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Nightlife in the Cabo Verdean diaspora: the case of Rotterdam City

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Chapter 3: Myth-making in the Rotterdam diaspora

Beginning in the 1950s, Rotterdam saw the arrival of an increasing number of Cabo Verdean men and a small community started forming in the port city. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, they mainly looked for work in the shipping industry, where plenty of work was still to be found. And while sailors were beginning to come ashore in Rotterdam, the anti-colonial war against the Portuguese colonisers was also beginning. This liberation struggle was led by Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973), originally an agronomist, who was born in Portuguese Guinea, which later became Guinea-Bissau. Cabral had founded the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde) in 1956. While initially a peaceful party, a guerrilla war was launched on the mainland of Guinea-Bissau in January 1963 which would eventually lead to the independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. The former became independent on September 24, 1973, the latter on July 5, 1975. In the context of the colonial war, Rotterdam was not just an important place of economic opportunity. With the struggle for independence in full swing, Rotterdam in fact played an important role as a centre of anti-colonial political and cultural activity.

One of the first Cabo Verdean men to arrive in the Netherlands, João Silva (b. 1929), was commissioned by Amílcar Cabral to stimulate and safeguard the cultural identity of the Cabo Verdeans through the recording of music and poetry, spreading a message of independence and thus recognising the importance of the diaspora in supporting, both financially and morally, the decolonial movement. For this purpose, Silva established in Rotterdam the first Cabo Verdean record label in the world: Morabeza Records. Over time other activities aiming to promote Cabo Verdean identity began to take shape as the community grew, often involving events that brought these migrants together in the after-hours. In several places in the city, Cabo Verdeans became involved in a cultural circuit that included music recording and performance, dance, theatre, and other events that were in

several cases intertwined with politically oriented activities. In these venues specific images, stories and ideas were brought forward, sung, and acted out, helping to forge a common identity and narrative among the Cabo Verdeans of Rotterdam. The process of producing, maintaining and disseminating this identity will be referred to in this chapter as 'myth-making', for reasons I will explain below.

In *Mythologies* (1972), cultural theorist Roland Barthes follows linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's semiological system of signifier, signified and sign, proposing a "second-order semiological system", the myth. If in the first order the sign is the "associative total of a concept and an image" (1972: 113), myth imposes a second layer of meaning onto this associative total, a layer which Barthes calls "metalanguage" (1972:114). His approach is instrumental in understanding the symbolical order of myth.

Barthes views France as a bourgeois society, based on capitalist ownership and power, which is expressed through a particularly dominant social ideology. He imagines that in this bourgeois-capitalist society a dominant worldview is imposed through myth. According to Barthes, "mythology can only have an historical foundation" (1972: 108). Myths are created or produced and as such have not existed eternally; they are formed and fed by history and found in the everyday. Myths are constructed through "collective representations" (1972: 8) that establish a particular way of viewing the world and which determine the "relations between man and the world" (1972: 139). Furthermore, myths establish a society's traditions, histories, uses, ideas, ideals and beliefs as if they were 'natural'. As such, myths postulate "a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" through which we view and understand the world (1972: 116). Myths are supported by different forms of speech, which can be understood as both verbal as well as visual, found in "photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity" (1972: 108), to which, in the context of this study, I would add music and a range of other digital sources such as social media or blogs. Even

though Barthes approaches myth in the context of a bourgeois ideology, his concept contributes to understanding how a collective forms a particular image of the world or, in the context of the Cabo Verdean diaspora, of that collective. In this context, I argue that myth-making, as a conscious effort, contributes to the production of a collective identity.

By the phrase 'myth-making', I mean to define the process through which a common narrative is created that produces and describes the identity of a group or community, drawing on foundational (hi)stories, important historical figures, traditions and celebrations. This common narrative elicits particular imaginations that connect and construct an idea of community through which sense can be made of the connections with a homeland, its stories and traditions. Myths are also a means through which sense can be made of one's position and identity in a diasporic community. The narratives that are told, re-enacted and performed in the diaspora are essential in the formation of a diasporic identity and make visible how that identity is described, felt and memorised. As such, myth-making should not be confused with the creation of fictional narratives. Rather, myths reveal lived realities that are fundamental in developing a sense of collective self. The idea of myth-making and the construction of a diasporic narrative is fundamentally connected to the act of imagining place(s): "the act of imagining migrant and homeland identity is always framed by the historical dimensions of that place and of the migration that started from there, but it is also inflected by those acts of imagining that produce the cultural identity in the present" (Alphen 2003: 57). Myth-making is embedded in a tradition of storytelling that finds it origins on the Cabo Verdean islands. Stories of the homeland and of migration are often told by parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren, who go on to adopt and adapt these further.

As author and creative writer Pooja Mittal Biswas argues regarding those diasporic travellers that metaphorically or literally cross the sea, or successive generations of these

travellers born in the countries of arrival, all participate in processes of myth-making as a means of reconciliation and connection:

> The farther they traverse, the more driven they are to participate in myth-making, in telling stories about their origins to themselves and to their children, so as to bridge the gap between their new "sky" and the old, far across the "sea" (sometimes literal, sometimes metaphorical) of experience. They tell these stories as a means of reconciling themselves to their inevitable hybridisation, such that they may survive in a new land while still remaining connected to their root. (2020: 95)

Mittal builds on American literary scholar Joseph Campbell's (1904-1987) idea of the monomyth and its structure of the "hero's journey" as one of the structures that emerges in myth-making. Campbell (1949) provided a blueprint, a succession of different stages that myths follow in every culture, which he called the monomyth. Myths provide signs and symbols that help construct the self while simultaneously describing, capturing and shaping human experience. An important commonality found in myth is the narrative, whether structural or incidental. As Mittal (2020: 97) argues, memory and myth(making) are "symbiotic processes" and as such are inseparable, as myth partakes in the construction of memory and (fragments of) memories construct these same myths. In a diaspora, myths and memories are mediated differently across generations, especially considering the different lives of those that migrated to other places compared to those born in the diaspora. In the context of this chapter it is important to highlight that second- and third-generation Cabo Verdeans appropriate, modify and retell the stories of previous generations, contributing to the mythification of the diaspora's origins, histories and identity. Cultural producers then embed these stories into theatre, dance, music and other performances, placing themselves

and the audience in dialogue with these foundational stories or 'myths'. Myth-making is an important process that has great value in constructing a sense of what it means to be Cabo Verdean, or of 'Cabo Verdeanness'. The representations created through these performances are connected to various histories, symbols, persons, places and events, both in the diaspora and in Cabo Verde.

The process of myth-making is one that requires constant cultivation and reaffirmation. In the context of nationalism and the formation of a national culture, historian Joep Leerssen refers to cultivation as "the agenda on the part of cultural-nationalist actors and activists, their intended instrumentalisation of the national culture" (2006: 570). Leerssen argues that this cultivation consists of several endeavours: the inventorisation and salvaging of cultural products and expressions, the canonisation of cultural works or the conscious revival of traditions (i.e. sports, music, pastimes), and "propagandist proclamations" that work to "suffuse the public sphere with a sense of collective national identity" (2006: 571), such as through education, architecture and various cultural activities. In relation to diasporic myth-making, cultivation is not only found in national(istic), top-down policies, but in everyday practices, such as in the stories that are told and in the local celebration of cultural traditions. Myth-making is also not uniform throughout a diaspora, nor through time. Instead its process reveals a multiplicity of identifications with the idea of homeland and diaspora.

Night spaces facilitate moments for myth-making because after the conclusion of duties such as work and care, time and place are available for the development of cultural activities and the promotion of culture. In the context of the Cabo Verdean diaspora, myth-making is linked first and foremost to important political histories and the anti-colonial thinking of Amílcar Cabral and like-minded figures in the diaspora. At the same time, the night also provides a space-time for creative engagement with one's identity, which becomes particularly relevant for later generations. This chapter seeks to understand the processes of

myth-making in the Cabo Verdean diaspora in Rotterdam, highlighting the cultural, historical and political values, symbols and events that play a role in shaping the diasporic experience in Rotterdam.

First, I investigate how a political-cultural connection developed between Cabo Verde and Rotterdam during the early years of Cabo Verdean migration to the Netherlands with the establishment of Morabeza Records. In the contemporary context the record label still plays an important role in the formation and dissemination of the diasporic narrative. As such, both past and current dissemination of the label's production and legacy will be considered, as well as their importance in the formation of a (early) cultural identity. I also illustrate how these processes of cultural resistance are incorporated into events in the city.

Second, much connected to the figure of Amílcar Cabral and the idea of an independent Cabo Verdean identity, I seek to discuss the practices of Cabo Verdean hip-hop/rap artists in Rotterdam and the way in which they interpret cultural heritage in their music, as well as their engagement with different levels of space, digital, home and abroad.

Third, linked strongly to the notion of place, I analyse accounts of the religious celebration of São João Baptista ('Saint John the Baptist') on June 24 in Rotterdam, which is known as the São João Festival. It is hosted every year on the Heemraadsplein, and mixes both traditional and modern cultural performances. The Heemraadsplein is strongly connected to the migration of Cabo Verdeans and has been co-named Pracinha d'Quêbrod ('Square of the Broken Ones') because many Cabo Verdeans historically used this square as a meeting place.

COVID-19 restrictions have caused a series of abrupt changes in the festival and event landscape, with São João and other events being forced to adapt their programming to an online environment from early 2020 to early 2022. Even though material of previous

events was collected and several interviews with organisers gave important insights into the previous physical events, online events were also valuable as research material because they have placed greater emphasis on the narratives and histories of the community, rather than a larger focus on entertainment that would usually be more common in physical events. For this reason, several online events that occurred during the research period are included in the analysis that follows.

Morabeza Records and the anti-colonial struggle

Resistance to the Portuguese colonial regime grew and in 1963 an armed struggle led by Cabral was launched that would eventually lead to independence on July 5, 1975. Back in Rotterdam, the incipient Cabo Verdean diaspora would serve as an important network of cultural resistance formed of and supported by a growing group of migrants. An important figure in this cultural struggle was João Silva, also known as Djunga de Biluca. Noting the growth of the Cabo Verdean community in Rotterdam in the 1960s, Silva and his business partner and friend Constantino Delgado (b. 1926) saw an opportunity to set up a boarding house for Cabo Verdean seafarers. Delgado later did, opening Hotel Delta in the Jan Kruijffstraat in 1964, very much in the centre of the Cabo Verdean concentration in the city's Delfshaven district. Delfshaven was located closely to the main port area of Rotterdam (the name Delfshaven refers to the historical port that was part of the nearby city of Delft in the fourteenth century). In the meantime, Silva set up a 'ship-store', a store catering for all necessities at sea, for newcomers in Rotterdam, on the ground floor of his house on the Beukelsdijk Street, which runs north of the centre. He also housed seafarers on the two upper floors of his house, while he himself lived on the first floor.

Instrumentalist Humberto Bettencourt dos Santos (b. 1940), better known by his artist name Humbertona, who lived in Belgium but recorded his work with Morabeza Records,

remembers in the preface of Silva's autobiography *De Ribeira Bote a Rotterdam* (2009) ('From Ribeira Bote to Rotterdam') that the ship-store was

> More than a simple shop, it was a meeting point where creoles from all the islands met. […] The store was also a meeting point for Cabo Verdeans, where people would come to play a game of bisca[1], with a bottle of Martel cognac (when there was grogue[2], it was a party). Everything and anything else was discussed there, from the girls they crossed paths with in the cabarets of the different ports, where each one was the main actor in their film, and in many moments the conversation drifted towards politics and even independence was talked about. (2009: 11-12, translation added)

During the beginning years of migration, when there was a scarcity of familiar places where people could meet, the house on the Beukelsdijk functioned as a hybrid space. It was not only a space of commerce, selling all things maritime, but also a place of diversion, of social relations and connection with those of the homeland that shared similar lifestyles, travelling and working around the world as sailors and telling stories of their foreign exploits. This everydayness was interspersed with conversations about independence and other political matters, much in line with the house's other function as a headquarters for Morabeza Records and Silva's anti-colonial thought, which will be elaborated hereafter. The history of Cabo Verdean boarding houses, which is also a central element of Cabo Verdean identity in Rotterdam and central to the story of Morabeza Records, will be also elaborated in the next chapter.

[1] Bisca is a Portuguese card game.
[2] Grogue is a Cabo Verdean distilled spirit made with sugar cane.

It is safe to say that ensuring the wellbeing of recently arrived migrants played a central role in the lives of all the pioneers in the diaspora, not just Silva and Constantino. Arriving newcomers were often quickly redirected to one of the many Cabo Verdean boarding houses that had opened in the city. This support began to be noticed by figures within the independence movement - Cabral had also been updated about the network that Silva and his companions had set up in the Netherlands and of the support they were providing to their fellow countrymen.

Indeed, the names of Silva and others in the diaspora soon began to circulate in anticolonial spheres (Gonçalves 2021). One of the main reasons that Silva had moved to the Netherlands was the threat of being imprisoned by the Portuguese, as he had had conflicts with Portuguese military officials during his time in service. Stories of Silva's rebellious streak against the Portuguese colonisers caught Cabral's attention and led him to send two representatives of the anticolonial movement to the Netherlands. Silva expected them to tell him that he was to be recruited to join the war in Guinea-Bissau against the Portuguese, but they instead brought direct instructions from Cabral to spread the Cabo Verdean culture in the diaspora and to "do everything to ensure that it was both preserved and cherished" (Silva 2009: 131, translation added). As Silva mentions in a documentary on his life, *Sodade - Djunga's Tiende Eiland* (2005) ('Sodade, Djunga's tenth island'), "according to Cabral, to be independent, without culture, without identity, is to be nothing" (Barendrecht and Slingerland 2005, translation added). With the assignment given to Silva, Cabral was acknowledging the importance of the diaspora in providing financial, moral and cultural support to the decolonial movement.

Morabeza Records - initially called Casa Silva - was founded in 1965 after the Cabo Verdean nationalist Abílio Duarte (1931-1996) visited Rotterdam. As an important figure in the PAIGC, Duarte and Silva discussed the idea of recording music albums. The idea of

recording was born out of the musical gatherings that had been taking place at Silva's home, which mixed music-making and get-togethers, often as a way to overcome homesickness. Silva worked as an electrician at the electronics company Philips and used his company contacts to get permission to record music in the company's recording studios (Gonçalves 2021), which facilitated the process. In doing this he was fulfilling his orders from Cabral, to continue to support the Cabo Verdean struggle in the diaspora, also by establishing relationships with governments and making Cabo Verdeans aware of what independence and being Cabo Verdean means.

With members of this group such as the renowned artists Frank Cavaquinho (1927-1993) and Tazinho (1932-2017), the first Cabo Verdean LP, *Caboverdianos na Holanda* ('Cabo Verdeans in Holland'), was recorded under the Casa Silva label, later Morabeza, a Cabo Verdean creole term meaning 'friendliness' and 'hospitality'. The label was graced with the collaboration of a number of high-profile artists who came to record with the new Rotterdam label. These included no less than the doyenne of Cabo Verdean music, Cesária Évora.

Before analysing the role of the Morabeza record label in promoting Cabo Verdean cultural identity in and from the diaspora, it is important to contextualise Cabral's views on culture in the struggle for independence, as it became an essential instrument to set Cabo Verde's identity apart from the Portuguese, as well as to position Cabo Verdean cultural expressions vis-à-vis the cultural ideals of the coloniser. Silva's activities as a pioneer resonated with Cabral's understanding of the political value of culture and the key role it should play in the construction of a national identity. In a speech delivered on February 20, 1970, at the University of Syracuse, New York, at the height of the anticolonial conflict, Cabral explained how foreign colonisers actively repress cultural life and expression as a means to dominate the colonised populations:

> History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination on a people. But it also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organised repression of the cultural life of the people concerned. (Cabral 1974: 1)

For Cabral, the promotion of culture was vital to the success of the 'liberation movement'. Indeed, the role of cultural life featured as a central concern in many of Cabral's speeches and texts delivered during the war of independence, and he defended it as a crucial instrument of emancipation from the colonial yoke:

> A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture. Thus, it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture. (Cabral 1974: 4)

Cabral's vision of culture approximates decolonial philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's views on the interweaving of national culture in the liberation of colonised nations. For Fanon, national culture is a "collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong" (1963: 168).

The need for culture was emphasised by movements in the Cabo Verdean diasporas, within which migrants were educated and even recruited to participate in the colonial wars in

Guinea-Bissau. In the context of the Rotterdam diaspora, Cabral refers to the city as an important place for the cultural and musical development of Cabo Verde. In a 1969 speech before the party cadres of the PAIGC, Cabral emphasised "the *mornas* and *coladeiras* that have been composed, inspired on our struggle, lifting high our party, the name of our courageous fighters […]" (Cabral cited in Cidra 2018: 441). According to Cidra,

> Cabral was alluding to a set of cultural expressions arising in the forests of Guinea at the moment of the armed struggle and presented in diplomatic meetings (such as poetry, storytelling, theatre plays, music and dance), but also to the recording of Cabo Verdean music in Rotterdam, an important centre of the nationalist struggle in Europe. In this context, the recording of the Cabo Verdean musical genres of *morna* and *coladeira* became a means to spread the nationalist claims to self-determination as a 'cultural act'. (Cidra 2018: 441)

Cabral's cultural legacy in Rotterdam: Morabeza Records

As the curator of Morabeza Records, Carlos Gonçalves mentions, many Cabo Verdeans were conditioned to see themselves as Portuguese. Cabral stated that as long as Cabo Verdeans identify with the coloniser, the struggle was doomed to fail, and so he gave Silva an important task: to break Cabo Verdeans away from the idea that they were Portuguese, by stimulating cultural consciousness and an independent cultural identity (Gonçalves 2021). Two of the main instruments to achieve this were music and poetry recordings, and Casa Silva was considered an important actor in the resistance against the Portuguese. It was

> Connected to the 'anti-colonial struggle' and PAIGC propaganda activities. With these political leanings, it published recorded poems of Cape Verdean writers and intellectuals and political speeches by

> party leaders. […] Records with political content were put into sleeves belonging to other records and transported covertly to African countries by Cape Verdean and Angolan sailors. (Cidra 2008a: 194)

A band called Voz de Cabo Verde ('Voice of Cabo Verde') was formed with the idea of recording these politically tinged albums, "conceiving the recording of Cape Verdean popular music as a means of documenting the cultural sovereignty of Cape Verdeans and legitimising the nationalist claims to self-determination" (Cidra 2015: 311).

In the initial phase there was little opportunity to pursue music professionally, so the musicians of the band kept themselves busy in other employment during the day and recorded (and performed) music at night and during weekends. One of the main issues Morabeza Records faced in its early productions was defining what Cabo Verdean is, and what it meant to be Cabo Verdean, as Carlos Gonçalves explains:

> Morabeza is Cabo Verdean music, morna is Cabo Verdean. In search of what distinguishes the Cabo Verdean, the creole language, literature, poetry, all these came together in Morabeza's music. They sang in creole, they sang about the nostalgia for Cabo Verde, about the Cabo Verdean traditions and history, the feeling of being Cabo Verdean, they were distinguishing themselves. The poetry telling stories of the famine, the misery that was experienced, all these were themes in morna. (2021, translation added)

Considering that the morna genre was considered somewhat closer to Portuguese cultural ideals by Cabo Verdean elites (Cidra 2018), it is striking that this genre was used as a means of opposing the dominant (cultural) colonial powers. According to sociologist Wessel Verkerk,

> The reason why so many *morna's* [sic] and *coladeira's* [sic] appeared on the label was primarily because these were the styles most Cape Verdean artists were acquainted with as other styles were prohibited. The artists that Silva and Frank Cavaquim brought to the Netherlands were musicians that had learned their craft from Catholic priests. (2021: 60)

The colonial rulers had sought to prohibit and repress not only any cultural expressions, acts and performances that were inconsistent with Catholic principles, but also those expressions that were harmful to the cultural and political values of the administration or which exposed its violence and injustices. At the same time, those that had the privilege of studying on Cabo Verde often did so at Catholic seminaries which included an (ecclesiastical) music education. Contrary to the idea that morna connected Cabo Verdean elites to a Portuguese cultural ideal, the mornas recorded by Morabeza expressed an independent sense of Cabo Verdeanness, often carrying hidden messages such as the pain experienced under the colonial yoke and the desire for an independent nation. The album cover of Caboverdianos na Holanda, in Figure 1, carries such a message through its cover image of a combative, clenched fist holding up maracas in a sign of cultural and political defiance.

Figure 1: Album Cover Caboverdianos na Holanda, 1965. Copyright Morabeza Records Int.

This instrumental album contained classic mornas as well as newly produced compositions, the titles of which were deliberately ambiguous, leaving room for political interpretation. One composition, 'Bô tem carinha di bô mãe', ('You have affection for your mother'), refers to the motherland of Cabo Verde: "the songs released by Morabeza often hid secret messages", says Gonçalves. "A text about the love for your mother was actually about the love for your motherland, for example. Cabo Verdeans were called upon via music to unite and fight for their country, without arousing the suspicion of the Portuguese" (Gonçalves 2019, translation added). Another song on the album, 'Otarde o Nunca' ('Late or never') is an obvious reference to the struggle for independence that had started after more than 500 years of colonisation. On the back cover, Silva described the sentiment of Cabo Verdean music:

> Cabo Verdean music has a painful feeling. Why? Because it is in our songs that we express what the mouth does not say, what the hand does not write. Muted anger, muted grief, muted despair, words of faith that have never been spoken, and confessions that die in the throat. All of this is delirious. (Silva 1965, translation added)

As these words suggest, the back cover of Caboverdianos na Holanda conveys the importance of music in Cabo Verdean culture, fostering a sense of national pride. Silva speaks cautiously about oppression on the islands, and about a sense of injustice that is being suppressed and that cannot be spoken (or written) about out loud.

The house on the Beukelsdijk thus became the centre of a cultural operation aimed at spreading these clandestine messages, with the night providing what Palmer terms a space of "rebellious alternative" (2000: 9) and transgression. The productions of Morabeza Records were prohibited in Cabo Verde, and there was not a large market for the label as communities in Europe were still relatively small. Silva mentions that many LPs were transported by car and sold in the Cabo Verdean diasporas in France, Germany and Luxembourg. Meanwhile, as Silva mentions in an article by Portuguese journalist Ricardo J. Rodrigues (2022) certain merchant navy sailors that he knew and trusted were given copies to take to Portugal, Cabo Verde and other more distant diasporas such as the United States. In this sense Rotterdam, with its centre of operations on the Beukelsdijk, became a remarkable distribution centre for anti-colonial propaganda. It became a place for the free expression and production of culture and opposition to the oppressive Portuguese regime, even as Silva and his associates were under surveillance by the Portuguese secret police, the PIDE ('Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado').

Business and politics

Silva paid for studios, artists and press, but it was not a lucrative business. As such, work in the studio took place mainly at night and on weekends, as musicians still needed to work during the day. Indeed, despite Morabeza playing an important role from a cultural point of view in aiding in the socialisation of the community, the label was not a commercial success (Gonçalves 2021). As Silva himself reveals, "the LPs were sold sparingly - I had them pressed in editions of no more than 1000 copies. I paid the orchestra 6,000 guilders, the studio 400 guilders an hour, the sound engineer 200 guilders an hour. Then there were the factory costs for the pressing. They were albums with a price of ten guilders, which also did not sell well" (Silva 2016, translation added). Morabeza's meagre returns did little for the health of Silva's pockets, and at times he had put money earned from his boarding house and his maritime shop into the record label to keep it functioning, says Gonçalves (2019).

Silva's political activities extended towards the foundation of the Associação Caboverdiana ('Cabo Verdean Association') in 1967. This association served the interests of the growing community, but it also had a political, anti-colonial current and supported the independence of Cabo Verde, which will be discussed in the last chapter in the context of nightlife activities. After several temporary locations, it finally established permanent headquarters on the 's Gravendijkwal street, which became an important space for Cabo Verdean gatherings, both political and social. As Netherlands-based Cabo Verdean writer and former sailor Guilherme Mendes da Silva (1935-2019) pointed out in a personal interview, the Associação was a place to come together after a long time at sea, or after a long working day: "when I came from the boat, I already liked to go downtown. I was very close to the Cabo Verdean association, I would go there to play cards with the guys, talk and drink something" (Mendes da Silva 2019, translation added).

The Associação also published a series of magazines called Nôs Vida ('Our Life') which, amongst other things, shared tips about work and the job market, life in the Netherlands, and news about the independence struggle (Silva 2008: 143). Curiously, Gonçalves (2021) notes that the distribution of Nôs Vida pamphlets was also often carried out in the dark because the PIDE kept an eye on the organisation. The night was in this sense a safer space in which to distribute information and propagate alternative myths.

In the late 1960s Silva was able to secure a contract for Voz de Cabo Verde as the house band for a South American themed nightclub, 'La Bonanza' in Rotterdam, where they played every night for about a year. This was a turning point in the professionalisation of the group, as its members were able to solely focus on music. But as the group's music took off, it became clear that some of the group's members did not support the issue of independence and the politics surrounding Morabeza Records' activities:

> Some were aware of what was happening, but there were also musicians who were completely unconcerned about independence. Bana, for example, was Portuguese, and did not like it. He was only busy making music and did not like the independence thing, the same went for Morgadinho. For them it was music, they were not bothered with the whole story on independence. In fact, some of them were not in favour of independence either. (Gonçalves 2021, translation added)

But if for some of Voz de Cabo Verde's members the main reason for playing was professional and not political, there were other members who were more conscious of the political situation and who supported independence. As Silva mentions in his autobiography, once, during a tour of the band through Africa, they played in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Angola, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau, in the midst of the anti-colonial

struggle. They were invited to the latter country by Governor Spínola, the commander-in-chief of Guinea who fought against the guerrilla movement of the PAIGC. This was obviously not appreciated by their manager, Silva, who agreed with the members that this went too far (Silva 2009: 136).

Regardless, Voz de Cabo Verde and Morabeza Records undoubtedly played an important role in capturing and promoting a unique cultural identity distinct from that of the oppressors at a time of great political upheaval, both through recordings and performances. As Morgadinho (1932) remembers,

> There were many Cabo Verdean mariners in the Netherlands, due to the merchant navy, and since Cabo Verdeans are very fond of music, they would listen to good groups (at the time the Italians dominated). So, they felt a great pride knowing that a group from Cabo Verde appeared to showcase what we knew. (As cited in Nogueira 2016: 377, translation added)

For Morabeza Records, the commercial and political were, in this sense, interwoven. Morabeza records navigated the political by producing records that referred to the situation in the homeland and which were made and distributed to generate consciousness both inside and outside of the islands, through the nighttime activities of recording and performing. At the same time, it was connected to a circuit of amusement and entertainment directed towards Cabo Verdeans both in Rotterdam as well as in the diaspora, who sought familiar cultural references to enjoy as a way of connecting with their homeland and with fellow Cabo Verdeans. Performances and the spaces in which these were held became important for generating a sense of belonging in the diaspora. Not only was a cultural identity reinforced through music and lyrics, but a collective sense of self was created as Cabo Verdeans in

Rotterdam enjoyed these cultural references in nighttime venues. A more extensive analysis of Voz de Cabo Verde's work outside the studio and in the La Bonanza nightclub, as well as of other nightlife activities that arose in both the past and present, follows in chapter 5, 'Dancing down memory lane: (re)experiences of Cabo Verdean nightlife'.

The map in Figure 2 on the next page shows the spaces discussed so far, which constitute some of the first important Cabo Verdean sites in the city. Ships were docked in the 'Port Area', at the bottom of the map and south of the Delfshaven district, which is the highlighted area, although the port area later moved west of the city, towards the coast. A little to the North you find Hotel Delta, where many Cabo Verdeans were referred to after their arrival in the city. Located on the Rochussenstraat was the Habanera nightclub, where many Cabo Verdeans went for entertainment, close to the Associação Caboverdiana. The important public meeting point Pracinha d'Quêbrod, which will be discussed later in this chapter, is only a short walk westward from the Associação. La Bonanza was located a little further north, and was the first multicultural club in Rotterdam, popular with Cabo Verdeans. Located southwest of the central station, on the 's Gravendijkwal, was Silva's ship-store, which was also the headquarters of Morabeza Records, a guesthouse, and Silva's home.

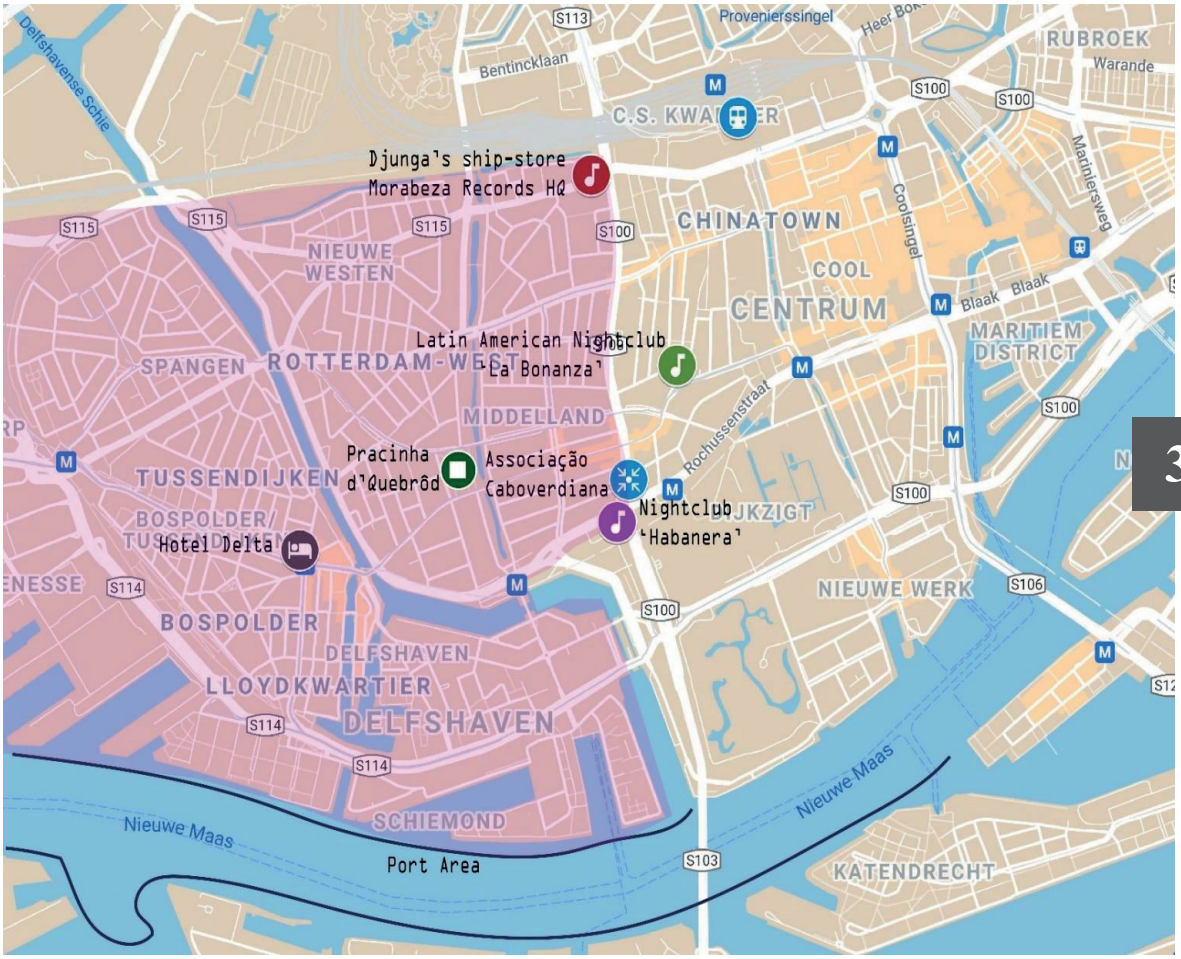

Figure 2: Map of Rotterdam's Port Area. Map retrieved from Google.com

Heritage (at night)

Stories such as those of Morabeza Records serve as an important frame of reference through which the common identity of the Cabo Verdean community in Rotterdam can be understood. As curator Gonçalves mentions in an interview with the online magazine Vers Beton ('Fresh Concrete'), "the story of Morabeza deserves to be cherished and passed on. After all, it is an important cultural heritage, both of Cabo Verde and Rotterdam. Stories like these can contribute to a community's self-image" (2019, translation added).

By 2016 Morabeza Records' masters were digitised by the Rotterdam City Archive, making the music accessible online as well as providing the historical context for the label. In 2019, the label was recognised by the Rotterdam Museum as *Echt Rotterdams Erfgoed* ('True Rotterdam heritage'), a move which represents an important step towards formally recognising the label as part of the memory of the city. The importance of the label is also made clear by the fact that the careers of many of the most famous Cabo Verdean artists took off in Rotterdam, establishing Morabeza as an institution central to the dissemination and development of Cabo Verdean musical culture: "the discography of Cabo Verdean music starts in the Netherlands. The careers of the greatest Cabo Verdean artists, including Bana and Cesária Evora, started in Rotterdam" (Lizardo 2016, translation added).

Morabeza indeed acted as a springboard for Cabo Verde's musical development. Following Silva, many other boarding house owners and other entrepreneurs started music studios, greatly increasing Rotterdam's influence on the Cabo Verdean music and night scene. In this sense, the story of Morabeza Records serves as a kind of foundational narrative for the history of the community, while at the same time embodying an important connection with the independence movement and the figure of Amílcar Cabral as a pillar of Cabo Verdean

identity in the diaspora. As such it has also served as a frame of reference for subsequent generations seeking connection with Cabo Verdean history as a source of origin and identity.

The expression of cultural resistance and the re-working of national history and identity through music production and performance occur mainly at night. Today, the after-hours are particularly important as a time-space in which Cabo Verdean heritage in Rotterdam is promoted, negotiated and celebrated. For example, to celebrate Silva's ninetieth birthday, an event called Roterdão canta Morabeza ('Rotterdam sings Morabeza') was organised in an event location called De Doelen. De Doelen, which opened in 1966, is a concert and conference building in the centre of Rotterdam, and is the second largest concert hall in the Netherlands. The location is connected to the history of the Cabo Verdean diaspora in Rotterdam, hosting many Cabo Verdean events over the years. Amongst other moments it is where Cesária Évora, Cabo Verde's most known artist, had one of her first major concerts in 1992. Évora had in fact performed in another location two years prior to her concert in De Doelen, but this is not widely known. A variety of defining Cabo Verdean cultural events, concerts and festivals have been hosted at De Doelen.

With Roterdão canta Morabeza, both artists that had recorded with the label and newer generations from inside and outside Rotterdam performed works that interpreted key themes of the label and honoured the achievements of pioneer Silva, as well as highlighting the label's history and its role in the development of Cabo Verdean music and the nation's struggle for independence. Today, in Rotterdam, various (cultural) groups and organisers are active in producing events, festivals and other activities related to the cultural identity of the Cabo Verdean community, including in the above-mentioned concert hall.

Figure 3: Flyer for tribute concert 'Rotterdam Sings Cesária',
Flyer of de Doelen

As mentioned in the introduction, Cabo Verde became independent from Portugal on July 5, 1975. Given Rotterdam's important cultural role in the history of independence, it is no surprise that this eventful day is celebrated each year through diverse activities including theatre, dance and music, and it is through performances like these that connections are maintained with memories and narratives that emphasise the legacy of Amílcar Cabral and the origins of Cabo Verde as an independent nation. One of these events is Noite da Independência ('Independence Night'), which has been hosted in De Doelen since 2019. As the organiser explains, De Doelen is easily accessible for Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam. The

word ‘accessible’ refers as much to its physical location in the centre of the city as to the reputation of the location among Cabo Verdeans.

Besides the fact that Cesária’s first large concert in the Netherlands was held there, many Cabo Verdean concerts, shows and parties have also been held in De Doelen over time, including the popular Sodade Festival as well as a variety of (dance) parties that will be elaborated in the chapter on nightlife. The range of events at this location is evidence of the integration of Cabo Verdean events in Rotterdam city spaces, events and night culture. The Cabo Verdean influence on De Doelen is also due to one of the venue’s former programmers, Hans de Lange. He was a member of Rabassa, a well-known Cabo Verdean-Rotterdam music group, and put Cabo Verdean music on the map at the venue.

With Noite da Independência a nostalgia event connected to Cabo Verdean independence from Portugal was created. In a personal interview conducted by myself, organiser Savannah da Rosa emphasises the importance of this event, which centres on Independence Day:

> It’s a topic that should stay and that everyone should remember, especially because it’s not that long ago. The youngsters should not forget their roots. We bring back this feeling of nostalgia and thank the migrants, the struggles they went through, the path they have laid out for us. That was what we wanted to preserve. (2020, translation added)

Several themes emerge from the quote above. Events often draw on the notion of roots, where a place of origin and belonging is explored through music and storytelling. Remembering and emphasising a common history is an important element in creating a sense of community. Nighttime events like Noite de Independência make it possible for younger generations to

visualise and connect with the history and culture of an imagined homeland, as well as providing a space of encounter that connects different generations. The idea of nostalgia is especially present in the idea of what the organisers call “taking people back home”, which they attempt to evoke through a combination of images of the sea, and Cabo Verdean music and food.

A common element in this type of event is highlighting the accomplishments of the first generation of migrants as a means of raising awareness about the origins of the community and the sacrifices that were made. Thankfulness towards diaspora pioneers and remembrance of their stories and history is an important way to connect migrants in the diaspora. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced the event online as government restrictions prevented the physical event from happening. Even though da Rosa emphasises that having to go digital was a setback, it provided different opportunities as well:

> This edition has allowed us to make more contact with Cabo Verde, with the Ministry of Creative Industries, and with a local television channel that has broadcast it and is eager to work with us. Also for other editions and projects they want us to produce. It has been a downer, but it has also given us more opportunities. (2020, translation added)

Particularly noteworthy was the reception of the event on the Cabo Verde islands. The event was broadcast during the evening on the independent TV channel T-Verde, increasing visibility of diasporic cultural initiatives in the homeland. The event also provided an opportunity for organisers to include educational components. One example of this was a video of a first-generation migrant sharing his story of migration together with his son, explaining how he arrived in the Netherlands and about his occupation as the owner of a

boarding house and bar. His son, who was born in the Netherlands, then explains his connections to Cabo Verde and to historical figures such as Amílcar Cabral. In addition to Cabo Verdean entertainment, digital events share stories and histories of the community as a way of commemorating and honouring its pioneers and seeking connections within a common cultural 'frame of reference'.

The political history of Cabo Verde still plays an important role in the creation of a diasporic identity. This is illustrated through the presence of historical elements and figures, such as the presence of Amílcar Cabral in the promotional material of Noite da Independência in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Amílcar Cabral featuring in promotional announcement of the Noite de Independência event in 2019.

In this still of a promotional video for the event, a cartoon version of Amílcar Cabral watches the signing of the declaration of independence in 1975 in Praia, Cabo Verde, where several head figures of the new Cabo Verdean government are seen, including the first president, Aristides Pereira, prime minister Pedro Pires, alongside Vasco Gonçalves, the prime minister of Portugal. While the video transitions to an announcement of the artists that will perform during the festival, in the background we can hear the famous refrain of the Tubarões song

‘Labanta Braço’ (‘Raise your arm’), as they sing “raise your arm if you cry for your freedom” (translation added). The song was recorded in Hilversum, the Netherlands, and became a hymn for Cabo Verdean independence fighters around the world. Noite de Independência reworks the historical figure of Amílcar Cabral into a figure that is more playful and thus more accessible for younger generations who are less politicised. Today, Cabral’s legacy is remembered and celebrated in cultural events across the diaspora. Cultural producers create diverse representations and narratives to explain the history of Cabral, his legacy, how he liberated the country and how the country was defined both in a cultural and political way.

Contemporary events reinterpret history and historical figures. The connection with this historical figure is also important for later generations that often have no direct memory of the period of independence and the preceding period of colonial oppression. The importance of this history of resistance also flows into various urban cultures. In the next section, therefore, attention is paid to Cabo Verdean hip-hop production and performance, in which these histories are re-appropriated and re-worked.

Cabral’s legacy and cultural activism in hip-hop

There is a large diversity of moments, events and places in which myth-making happens, often in the context of specific traditions and historical moments that are celebrated. Activities and events that work with Cabo Verdean history in Rotterdam entangle various contemporary and historical moments and places, both in Rotterdam and in Cabo Verde, in a web of references that construct a narrative of the community and embed it into the city’s structure. Common elements in this regard are Amílcar Cabral’s legacy and the role of the migrant pioneers in propagating his political and cultural ideas in Rotterdam, which they often did through music production and other political activities, as well as the assistance offered by

boarding house owners and others to newcomers to the city, and the migration of Cabo Verdean citizens travelling as sailors and workers.

Myth-making takes place in popular evening and nighttime events, such as in celebrations of independence, anniversaries, and other cultural events. However an often-overlooked field in which myth-making takes place is that of urban cultures, such as hip-hop and rap, which can provide a space of reflection on history and identity in diaspora. In Rotterdam a significant hip-hop culture has developed among Cabo Verdean migrants and second-generation Cabo Verdeans. Their music is often connected with issues of homeland, ancestry, migration history and life in foreign cities. In this section I explore the connections of rap relating to four themes: The legacy of Cabral, migration to the Netherlands, the connection with city spaces, and rap as a way of exploring Creole identity.

Cikay (Lúcio da Costa) is a Cabo Verde-born hip-hop artist who has lived in Rotterdam since his eighteenth birthday, after moving there from Portugal. Once he arrived in Rotterdam his best friend managed to get him into a Cabo Verdean radio program on Friday evenings, which helped him enter the music scene as an aspiring artist. For Cikay, hip-hop culture connected 'his' culture and the culture of others. He states: "it served as a bridge between Cabo Verdean culture, which I didn't really know, which I couldn't explain but lived because I was Cabo Verdean, and hip-hop culture" (Costa 2021). After starting out with an online platform, in 2018 Cikay and his business partner David Ferreira opened a space which they named Voz di Rua ('Voice of the Street'), and which grew to become an important community centre hosting events every weekend. It functioned until 2021, when it closed due to the (financial) consequences of COVID-19 and was taken over by another Cabo Verdean entrepreneur, who remodelled the interior but continued hosting nighttime cultural activities such as music, as well as retaining its function as a popular bar/restaurant.

The venue is located in the neighbourhood of Schiemond, which is also known colloquially by Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam as *Poço dos Negros* ('Black Well'), because it is one of the areas in Rotterdam where many people from Cabo Verde and other African communities live. The colloquial name speaks of the attachment and appropriation of city spaces by migrants through naming practices. These naming practices for familiar places are common in Rotterdam. For example, the Former Office of Government Taxes, which is located in the Puntegaalstraat - where *Puntegaal* is probably a corruption of 'Point de Galle', a seaport in colonial Ceylon - is also jokingly called the *Pluk-me-kaal-straat*, which means 'shake-me-down-street'. But for Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam, besides continuing a Rotterdam tradition, these naming practices are also an important means of claiming space in the city and creating a sense of belonging. Naming practices highlight the importance of particular places in the city, connecting them with the history of migration. The recognition of a certain culturally specific belonging by local authorities also plays a role in this, as is the case for the Heemraadsplein, co-named officially as Pracinha d'Quêbrod. The history of this square will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Besides the important social role that city spaces have played historically for Cabo Verdean migrants, the memory of these spaces is safeguarded through naming practices. As Derek H. Alderman explains, "naming is a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within wider networks of memory", where "renaming represents a way of creating new connections between the past and present" (2008: 195). Naming practices also arguably serve as a means of bringing recognition to the community's presence in the city and its role within Rotterdam's history and geography, since these practices have a clear commemorative function (Alderman 2008).

Even though Voz di Rua started as a platform to promote Cabo Verdean hip-hop, this concept soon expanded to include to a wider variety of cultural expressions. As Cikay

explains, “Cabo Verdean culture in Rotterdam needed a locale; we had no physical locale to meet” (Costa 2021, translation added). Very much embedded in the multicultural environment of the neighbourhood of Schiemond, Voz di Rua was intended as a meeting place, a space of creativity and encounter between different cultures, with a solid Cabo Verdean base: “of course, the base was Cabo Verdean because we are Cabo Verdeans. But we were open to all people, all cultures; our idea was to create a meeting point, in cultural terms, in business terms, to meet entrepreneurs from different areas, a meeting point to develop ideas […]” (Costa 2021, translation added). This broad cultural-entrepreneurial vision is reflected in the wide variety of events hosted at the venue. Indeed, Voz di Rua became both a “key daytime community cultural centre and night-time venue” where one could enjoy “a monthly Cape-Verdean music night”, as well as “talks by community leaders, local business entrepreneurs, storytelling events, book launches, theatre performances” (Brandellero and Kersbergen 2022).

In an article entitled ‘Night spaces and stories of the Cape-Verdean diaspora in the Netherlands: belonging and cultural activism’ (2022), a detailed close reading of the space by Brandellero reveals its intimate connections with the community’s memory as a musical city and with the legacy of Cabral:

> Once inside Voz di Rua, the walls functioned as an archive of collective memory and intercultural solidarity. Images of Amílcar Cabral sat alongside displayed record covers from Morabeza productions (including the iconic *Caboverdianos na Holanda* cover of 1965 referenced above), framed newspaper cuttings from visits of Cesária Evora to Rotterdam and other significant political and artistic occasions, as well as contemporary references to the ongoing struggle against racist violence. (2022: 98)

The venue also reveals its deep connections with contemporary issues of social justice, violence and racism through the artefacts and messages presented in the venue's walls and surfaces. The photos in Figures 5 and 6 show the range of references that are displayed on the interior of Voz di Rua.

Figure 5: Wall of references at Voz di Rua

Figure 6: Morabeza Productions on the podium wall of Voz di Rua

The framed constellation of photographs on the wall featured in Figure 5 pays tribute to freedom fighters including Amílcar Cabral and Che Guevara, as well as the revolutionary Nelson Mandela. Black rights activists Martin Luther King and Malcolm X both also feature prominently on the wall. The connection of the space with mainly African American and African activists and heroes is thus clear and striking. Meanwhile the collage of Morabeza Records album covers (Figure 6) symbolically painted on the side wall of the podium, connects the venue with the foundational stories of Cabo Verdean night culture in Rotterdam.

Voz di Rua thus provides a space of reflection related both to significant moments in Cabo Verdean diasporic (music) culture, particularly connected to Rotterdam city spaces, and to issues that go beyond this local scope, including related to the African continent and Brazil. According to Cikay, the hip-hop nights organised in Voz di Rua functioned as a site of exchange of culture and knowledge:

> Our goal, what we want to achieve, we want to promote unity, which was one of the first things we learned from Amílcar Cabral: Unity, Work and Progress. Everything we've done, we've always tried to promote that unity, whether it's a unity between us Cabo Verdeans, between older and younger people, or between us foreigners in a foreign country and the people residing in the country, what we want to do is an exchange, a 'one plus two'. (Costa 2021, translation added)

The fragment above demonstrates not only how an image of the history of Amílcar Cabral is used in an event, but also how a particular ideology inspired by Cabral's political ideas is constructed and promoted in contemporary hip-hop events. The dissemination of culture and of Cabral's ideology serves as a bridge between different generations of Cabo Verdean migrants, as well as other groups in society. As such, in the context of myth-making, Cabral's ideas are not simply disseminated but are incorporated into a strategy, into a modus operandi for dealing with contemporary cultural exchanges.

Rap and cultural legacy

Cikay's videoclip 'Fidjuz di Cabral '05' ('Sons of Cabral '05'), which is also the name of a foundation he created to help "communities in the diaspora and to spread and promote Cape Verdean culture and continue with the legacy of Amílcar Cabral" (Ck3Nation 2021), reflects the urgency of cultural activism in the diaspora. The song is a production of Cikatriz Crew

(‘Scar Crew’), a collaboration of three rappers including Cikay. The name *Cikatriz* refers to “that which does not end, which does not go away, which is forever, like a scar”, as Cikay (2022) elucidates in a personal conversation. The video clip opens with an interview with Amílcar Cabral, in which Cabral explains that the fight for freedom is being waged not by the military but by armed militants, who will return as farmers once the goal of independence is achieved. This emphasises the unity of a soon-to-become nation. As the beat picks up, a group of rappers gather in front of Cabo Verde’s pre-1992 flag, which symbolised the nation’s connection to continental Africa. In 1990 the one-party state led by the PAIGV (formerly PAIGC) since independence was abolished. In 1991 the MpD (Movimento para Democracia) won the first multiparty elections. The new red, white and blue flag adopted in 1992 by the MpD symbolised, according to Carling & Batalha, “a redirection of the country’s foreign policy and development strategies” (2008: 15-16) towards Portugal and the West in general. As the lead performer of Cikatriz Crew, Cikay raps while two colleagues behind him hold up the former flag:

Anôs Cikatriz, anôs é kabuverdianu
Nu ten grandi orgulhu na ser afrikanu
Kultura y liberdadi foi Cabral ki danu
Strategia y teoria foi él propi ki enxinanu
Pega na mic moda nu ta pega na pistola
Pa tudu nôs povu sabi, ma djâ sta na orâ
Di nu rabela mô rabeladus lá di fora

We are Cikatriz, we are Cabo Verdeans
We are proud to be Africans
Culture and freedom is what Cabral gave us
Strategy and theory is what he taught us
Grab the mic as if you grab a gun
So that our people know that it’s time,
To rebel like the Rabelados from the countryside.

(Cikatriz Crew 2008b, translation added)[3]

[3] Lyrics were provided in crioulo by Cikay Lucio da Costa.

As Cikay raps, the video switches back and forth between shots of him performing in an urban setting, and (historic) images that relate to the lyrics shown above. First we see an image of Cabral's face intertwined with the African continent, drawing on the idea of unity that was also present in the yellow, green and red flag of Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau - colours which are also included in the flags of several other African countries. This is followed by a video in which the 'Rabelados', a community on the island of Santiago that sought refuge in the interior of the island to flee persecution by the Catholic Church, are seen holding up the Cabo Verdean flag. Finally, the video shows an image of enslaved Africans receiving lashes, a reference to the colonial scar. In a somewhat aggressive rapping style, the song reflects upon Cabral's cultural struggle and the oppression suffered by the islanders under the colonial regime. A dialogue emerges in which the act of rapping is compared to an armed struggle, the weaponising of culture as a means of continuing Cabral's philosophy, with rap as one form of that struggle. It is therefore no coincidence that this armament is being compared to the rebellion of the Rabelados, who rebelled against the rule of the Catholic ethos by moving to the difficult interior of Santiago in order to safeguard their traditions.

In the context of this rebellion, Cabral looked at these cultures as an example in which a Cabo Verdean consciousness could be built:

> Deep in the forests, in the most rural and remote parts of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau the semi-colonised retained and, often, recreated their cultures and reinvented their ethnic identities. Cabral asserted that it was these untapped aspects of precolonial and traditional culture that should be built on in the interest of developing anti-colonial, cultural, and a new "national" transethnic consciousness. (Rabaka 2014: 225)

As cultural anthropologist Derek Pardue argues, “Kriolu rappers in their performances are doing identity work as they contribute to cultural production” (2014: 54). Even though Pardue’s work is focused on Lisbon’s diaspora, rap in Rotterdam is similarly an instrument for identity work. Armed with a microphone, Fidjuz di Cabral navigate a historical field of references in which a connection is made with Africa as an identity and a specific space, drawing on a consciousness of tradition and of consequent colonial oppression. It is a testimony to how urban space can serve as a field of reflection and connection in the diasporic context, a space through which historical, cultural and political references are ever-present and re-worked through contemporary forms of expression that then find their way into nighttime performances as a form of myth-making, whether at Voz di Rua or elsewhere.

The representations present in rap performances elicit a space, or multiple spaces that overlap and cross, bringing urban space into a dialogue, a negotiation, a crossing of cultures. Indeed, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall mentions, “we should think of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (2014: 222). Although Hall’s ideas here refer to an analysis of Caribbean cinema, the same issue of representation is equally important in rap videos and performances such as the one described. Rap can be seen as a zone of productive encounters that produce identities and identifications. These encounters draw on “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” (1990: 223) that generate a sense of fixedness, a rootedness, whether in specific ideas, images or histories. Identities are, in this sense, not produced so much by historical facts per se, but by processes of “re-telling” histories, or by what Hall calls an “act of imaginative rediscovery” (2014: 224).

In the context of the Rotterdam Cabo Verdean diaspora’s rap scene, hip-hop artists indeed produce images, sounds and texts that “offer a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation” (2014: 224). By claiming “we

are Africans" or "we are Cabo Verdeans" artists create a sense of unity that connects them and their craft to what can be considered a land of origin, as a source of identity. Rap offers an act of 'positioning' within a field of "unstable points of identification or suture" (Hall 2014: 226). Indeed, the fast flows of rap that seamlessly connect different cultural elements, histories, figures and places is quite appropriately described as a process of suture in which the modern sounds and flows of hip-hop carry cultural references into the urban landscape and generate a patchwork of belonging: 'we are here but we are also [from] there'.

As Cikay highlights in the context of hip-hop performances throughout the city of Rotterdam, the night is a crucial point of departure for his creative endeavours:

> We organise many spectacles and activities at night, we can't work out our ideas during the day, or during weekdays… We have the advantage of utilising the night, the night carries night 'life' here in Rotterdam, because at night Rotterdam is a wonderful city, with all its lights inside and outside. I have worked at festivals in the nighttime streets of Rotterdam, it's just like in the movies. (Costa 2021, translation added)

The quote above emphasises the importance of the night for artists, as a time-space in which both productivity and creativity can develop. For many artists who also work elsewhere during the day, the night inspires other sensations and connections beyond those permitted in our '9 to 5' identities. Just as Fidjuz di Cabral evokes a field of references in their music, these references are also embodied in hip-hop nights in nighttime spaces like Voz di Rua, as is visible in the images of live performances in Figures 7 and 8, where iconography and symbolism are visible which ground the performances in a specific socio-political space.

Figure 7: Hip-hop performance at Voz di Rua. Courtesy of Cikay Lucio da Costa

Figure 8: Cikay performing at Voz di Rua. Courtesy of Cikay Lucio da Costa

In Figure 7, several of Cikay's colleague rappers perform in front of the highly symbolic post-independence flag of Cabo Verde, replaced in 1992, which today still symbolises a Pan-African ideal to many Cabo Verdeans at home and in the diaspora. This backdrop is often found in videoclips, concerts and performances, and draws on an idea of unity. In Figure 8 we find Cikay performing during the same night. He is wearing a necklace bearing two representations of Amílcar Cabral, one of them imprinted on the African continent. This

represents this same Pan-African ideal, as well as signalling Cabo Verdean rap's connection to Cabral's cultural legacy.

Rap and routes

As has become clear in the previous paragraphs, rap connects with the context of the home country. Even though the figure of Cabral, for example, is an important element in the song previously discussed, it is not only the history of the homeland that is re-worked and rediscovered in rap. In the song below, titled 'CABOROFFA', the history of the diasporic experience and the formation of the community serves as an important reference point:

Na anus 40 Berdianus tchiga Roterdôn
Marinherus di vapor ki binha di Santanton,
Sanicolão y Soncente y otus ilhas di kauberdi
És dexa pa tráz miseria, prublema fomi y sedi
Di porton di nós ilhas di tchiga Portu di 010
[…]
Roterdôn dja bira kaza ku un novu sol y novu lua
Ta mata sodadi ku kansôns di Morabeza
Cabo-Verde Show, Bana y Cesária Évora
Primeru gerasôn di gravasôn di nós kanson
Cabral flá Djunga, kultura ké ruvlusôn
Musika ké salvason, di rap ti tradisôn
Pa Cabo-Verde y Roterdôn keli é un didikasôn.

Since the forties Cabo Verdeans arrived in Rotterdam
Steam sailors who came from Santo-Antão,
São Nicolau and São Vicente and the other islands of Cabo Verde
Leaving behind misery, hunger and thirst
From the port of our islands we arrived to the ports of 010
[…]
Rotterdam became a home with a new sun and a new moon
We overcome homesickness with the songs of Morabeza,
Cabo Verde Show, Bana and Cesária Évora
The first generation of recordings of our songs
Cabral told Djunga, culture is the revolution
Music is the salvation, from rap to tradition
To Cabo Verde and Rotterdam, this is a dedication.

(Liga di MC's 2016b, translation added)[4]

[4] Lyrics were provided in crioulo by Cikay Lucio da Costa

If, following Hall, we consider identity as a production that is continuous, it is logical that its sources of identification, which can be found in place(s), are various, able to shift and contain some kind of inherent fluidity. The 'I' is formed and is in different places at the same time. In the construction of a 'narrative of the past', a multiplicity of places and narratives thereof intertwine. In line with Gilroy (1993) and historian James Clifford (1997), the idea of the Cabo Verdean nation is much less connected to a fixed root, but to routes, which intersect in contemporary hip-hop: The title of the song, CABOROFFA, is a compound word that combines Cabo (Verde) and Roffa, slang for Rotterdam, a collaboration between ten Cabo Verdean-Rotterdam MCs and rappers (paralleling Cabo Verde's ten islands) called Liga di MCs ('League of MCs').

As Cikay explains:

> Most of the rappers in the group are Cabo Verdeans born here on the 'island' of Rotterdam, that's how they call it, it's one of the islands of Cabo Verde. Automatically, we started talking about Rotterdam in Cabo Verdean creole, this was the dedication for the sound of CABOROFFA, it's a dedication to Rotterdam, but also to Cabo Verdeans from our 'island' Rotterdam. CABOROFFA is a way to celebrate unity, of all small Cabo Verdean communities around the world, the 'islands', it's not just ten, there are many. (Costa 2021, translation added)

Connecting both places, the song alludes to the rich history of travel between the island of Cabo Verde and the urban 'island' of Rotterdam that began with the arrival of a few sailors in the European port city. Indeed, this song draws on what has become a 'foundational' narrative or myth, one that is retold and remembered by many and in many cultural productions and

events, and then reworks that narrative into the urban structure of the city: “I wanted to take this image, of Rotterdam ‘the city’, and Rotterdam, ‘the urban city’, which is a creative city full of paintings, graffiti and paintings from all over the city” (Costa 2021, translation added). As will become clear in the next chapter, this narrative, and the experiences of sailors arriving, passing through and living in the city was an important theme in music of the 1960s, 1970s and to a lesser extent, the 1980s. Not only did artists record experiences of travel, but parallel to their transnational routes they gave insights into the routes through the city and the daily and nocturnal rhythms of the city, both in work life and nightlife. CABOROFFA reworks the motifs of migration, ‘misery, hunger and thirst’ as a reflection that transcends generations: ‘we arrived at the ports of 010’, the Dutch governmental area code for Rotterdam, where travel becomes a common identifier between generations.

At the same time, the song maps out the night and music culture that developed in Rotterdam, starting with the establishment of Morabeza Records. Bana arrived in the Netherlands to work with Voz de Cabo Verde, after which he moved to Portugal, though he remained a frequent performer at another nightclub in Rotterdam, Habanera, which will be discussed in the last chapter. Cesária Évora, Cabo Verde’s most decorated artist, recorded her first album with Morabeza Records, then still known as Casa Silva. Interestingly, CABOROFFA also mentions Cabo Verde Show, who did not record under the Morabeza Records label. The group recorded their first album only in 1977, under the Monte Cara label which was set up by Bana while he was living in Portugal. The group also later recorded under several labels in Portugal and France. The group gained great fame within the Cabo Verdean diaspora worldwide and as such they form part of a memory of nightlife and culture in the Dutch diaspora as well. The song actively tries to make a link between rap and tradition, a kind of continuation of the track record from what are now considered ‘classic’ artists, to the modern Cabo Verdean music culture in which rap plays an important role. It

does so by connecting different generations, places, and histories: the arrival of sailors to the city flows into the music culture of Morabeza Records, connected to Cabral's cultural struggle, flowing into contemporary rap as a patchwork of references and narratives, represented and performed in the urban landscape of Rotterdam.

In addition to the moments and places that can be described as historical, rap also stakes a claim to significant Cabo Verdean city-spaces of today. As the backdrop for the video clip of his song 'Nos e que Nos' ('It's us') Rotterdam-born Leovegildo Vieira, known artistically as Vieira Nkosi, uses an icon of the Cabo Verdean community in Rotterdam, Club São Nicolau.[5] Club São Nicolau is one of the few island-specific Cabo Verdean cultural clubs that has survived until now. It was established in 1979, by two men from the island of São Nicolau, and was originally a football club meant to bring islanders together in the diaspora. In the 70s, 80s and 90s there were a multitude of clubs and associations based around islands of origin, though few still exist. Club São Nicolau is one of the remainder, and still has a clubhouse, now located at the Admiraal de Ruyterweg in the centre of Rotterdam. It is not a

Figure 9: Leovegildo Vieira in Club São Nicolau, in Nos e que nos videoclip

[5] There are various ways in which São Nicolau is spelled (Saniklau, San Nicolau, San Niklau). I adhere to São Nicolau, as this is the spelling the club maintains.

football club anymore, however; instead it serves as a cultural centre which organises music and dance evenings, football match viewings and a platform through which entrepreneurs, authors and other figures from the community can showcase their work.

In Nos e que Nos, Vieira immerses the viewer into the venue of the Club São Nicolau. It starts with an image of a man unfurling the current flag of Cabo Verde, alternating this with the faces of first-generation Cabo Verdeans visiting the club and with conversations had with visitors. The clip continuously changes, showing at times an inside view of the club, with people drinking and talking, and of images on its walls, intermingled with images of the islands of Cabo Verde, with workers processing sugar cane and a statue of Cabral, thus highlighting the deep connections between the two locations. As Vieira explains,

> If I had to choose a favourite pub, it would be Club São Nicolau… now I just go there occasionally. Sometimes I just cycle past, I end up there and I stay for hours. For me personally, it's sacred ground, there is such a connection for me. The interior is exactly as it was when I was three, nothing has changed there. The same carpet, walls, furniture… The older generation is still coming… When I tell them who my parents are, or who my grandfather was, "Oh! Are you a grandson of his! I know him!" then the stories emerge… When I say who my father is, then the stories come, here or on São Nicolau, in my father's village. (Vieira 2021, translation added)

Connecting to the story of the club in the centre of Rotterdam, Vieira switches to the context of the island of São Nicolau as the birthplace of his father, emphasising the importance of locally known family relations and names and the connection to place of birth, drawing a direct line between this place on the island, and Club São Nicolau. He further explains:

> My name is Leovegildo Vieira, but that doesn't work in São Nicolau, because then they still don't know who I am. There I am Leo, of 'Djo' of 'Mambá' and 'Toiquinha', Djo is my father, but which Djo? There are many of them. But I am Djo of Mambá, my grandmother, and Toiquinha, my grandfather. Toi is a diminutive form of Antonio, but he is Toi Quinha, Quinha was my great-grandmother. So, I introduce myself around my father's village on that side of the island as Leo de Djo de Mambá e Toi Quinha, so I've been taking four generations with me. And then people say, "Ooooooooh those!" And on my mother's side of the island it's Leo de Antonita de Mari de Luz e nha Chico again…'Ooh them! Are you their grandchild!' I don't know any better, I just throw it out. (Vieira 2021, translation added)

Following Massey's concept of space as a "porous network of social relations", a phrase which emphasises that the identities of place are constructed through "the specificity of their interaction with other places" (1994: 121), it is important to note the interweaving of places, languages and social relations evident in the conversation above. We see a continuation of local Cabo Verdean manners, where Nkosi figures out certain family lines according to a connection of names and generations. This process at the same time highlights the importance of local spaces such as cultural clubs in the city as a beacon of Cabo Verdeanness (or perhaps 'São Nicolauness'), where one talks about the past and thus strengthens family ties, acquaintances are rekindled and one can dwell in memories, facilitating and strengthening the connection with the homeland and those from there.

Language as performance of identity

Cabo Verdean rap can indeed be seen as a re-discovery of the past, of a re-working that is not always loyal to the chronology of history but instead to a merging of elements that assume significance for future generations. As mentioned before, rappers do identity work through performance, and language is significant in this process:

> Kriolu is a hermeneutics for (inter)cultural understanding. More specifically, it is the medium through which local youth of Cape Verdean heritage reckon the ambiguous but nonetheless powerful discourses of being "African," "Cape Verdean," "black," "European," "Portuguese," "an immigrant," or part of the "Lusophone community" (*lusofonia*). (Pardue 2014: 54)

In addition to the historical awareness exhibited in the preceding fragments, Pardue refers to the negotiation that takes place in rap through the Cabo Verdean Creole language, Kriolu.[6] Although he also writes from the context of Cabo Verdean rappers in Portugal, many of the same forms of subjectivity coincide and emerge in the fragments analysed in this work. These subjectivities are informed and shaped by both national and continental identities, by historical processes, by displacement and by work: African, Cabo Verdean, but also revolutionary, sailor and migrant. These are part and parcel of the different facets of identity negotiated in rap.

[6] The terms 'Cabo Verdean creole' and Kriolu are both used in this thesis, referring to the language spoken on Cabo Verde and in the diaspora. When other terms are used, such as 'creole', it is in the context of use by other authors or interviewed participants.

Vieira Nkosi emphasises the importance of Kriolu in exploring one's own identity:

> I have been making music in Dutch for a long time, I put that aside for a while and now I am fully engaged in Cabo Verdean. It's another way to engage with the language. I've always spoken it, but you go into it deeper, you have to play with how you want to word things and so on. I am discovering my own Cabo Verdean identity in it, investigating, because what does it actually mean to be Cabo Verdean? There is not a Cabo Verdean identity, it is multidimensional. My role as a 'Son of Migrants' ('Fidjus di Migrante'), that's the name of my Cabo Verdean-language album that I'm working on, I'm exploring my dimension and adding it to the whole spectrum of Cabo Verdean identity. (Vieira 2021, translation added)

The excerpt above highlights the importance of language for a generation not born in Cabo Verde in supporting the process of identity formation. Nkosi emphasises the multidimensionality of being Cabo Verdean by asking how one is Cabo Verdean as a son of migrants to the Netherlands. Language, in this sense, reflects the influences of local culture on the diaspora, raising questions about what it means to be a Cabo Verdean born in the diaspora, compared to those that were born in Cabo Verde. Equally, performing in Kriolu as a Rotterdam-born Cabo Verdean is a means to 'mark your presence': "it is a kind of assertiveness, letting people know where you come from, you often see that in rap" (Vieira 2021, translation added). As Pardue argues in the context of Cabo Verdean rappers in Portugal, Cabo Verdean-ness is "entangled in the performance of Kriolu" (Pardue 2015: 9). In the fragment above, rap can be seen as a performance of Kriolu presence. Performing in Kriolu creates a 'visibility of difference', where membership both within and outside Dutch society is negotiated. It lays claim to the necessity of 'being there', while also claiming a

space in the context of cross-cultural encounters in spaces where people are often unaware of any Cabo Verdean presence in the Netherlands:

> I always did a song in Cabo Verdean, that was part of my repertoire. You were simply going to know that I'm Cabo Verdean, I don't care if you've never heard of it, especially because you don't know I'm going to do it, so that in Nijmegen, or in Tilburg, they know who Cabo Verdeans are. […] It is such a big part of me that I have to say things in a language that you don't know. I can't do it in the language you understand. I want people to understand that, "There is still a whole world outside of my world". (Vieira 2021, translation added)

The 'it' here refers to both the language, Kriolu, and to being Cabo Verdean. Not only is language an important instrument to create a personal demarcation of presence in the Dutch migratory context or to generate a sense of 'being there', but it is also a way to honour and represent the history of the community and to seek recognition, especially beyond Rotterdam. As Leovegildo discusses his work he relates it to his parents: "I want it to bring a piece of recognition for them. I want to write on the wall 'I was here, but my parents were here too!'" (Vieira 2021, translation added.)

Broederliefde's rise to fame in the Dutch music scene

Although Cabo Verdean hip-hop is generally little known in the Dutch scene, one group has gained prominence. Broederliefde ('brotherly love') is a hip-hop group consisting of a core group of four singers and a DJ. Three of the group have a Cabo Verdean background, while one is Antillean and one is Dominican. The group broke a record set by Dutch folk singer Frans Bauer, with their album *Hard Work Pays Off II* securing the number one spot on the album hit-list for fourteen consecutive weeks in 2016. As such, the album became the longest-

running Number One Dutch-language album. The two hits with which the group broke through in the Netherlands were ‘Alaka’ and ‘Labanta’. Remarkably, neither of these two songs have Dutch titles, and the latter is even sung entirely in Cabo Verdean creole. Alaka, a Surinamese word, translates to ‘all this shit’, while Labanta is Cabo Verdean creole for ‘stand up’. Their hybrid music style, which bears Cabo Verdean, Antillean, Surinamese, Dominican and various other influences, has had an enormous impact on Dutch hip-hop culture and has become immensely popular in Dutch club culture.

In *Cabosound*, part of a documentary on Dutch hip-hop culture, Jerr, one of the group’s members, demonstrates how Cabo Verdean music (including tracks by Cesária Évora and Chando Graciosa) is incorporated into their beats by slowly blending a *funaná* sound into a mainstream hip-hop beat on a mixing panel. With Broederliefde’s immensely popular presence in Dutch hip-hop culture the visibility of Cabo Verde has found its way into youth culture, and into nightlife:

> In our music you hear a lot of Cabo Verdean influences, we are guys that play a lot with those sounds. Most of what we use comes from zouk style, morna, funaná. ‘Jongens uit de Cité’ [‘Boys from the City’], which comes from a song by Cesária Évora and Tito Paris, those are numbers that we actually sampled… (Cabosound 2021, translation added)

Even though one member admits that the group is perhaps not part of the Cabo Verdean scene, their original style possesses recognisable influences from what is today regarded as traditional Cabo Verdean music. The group released two well-received songs entirely in Cabo Verdean creole, ‘Labanta’ and ‘Moral’, both of which feature clips shot in Cabo Verde. In addition many of their other songs contain fragments and words from Cabo Verdean creole,

Spanish, Papiamento and Surinamese, which is characteristic of this ethnically diverse group who grew up in Spangen, a multicultural neighbourhood within the Delfshaven borough of Rotterdam. In this sense, Broederliefde's music bridges the gap between different cultural forms, resulting in a hybrid style that has conquered the popular Dutch hip-hop scene. As such, they have brought Cabosound into popular Dutch nightlife.

Cultural Festivals - São João

As has been discussed previously, since the start of migration to the Netherlands, music culture has consistently played an important role in the Cabo Verdean community's identity. Starting with get-togethers in people's homes, a music scene appeared that was at first connected strongly to the political situation in Cabo Verde, and which later helped Rotterdam become Cabo Verde's music capital. The connectedness to Cabo Verde's history of a decolonial struggle leading to independence, to Cabral's legacy, as well as to imaginaries of migration and homeland, are much present in contemporary culture. As Brah mentions, "all diasporic journeys are composite" and as such are "embarked upon, lived and relived through multiple modalities" such as "gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation" (1996: 183-184). Even though these modalities are indeed able to differentiate and generate a multiplicity of identifications within a particular (diasporic) group or culture, the opposite is also true, as these modalities can generate a sense of belonging and togetherness through specific symbols that come to be accepted, celebrated and recognised in a more community-wide fashion.

Much related to the formation of a common identity are the religious celebrations of São João Baptista that take place every year around June 24 on the Heemraadsplein, playing a fundamental role in gathering and reuniting Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam. In Christianity, Islam, and Mandaeism, São João Baptista - Saint John the Baptist - is hailed as the prophet

who foresaw the birth of Jesus Christ and later baptised him. In Cabo Verde and other Portuguese-speaking countries São João is celebrated during the *Festas Juninas* ('June Festival'), with a mass held annually on June 24. This is a remnant of the colonial past during which Portugal imposed its religions, customs, and celebrations upon colonised populations. In Cabo Verde the celebrations have subsequently adopted elements of native religions and traditions, such as the *kolá* dance, described below, evidencing a rich cultural-religious syncretism.

In Rotterdam the São João Festival commemorates the religious feast day with food, culture and different kinds of performances presented in a party extending well into the evening. Very particular to the celebrations in Rotterdam, though, is São João's connection to the square, which itself has played a remarkable role as a community space over time. For this reason, before analysing the specifics of the São João Festival, I will discuss the history of the square as it demonstrates the centrality of place in the formation of a community.

A place to remember - Pracinha

Throughout the entire history of migration, one place in the city has consistently remained known as a space of encounter for the Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam. In the centre of the Heemraadssingel, in the Delfshaven district, is located the Heemraadsplein. The square lies at the heart of this historically Cabo Verdean district, with a majority of the diaspora community living in and around the streets connecting to the square. In 2001 the square was officially given a second name, Pracinha d'Quêbrod, by the then-mayor Ivo Opstelten and prominent members of the Cabo Verdean community. The name translates roughly to 'Square of the Broken Ones' or 'Poor man's Square', reflecting its historical role as "a focal point of the Cape Verdean community" (Carling 2008: 91) since the first generation of immigrants arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. The square became a place for seafarers to go to whenever they were

broke, unable to find work and wanted to meet fellow Cabo Verdeans to share their misfortunes and their longing for the homeland. There are many Cabo Verdean cafés around the Nieuwe Binnenweg, a street that also passes along the square, and these also served mostly as a meeting points and outlets for men, but for those who did not have money to visit the cafés, the 'Pracinha' served as their gathering space (Strooij 1996: 69). As of today, it is still considered an important community space.

In an online cultural magazine focused on important places and figures in Cabo Verde and the diaspora, Paris-based Cabo Verdean sociologist Luiz Silva compares the social role of the square for those in the diaspora with Praça Estrela in Mindelo, the capital of the island of São Vicente, in the 1960s: "you would meet kids, youngster and adults, to talk about anything, mainly about football, carnival groups, lovers, etcetera. On Mondays, football was discussed and on Saturday, the lovers" (Silva 2011, translation added). More importantly for the diaspora, however, the Pracinha d'Quêbrod was quickly appropriated to serve as a place to touch base with fellow countrymen:

> When the Cabo Verdeans, autonomously, and thanks to the twelve apostles of emigration to the Netherlands, were leaving clandestinely from Porto Grande for a shelter to organise the liberation of Cabo Verde from droughts and hungers, from the route of São Tomé e Príncipe and the Portuguese colonisation, they arrived in Amsterdam (Jerusalem of the North) and Rotterdam. They needed their own spaces to meet each other and exchange information about work, politics, and to organise cultural and sports activities. For those who knew the situation of our newly arrived emigrants in the late fifties and early sixties in Holland and the importance of having a meeting place where one could find a friend and the solidarity of brothers, this

> Square, which the Cabo Verdeans named "Pracinha d'Quêbrod", had its own special history in the Cabo Verdean migration. (Silva 2011, translation added)

The 'twelve apostles', Silva refers to are the first group of men who crossed the sea towards the Netherlands, a group which included pivotal figures such as João Silva and Constantino Delgado. These 'apostles' laid the foundations for many others to take refuge in the Netherlands, whether for political or economic reasons. Silva also refers to Amsterdam as the 'Jerusalem of the North,' calling on the city's status as a place of migration for many Jews (mainly Sephardic and Marrano), who have settled in the city since the sixteenth century. Prominent Jewish authors such as Daniel Levi de Barrios (c.1625 - 1701) already named the city 'the Jerusalem of the North' at that time. The name reflected its centrality in the formation of a Jewish community and its cultural identity (Mintz-Manor 2017), but also emphasised the relative safety in which Jews were able to live there as a diasporic community. Silva thus draws a link between the two cities in their function as safe havens for persecuted migrants.

But although Cabo Verdean seamen did indeed arrive in Amsterdam, this was not their largest mooring place, with most finding their feet instead in Rotterdam. And when recently arrived sailors lacked an address to stay at, such as a boarding house, they were often sent to the square to meet other Cabo Verdeans who could help them on their way. The square quickly became a regular meeting place. Whether on Praça Estrela in Cabo Verde or Pracinha d'Quêbrod in Rotterdam, Silva meets the same acquaintances and friends and engages in conversations that reveal relevant cultural and political references of the time:

> And there we find old friends from Praça Estrela like Deiza, brother of the Castilian tennis player Marcolino "Naraus", killed in a great

> shipwreck, Amâncio, Djosa de Bernarda, Rui de Tuda, each proudly defending his Cabo Verdean team and not Portugal, as they do today. There is talk of the arrival of the emigrants in the late fifties and early sixties and of the people who organised our emigration, and in particular the founders of the community; the Cabo Verdean football teams from Rotterdam and Cabo Verde; the creation of "Voz de Cabo Verde" and the newspaper "Nôs Vida" (which needs to be reissued due to its role in the liberation struggle); the problems of other Cabo Verdean communities in the world; the social agents who found work on boats for Cabo Verdeans; Dutch people (like Maria Grega and Papa Dedona who helped Cabo Verdeans a lot); the participation of emigrants in economic, social and cultural transformations, from the end of the fifties. (Silva 2011, translation added)

In this panoramic view of the square, Silva captures its role in facilitating interaction and conversations among Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam, as a space of familiarity and connection with acquaintances and friends. A history of community is formed through conversations around the most important figures in the community and through colloquial discussions on football that reveal affiliations with the identity of a soon-to-be or recently independent Cabo Verde, where Silva curiously states that in Cabo Verde they would still support Portugal. Some discuss the political magazine Nôs Vida, issued by the Rotterdam-based Associação Caboverdiana with its close ties to the liberation movement, as briefly mentioned before. Conversation also discusses nightlife, in which Voz de Cabo Verde played a major role in Rotterdam. The square evidences what Massey has called the "mix of links and interconnections" of a place to a 'beyond' (1994: 5). Everyday spaces such as Pracinha make connections with other places and events possible. The beyond, in this case, is located in the

stories and imaginations of Cabo Verde, its diaspora, and Rotterdam, and the global-local interactions between these places.

The relevance of the square is also highlighted in the Rotterdam-Cabo Verdean discography. Rotterdam-based artist Américo Brito released his LP *Sintado na Pracinha* ('Sitting on the square') in 1980, which contains a song with the same title narrating an encounter on the Pracinha with a fellow Cabo Verdean. One encourages the other to go back to Cabo Verde with him, "to see our mothers and our lovers" (Brito 1980, translation added):

Cintad na pracinha quand bo txiga na mim,
Bo flam pa nos bai, pa nos terra Cabo Verde …
Pam bai pa unde? Pa nos terra Cabo Verde
Pam bai pa unde? Pa nos terra Cabo Verde…

Sitting in the square when you came to me
And you were telling me, to return to our land Cabo Verde
Where are you going? To our land Cabo Verde.
Where are you going? To our land Cabo Verde.

(Brito 1980, translation added)

In this song, the square functions as a place in which sodade, the feeling of loss and homesickness that is often central to Cabo Verdean music in the diaspora when referring to the homeland, is processed.

The role of this square is further emphasised in a documentary which was published in 2007 about Brito's life, titled *Rotterdam Saudade* ('Rotterdam longing'). In one scene on the Pracinha, two men are having a conversation about how many children they have in Cabo Verde and Rotterdam when Brito walks by. He asks the men if they are reminiscing about the past on Pracinha, and one says they were remembering the old friendships and the conviviality of the past. The other then describes his memory of Pracinha: "I was working, but in my spare time I came here to talk about Cabo Verde. About the nostalgia for Cabo Verde" (Thelosen 2007, translation added). The first man also speaks of the necessity of such a space

in which to share struggles of poverty, joblessness and hopelessness, especially in times of crisis:

> There were many people who because of the crisis could not return to the islands. They couldn't afford a plane ticket and they were ashamed to return empty-handed. Without gifts for your wife and your children you couldn't go home. Here we talked about these things. About sodade and some news. News about the family, and such things. It was all discussed here. (Thelosen 2007, translation added)

In the documentary, after hearing the conversation between the two men, and wrapped in this context and standing on the square, Brito starts singing 'Sintado na Pracinha', entangling the different sentiments that the men exchanged into an in-situ performance.

The celebration(s) of São João Baptista

In Rotterdam, even though the Festas Juninas are not celebrated *en masse*, since the beginning of migration to the Netherlands Cabo Verdean migrants have organised São João celebrations often simply as an informal way of getting together. Historically it was particularly celebrated by male labourers and sailors as a means to come together, but during the development and growth of the diaspora a more diverse audience appeared, including women and children. One of the first organisers of São João in Rotterdam, Manuel Felipe Rodrigues, described the festival in a personal interview: "everyone went, they took their children, lemonade, croquets, pastries, catchupa[7], it was cultural" (2019, translation added). It was only later, in the 1980s, that the Cabo Verdean club Associação Centro Cultural ('Cultural Centre Association') started organising the celebrations in a more structured, officialised manner. One of the main members of this early Cabo Verdean association in Rotterdam, nicknamed Piduca, confirms

[7] Catchupa is a traditional Cape Verdean stew with beans.

that their goal was to preserve and maintain Cabo Verdean Culture in Rotterdam, and to activate people, get them out of their homes and bring them together, to convey knowledge about the culture and through culture (São João Rotterdam 2020).

Today, São João in Rotterdam is an event that brings together thousands of Cabo Verdeans in the diaspora. In Cabo Verde, however, the social context in which the festival is celebrated still reveals a class issue, as mentioned by Carlos Gonçalves:

> In Mindelo and other cities it was forbidden to celebrate São João in the city centre. It was a party for poor people, and therefore it was celebrated in the outskirts of Cabo Verdean cities. But here in the Netherlands the celebration took on a different dimension, it became a celebration of the community, and everyone felt connected by Sanjon, while in Cabo Verde it was also a class issue, it was more an event for the poor than for the middle classes and better-off people. (São João Rotterdam 2020, translation added)

Indeed, Portuguese authorities strictly forbade deviant cultural expressions, as discussed before, and the celebrations of São João were no exception. With room for free cultural expression in Rotterdam, São João was able to develop into a major event in the diaspora. Even though Gonçalves notes that it was mainly workers and sailors looking for a better life who came to the Netherlands, and in that sense they would have belonged to a poorer layer of Cabo Verdean society, in the diaspora the event is celebrated by people from all islands and different substrata of society, all congregating at the Pracinha.

The longstanding tradition of São João celebrations on the Heemraadsplein even led to the designation of São João as *Immaterieel Erfgoed* ('intangible heritage') of the Netherlands in June 2019 by the national Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed ('Knowledge Centre for

Intangible Heritage'). The organisation's website describes the start of the celebration as follows:

> The celebration of Saint John the Baptist starts with the collection of the statue of Saint John the Baptist in the Saint Victor Church in Waddinxveen. The collection of the statue refers to the ritual in Cape Verde, where the statue of the saint is also fetched from the highlands, after which it passes all the villages before being brought to its final destination, the parish. On Saturday morning the statue is rigged by a local florist. At the Sociedade Cultural Caboverdiana the *tambores* and the *navio*, a miniature ship, are prepared and decorated. At noon, the religious celebration starts with a church service in honour of the birthday of Saint John the Baptist. (Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Website n.d.)

The celebrations have not always included the same rituals as described above. The first celebrations had no central organisation, and simply involved sailors coming together on the square to play drums, the so called *tambores*, and catch up. It was only with later organisations that a procession similar to that of Cabo Verde was added, seeking to revive and mirror elements belonging to the islands' cultural heritage.

The revival of traditions plays an important role for Cabo Verdeans in the diaspora, including those not born and raised in Cabo Verde, and allows them to feel connected to the culture of the islands. In the context of myth-making, the tradition in Rotterdam was in fact produced or *made*. It did not exist previously, yet it elicits a particular imagination of the homeland by re-enacting the procession ritual. As anthropologist Marta Maffia argues in the context of the Cabo Verdean diaspora in Argentina, "descendants of Cape Verdeans have also

drawn upon memories that are not their own, memories which legitimise them as Cape Verdeans, recovering and reinventing traditions" (2008: 51). Rituals serve to connect and bind members of a particular diaspora to common cultural references and thus to find ways to 'ground' a diasporic identity in these. The day continues:

> After the service, a procession takes place in which the statue is carried to the Heemraadsplein. The procession is attended by the churchgoers, the drummers, the one chosen to carry the nave, but also by those who for one reason or another could not attend mass. A traditional Kola San Jon dance is also performed. Arriving at the square, the statue is placed on an altar, after which the cultural activities begin on the square. Visitors can become acquainted with Cape Verdean culture through activities for young and old, culinary specialties, performances from home and abroad, exhibitions and storytellers. (Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Website n.d.)

Similar to the celebration in Cabo Verde, the statue of Saint John the Baptist is accompanied on its journey by a large crowd, a group of drummers, and a man bearing a miniature ship around his waist which he carries towards the Heemraadsplein, symbolising good sailing for this traditionally seafaring people. During the traditional Kolá San Jon dance, men and women allow their bellybuttons and hips to collide in an act that symbolises sexual fertility. And after the more traditional celebrations of São João have concluded, mainstream festival elements are introduced, with stalls, performances, music, and other activities that go on until the beginning of the night.

The variety of performances during the festival is large, including acts from both older and younger generations and cultural expressions coming from different islands. Indeed, using

Brah's (1996: 183) words, "multiple journeys" configure how the diasporic community is imagined and represented throughout the day: the stage, for example, is first set for a traditional *batuko* group. Batuko is a call and response genre that is both a dance and an oral tradition in which women take turns to put themselves at the centre of a semi-circle and narrate everyday stories and events, often denouncing everyday violence and conditions, while the other members rhythmically hit a piece of folded cloth clamped between the legs. This tradition, which comes from the island of Santiago, was persecuted and prohibited by the Portuguese colonisers "because of its supposedly licentious dance moves" (Cidra 2018: 437). The genre found its revival after independence, including in the diaspora. As of today Rotterdam hosts several batuko groups, each of which can be regularly found at Cabo Verdean cultural events. Even though the tradition specifically originates from the island of Santiago, in the diaspora it is often celebrated as something pure and authentically Cabo Verdean and is in this sense seen more as a celebration of national identity than of an exclusively regional one.

Starkly contrasting with the traditionalism of batuko, São João Festival also includes third generation rap/hip-hop formations and artists, who touch on more common themes such as wealth and love, attracting a younger audience to the festival. The festival also hosts performances by artists from across the diaspora and the Netherlands, playing popular genres such as coladeira, *kizomba* and funaná. Indeed it is the combination of all these elements of Cabo Verdean culture, whether considered more traditional or modern, which 'makes' São João. As organiser Jorge Lizardo mentions: "nowadays we really show it, from Américo Brito to Jacqueline Fortes, they wouldn't be together with Broederliefde or Bollebof. Well, on São João, they are!" (São João Rotterdam 2020, translation added.) Both Jacqueline Fortes and Américo Brito are accomplished artists living in Rotterdam and performing traditional morna

and coladeira songs. Broederliefde and Cape-Verdean born rapper Bollebof, on the other hand, are very much popular in the contemporary Dutch urban music scene.

Online cultures: São João Digital

During the pandemic, the yearly celebration of São João also moved (partly) online, being rebranded as 'São João Digital'. The festival's digital edition still included traditional (and physically celebrated) elements, such as the carrying of the statue of Saint John the Baptist to the Pracinha d'Quêbrod, a performance by a group of drummers, and a man carrying the miniature ship. The online festival also included the dancing of the Kolá San Jon, even though the obligatory 1.5 meters distance was observed in recognition of the pandemic. It was also the 40th edition of São João, making it a special occasion particularly because the São João celebrations were officially added to the inventory of the Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed, with the signing of official documents taking place during the digital edition, emphasising the status of this tradition.

The venue in which the digital edition was recorded and celebrated with just a few dozen guests, was the pop podium Grounds, which is located on the Pieter de Hoochweg in the Delfshaven district. It is located in the former office for the Loodswezen ('Pilotage') building, built in 1921, and thus is symbolically connected to the history of seafaring. It is also close to various historic points of reference for Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam, such as the maritime employment offices, colloquially known as the *barracas* (the 'sheds'), which are sung about in numerous Cabo Verdean songs and which will be discussed in the next chapter on labour. It is also close to various mooring places at which workers arrived and departed. The link with the Cabo Verdean maritime tradition and the cultural legacy of pioneer sailors that arrived in Rotterdam is emphasised by organiser Jorge Lizardo in his introduction to the event:

> The link with Rotterdam is the *navezinho*, the little boat that brought us to this great city, now our home. Cabo Verdeans have been coming here since the late 1940s and early 1950s. But not only the sailors, our culture has come along too. One of these heritages is Morabeza Records, and that's where the story of Cabo Verdean musicians begins. (São João Rotterdam 2020, translation added)

Figure 10: The set of São João Digital 2020, with just a handful of sound and image engineers, artists, and traditional decorations such as the altar visible at right.

In this sense, the digital edition was in large part also a homage to the first Cabo Verdean settlers in the Netherlands, and those that founded the São João celebrations. In the online component of the festival, space was given to honour those pioneers in the diaspora, as well as those who have contributed to the wellbeing of the community. A special theme of the 2020 edition was 'Rotterdam', for which several artists were invited to play not only their own music but also songs that narrate the story of migration towards Rotterdam and the lives of Cabo Verdeans in the city.

During São João, religious, cultural and musical element are synchronised and celebrated. Importantly, in these celebrations a strong emphasis is placed on the spaces in which life in migration took place: in general, in the city of Rotterdam, but more specifically in certain parts of the city, such as the pracinha, the barracas and other places of significance for Cabo Verdeans. One of the artists invited was Américo Brito, who performed 'Sintado na Pracinha' (Sitting on the square'). Another Rotterdam-based artist, Jacqueline Fortes, also interpreted one of her own songs, 'Viagem de Costa' ('Coast Travel'), which will be analysed later, which discusses the importance of preserving Cabo Verdean traditions such as those found in the nightlife of Rotterdam. The celebration and reiteration of city spaces in which key processes of belonging and identity formation took place, often because of their day-to-day significance to a large group of migrants, are key to the continuation of a community's narrative in the diaspora. This digital edition of São João showed not only how the city was imprinted in music, but how music was imprinted on the city, as these experiences of urban life were vocalised in live performances.

Of particular importance when considering day-to-day spaces, are spaces of work. Narratives of work life in Rotterdam (or the lack of work) are also extensively documented in music and other cultural forms. The next chapter will therefore zoom in on the key spaces, rhythms and routines of labour.