of residence, and on park benches, among others. Interviews lasted one hour on average and, with the interviewees’ consent, were always digitally recorded. Most interviews were conducted in Portuguese, with the exception of some interviews with Portuguese-Canadians that were carried out in English or a mixture of both languages.
The selection criteria for the 40 interviewees were based on the following variables: age upon return (ten years of age or over); minimum length of stay in the parental country of immigration (at least ten years); gender (13 Portuguese-Canadian males and seven females; eight Portuguese-French males and 12 females); age-span (participants were born between 1964 and 1988, with 1976 as the mean year); education level (16 possessed a high school diploma or equivalent, 14 an undergraduate degree, and 10 a postgraduate degree); and territorial distribution of return in continental Portugal. Among the 40 interviewees, 15 resided in the district of Lisbon, seven in Viana do Castelo, six in Braga, five in Setúbal, two in Porto, two in Coimbra, one in Leiria, one in Viseu, and one in Portalegre. Lastly, one final return variable worth highlighting is that of individual versus accompanied return. Of the 40 interviewees, 26 returned unaccompanied, while the other 14 returned with their family (nine as the offspring of the family unit; five as a parent within the family unit). All participants’ parents were Portuguese nationals.

Theorizing transnationalism and its application to migrant descendants in the context of return

The image of migrants living simultaneously in two worlds is the central thread in the debate on transnationalism (cf. Basch et al., 1994; Faist, 2000; Glick Schiller, 2004; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1992; Kivisto, 2001; among others). The development of research on migrant transnationalism argues that nation-states are ever-growing, overlapping, delimiting societies, with national boundaries being blurred by migration practices. This argument leads many theorists (Pries, 2001; Vertovec, 1999) to defend that it is time to think of societies as translocal, transnational, de-territorialized (Appadurai, 1996), and global. Thus, in its essence, transnationalism comes across as a conceptual framework for understanding ties—social, economic, cultural, political—between migrants’ host and origin countries articulated via regular and sustained contacts over time and across national borders (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999).

Links across multiple nation-state borders are, therefore, sustained by transnational networks created by transnational individuals. In equal parts, these networks can be seen as the basis for, or as a form of, transnational social fields. Based on the definition of Basch et al. (1994), social fields are sets of multiple interlocking networks of social relations through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged, organized, and transformed. They are multidimensional, encompassing interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth, such as personal or organized relations, and movements (Basch et al., 1994).

Within such social fields, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2003) argue for a differentiation between ways of being and ways of belonging. The former refer to the social relations and practices in which individuals engage; the latter refer to the options individuals may or may not have in different social frameworks (connected to a way of belonging—through memory, nostalgia, or
imagination—that allows members to be a part of a social field). As the authors further point out, when individuals self-identify with a particular way of belonging, they may associate with like-minded individuals and create a social field. When a transnational social field is both formed and named, it becomes a transnational social space where daily practices, as well as ideas, are shaped by forces not confined to one nation-state, thus making ways of being and ways of belonging transnational.

Whether or not individuals forge or maintain some kind of transnational connection depends on the extent to which they wish to remain attached, or, in the case of immigrant offspring, on the way in which they are reared in a transnational social space (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2003, p. 15). Much of the debate connecting migrant descendants and transnationalism has tended to explore the often complex articulations of integration strategies and identity constructions, often defined by hybrid senses of belonging, reflecting both the country of settlement and the parents’ country of origin. This line of research, however, either centers on those descendants geographically fixed in their parents’ settlement country, most often examining the transnational/transcultural ties to the ancestral homeland via the reproduction of “home culture” elements in the diaspora (cf. dos Santos, 2002; Friedman & Schultermandl, 2012; Haller & Landolt, 2005; Hoerder et al., 2005; Kim, 2010; Louie, 2006; Somerville, 2008; Wessendorf, 2007), or, to a lesser extent, the research analyzes descendants’ links to the parental home countries via such means as technology and communication channels, media forms, as well as through participation in transnational social spaces (Levitt, 2009; Levitt & Waters, 2002).

Given the scope of this article—linking together migrant descendants, ancestral homeland return, and transnational networks—it is imperative to point out that such a conjunction has received little attention in the academic research. Considering the literature review on return migration alone, King and Christou (2008, pp. 11–16) point out that from the early classic studies on return migration dating back to the 1950s and 60s, to the research on labor-migrant returns during the 1970s and 80s, to the more recent return and pendulum migrations carried out since the 1990s, the literature concentrates almost exclusively on the first generation. Reflecting on the returnee populations historically studied in the literature, King and Christou (2008, p. 12) point out that “it is almost as if they had no families.” More recently, although a growing interest in trans-generational ancestral return and other diaspora homecomings has emerged (Basu, 2005; Conway & Potter, 2006; Tsuda, 2004), much of the literature still fails to reflect on the specific experiences of the migrant offspring.

That said, the connection between migrant descendants, ancestral returns, and transnationalism logically follows suit. When it comes to researching these issues, in fact, on the one hand, much of the work has focused on return holiday visits and the impacts of these visits in strengthening the transnational
self (cf. Christou, 2006; Conway, Potter, & St. Bernard, 2009; Kibria, 2002; King, Christou, & Teerling, 2011; Samborski, 2004; Vathi & King, 2011). In the case of migrant descendants who, on the other hand, have made a permanent return to the ancestral homeland, only a reduced number of case studies have, to date, set out to observe how these individuals negotiate integration, sense of belonging, identity, as well as network (re)constructs in the post-return.9

Although much of the work centering on migrant descendants and ancestral homeland return differs when it comes to analyses and findings, one often transcending commonality is the fact that, for the returned individuals, (re)insertion into the society returned to is never free of adjustments. As various authors have pointed out (Chamberlain, 1997; Gmelch, 1992; King & Christou, 2008; Sussman, 2010), a “homecoming” project is seldom a unified social process, but, instead, a versatile socio-cultural experience characterized by diversity, complexity, and ambivalence, often filled with anxieties, anticipations, and hardships, and, in many cases, leading to rupture and disillusionment (King & Christou, 2008; Sardinha, 2011a)—what Markowitz and Stefansson (2004) have coined the “unsettled paths of return.” Such rupture and disillusionment come about when the “warmth of the welcome” on the part of the receiving society is not what the returnees had been expecting—when they are “othered,” when integration is not facilitated, when the ethnic culture returned to is not the same as the ethnic culture experienced in the diaspora, and/or when values clash (Sardinha, 2011b). The realities of life in the ancestral homeland will, therefore, often deviate from the preconceived notions of the mythical homeland that only mirrors the subjectivities of migrant belongings (Markowitz & Stefansson, 2004). When pre-return ideals are challenged upon return, questions of belonging then resurge, becoming implanted in the same manner they had existed when these individuals resided in the familial land of emigration, where their identity constructions and sense of belonging were primarily defined by their bicultural and pluralistic life patterns, resulting from bi-socialization processes involving two spheres: the “internal”—the ethnic socio-cultural space lived primarily within the family unit and ethnic community—and the “external”—the space outside of the former (Gokalp, 1988). With many returnees often returning with the goal of doing away with the “cultural wars” (Nunes, 1986) that divided them in the familial land of emigration, it is not uncommon to see the opposite occurring—return accentuates the “hyphen” and allegiances within them (Christou, 2006; Sardinha, 2011a).

Ultimately, given that homelands do not always offer the welcoming embrace of a longed-for homecoming, the search for a place within the transnational social space where one negotiates dual ways of being and belonging is likely to be continuous. Such negotiations in the post-return bring about new diversities, in many cases, leading to the redefinition of the returnee—one that ends up taking different contours not originally imagined in the pre-return. Consequently, it is common for social fields, as interlocking networks of social
relations, to also experience alterations. As Christou (2006, p. 37) points out, transnational social spaces serve as key frames of reference in determining new practices, biographical projects, and (re)formulated identities. As new transnational social spaces emerge within a multitude of geographical spaces, life plans and projects become (re)structured within transnational social relationships and institutions, redefining the transnational social fields of participants (Pries, 1999, p. 27). It is exactly these negotiations that often challenge emigrant descendant returnees to reconsider “who they are where they are” and what it means “to belong where they are,” calling into question the relationship between identity, belonging, and place.

**Negotiating transnationality in the post-return**

Although return migration and transnationalism are equally part and parcel of a system of ties and exchanges, the latter is distinguished, above all, by its ongoing circuit of mobility as opposed to being a definitive act of resettlement (Cassarino, 2004). This is to say that, under the scenario of return, the migration experience seldom ends with return, for there is always another country to which one is tied. The past is not abandoned; on the contrary, it is fortified through transnational links, and not always of a physical nature. But how is this so?

Elsewhere I have discussed the primary reasons Portuguese emigrant descendants “return” to Portugal, be it alone or with their families (Sardinha, 2011b). To one degree or another, all the returnees interviewed expressed a desire to “return to roots” (Wessendorf, 2007). In some cases, this is “a search for ontological security” (King & Christou, 2008)—a search for self thought to only be accomplishable in the ancestral homeland. Yet in other situations, it is a matter of escaping sentiments of not belonging; whereas, in Portugal, Portuguese heritage was felt to be stronger, often confronting the demands of assimilation in the country of familial immigration. As a result, the return has as its objective the conquering of a territorially ethnic grounding and attachment (Blunt, 2007), where returnees can feel as though they are one among the majority, eradicating sentiments of in-betweenness. Coming to live in Portugal is, therefore, fuelled by an imagined stability to be established in the midst of time/space authenticity.

Exactly what each returnee is “returning to” is seldom perceived as an unknown situation to them. In fact, most return to an idealized version of Portugal, a rendering they conceived when still residing in Canada or France through family, community, and technological transmissions, and through short periods of time spent on holidays back in the ancestral home (Sardinha, 2011b). When a definite return is made, returnees thus bring with them their personal container of positive preconceptions conjured through these means. When in the state of *émigrés*, what is frequently transmitted is, more often than not, romanticized versions of a Portugal reminiscent of yesteryear, passed down by the first generation and by life within the ethnic community. Meanwhile,
temporary returns through holiday visits are, above all, holidays—time spent in laid-back mode where activities are “carnivalized,” often calculated and constrained by time (Afonso, 1997, 2005; dos Santos, 2005; King & Christou, 2008; Sardinha, 2011a).

When descendant returnees settle long-term, the positive preconceptions they bring with them are frequently contradicted, as the idyllic return fails to be fulfilled in the post-return. Elsewhere I have discussed the reasoning behind return tensions and disappointments as experienced and described by emigrant descendant returnees in Portugal (Sardinha, 2011a). Returnees made reference to problems encountered with the “inner workings” of the Portuguese society and state (e.g., the bureaucracy, the lethargy of Portuguese public services, lack of sense of service and friendliness, etc.; the clash of social norms and values; the processes of “othering” (where returnees are considered outsiders), of labeling, and stereotyping (Conway & Potter, 2006; Potter, Conway, & Phillips, 2005); and the unsuccessful integration in specific social spheres due to lack of socio-cultural capital. Culture shock is particularly worth highlighting, as many returnees find that their versions of Portugal and “Portugueseness” are not reflected in the Portuguese mainstream society.

Ensuing from these “shocks of return,” many returnees often experienced what they had never imagined would happen before returning: a cultural, identification, and social network contradiction—where “being Canadian/French,” maintaining contact with Canada/France, and their transnational sense of belonging becomes accentuated. “Hyphenization” and “allegiances” can become resilient as returnees are made aware that the “Portuguese outsider” they may have felt they were in Canada or France is now the “Canadian/French outsider” in Portugal.

With the awareness of (also) “being Canadian/French,” visible acts of identification can start coming to the forefront. The literature centering on the impact of first-generation Portuguese emigrants on the Portuguese socio-cultural landscape demonstrates the desire to incorporate symbols of the emigrant country culture in the everyday life of these individuals or families. Two examples of this symbolic incorporation are building houses that are influenced by the architectural styles found in the countries where these immigrants are from (Leite, 1989; Sousa, 1989; Vieira & Veríssimo, 1989; Villanova, 1995; among others), and naming businesses after the countries/regions of their emigration (Rocha-Trindade, 1989). The tangible and visible display of such socio-cultural identification in the public space constitutes a memorialization of the place of emigration, and enacts the performativity of cultural elements that define who they are—no longer just Portuguese, for they have acquired “identity bits and pieces” of another ethnic space and society that now also complements them.

Conversely, the descendants of these migrants pointed out visibility markers that they deemed as being “inescapable,” such as being given a foreign first name (identifying them as individuals born elsewhere) or speaking
Portuguese with an accent. Such markers often bring about the “emigrant tag”; connotations of a derogatory nature, at times drawn by stereotypical behavior and labeling attached to Portuguese emigrants in Portugal (Gonçalves, 1996). Drawing on examples from the interviews collected, visibility and the proclamation of the transnational self is also purposely brought forth by the returnees themselves:

It’s the little things like, for example, I make it a habit to show up on time. Punctuality is not exactly the norm here but I was brought up that way, and that’s the way I still am. People see this and they know they’re not local habits. (P-F04)

I wear my Montreal Canadiens ball cap or jersey as much as I can. It’s part of who I am. Even if people don’t know that the Canadiens are a Canadian hockey team, it’s important to me. (P-C13)

In assuming their personal sense of identity through sustained socio-cultural symbols and habits across nation-states, these “hyphenated returnees” create a transnational social field defined by the concoction that is the very outcome of their dual ethno-cultural environments they were raised in and in-between. The aforementioned “shocks of return” play a particularly key role in influencing such identity and sense of belonging constructions and negotiations; important in defining the degree of transnationality of the social field. Once aware that “the Portugal” to which they return is not the idyllic version that was pre-conceived before the return, the emergence of “official” forms of return migrant networks constitutes reproductions of national representations; networks that may be formed locally in the search for other descendant returnees who find themselves in the same position. It is in these networks where transnational social spaces are created and where resources, social capital, and security may be gained. Not “fitting in” with what Portugal offers, or feeling the brunt of disillusionment with what one finds and/or experiences in the post-return, goes beyond experienced differences; it is a reality embedded in active engagement with subjecthood, identity, and social dissimilarities (Christou, 2004). The following interview comments provide evidence of this reality:

You have to know how to play the game, who to talk to, what to say and what not to say. The people here have a certain baggage and the tools that fit the Portuguese system and we don’t. . . . This ‘game playing culture’ is not what I was brought up on in Canada. (P-C16)

I didn’t grow up here; I didn’t grow up watching what they grew up with on television; listening to the music they were into; commenting on the local issues of the day. When they start talking about some soap opera everyone would watch back in the 80s, I don’t know what they’re talking about. (P-F20)

For the Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees that I interviewed, network building in the post-return reflects dichotomies of inclusion and
exclusion. As a result, it is common for returnees, especially those who returned by themselves, to construct networks of friends also composed of other emigrant descendant returnees. Upon settling in Portugal, it is common that many find work or end up studying in areas where resources brought with them from Canada/ France will play to their advantage. Given their fluency in English and French, many use this resource to their benefit, by finding work in language schools, multinational corporations, the tourism industry, or by taking courses in these areas. Thus, through the labor market and education, many end up finding colleagues who have come to Portugal from the same country they came from. Having other French or Canadian individuals as classmates or workmates, with whom they spend a large amount of time, and, of course, speak French or English, is common, as is the fact that many continue living a French or Canadian lifestyle, constructing the transnational sense of self in the post-return. Such networks, as explained by many of the interviewees, are key to maintaining cultural contacts with their Canadian/French past and with their present selves, given that they share information on France/Canada, often reminiscing about the country they left behind.

Transnational formations, as argued by Dahinden (2010, p. 51), result from “a combination of transnational mobility, on the one hand, and locality in the sending or/and receiving country, on the other [emphasis in the original].” Whereas locality means being rooted or anchored—socially, culturally, economically, politically, etc.—in one country and negotiating transnationalism at a distance, mobility is understood as the physical movement of people in a transnational space.

Concerning the link between transnational formation and locality, one particular variable is central: that of satellite technology and other technological forms—namely the Internet. This technology plays a key role, not only in strengthening contacts among individuals and communities in localities across borders, but also in constructing new patterns of networks and shaping the essence of such networks. Cyber-networking facilitates the creation of a virtual community, permitting the maintenance of identity composition and the transnational self, bringing together social spaces of interactions.

Access to news and information, via technological means, provides proximity to occurrences of a social and cultural nature. As pointed out by Williams, Anderson, and Dourish (2008), people are often pragmatic about how technology fits into their current practices and helps them accomplish what they value and need in life. Decisions to use or not use technology are influenced by family, friends, and individual interests. Being close to family and friends and/or being up-to-date on issues that affect the individual, or are of interest to the people back in the country of departure, may become a priority for these descendants for strategic reasons (e.g., to keep tabs on what is occurring in and around the lives of those left behind, or to keep up with personal niche interests pertinent to France/Canada and its cultural landscape). The following citations echo exactly this:
We have access to France via the Internet and television. We watch mostly French television at home as well. We can be in France as much as we want to be technologically. We know what’s going on politically—the lives of local figures—those sorts of things. (P-F01)

When I first got e-mail I thought it was great as I could e-mail my friends back in Canada. But now, with Skype, it’s awesome—you can see the other person, you can talk forever and you pay almost nothing. You can keep up with friends; keep up with what’s happening. We can talk about the latest sports scores as they happen. It’s the next best thing to being present. (P-C05)

As globalization has facilitated the dispersion of individuals around the world, communication has become cheaper and more accessible with long-distance phone calls, cell phones, and cheaper international airfare aiding the maintenance of ties. Access to modern technologies, including cyber-networking, will drive the desire to be physically closer to what is already virtually close and frequently visible. For these returned descendants, the use of such technologies, therefore, implies a mobility that is spatially, temporally, and infrastructurally anchored, but globally distributed. The examples given in the interview quotes above (of being able to see and talk to someone thousands of kilometers away at the click of a button, being able to watch televised broadcasts and knowing what is happening as it occurs in real time), contribute to the linking of individuals and communities, facilitating exchange and, thus, reinforcing transnationalism and permitting its continuity.12

In this study, an attempt to measure the physical movement of these returnees in a transnational space revealed that returnees from France claimed to make more regular visits to France than those from Canada did to Canada (an average of once per year versus once every 2.2 years, respectively).13 The proximity between Portugal and France makes travel less expensive and explains the more regular physical contact of the French-Portuguese returnees. The majority claimed that their return visit to Canada/France was primarily to see family and friends, and, to a lesser extent, for business. In more recent interviews, however, an increasing number of interviewees claimed they had recently visited or were planning to visit France/Canada for a specific reason: to explore the possibility of a re-return.

The research of Potter and Phillips (2006) on second-generation migrants identified return from the United Kingdom to Barbados as being a middle-class phenomenon. Potter (2005) further points out a correlation between returnees who end up staying and those who re-returned back to the United Kingdom, highlighting that those in the majority, possessing college14 or university qualifications, showed greater tendency to stay in Barbados, while those with lower qualifications were found to be more likely to re-return to Britain. In the case of the 40 Portuguese emigrant descendants in this study, this pattern is not reflected, as current re-return ambitions cut across academic/professional qualifications. The phenomenon is due to the economic crisis currently gripping Portugal, leaving some of the interviewees on the verge of losing their
jobs and/or closing businesses, with yet others already unemployed or unable to find employment after completing their schooling.

It is at this critical juncture where transnational networks and ties are of particular importance and ready to be activated. Here, returnees partake in a transnational network fueled by opportunism, as transnational dealings may be less conditioned by representations of ethnicity (as was the case for many upon return to Portugal), but more so by personal interests, since the resources the transnational space can provide them may not fulfill their current and future needs. The central element, therefore, is that mobility becomes an integral part of migrants’ life strategies—if not always occurring, it is a strategy they are always open to. The transnational space, and the investment in its (re)formulation, thus becomes a tactic for gaining “mobility capital,” which one respondent describes in the following manner:

If things continue as they are, I’m gone, and the way things are going, it seems like it won’t be long until it happens. So I’ve been preparing for it with the help of family, friends, and contacts I keep back in Canada. (P-C09)

Disillusionment and regret, therefore, emerge as dominant themes, driven by the current Portuguese socio-economic situation. Yet, the transnational self is strengthened as “the Portugal” many had returned to 10, 20, 30 years ago—one possessing scenarios of growing globalization, development, and modernity—is no longer, as many of the interviewees pointed out. Consequently, as expressed by another interviewee:

If this country [Portugal] can no longer provide for you, you have to find one that can. Now if you have ties with a country that you already know, where you know people, why not take advantage of those ties, right? (P-F10)

Mobility, including the act of return, is often dependent on the strength of social networks and the social capital an individual can accumulate (Cassarino, 2004; Morosanu, 2010). If such networks are nourished, transnational links will persist (King & Christou, 2008). The search for belonging, under this scenario, implies (re)negotiating, (re-)establishing, and (re)producing the self, all within spatial-temporal contexts and transnational spaces. The importance of being able to negotiate in both the sending and receiving settings, is particularly key to the gathering of resources, this in order for the individual to successfully become integrated in the “here and now,” keeping in mind one’s comfort and security. If the “wanderlust” associated with the pre-conceived return is not matched, openness to further mobility will thus become ignited, relying on transnational networks to search out a better well-being.

Conclusion
This article has attempted to analyze belonging and notions of transnationality among the descendants of Portuguese emigrants in France and Canada who
have returned to Portugal. Even before returning to Portugal, all these returnees share a parallel presence of (at least) two cultures, countries, societies, and languages in their lives—a hybrid in-betweenness that describes their identities and sense of belonging. Returnees see in Portugal the opportunity of doing away with such dividedness and shedding a hybrid state. Upon settlement, processes of integration reveal “shocks of return,” when the returnee encounters moments of disillusionment and rupture. As a result, the returnees realize the opposite—the hyphen is accentuated and the transnational self is brought to the forefront.

The conscious awareness of a dual sense of belonging is further aided by the (re)creation of transnational networks maintained through connections with other returnees in the same scenario and through contacts maintained in Canada/France (family, friends, special interest individuals, etc.). In this, “transnationality from the local” is particularly emphasized, aided by technological and communication innovations which facilitate contact and network maintenance to the point of even constituting new networks at a distance. Observing the circulation and network patterns, Portuguese migrants have become “transmigrants” (Klimt, 2000), maintaining relations of a familial, social, organizational, as well as economic nature that traverse borders.

Portuguese emigrant descendant returnees’ belonging can, therefore, be visualized as a schema composed of three distinct rings: networks of migration (Canada/France), networks of return migration (Portugal), and networks of the returnee/migrant (cf. Christou, 2004, on the Greek return scenario). In this schema, “home,” “host,” and “migrant” are three basic and interrelated constructions that add up to a transnational placing where all three are constantly present, negotiated and valued to different degrees depending on time and space. Conway and Potter (2006, p. 13) defend that, for such returnees, sense of belonging is likely to be a multi-dimensional construct of territorial attachment. The migrant, a voyager, is as much a returnee as a migrant in, between, and across “home-host” constructs.

Seldom is the “homecoming” an integrated social project, but instead a flexible socio-cultural experience characterized by a variety of multiplicities, convolutions, and ambivalences. Inner contradictions of belonging point to an often muddled labeling as some returnees make greater efforts than others to integrate themselves “where they are,” this while others retain social characteristics relevant to their external home (Wong, 2002). In this case, “where they are” serves to define “who they are.”

Transnational social spaces are, therefore, negotiated on a playing field that, in many cases, serves to accentuate a flexible sense of belonging. As a result, mobility strategies may become unpredictable, and may end up being determined by a logic of comfort in which economic survival—rather than the importance of ethnic proximity—becomes an overarching factor. Sensing that they belong to an “anchored home” at a given time gives these migrants the security that enables them to have flexible approaches to livelihood changes.
and options (Conway & Potter, 2006). In the end, the act of return may be nothing more than an act of self-discovery, happening in the “here and now,” but where the near future is kept in mind—always maintaining transnational links at bay, ready to be activated if necessary. Such is the case of the current “here and now” in Portugal, where the economic crisis leaves many to re-activate their transnational placing, setting in motion any possessed transnational socio-capital to their own benefit, with the possibility of prompting further mobility—a re-return. The outcome is surely fodder for further research.

Notes
1 Although I here apply the word “return” to the descendants of Portuguese emigrants who have settled in Portugal, I am well aware that the use of this term does not apply to all descendants of Portuguese emigrants, namely those who were born in their parents’ country of immigration and, therefore, have never experienced a previous migration.
2 The 1.5 generation consists of those born in Portugal who emigrated as children. I here define those who emigrated before their teenage years (12 years or younger) as belonging to the 1.5 generation. Those belonging to the second generation, on the other hand, are born in their parents’ country of immigration.
3 This research has been funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) Research and Development Project Funds within the project Luso-Descendant ‘Returnees’ in Portugal: Identity, Belonging and Transnationalism (PTDC/ATP-GEO/4567/2012), and partially funded by an International Council for Canadian Studies – Faculty Research Program Grant.
4 This amalgamation of sending and receiving contexts frequently reveals an identification construction relevant to the creation of a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994). The issue of whether young immigrants and the children of immigrants live in between two cultures, form hybrid identities, or establish a “third space,” is one generally debated across ethnic groups, particularly common in immigration settings (Hoerder, Hébert, & Schmitt, 2005).
5 As part of the FCT Research and Development Project Luso-Descendant ‘Returnees’ in Portugal: Identity, Belonging and Transnationalism, further interviewing will be carried out with these and other returnees in 2014–2015.
6 It is worth emphasizing that some of the returnees resided in more than one location. For example, some may reside in a city or town where they work or study during the week and on the weekends return to their family home in another part of Portugal. Place of residence, in this case, was defined by respondents as the place they feel best fits their definition of permanent place of residence.
7 It is important to point out that these variables may play a role in determining one’s transnational capital and positioning in a transnational social field. For example, absence from a place leads to social distancing, while, on the other hand, social and monetary capital, along with stability in the returned-to setting (family, work, home, etc.), may lead to the doing away with one’s transnational placing. In providing examples: those who have been residing in Portugal for a longer period of time may have fewer contacts or no longer have the necessity to negotiate within their transnational social field, when compared to those recently arrived; just as those who have their family in Portugal with them may not need regular contact with Canada or France, in comparison to those who still have their parents in those countries.
8 It is equally important, however, to take age into consideration. While as children, transnational connections can be more malleable, given parental influence, for example, once the offspring reach adolescence and continue on into adulthood, the degree of transnational connection will depend on the extent to which he/she wishes to remain attached, defining the transnational self in accordance to his/her specific degree of attachment.
9 Some of the more in-depth and key studies that look at migrant descendant ancestral homeland

10 Interviewees are identified with the two countries they share: “P-C” implies Portuguese-Canadian; “P-F,” Portuguese-French. The numbers identify the order of interviews. Moreover, while the interviews with the Portuguese-Canadian participants in this study were all carried out in English, in the case of the interviews with the Portuguese-French participants, all were done in Portuguese. All translations of narrations from Portuguese to English are my own.

11 Resonating with my findings, Tsuda (2003) reveals how the identities of the Nikkeijin returnees to Japan neither “fit” the country of origin nor that of destination for two reasons: firstly, the specification of origin and destination is ambiguous for the Japan-bound migrant descendants; secondly, Japanese cultural nationalism devalues those who are not fully Japanese by virtue of their significant time spent abroad. As a reaction to this, the Nikkeijin deployed “Brazilian counter-identities” as a defense mechanism, as a reaction to non-acceptance on the part of the locals, for it was believed to be easier to pursue a strategy of marginalization by “acting Brazilian” instead of “becoming Japanese” (Tsuda, 2003, pp. 274–275).

12 It is important to highlight that these transnational technological exercises are very much a reflection of what Portuguese emigrant descendants equally practice in the diaspora. Antunes da Cunha (2009) provides a good example in France, observing the presence of the Portuguese television channel RTPi and Internet activities via the creation of blogs of Portuguese emigrant descendants.

13 Two Portuguese-Canadians stated that they had not gone back to Canada for a visit since moving to Portugal. Thus, this average accounts for the other 18 who have returned.

14 Potter (2005) refers to college as meaning a degree-awarding tertiary educational institution specializing in professional or vocational training.

References


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