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

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Chapter 5: Dancing down memory lane: (re)experiences of Cabo Verdean nightlife

Oh pove bzot ben oiá
Êss kriol na porta de Habanera
Frontode num pavio dôde
Na finta dês holandesa

Kem k'uvi bzot
Kêss bóca xei ta falá
Nês menina k'bzot ranjá
Nem oiá bzot ta temá paioff

Quem crê sabê sê devera
Esperá quate hora de madrugada
Pa ben oiá kebra kabeça
Ma ês menina de 70 ma 100

Oh people come and see
These creoles at Habanera's door
Crazy with excitement
For conversations with the Dutch ladies

If someone would hear you
Talking with your mouth full
About these girls you've had
They didn't even see you get the worst

For those who want to know
Wait until it's four o'clock
To solve the puzzle
Of these girls between 70 and 100.

(Morais 1967, translation added)[13]

In the song above, we are at the entrance of Habanera, a Latin American nightclub in the city of Rotterdam. Some men from Cabo Verde decide to try their luck chatting with some Dutch ladies outside the door of the club to earn bragging rights. Comically, the song urges the listener to wait until four o'clock, when 'the puzzle is solved': as it turns out, the ladies are professionals who charge 'between seventy and a hundred' guilders for their company. As an article from 2015 in the Dutch newspaper NRC describes, "night-time hunks were picked up in front of the doors of the Habanera, l'Ambassadeur, the Cascade and the Spidobar: for forty

[13] Luis Morais is the composer, though this song was recorded and performed by Bana.

guilders extra, a sea boy could also arrange his overnight stay in a love room" (De Jong 2015, translation added). The article refers to a series of popular nightclubs in the early 1950s and 1960s in Rotterdam, around which sex workers would pick up sailors visiting from all over the world. These were most probably the girls these men depicted in the song were talking to late at night. Indeed, the entertaining scene illustrated in the lyrics is a testament to Rotterdam's lively nightlife, and the song was recorded by renowned Cabo Verdean singer Bana, who arrived in the city in 1965. The song is called 'Problema', translating to 'Trouble', and it relates the nighttime adventures of Cabo Verdean men from a somewhat critical perspective. Waiting and looking for a ship to board, many Cabo Verdean sailors ventured into the nighttime city. Simultaneously, this became an interesting and entertaining subject for some artists to sing about.

After some years, with more and more Cabo Verdeans arriving and staying in Rotterdam, the diaspora community increasingly sought ways to spend its evenings with compatriots. For this reason, many Cabo Verdeans started to engage with a night circuit that encompassed their own community. Cabo Verdean musicians and artists found their way to Rotterdam and the first so-called *Noites Caboverdianas* ('Cabo Verdean nights') were organised. These served as important occasions in which the socialisation of the rapidly growing community was a central goal. At that time, the city of Rotterdam was (as it still is) in constant movement and (re)construction, and many historic venues have been repurposed or demolished as of the time of writing. In present-day Rotterdam, the nights that were celebrated in various (historic) venues, whether in clubs or at Cabo Verdean parties, have become part of the community's memory of the city. At the same time, the histories of particular places and memories where Cabo Verdeans used to meet and have fun together are appropriated in contemporary nightlife, as organisers draw on collective memories of historical nightlife events. These events are promoted through narratives of the nocturnal city,

where both the community's and the city's past are reflected through practices of re-memory and re-experience (Brah 1996) and where an imagination of the nocturnal past is constructed.

Moving mostly from studios, community centres and squares in the first chapter, to barracas, boarding houses and bars in the second, this chapter addresses nightlife spaces such as nightclubs, performance venues and 'dancings' (a pseudo-English Dutch word for a bar or venue in which people dance, possibly best translated as 'dancehalls'), and explores how these spaces, and the practices therein, contribute to understandings of the night as important sites of belonging, identity and culture within the Cabo Verdean community. Drawing on a variety of materials from several events, places and organisers, including music, newspaper articles, promotional material and interviews, this chapter discusses the memory of Cabo Verdean nightlife and its associations with specific locations in the city since the 1960s. I also seek to demonstrate how current generations of nightlife organisers (and partygoers) imagine the city's different (historic) night scenes.

The first part of this chapter includes an historic account of early nightlife. I will first seek to understand in what historical-social context a nightclub scene was constituted in Rotterdam, in which the Cabo Verdeans found their way into the cities' nightlife. Navigating one of the Netherlands' major cities inevitably led to cultural encounters in post-war nightlife venues, and early night venues visited by Cabo Verdean migrants became important spaces of encounter where ties with fellow nationals (and others) were forged. After this, I will consider the 'politics' of nightlife and how the first Cabo Verdean night spaces were informed by particular ideological and political ideas linked to the situation in their homeland, as well as emphasising the particular visions of nightlife that appear in music. Finally, contemporary nightlife events will be discussed in terms of how historic nightlife practices are re-imagined and re-appropriated in the present.

Rotterdam restarts its nightlife

On May 14, 1940, Rotterdam, the second largest city of the Netherlands, was bombed by the German Luftwaffe. Dropping almost 1300 bombs in thirteen minutes, the German invaders left little of the historic centre of Rotterdam intact, and destroyed a major part of the port area. In fact, Rotterdam was the only major city in the Netherlands that was destroyed to such an extent during World War II. Post-war reconstruction did not initially prioritise the development of nighttime spaces of leisure such as nightclubs but, on February 28, 1948, the social-democratic newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* ('The Free People') announced the re-starting of nightlife in Rotterdam:

> Whatever has already been or is being rebuilt in Rotterdam, the world of going out still lacked one facet: nightlife. For a global city that wants to attract foreign nationals (read: foreign currencies), insiders say it cannot be missed and that is why the gap has been filled from tonight onwards. Rotterdam started its post-war nightlife. Three establishments have been granted night permissions and Parkzicht has used this to found the Parklane night club. […] The main thing is that it can no longer be said of Rotterdam that it is so far behind other cities in this term of entertainment. […] In view of visitors from elsewhere, of course. […] (*Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 28 February 1948, translation added)

Large flows of sailors from all regions of the world, including the Cabo Verdean archipelago, visited the city in the downtime between journeys. The nocturnal city welcomed them, whether outside, or in cafés, bars, restaurants or nightclubs. Several neighbourhoods in the city served as red-light districts or offered other forms of nighttime entertainment. With

Rotterdam in reconstruction following the end of the war, several new establishments opened while others were remodelled after having served as 'emergency nightclubs', which were constructed during the war. The article above states that the opening of the Parklane nightclub was a great success with, amongst other performances, "a little dancer who had come all the way from Ceylon to show the strangers some most curious dances. The highlight was the 'dance of the seven veils', the details of which we gladly disguise with the veil of love for the sake of the guests who cannot escape them…" (H*et vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* 1948, 28 February 1948). Parklane would later be renamed Casino de Paris, also a nightclub, which was also frequently visited by Cabo Verdean sailors. In a broadcast made in 1958, the socialist public broadcaster *Vereeniging van Arbeiders Radio Amateurs*[14] (VARA) emphasised the variety of cultures represented in Rotterdam's nightclubs of the late 1950s, describing "South Slavonic" sounds in the grand cafe 'Engels' and Italian ones in the 'Belmont' (*Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 7 July 1958). Later in 1966, the local tourist information office *De Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer*[15] (VVV) emphasised that Rotterdam was ahead of the capital city, Amsterdam, in terms of entertainment available, offering a large variation of amusement:

> An establishment where you can hear chansonnettes ('t Winckeltje), places where you can dance and are regularly treated to a floor show (La Bonanza, Bristol, Casino de Paris, Habanera, l'Ambassadeur, El Amra), a place where one can 'twist' for hours (De Wieck, where beatgroup the Hot Jumpers plays), an establishment where one can drink a glass with piano or accordion in the background (Doofpot and

[14] 'Association of Workers Radio Amateurs'
[15] 'Association for Tourist Traffic'

> Drie Musketiers) (*Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 18 February 1966)

At the time when Cabo Verdean sailors began arriving in Rotterdam, no Cabo Verdean clubs, associations or music spaces existed in the city. However several clubs were frequented by Cabo Verdeans, and in the newspaper excerpt above, two places stand out. Habanera, a venue we encountered in the previous chapter, was opened in 1950. It was a dancing and bar "completely furnished in the Cuban style" where "Rotterdammers and non-Rotterdammers can find amusement" (*Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 30 September 1950).

Habanera was a popular club for young Cabo Verdean sailors. Bana regularly played at this venue and attracted a significant Cabo Verdean audience. As one sailor recalls:

> I worked for Heineken for some time, but I only earned 90 guilders per week. During the weekends, I went to Habanera - two nights, and it was all gone! So, I thought, I'm going to sea, this way at least I will be able to save some money! (Rosario Silva 2021, translation added)

Many men who came to Rotterdam were still young and keen to go on nightly adventures in Rotterdam's nightclubs, such as Habanera, when they were off work. The realisation that this was not a very sustainable lifestyle often came later. Three years after Habanera, La Bonanza opened, another dancing venue that would later become a hotspot for Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam and create cultural connections between Cabo Verde and Latin America in the city:

> South America is now also represented in the entertainment life of Rotterdam. In six weeks' time, the former café De Kroon […] has been transformed in La Bonanza ('Prosperity'), a tastefully decorated

bar. Lou Hidalgo holds sway over it and the Don Alvino Garcia orchestra receives visitors with South American tunes.(*Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 4 September 1953)

Cabo Verde in La Bonanza

La Bonanza was run by the first Surinamese club owner in Rotterdam, Lou Hidalgo. Even though Cabo Verdeans attended the nightclub, the space attracted a diverse audience, predominantly Dutch but with many migrants - Antillean, Spanish, Portuguese, Surinamese. Over the years Hidalgo contracted many migrant and foreign musicians, and it became known for its exotic performers; Black Surinamese jazz performers such as Teddy Cotton and Kid Dynamite, a variety of Latin American performers, as well as floorshows and stripteases. La Bonanza was also one of the first nightclubs in Rotterdam to contract the Cabo Verdean music group Voz de Cabo Verde, which would soon become a popular icon of Cabo Verdean music. As mentioned, the group was managed and created by Silva, the owner of Morabeza Records.

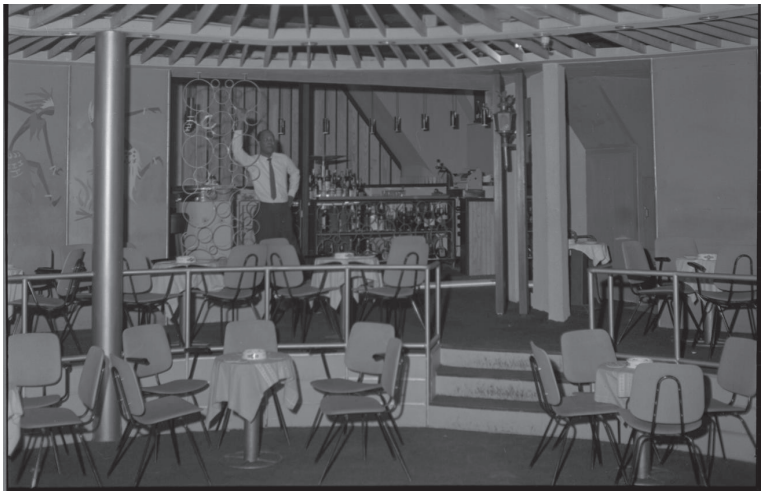

Figure 17: 'Interior of La Bonanza on the Van Speykstraat', 1964. © Gemeente Rotterdam (Stadsarchief)

The group, first named Os Verdianos and later renamed as Voz de Cabo Verde in 1966 to appear more professional, started playing at 'creole parties' almost every weekend, and according to Silva, Amílcar Cabral himself was very content with the group as they "symbolised and represented Cabo Verde" (Silva 2009: 137, translation added). The term 'creole' has also played an important role in the genesis of Cabo Verde and the formation of a national identity. Although it implies national unity in this context, the term is also in constant debate given the variation of life experiences, cultural traditions and migration trajectories on each island. In the nineteenth century, the Portuguese colonisers even regarded creole as an intermediary stage "on the way to speaking and being Portuguese" (Pardue 2015: 42). In the description above, however, the term creole is rather used as a badge of honour for Cabo Verdeans as it is placed in the context of the anti-colonial struggle.

Voz de Cabo Verde was one of the first internationally successful Cabo Verdean music groups to be integrated into this diverse landscape of night scenes: as well as performing in Cabo Verde, they played in Dutch and Belgian clubs and in nightlife venues of the Cabo Verdean communities across Europe, in France, Luxembourg, and Portugal. Silva landed a contract with Rotterdam's La Bonanza in 1968, where they became the house band and played several evenings a week.

The cover of the album *Meché* ('Shake') produced in 1969, seen in Figure 18 on the next page, shows a series of photos of the group with their own instruments inside and outside La Bonanza, including at the bar, on stage, and in front of the building. Meanwhile, the nightlife activities employed at this venue coexisted with more the politically oriented activities of the label, which were discussed in the first chapter.

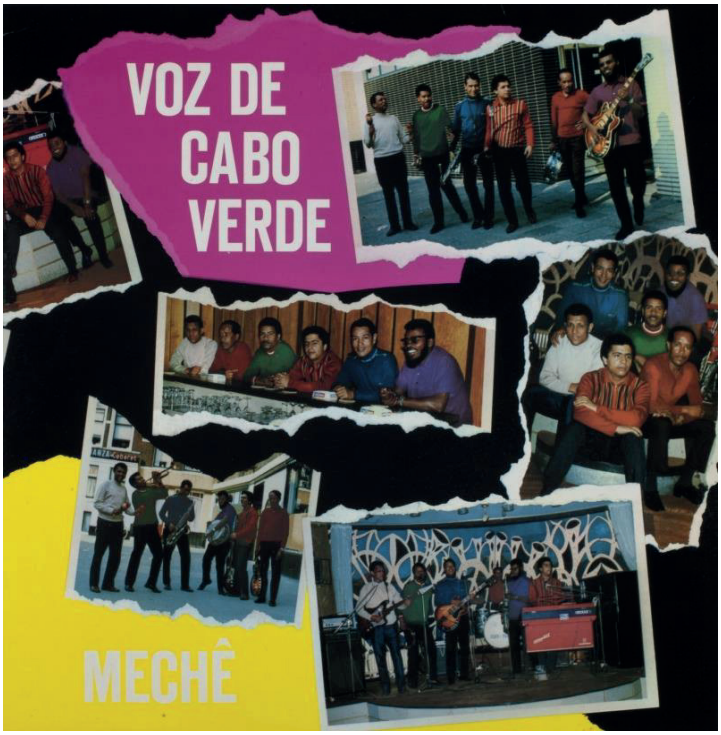

Figure 18: *Meché* Album Cover, 1969. Copyright Morabeza Records Int.

At La Bonanza Voz de Cabo Verde played a repertoire of mainly Latin American music styles, including *cumbia*, *merengue* and *samba*. Cabo Verdean music styles such as *morna* and *coladeira* were for the most part played for recordings and at Cabo Verdean parties, even though the stirring rhythms of coladeira would also be played in La Bonanza at times. The owner of the club wanted them to play mostly Latin American music, in line with the 'tropical' Latin theme. The group even switched vocalists, replacing Bana for Djosinha to satisfy Hidalgo's wishes as Bana almost exclusively sung mornas and coladeiras. The group's adaptability and versatility are well-reflected in their music production: "along with the dance styles in vogue in Europe, the group recorded in their phonograms a substantial repertoire of mornas and coladeiras, vocalised or in instrumental versions […] which circulated in Portugal, in the then African colonies and in the centres of the Cape Verdean diaspora" (Cidra 2008b: 114, translation added). This first popular Cabo Verdean music group was thus in a

sense entangled in both political and commercial circuits, each of which had a particular place and time. Whereas recordings were integrated in streams of information and images oriented towards Cabo Verdeans in the context of a political struggle, the group was also integrated into a nightclub scene that offered transnational forms of entertainment. At the same time, these spaces still offered room for generating a sense of belonging in the diaspora. Voz de Cabo Verde's residency in La Bonanza is in this sense an example of how different cultural, political and ideological flows are interwoven in nightlife, entertaining both foreigners and the diaspora.

Unlike other venues that were marketed towards mainly white and western preferences, performances in La Bonanza included a variety of standardised or stereotyped performances of Latin American music and entertainment, as well as black jazz. Catering towards an ethnically diverse audience, these commercialised nights out created experiences that drew on the popular imagination of foreign cultures. In this sense, foreign cultures were commodified towards a standardised (formula of) commercial cultural expression and captured within representations of leisure and entertainment that were both reproducible and accessible. Cultural performances can also be read within the context of what Huggan has called the "postcolonial exotic" (2001), in which a product/show/performance is marketed towards a particular audience, made familiar, and in which cultural expressions are commodified so that they can be enjoyed. In this way, La Bonanza provided a space for the integration of Cabo Verdean music performance into a somewhat 'exoticised' cultural product. Even though the group obtained an iconic status as a Cabo Verdean musical reference, in Rotterdam it was integrated into a commercial cultural circuit surrounded by a tropical, Latin-American or Caribbean commercial image, which can also be observed in nightlife venues such as La Bonanza and Habanera. It is, however, inaccurate to consider the

integration of Cabo Verdean music (groups) into this image as dependent exclusively on processes based on cultural homogenisation.

Considering that "globalisation is itself a deeply historical, uneven and even localising process" (Appadurai 1996: 17) and migration, settlement and integration occur within a context of power-relations, the cultural context of the development of a Cabo Verdean night scene cannot be seen separate from what Appadurai has coined "global cultural flows" or the (rapid) "flow of mass-mediated images, scripts and sensations" (Appadurai 1996: 4). Simply put, artists, songs and performances are always and already influenced by the representations and sounds that surround them. This is even more evident in the case of the Cabo Verdean community, where both artists and nightlife visitors often travelled the world as sailors (also often passing through and along Latin America) and thus were exposed to different music styles, venues and forms of nightlife. Thus instead, hybridities, cross-cultural flows and intercultural exchange should be emphasised, "producing locality in (new) globalised ways" (Appadurai 1996: 9).

A playful appropriation of the commodified Latin-American cultural expressions that could be found in places as La Bonanza are also visible on the cover of Luis Morais' album *Luis Morais em La Bonanza*, shown in Figure 19 on the next page.

Luis Morais (1935-2002) was the saxophonist of Voz de Cabo Verde, and the music on his album is also the music played in La Bonanza at the time. During that period they played in a more commercial format (Gonçalves 2021). The album features Latin American songs, and the album cover brings together a collection of stereotypical images: two barefooted men with ponchos and headgear sit on the floor, while behind them stands a woman with a turban reminiscent of Brazilian star Carmen Miranda, thus playing with the representation of Latin American pop culture that was performed at La Bonanza.

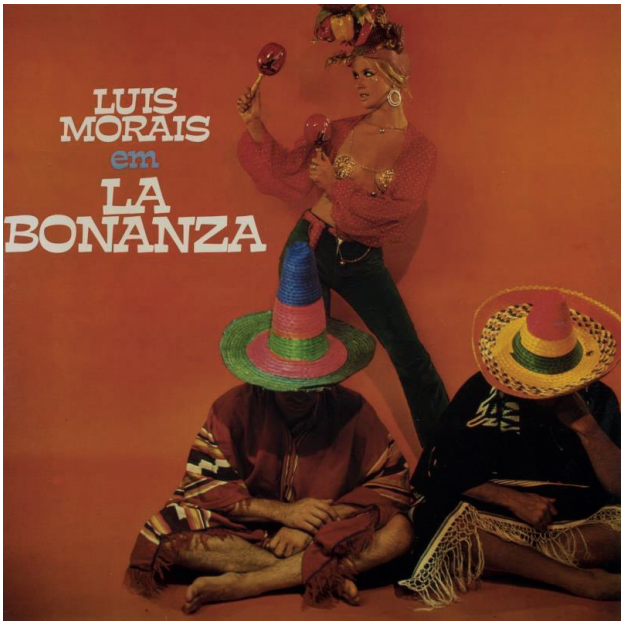

Figure 19: Luis Morais em La Bonanza Album Cover, 1974.
Copyright Morabeza Record Int.

Socialising on the dancefloor

With the arrival of Voz de Cabo Verde in La Bonanza, a larger Cabo Verdean crowd was also drawn to the nightclub. In the social realm, La Bonanza offered a space of transnational encounter (both musical and between communities) and of re-encounter with fellow Cabo Verdeans. Interactions with strangers were common: sailors from other countries, tourists, locals and visitors of both sexes mixed in this space. The dancefloor functioned as a space of inevitable cultural mixing, and sometimes collision. It also served as a space of re-encounter: of those Cabo Verdeans that had departed from the same country and were able to socialise with each other 'between ships', or with those that had already settled on land. The dancefloor was simultaneously a space in which common cultural references could be enjoyed collectively. In a Rotterdam neighbourhood newspaper, a Cabo Verdean migrant remembers his first experiences of La Bonanza as a 16 or 17-year old, while waiting on land to board another ship:

> You saw so many familiar faces… greeting… kisses… shaking hands at tables… a couple of beers to warm up […] We danced the *cumbia* … When 'Quem tem odio' or 'Terezinha' were played the dancefloor exploded. Merengues, sambas, coladeiras, yeah yeah… Djosinha was the king on the podium, he jumped right in the middle of the audience. Luis Morais was the joker — always teasing, always with a drink: "Listen, there is no bad grogue, it's about how you feel - FORMIDABLE!"(Hart 2012)

In La Bonanza, both artists and audiences appropriated various cultural forms and the enjoyment of this blend is emphasised, with crowds enjoying equally the cumbias mentioned above, but also Cabo Verdean coladeira hits such as 'Quem tem Odio' ('Who has hate'), by Cesária Évora and 'Terezinha' ('Little Tereza') by Voz de Cabo Verde. There was room to meet acquaintances and to enjoy the entertaining scenes caused by the popular artists on stage. Cabo Verdean music, artists and music groups were soon firmly integrated into the dancing and nightclub scenes of Rotterdam and other European countries, while Cabo Verdeans enjoyed nocturnal entertainment outside of community-founded spaces, engaging with the (transnational) cultural expressions and circuits that found their way to Rotterdam. In fact, the Latin American hits of the time, for example those played by Voz de Cabo Verde in La Bonanza, became popular among the Cabo Verdean public outside this club and began to be played at other parties (Gonçalves 2021), including at more exclusively Cabo Verdean events which will be discussed later. Early nightclubs were a privileged site which accommodated encounters in an informal, casual setting. As such, these spaces simultaneously functioned to generate a sense of community through shared experiences of enjoyment and encounter.

The politics of nightlife

As previously discussed, at the time when Cabo Verdean sailors began arriving in Rotterdam, no Cabo Verdean clubs, associations or music spaces existed in the city. However several clubs were frequented by Cabo Verdeans, such as La Bonanza and Habanera. During this period, Cabo Verdeans would also more often gather at their own homes or at boarding houses to play and enjoy Cabo Verdean music. However over time a shift from private to public spaces took place, and soon Cabo Verdean groups no longer exclusively performed in intercultural spaces such as La Bonanza, as groups and partygoers alike began to get their money's worth elsewhere in the city. When larger numbers of Cabo Verdeans settled in Rotterdam from the mid-1960s onwards, a night scene directed towards and created by Cabo Verdeans started appearing and more and more community organisations were founded.

Writer Mendes da Silva describes this change in an interview, when he explains to us what nightlife was like for him when he arrived in Rotterdam in the mid-1960s:

> I loved to dance, I danced a lot, always, every week I danced. At first, I danced in Bristol, which was a little 'dancing' close to the Weena Fountain. A pretty little 'dancing' with only pretty women, lots of pretty women, but later that place closed. I immediately went to dance at the Casino de Paris, near the Euromast, I went there for a while, but that one closed too. But then Cabo Verdean music appeared, Cabo Verdean players, I went to go dancing at Cabo Verdean dance parties. But at first it was just Dutch [clubs], there were no Cabo Verdean parties. (Mendes da Silva 2019, translation added)

In the early 1970s, many events started to be organised by Cabo Verdean clubs and associations that were committed to the well-being of the community in Rotterdam. During

the day, both the artists and the organisers that lived ashore worked in Rotterdam's factories and other companies, and they organised nighttime events in their spare time. Organisers contracted groups from Cabo Verde to play in the Netherlands as a way to promote Cabo Verdean culture in the diaspora, but also to invest in cultural exchanges to increase visibility in Dutch society (Rodrigues 2019).

Parties and associations

Community organisations often strove to contribute to the independence of Cabo Verde by organising cultural and social events, including nighttime (music) events. These activities always took place in the after-hours: "cultural life, club life, everything always took place after working hours. After work you went to the association, you went to the meetings, you went to parties, you went to practice [music], everything took place at night and in the evenings" (Gonçalves 2021, translation added). One of the most prominent Cabo Verdean organisations in Rotterdam was the Associação Caboverdiana ('Cabo Verdean Association'), which had been founded in 1967 to meet the needs of newcomers for housing and mutual contact (Pires 2006: 10). As sociologist Doris Pires mentions, this organisation was founded by pioneers such as João Silva and other members of the Cabo Verdean resistance against Portugal, and it had an emancipatory goal to create awareness among the Cabo Verdeans of their own culture. Members and sympathisers of the independence movement actively joined to promote their Cabo Verdean identity. To overcome a lack of funding and in the absence of governmental support, the association started to organise the first Cabo Verdean nights in Rotterdam to raise money and awareness. The first of these parties was organised in Café Arena (Pires 2006: 105), which was located on the Marconiplein in the Delfshaven district, a place the association would come to rent every week in order to organise dance nights. With the income from the bar and entry fees they would finance their other activities including literacy lessons, card evenings and the establishment of a Cabo Verdean football club. In the

1970s, a small childcare centre was also organised for working mothers (Pires 2006: 104-105).

As one prominent member of the association recalls, "Cabo Verdeans organised many dance evenings. But the dances were there to get people involved, to sell their political story" (Sailor A 2014, translation added). As Gonçalves mentions

> The purpose of those parties was to gather people, give people a good time, make people aware of… hey, remember, our youth? Cabo Verde, Cabo Verdean music, we are not Portuguese, those are elements that always came back at parties. The people who organised it did it consciously, but the people who went there, it was giving those people a good feeling, so that they could have some fun and be a Cabo Verdean for a while. It was something psychological, but it wasn't something handed to you on a pamphlet. (Gonçalves 2021, translation added)

In this sense, party nights can be seen in light of the political ideas and motives of the Associação Caboverdiana and other organisations that sought to promote a Cabo Verdean identity and consciousness in the diaspora, even though this often occurred in a less obvious manner. It was mainly small elements that were used during parties, such as food, drink and music, that were supposed to provide a sense of collective self that was distinct from what was Portuguese:

> Everything you encountered was typically Cabo Verdean, 'Cabo Verdeanness' was celebrated. The Cabo Verdean snacks, which were different from the Portuguese, Cabo Verdean rum, which was different from the Portuguese, our music, different from the

> Portuguese… 'We are different from the Portuguese', that was always the focus of those kinds of moments and activities. (Gonçalves 2021, translation added)

According to da Graça, besides its social and cultural role the association was focused on promoting the political consciousness of Cabo Verdeans in the diaspora and some board members were strongly influenced by the political ideas of Amílcar Cabral, leader of the PAIGC. In the 1970s, an underground group linked to the PAIGC was even formed to stimulate this consciousness (Graça 2010: 56). As João Silva states in his autobiographical book *De Ribeira Bote a Roterdão*, he and others who helped organise the community played an important social role, and for a quick socialisation of the community they organised cultural and social activities, sports, music and other activities (Silva 2009: 120). It is clear that many activities were inspired by a political consciousness based on the PAIGC party's ideology: "Amílcar Cabral sent instructions directly to the PAIGC cell in the Netherlands, that I coordinated, and which had as its mission to spread the Cabo Verdean culture in the diaspora, to do everything to make sure it is preserved and nurtured" (Silva 2009: 131, translation added). The PAIGC's party-ideology played an important role within the association, and this ideology was directly connected to ideas on the socialisation and consciousness of the community, which was also stimulated through nightlife events.

Even though the activities of the Associação can be seen in light of more institutionalised practices, night spaces were fundamental in bringing a community together and making it visible, in order to create a sense of collective self. The Cabo Verdean music and night scene thus developed in parallel and in conjunction to the (political) institutionalisation of the Cabo Verdean community. Many other organisations would follow in their footsteps. These organisations, often linked to the island or to a city of origin, mostly had the same programs and intentions, focusing mainly on football and social-cultural

activities. The organisation of parties was particularly popular amongst these organisations (Pires 2006: 106), and even today there remain organisations and clubs that host live music frequently.

The politics of music

This crisscrossing of pleasure, politics and culture was particularly visible when interviewing Manuel Felipe Rodrigues (1941-2021), a first-generation party organiser who arrived in the Netherlands as a sailor in 1964 and organised many nighttime events during the 1970s and 1980s. Besides organising in the night scene, Rodrigues was one of the founders of the summer carnival in 1982 which has since become an important annual tradition in Rotterdam to this day, and in which groups from the Dutch Antilles, Suriname and Cabo Verde participate, mirroring the carnival parades seen in Cabo Verde. He also brought Cesária Évora to the Netherlands for the first time to perform in Ocean Paradise around 1990, better known as the 'Chinese boat', which is located at the Parkhaven in the old harbour area. This was long before she performed in 1992 in the official music hall De Doelen.

Music events that he organised were inspired by political and cultural ideas: "to inspire Cabo Verdeans to have the right to participate in society. This was all part of it, of creating a Cabo Verdean society" (Rodrigues 2021, translation added). It was also a means by which to generate cultural affiliation and to generate a connection to an imagined homeland for younger generations. "People of all ages came. When we started organising parties, we took our children with us to teach them how it was, our culture, our habits" (Rodrigues 2019, translation added). In this sense it is important to note that the parties that Rodrigues organised also had a conscious educational component. Moreover, parties were not only organised for (and attended by) a private audience, but "for everyone, especially to get to know the custom of Cabo Verdeans, as humble people, who like to share with others" and "to

promote the culture of Cabo Verde, for the recognition of us being a people" (Rodrigues 2019, translation added). Rodrigues contracted groups from Cabo Verde to play in the Netherlands as a means of cultural promotion, while also acknowledging that "people simply wanted to dance" (Rodrigues 2019, translation added) and came to enjoy themselves. A distinction needs to be made, however, between party nights, which were mainly occasions to dance, socialise, drink and listen to music, which were also known as 'festas populares', and the music performances included in cultural, social and political events. Even though the Cabo Verdean nightlife that we have discussed so far draws clear ideological inspiration from ideas of Cabo Verdeanness and community, it is particularly the cultural events that are more heavily inspired by political ideas based on the (intellectual) legacy of the PAIGC and Amílcar Cabral.

The parties organised by Rodrigues and other organisers within the Cabo Verdean community were located in various places in the city. Unlike the many pubs that were located around the port area and around the Nieuwe Binnenweg, many discotheques and party halls were located more centrally in Rotterdam, at least until the 1980s and 1990s. For example, parties were organised in the banquet hall of the Ton Menken ice rink, which opened in 1978 (and was demolished again in 1996) and which was located next to Central Station. Other banquet halls were also found around the central station, including the Fantastique ballroom and Congrescentrum Engels ('Conference Centre Engels'). In addition there were also venues located in other parts of the city, such as the Trefcentrum ('Meeting centre'), which was located in an old candy factory east of the city centre, and the Royal Partycentrum ('Royal Party Centre'), also located on Marconiplein.

The concept of organising parties was often not complicated. The boss of a hall was usually Dutch, and they would manage the bar. A group of musicians was hired, and partygoers paid a small entrance fee (Rodrigues mentioned 5 guilders, approximately €2) to

pay for the band. For example, Rodrigues explained that organising a party at the Ton Menken ice rink cost only 100 guilders, and you never paid more than 500 guilders for other venues: “the owners of the venue sold their drinks, and the people came to dance. We didn’t profit from the bar ourselves. Food was also sold by the bar, but at the time it wasn’t very expensive — you bought a portion of fries, gave a guilder, even less, and all of this was organised on a voluntary basis” (Rodrigues 2019, translation added).

How music spaces connect to politics is crucial for understanding the construction of a common collective in which shared histories and shared origins are part of an imagination that is transmitted through music. Considering the political context in which the Cabo Verdean diaspora was formed, and how socialisation stimulated a consciousness linked to the home country, it is in the night that this consciousness was stimulated. Borrowing from Fouquet (2016), indeed the spaces in which these activities occur could be considered nightscapes through and in which political, cultural and historical imaginations and ideas circulate, and are negotiated and appropriated. These processes that occur in nighttime spaces are also significant for new arrivals seeking a place in the host society. Anthropologist Néstor Canclini explains the importance of place-making and how solidarity and entertainment are linked:

> It is logical that this vulnerable or uncertain condition encourages the maintenance of frequent ties with compatriots in the new country and in the home country. The difficulties of integrating into the host society encourage solidarity networks, emblematic places of encounter and entertainment (parks, restaurants, bars, and clubs). (Canclini 2014: 91)

Location not only serves as a physical place to celebrate something, but becomes part of the symbolic spaces of a community in and through practices of musicking. In the Cabo Verdean

context, music spaces could function as a shelter in which one finds "cultural comfort from the hostile world outside" and where a community is able to "develop their own music and dance cultures" (Sedano 2019: 273), creating a space in which the colonial Portuguese cultural ideology could be questioned through alternative practices of resistance. In this context, security could be found in musical expression. While local music styles were often prohibited by the Portuguese authorities in Cabo Verde, music styles such as morna, coladeira and *funaná* thrived in the diaspora. During any Cabo Verdean night one could expect these music styles to be played, and it is particularly the morna, a melancholy musical style, that serves to express the sentiment of the colonial situation that Cabo Verdeans lived in under the Portuguese. Organiser Rodrigues explained the role of morna in diasporic nightlife as follows: "Cabo Verdean people like music; morna, they like it because it expresses the feeling of the colonial situation which we lived under the Portuguese. That's why these people left to find a better life" (2019, translation added). In this context, music functions as a vehicle through which solidarity can be generated and information transmitted, but through which affects can also be spread. In this context, drawing on geographer Ben Anderson (2006) I understand affecting or being affected as "taking place during spatially and temporally distributed encounters" (735) and connected to the idea of hope and possibility, where (feelings of) oppression and melancholy are in tension with the contemplation of a better life abroad.

Music is also actively used to shape a transnational diaspora 'feeling' or grouping, connected to the homeland: "the experience of interpretation and listening for the interpreters and listeners triggers individual and collective processes of imagination and of proximity to Cabo Verde, of configuration of memory and experience of identities" (Cidra 2008a: 201-202). The imagination of a shared homeland, and also a history, present and future, was critical to the construction of a common collective. In encouraging listening, dancing, and being together, music played an important role in this process by developing and transmitting

particular narratives and imaginations. Commercial motivations aside, the organisation of nightlife was also linked to political ideas in which solidarity with co-nationals played an important role. The imaginations that are produced are partially constructed through the re-working of histories at home and abroad through music, which was played, listened to and interpreted during the after-hours in Cabo Verdean nightlife. Music played an important role in imagining the homeland within a political context, but also within the context of the host society. It worked to create orders in which specific political and cultural ideas were reiterated in night spaces, and through which, in Appadurai's words, "diverse local experiences of taste, pleasure, and politics can crisscross with another, thus creating the possibility of convergences in translocal social action that would otherwise be hard to imagine" (1996: 8).

Life and the night in music

Already from the early days of migration, music became a medium through which concerns could be voiced, discussed, but also questioned. Even though music transports listeners to places, this is frequently done not with the purpose of reminding, exciting or pleasing, but rather to remind Cabo Verdeans of their position as foreigners in Dutch society, often as illegal migrants, and to define appropriate behaviour and emphasise the Cabo Verdeanness of these immigrants. Amongst other ways, this is achieved by commenting on experiences in particular important places in the history of Cabo Verdean migration to Rotterdam, such as those of nightlife. The first section of this chapter mainly emphasised the nightclub La Bonanza, which played an important role in the early nightlife of the Cabo Verdeans. In 'Lucy d'Nho Morgode' ('Lucy of Mister Morgode'), a 1980 song by Bana, a conversation takes place between two men from the islands of Cabo Verde who meet each other somewhere in Rotterdam at night and end up going together to a nightclub:

Nacionalidade o que bo e?
Mim e fidju di caboverdeano …

U ke k bo tem feito desd que bo txiga ki?
Nha vida e rodea ta ospia traboi …

Nos ba, nos ba,
dança na Martinique
Ka bo preocupa
Virgem Maria ta ramedia

What nationality are you?
I am a child of Cabo Verde
What have you done since you are here?
Walking in circles looking for a job.

Let's go, let's go,
Dance in Martinique
Don't you worry.
Virgin Mary will solve it.

(Bana 1980, translation added)

In this encounter narrated by Bana, one man inquires what the other man's nationality is, and finds himself talking to a compatriot seeking some distraction in the nighttime city. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter on work life, going out, having fun, drinking and partying, or what could be considered the 'pleasure' side of the night, almost appears to be a direct consequence of the activities of the day. Working days are often depicted in music as frustrating endeavours, emphasising the struggle of finding fair jobs or working in unfair or illegal conditions. A continuation of the working day or days spent job-seeking, both of which are found in these same narratives, often seems to be placed in the context of pleasure seeking — visiting bars, dancing, drinking, meeting other Cabo Verdeans or potential romantic company — as a release valve. Often on the weekends this continuum extended towards the nightclubs of Rotterdam, while bars were more often visited earlier at night and during weekdays. Having a hard time finding work during the day, describing life as mainly consisting of "walking in circles", the man invites his new acquaintance to go out to a club in Rotterdam: letting off some steam, interrupting the cycle of boredom and stress that migrant life brought, meeting fellow Cabo Verdeans, and perhaps, a lady, Lucy, to "dance some

reggae with". Incidentally, Martinique was allegedly a pseudonym for the Latin-American Nightclub La Bonanza.[16]

As narratives show, the city is not experienced or recorded equally by all artists — or by their audiences. On some occasions, actual (often playful) discussions arise between artists in songs. These discussions include certain interpretations and visions on the working conditions and the position of Cabo Verdeans in Dutch society, whether Rotterdam is viewed as either an exclusive or inclusive city, if Cabo Verdeans are worthy citizens of Dutch society, and if it is worth living in the Netherlands. Contrasting interpretations and representations of city life reveal issues of citizenship and belonging in relation to Dutch society. It is in this sense that artists generate a particular atmosphere of the night in music, as a practice of assemblage that generates several layers of meaning upon the night. Music assembles particular iterations of night spaces, thus creating imaginations of "the buzz, sensation and feeling of the city centre at night" (Shaw 2014: 93), which are indeed multiple.

In 1974 Bana launched a new album, *Contratempo*, meaning a setback, upset, or difficulty. One of the most popular tracks on this album was 'Holanda é ca d'bossa' ('Holland is not yours'), a testament to the difficulties of integrating into another society's customs and habits. The song was originally written by Manuel d'Novas, a sailor who had lived for some time in Rotterdam and was well integrated into the Dutch Cabo Verdean cultural scene. d'Novas is known as an 'emigrant composer' who understood how to translate common experiences of the Cabo Verdean migrant (Monteiro 2003, n.pag). The song, as can be read below, is hardly positive about Cabo Verdean migrants' position in the Netherlands:

Amdjor bô txá de falá snêra
Holanda é ka de bósa
Holanda é de Juliana
Holanda é de Holandês

[16] This was explained in conversations with Jorge Manuel Oliveira Lizardo.

e bô é kabeverdian
Ka bô txa nada konfundibe
kordá, bô spiá
Kemá es podê petóbe pa bem nadóde
e txegá ke lime na dente (x2)

You better stop talking foolishness
Holland is not yours
Holland is Juliana's
Holland is for the Dutchmen
And you are a Cabo Verdean
Don't let anything confuse you
Wake up, watch out
Because they can send you back swimming
And you'll get home with seaweed in your teeth.

(Bana 1980, translation added)

The song is a commentary on certain attitudes on the assimilation of Cabo Verdeans in the Netherlands: "you better stop talking foolishness". It captures the critical position of the composer towards issues of behaviour, but also of citizenship, where becoming Dutch seems an impossibility and Cabo Verdeanness needs to be preserved in the diaspora. In a short analysis of this song, Juliána Braz Dias states that the composer, Manuel d'Novas, reminds Cabo Verdeans that

> They are in the Netherlands, but also that they do not really belong there; that at any moment they may need to return home; that their true home is Cape Verde. He tells them to always keep some of their old Cape Verdean habits, even while they adopt new Dutch ways — for example, when he tells them to go ahead and have krakeling (biscuits) for a snack, or a Dutch beer. This song enforces the discourse regarding the construction of a Cape Verdean nation, emphasising the importance of maintaining the nation even in the diaspora. (Braz Dias 2008: 185)

This song discusses the lifestyles of Cabo Verdeans in the Netherlands, telling them to enjoy Dutch privileges while realising that they will never really be Dutch because 'Holland is Juliana's' — referring to the then-Queen.

'Mi também é Holandes' ('I am also Dutch'), by Africa Star (1982), serves as a response to Holanda é ca d'bossa. While Holanda é ca d'bossa denies citizenship status to Cabo Verdeans in the Netherlands, Mi também é Holandes asserts the opposite: "remember that my passport is Dutch, I'm married to a Dutch woman":

Se Holanda e ka di bossa,
Se Holanda e di Juliana
Se Holanda e de holandês,
Mas ta enganado, mas esh ka lembra,
ma mim e holandés
nha pasaporte e holandes,
mim e casado ma Holandeza.

If Holland is not yours
If Holland is Juliana's
If Holland is of the Dutch.
But you are wrong, don't you remember
That I am Dutch
My passport is Dutch
I am married to a Dutch women

(Africa Star 1982, translation added)

The song then continues to discuss some very particular conditions for being Dutch:

M tem bizzniss, ntem discoteca […]
M'ta trabalha na terra, m'tem um bar

I have a business, I have a discotheque,
I work on land, I have a bar.

(Africa Star 1982, translation added)

Indeed, this last fragment refers to the fact that in the 1970s, years worked on land counted towards obtaining a residence permit, unlike years worked at sea. The fragment emphasises how much the singer regards himself as Dutch and belonging there. Not only because he has a

Dutch passport, but also because he works on land and has his own business (a disco or bar). For a majority of Cabo Verdeans, however, owning a property or a business was not a reality, especially not during the early days of migration. Yet even while this song does not reflect a common reality for most Cabo Verdean migrants, it does comment on the perceived need to succeed in the diaspora, and serves to oppose the stories of hardship and failure often found in music written by various other artists. While this song does not emphasise a lavish lifestyle, it does oppose the slightly strict vision of belonging that Bana presents.

Meanwhile, other voices in Cabo Verdean music celebrate a lifestyle of leisure and pleasure, much in line with what anthropologist Alan P. Merriam has argued about the role of music for a community:

> Songs could be, however, both forms of social control — reflecting the ethos of a particular culture, in terms of values, sanctions and problems — and a means of challenging norms, through the expression of feelings that could not be spoken in other contexts (Merriam cited in Connell and Gibson 2003: 24).

Indeed, we should not view music practices in this context exclusively as a unifying mechanism, as if to inextricably bind and connect all members of a neatly defined community. Many Cabo Verdean artists wrote songs about Rotterdam, in which nightlife is a prominent theme. Most striking is that a dialogue develops between the composers, in which music becomes a moral playing field upon which behaviours are observed, evaluated and judged by the artists and listeners of the community. It is a way to transmit opinions and is in this way a cornerstone in public debate. Whereas in the chapter on labour, for example, a more dramatic narrative was drawn of the daily rhythms of Cabo Verdeans in the city, in which this rhythm was much more depicted as a struggle from which the night served as a

release, emphasising the hardships of migration, the next song, titled 'Bem Qu'el Lorge', criticises these same rhythms and how people spent their time (and money):

Bo deve lembra c'ma bo câ Holandes
Tambem ca bo esquese c'ma bo ta na estrangeiro.
Ganha bo vida ca bo gasta dum vez
Quem guarda siguida ta vive c'onradez

El bem, qu'el largue
El ba dritinho pa Vigmar
Hora quel kabâ
E outra vez pa mar

You should remember that you're not Dutch
You also shouldn't forget that you're abroad
Earn your life and don't spend it all at once
The one who saves lives with honour

There comes the money
And he went directly to Vigmar's
When it's all spent
He's off to sea again.

(Voz de Cabo Verde 1969, translation added)

Earning money, spending it, then having to go aboard again to earn money, forms a vicious circle linked to ideas of living a not-so-earnest life. This song reminds listeners of the fact that they are not Dutch and should therefore save money instead of wasting it on drinks, in order to live an honourable life. In 'Bem Qu'el Lorge' (roughly 'Money's received'), a 1969 song by Voz de Cabo Verde, the group criticises the lifestyles of Cabo Verdeans sailors coming ashore in Rotterdam. In this song, the lyrics connect nightlife to unnecessary spending and drinking, and instead propose a more sober lifestyle. In this vision, Cabo Verdeanness is connected not to exuberance and wasting money on hedonistic lifestyles but to an ideal of living modestly in order to be able to return to the islands and afford a life for your family.

It is striking that Cabo Verdean music not only reminds people of the beauty of the homeland, which has always been a major theme, but that it serves as a voice for the communities that start to take shape elsewhere in the world. One of the prominently discussed

issues is correct (or incorrect) behaviour in these other places, and these are similarly connected to ideas on incorrect behaviour in nightlife contexts. Place is contested through music as criticisms highlight the irresponsible behaviour of fellow Cabo Verdeans in particular venues of the night in Rotterdam. Especially considering the uncertain circumstances in which (initially only male) Cabo Verdeans would find themselves in the city looking for work, often illegally, many songs related to nightlife and leisure are a call to use common sense in these situations, not to exacerbate hardship by spending recklessly, and to position themselves as 'humble beings' in foreign society. Nightlife is, in this sense, a luxury that few should afford.

About a decade later another artist, Carlos Vieira, highlights a completely different attitude towards work and nightlife in 'Nõ Ta Da Póff' ('We're gonna smoke a joint') (1981):

Muit gente na Holanda
Krê traboi ês ka ta otchá
No ta otchá no ka krê
Vida kré nôs ê sô droga

Nô ta dá poff na Bel Ami
Nô ta ba spankál na Sató

Oh menish jam rolá um poff
Ma li dentro no ka ta dál
Sês panhone ês ta matone
Nô ba nô ba Bel Ami

Nô ta passá vid'assim
Sô ta anda dali pra lá

A lot of people in Holland
Want work and don't find it
We find it but don't want it
Our lives only want drugs.

We smoke a joint in Bel Ami
And we'll enjoy in Sató

Oh people I rolled one
But here we can't smoke
If they find us they'll kill us
Let's go to Bel Ami

We'll live our lives like that
From one side to the other

(Vieira 1981, translation added)

Almost completely opposed to the narratives previously encountered, in which work life is approached from a perspective of marginalisation and hardship and where nightlife should be celebrated with some restraint, Carlos Vieira's Nõ Ta Da Póff celebrates a lifestyle of leisure, pleasure and drugs. Vieira proposes to go to Bel Ami, a club located in the Hague, or to a Cabo Verdean owned disco, Sató, which in the 1970s was located in the Weena business district in Rotterdam. The singer boasts that while many of his fellow Cabo Verdeans "want work and don't find it", he and his friends "find it but don't want it", countering the common narrative of struggle and impossibility and refuting the typical port work life of Cabo Verdeans.

Some composers, rather than criticising or glorifying excessive nightlife activities, instead point to what they see as more proper ways of enjoying the night as Cabo Verdeans in the diaspora, such as in 'Viagem de Costa':

Bem escuta realidade de nos terra,
ka bo ser engrato dess manera
desd bo méte pe na estrangeiro
ta toma ness pils, bo esquese se bo e fidjo nacional caboverdiano
…
Ben brincá na nôte caboverdiana,
ben dança na baile popular
se bo e caboverdeano,
bem relembra nos pikapada's
e ka bo confude funky ku nacionalidade

Come listen to the reality of our land.
Don't be so ungrateful,
Since you set foot on foreign land,
Drinking pilsner, you're forgetting that you are a child of Cabo Verde.
…
Come play at the Cabo Verdean Night.
Come dance at our dance night.
If you are Cabo Verdean,

Remember our pikapadas,
And don't confuse funk with your nationality.

(Fortes 1986, translation added)

In Viagem de Costa ('Coast Travel'), composer Faria Júnior (b. 1948), calls for more attention towards the "reality of our land" and to appreciate Cabo Verdean nationality in the diaspora. The loss of a feeling of Cabo Verdeanness caused by adapting foreign traits and preferences — drinking pilsner, dancing to rock and funk music — is contrasted with what could be considered more 'pure' Cabo Verdean cultural expressions, such as morna and coladeira, which should instead be enjoyed. As the performer of the song, Jacqueline Fortes (b. 1954) mentions in a personal interview, "a lot of people arrive here, they become part of an environment here, and they don't even listen to Cabo Verde's music" (Fortes 2020, translation added). It is in this sense that one should not confuse funk with nationality, or foreign styles with those more traditionally considered Cabo Verdean: "you are Cabo Verdean, don't think you're American or Dutch. It's to remember that this person is actually Cabo Verdean" (Fortes 2020, translation added). The song suggests visiting a more authentic Cabo Verdean nightlife event, the *Pikapada*, which are popular parties that feature live music and/or DJs and often continue until late in the night.

The night can thus be seen as a playing field on which the social relations of the community are negotiated. Discussions about how the night is properly celebrated include themes of tradition, national identity, morality and appropriate behaviour. This evidences how night spaces are inherently dynamic, and are experienced differently throughout a community; what the night or a night space 'means' in terms of feelings of belonging depends on these experiences, on social backgrounds and relations, and the value placed on traditions.

Contemporary Cabo Verdean nights and memory

Initially night spaces served to relieve the pressure of the daily persecution of Cabo Verdeans by the colonial regime and became an instrument for generating Cabo Verdean consciousness in the diaspora. Simultaneously, they provided a means for integrating into the urban spaces of Rotterdam. Early Cabo Verdean nightlife in the 1960s and 1970s was predominantly organised in venues owned by Dutch citizens, and organisers would simply rent a hall. A band would be contracted, either from the Netherlands, elsewhere in the Cabo Verdean diaspora or from Cabo Verde itself, and an entrance fee would cover the costs for rent and the music group. Even so, a collective memory of space has formed over the years in relation to particular locations in the city. Organisers often built relationships with venue owners and would host reoccurring parties at the same location for extended periods of time. The experiences in these common locations have also produced connections with particular places. Since the 1970s there were a handful of venues that were owned and run by Cabo Verdeans, which became important meeting points, and throughout the history of Cabo Verdean migration to the Netherlands, each decade had its places that were significant for the construction of a community.

The next section will focus on the re-appropriation of the memory of several significant night spaces for the Cabo Verdean community, and how they are promoted in contemporary nightlife in terms of belonging. This chapter jumps from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to the new millennium. Yet, it bridges the nightlife activities in the 1990s by analysing the collective memory that still exists today, of nightlife venues in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Cabo Verdeans have an active memory of community nightlife and the various locales in which events were hosted. Particular places and memories thereof are mentioned with a sense of nostalgia, where Cabo Verdeans used to meet and have fun together. Music is an

important trans-generational binding element, connecting not only recent migrants with each other and with Cabo Verde, but also with descendants of previous migrants (Pires 2006: 119). La Bonanza and Habanera became the first places where Cabo Verdean music was played and Cabo Verdean men came together to enjoy music during nights out, and where both Cabo Verdean classics and Latin American music more broadly got the crowd going. In the 1970s and 1980s, several Cabo Verdean owned establishments opened in Rotterdam. These included the Butterfly Bar, located on the 's Gravendijkwal, an avenue that runs from Rotterdam's River Maas to the city centre, as well as the Scotch Inn, Tipoia's café, and Sató discotheque, which was mentioned before. Many of these places, including those owned by Dutch people, are connected by the fact that various Cabo Verdean artists have sung about them over the years, often through various lenses, as we saw in the previous section.

Rotterdam is a city that is in constant movement and (re)construction, and thus these places mentioned before have all been repurposed, changed owners or have been demolished as of today. A nighttime party scene continued to evolve throughout the 1980s and 1990s, establishing new relations between performers, audiences and nighttime venues. Several of these places have since been swallowed up by urban development projects as the city council focused on "the development of prestige projects" in several areas including the city centre (McCarthy 1999: 306). New places arose that took their place though, and became central to the nightlife of the Cabo Verdeans in Rotterdam. In the 1980s, several locations opened on the Schuttevaerweg, located opposite the Spangen neighbourhood in Delfshaven district, including SunClub, Blokhut, Scouting, Real Parbo Football Club and Voorwaarts Football Club. Not only was this cluster close to the district in which the majority of Cabo Verdeans have historically lived and still live, but it was also close to the Van Nelle Factory where many Cabo Verdeans that settled in Rotterdam had been working since the 1960s. The area was colloquially known as 'Vanella' by Cabo Verdeans, and served as the main location for

Cabo Verdean parties during the weekends from the 1980s until 2017, when most of the venues were demolished. As current organiser and DJ Arnaldo Soares explains, while the parties in SunClub attracted a somewhat younger audience with the more modern sounds of that decade, such as *zouk* and *swingbeat* in the 1980s, and *cabo-swing*, *cabo-zouk*, and R&B in the 1990s, the other halls in the area attracted an older generation that mostly enjoyed the more traditional Cabo Verdean coladeiras (Soares 2020). These places, and in particular SunClub, will appear in the analysis of several recent events that appropriate the memory of places well-known within the community.

Even though Cabo Verdean-owned venues were scarce, and the ones on the Schuttevaerweg, for example, were owned mainly by Dutch-Surinamese organisations, one cultural producer describes two centrally located venues in the 1990s:

> Fountain Paradise […] was unprecedented. It had a Cabo Verdean owner, just like Zu King, in the same street near Annabel, King's Place, on Hofplein, where BAR is now located. That block, called Schieblok, is where you had Fountain Paradise and Kingsplace, which became a Cabo Verdean domain in the 1990s. (Rodrigues 2019, translation added)

Indeed, a series of nightclubs emerged in the 1990s near the central station, whose owners were Cabo Verdean and which became immensely popular among the Cabo Verdean population in Rotterdam. Several other venues have also played an important role in Cabo Verdean nightlife, often connected to cultural, political or sporting associations. The 1990s, in this sense, were marked by two regions; the block near central station, and Vanella.

A sacred place: SunClub

In a recent song, 'Bolo ku Pudim', by one of the most famous contemporary Cabo Verdean artists, Nelson Freitas, born in Rotterdam, an encounter at the Vanella area is narrated:

Mbem paxoná
Pum loira na Vanela …. Bnitinha
Dicidi fka má ela
Nha passaporte kaduká

I fell in love
With a blonde at Vanella, pretty.
I decided to stay with her,
My passport expired.

(Freitas 2019, translation added)

As the above lyrics in Freitas's song demonstrate, the artist engages with memories of nightlife in Rotterdam that are strongly linked to a particular place in the city. This can be explained not only by the fact that these places, in contrast with other temporary locations, have served for an extended period of time as a nightlife venue, but also because of the necessity for people living in a diaspora to "engage in creating places, transforming the urban landscape of contemporary cities" as both "symbolic and material expressions of local and translocal connections" are created (Ehrkamp 2005: 361). It is on the local level that spaces are created in which "some sense of being a citizen is made possible", which is often done in "everyday spaces of the city" (Kalandides and Vaiou 2012: 264). Kalandides and Vaiou refer to citizenship here not as an institutionalised status related to the nation-state, but instead argue that citizenship "works at the scale of everyday life in the city and links with the right to live in it and to develop daily routines and practices that contribute to produce/create urban space and in turn mobilise processes of inclusion and belonging" (2012: 264). The everydayness of spaces such as Vanella and its importance in popular memory showcase the importance of community spaces for generating a sense of belonging in the diaspora, particularly at night.

Freitas' song refers to the Cabo Verdean 'zone' of the city known as Vanella, rather than specifically to any of the clubs that existed there. It is a testimony of the area's popularity even today in the collective nighttime memory, and in fact, in contemporary nightlife, one way of 'theming' an event is to re-appropriate the memory of one particular nightlife location as a way of inviting guests to re-experience place. This is reflected in an advertisement on 'DJGuide.nl', a popular website for the promotion of nightlife events in the Netherlands:

> Saturday, June 30, we bring you back to the 80s / 90s / 00s when SunClub was a phenomenon in Rotterdam for many Cabo Verdeans. Remember how fun going out with your friends used to be in the then-popular SunClub venue? Parties such as Tcholda, Dominginhas, Ribeira Alta, Santiago, Maense were super fun! […] The best classics from the 80s / 90s / 00s in Pakhuis, which will be transformed into SunClub. In addition, the best Coladeira, Funaná, Zouk Love, R&B and house music! We'll make sure you move. The nice people, the atmosphere of the past and the beautiful warehouse location take care of the rest and we'll make SunClub Reunion a unique party .
> (Remember the good old times!! 2018)

SunClub, located in the Vanella area, was an event hall that had been used for Cabo Verdean parties since the 1980s until January 2017, when it was forced to close. The SunClub reunion was organised in 2018 by two Cabo Verdean DJs who used to be regulars at the venue. Several party organisations that had been established by immigrants from the same place of origin (these include Ribeira Alta and Santiago) and football clubs (Maense) had used SunClub and several other neighbouring venues as their main party location since the start, establishing long-term relationships with the renters over time. Several organisers regard these venues, and in particular SunClub, as a home port and part of Cabo Verdean history in

Rotterdam. As organiser Hermes Delgado mentions, it was seen almost as a "holy place" (Delgado 2020, translation added). He argues that, "Cabo Verdeans go to parties everywhere, but when it's a Cabo Verdean party, it had to be in SunClub" (Delgado 2020, translation added). DJ and organiser Arnaldo Soares confirmed that when organisers tried hosting an event at another location, visitors would "look around and say, 'what is this? This is not SunClub!'. It was hard for DJs to get people on the dancefloor because they were ill at ease" (Soares 2020, translation added).

Contemporary nightlife directed towards Cabo Verdeans or organised by Cabo Verdeans still comes in diverse forms; from traditional morna performances in small-scale venues such as restaurants and bars to larger parties which include DJs and international artists and take place in popular city centre venues. As seen in the previous example, a common phenomenon in the Cabo Verdean night scene is that of contemporary commercial organisers drawing on the history of Cabo Verdean nightlife in Rotterdam by organising events that invoke reflection on common memories in these places. These are memories that have been collectively shaped in particular places in the city, and they are in this sense memories of place. The following commercial text demonstrates the relation of yet other places, memory and community:

> Lembra in the Thalia Lounge is a household name since the previously sold-out edition. It turned out to be a party that a lot of 25-plus people were waiting for: with many memories of the atmosphere, the people, and mostly the golden years of Cabo Verdean music. Lembra brings visitors back to the time of parties in Fountain Paradise, Imperium, Palace, Ocean Paradise and the golden years for bands like Livity, Rabelados and Gil & the Perfects. Whomever recognises this should feel invited to relive these days. The Lembra

> band accompanies the popular band Cabo Verde Show, the tough boyband Jocel and the Cabo Verdean Diva Dina Medina with their greatest hits from the eighties and nineties. DJ Triumph and Sir Edward will spin the best (disco)tracks from those years and an airline ticket to Cabo Verde can be won. (Metro Netherlands 2014, translation added)

The landscape of nightlife venues changed over the years in part because many of the previous venues are not available anymore. Contemporary organisers seek more centrally located, often more upscale venues for their events. Thalia Lounge – now called Club Villa Thalia – where Lembra was hosted, is a popular venue in the city centre of Rotterdam with a young and ethnically diverse audience. Even so, the Cabo Verdean music event Lembra promotes the collective memory of Cabo Verdean nightlife spaces. The advertisement connects specific venues – Fountain Paradise, Imperium, Palace, Ocean Paradise – to a particular atmosphere and memories of the so called 'golden years', glorifying the 1980s and 1990s in which many Cabo Verdean artists found fame and Cabo Verdean party nights and shows were still extremely popular within the community. As organiser Jorge da Veiga explained, in this time period many Cabo Verdean artists produced their greatest hits and the Cabo Verdean night scene thrived thanks in part to this reason. The organiser's marketing strategy for this reason focused on "bringing back the feeling of that time" (da Veiga 2020, translation added). It is not, however, exclusively a feeling of time, but also a sense of place which is produced in this advertisement, demonstrating that historical places of community are still actively imagined and appropriated as places of community and belonging, while demonstrating their present relevance for commercial nightlife organisers.

In an interview with Danilo Tavares, perhaps the most important contemporary producer of Cabo Verdean music in Rotterdam and the bassist of Rabelados, a group that also

launched the musical careers of artists like Suzanna Lubrano and Beto Dias (Nogueira 2016, 447), he confirms the feeling of the time that Lembra refers back to:

> We also played in Rotterdam, that was … yeah… Especially the band Livity, wow… They have done so many beautiful performances. I can also speak of this, because I often went to these shows, it was always a blast. Always a full house, 1500 people, and in those times there was not as much violence as now, it was always a joy, for everyone. We had Fountain Paradise here, Kings Place, we had Imperium, that was one of the most known places. (Tavares 2020, translation added)

Drawing on collective memory is a common practice in the party scene, which is also visible in the name of the promotion, which translates to 'remember'. But if reference to a time in history brings memories back to life, it is place that specifies and situates these memories, suffusing them with the emotion and atmosphere of that place. The ability of place to be situated in memory comes through its familiarity to a person, invoking sentiments of nostalgia. There are several elements that create and refer to a symbolic 'us' in the event's logo in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Lembra promotional logo, Courtesy of Jorge da Veiga

It is worth noting that Lembra, written as it is in a classic retro font, is contained within the green, yellow and red colours of the flag that Cabo Verde adopted after independence, which is also associated often with socialist and pan-Africanist politics. The flag reflects themes of solidarity and mutual assistance within the diaspora and the homeland and thus echoes particular values and affiliations towards these places. The background includes album covers of artists in their heyday that will be familiar to the party-going generation of the 1980s and 1990s, who are targeted by the event.

The albums visible in the background of the Lembra logo show familiar faces: Gil & the Perfects, Beto Dias, Cabo Verde Show, Splash and Bulimundo, each of which have histories and stories in the Netherlands since the 1980s. Some artists came to the Netherlands at an early age or were born there, while others often performed in the Dutch Cabo Verdean diaspora or recorded their albums at one of the many recording studios in Rotterdam and its surrounds. For example, Gil Semedo, from Gil & the Perfects, came to the Netherlands at only six years old, in 1980. At fifteen years old he participated in a classic Dutch television talent show called 'the Soundmix Show', as a young imitator of Michael Jackson and finishing second after Marco Borsato, who would go on to be arguably one of the most successful Dutch singers. Semedo's later creations, a combination of modern and traditional Cabo Verdean sounds, became known as *caboswing* and would soon conquer not only the Cabo Verdean night and music scene in Rotterdam, but diasporic music circuits worldwide (Nogueira 2016: 208). Groups originating from the Cabo Verdean islands, some of which are featured in the event poster, could often be found visiting Rotterdam to record and perform for periods of time. Bulimundo, for example, recorded several albums at Black Power Records in Rotterdam, incorporating Dutch-based artists such as Suzanna Lubrano and Milena Tavares as background vocalists. Organiser Jorge da Veiga booked several artists visible on the Lembra logo to perform at the actual event. On the photo in Figure 21 we see a

crowd gathering in front of the stage for the perennially popular artist Beto Dias (b. 1971), at the prestigious *Maasgebouw* in the south of Rotterdam.

Figure 21: Beto Dias at Lembra Evento 2017, photography by Sean Hitchens ©

Lembra, whether phrased as an imperative or as a question ('remember?') calls the recipient to actively remember specific experiences related to this historic music scene, during which many Cabo Verdeans flooded music halls and other venues to attend performances and shows by these popular groups. What this event builds is indeed a nostalgia of place through common references in music and historical spaces of community. This is even more relevant in night spaces, as these were historically the places where people would be able to meet other Cabo Verdeans after a week's (or day's) work and socialise, drink and dance. (Live) music played an integral part in this experience as a highly valued cultural reference and symbol, connecting music, space and memory, and as such its realisation in the present provokes feelings of nostalgia towards these times and places. It can even be said that a sense of Cabo Verdeanness in the diaspora was created in these night spaces, where Cabo Verdean events have become inseparable from certain places. Lembra adopts a particular narrative by

depicting these nighttime venues as places of mythical proportions, while presenting both performance and place simultaneously as the collective memory of nightlife for the community.

As Brah mentions, it is important "to be attentive to the nature and type of processes in and through which the collective 'we' is constituted". As such, she asks several questions: "who is empowered and who is disempowered in a specific construction of the 'we'? How are social divisions negotiated in the construction of the 'we'? What is the relationship of this 'we' to its 'others'? Who are these others?" (Brah 1996: 184). Nightlife events play an important role in the construction of a collective self, drawing up the borders of a community. In this context it is important to understand that the Cabo Verdean islands are both geographically, culturally, ethnically and economically divided, often generalised in the separation between the *barlavento* (windward) and *sotavento* (downwind) islands.

As such, in the context of the Lembra event, the organiser explains that the title was carefully chosen to attract an audience not limited by the distinction between the windward and downwind islands of Cabo Verde. Referring to barlavento variations of Cape Verdean creole, he states:

> Normally one would say, 'lembra temp', remember the time. But in the windward islands it's 'lembra temp', and the downwind islands say, 'lembra tempo'. So if I had promoted the event as 'lembra tempo', people from the windward island would not go there, and vice versa. That's why I kept it plain. I just look at this business-wise, I look at which people mostly come to my events, and I adjust my promotion accordingly. (da Veiga 2020, translation added)

When promoting an event, even the dialect chosen for the wording matters in attracting a particular audience. This calls into question the use of the term ‘community’ as it casts light on racial and cultural divisions within the Cabo Verdean community precisely by excluding difference. It is also true that second- and third-generation Cabo Verdeans identify with a broad Cabo Verdean identity more than with that of one island. In either case, people are able to identify more easily with this ‘neutral’ form of Cabo Verdean creole than with regional variants. This bypassing of regionalisation could be considered an identity-building experience in the diaspora that is never fixed but always influenced by events that narrate and construct a shared history and identity. In the construction of a ‘we’ multiple narratives (economic, political and cultural) collide in order to create and define the diasporic community. In the previous subchapters, the role of political processes in the homeland that impacted the diaspora were discussed, especially in relation to the construction of nightlife spaces as spaces of belonging in the context of first generation migrants. In the discussion above, however, the role of commercial nightlife in constructing and imagining spaces of belonging in the twenty-first century becomes more visible. Commercial organisers not only use the idea of an existing, imagined diasporic community, but promote a particular narrative, in effect shaping a collective sense of self, demonstrating how the construction of this is intersected by both political, cultural and commercial flows, often almost indistinguishably. Simultaneously, these events are also relevant in the production of new places of belonging in which the idea of community is celebrated.

New opportunities, new styles

Party concepts like the ones previously discussed, in which particular times are remembered, are less frequent nowadays. This is partly explained because many familiar venues have closed over time and younger generations do not associate as strongly with the more ‘traditional’ nightlife concepts that older generations experienced and organised, as is

expressed by several DJs and organisers (Soares 2020; Delgado 2020). As renting venues has become more expensive, promoting more 'traditional' nights out has become commercially challenging. Being able to organise these parties in the more popular — and more expensive — city-centre venues often means creating a commercially successful formula that includes a broader audience, taking into account the preferences either of different generations or of a more culturally diverse audience. This means, for example, hosting events in venues with multiple halls in order to play different music styles, or including different genres in the programming of an event. Whereas previous generations prefer genres as coladeira, funaná and later *cabo-love*, zouk and cabo-zouk, the younger generations favour more contemporary genres such as afrohouse, R&B and *kuduro* (Lopes 2020; Soares 2020; Delgado 2020). Nightlife organisers, DJs and performers often overcome this challenge by cooperating to create commercially successful concepts that attract a broad Cabo Verdean audience.

Great value is attached by promoters to the historic and nostalgic locations mentioned in this chapter. However, in interviews with the aforementioned DJs and organisers reference was also made to several problems that occurred in the Vanella area including alcohol abuse and violence that would occur at nightspots (Soares 2020; Lopes 2020). Local news broadcaster RTV Rijnmond also reported violence and shootings, as well as the discovery of firearms (RTV Rijnmond 2006; RTV Rijnmond 2007; Terlingen 2011). The Vanella area is located on a business park, and over time the Rotterdam municipality decided to close several party locations in the area, with a view to future developments of the business park (RTV Rijnmond 2011) which are still ongoing. As the former district mayor of Delfshaven District mentioned in a personal interview, although several party centres such as SunClub were originally to be relocated to a nearby area, this did not materialise as project developers withdrew due to economic uncertainty in 2018 (Gonçalves 2022).

Several contemporary commercial organisers also mentioned in interviews that they view(ed) these locations as an obstacle towards the scene's growth and inclusion into city-centre nightlife and acceptance by popular venues (da Veiga 2020; Lopes 2020; Delgado 2020). They refer to them as simple and poorly decorated party venues in an industrial area, surrounded by farmland, and they emphasise its non-professional organisation and unglamorous image. Indeed, since the beginning of the twenty-first century the region has been swallowed up by industrial development, and presently the venues are surrounded by dull offices and vacant lots, as well as a highway which crosses over the area. Yet Gonçalves (2022) also highlights that due to the closure of clubs in the area, affordable venues for organising nightlife have disappeared, which problematises access to parties for a lower-income segment of nightlife audiences.

When the first Cabo Verdean music group, Voz de Cabo Verde, was contracted to play several evenings a week in the South America-themed nightclub La Bonanza, they agreed to play a variety of styles — from cumbia to coladeira — that fit the venue's Latin American décor, while their own Cabo Verdean identity played a subordinate role for the group. The celebration of this identity was for the most part reserved for parties directed towards and hosted by Cabo Verdean communities in the various diasporas. Some years later, in the same manner, Cabo Verdean organisers started organising events that were predominantly directed towards members of the diaspora. Contemporary organisers have a better understanding of the landscape of nocturnal venues and often have access to different cultural worlds. These include national or regional identities — Dutch, Cabo Verdean, African, and other cultural imaginaries such as 'Urban' or 'Hollywood', which they are able to integrate into events.

In this context, current Cabo Verdean organisers often do not exclusively organise events labelled as 'Cabo Verdean', whether through music programming or through other content or directed exclusively towards the Cabo Verdean community. Instead, contemporary

organisers focus more frequently on opportunities within the broader nightlife scene, including a broader target group and (cultural) content. This often includes organising events that are not accessible only to Cabo Verdeans but to a multi-ethnic crowd, either from Lusophone countries, or including Antilleans, Surinamese and other nationalities. Often a more cosmopolitan, 'high-class', image is transmitted in promotional material for these events, where luxury iconography and young, well-dressed people are prominently featured. Organisers often work with concepts that are popular in regular nightlife, such as VIP tickets and tables, and thus create a more exclusive and glamorous character. As organiser Jorge da Veiga explains, he uses his multicultural experiences to introduce new elements to his events:

> During my studies I travelled a lot, to Brazil, Surinam, Dominican Republic, Miami, USA, New York, where I got a lot of influences from. So, if I could organise a Cabo Verdean party, how would I do this? I tried to put all these influences into an event. In Miami, for example, you had hostesses with the same clothes, hair dress, shoes who received people. So, I looked at locations, how to do promotion. I put my flyers in an exclusive envelope. I had a team of 10 hostesses, gorgeous ladies. Besides Cabo Verdean music, I also introduced other genres to my event. (Veiga 2020, translation added)

The ideas reflected in the citation above are all incorporated in an event called Bella Vista Club, created by the organiser of Lembra. The event reflects implications for the multiplicity of identities and how identifications with particular cultural scenes are visible and are incorporated in the context of multi-placedness, where events incorporate various cultural worlds. This includes the imagination of multiple worlds and lifestyles and their expression in nightlife events. Even though Bella Vista club receives a more culturally diverse audience, seventy percent of its audience is Cabo Verdean. Cultural references within the event's

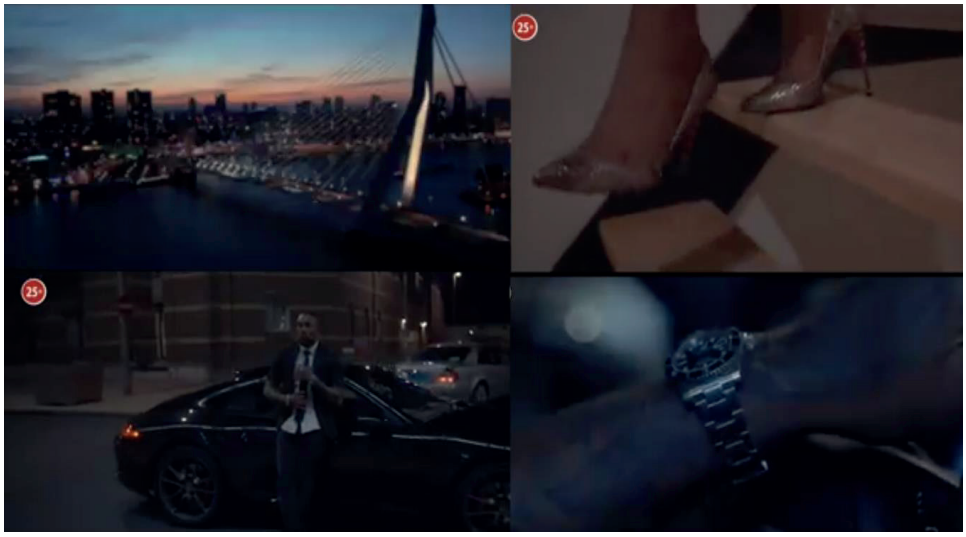

Figure 22: Promotional Video for Bella Vista Club 'Heels & Ties Edition' — A glamorous event hosted in a metropolitan city. Stills retrieved from YouTube.com

promotion are not inward-looking or strategically directed towards a Cabo Verdean audience, instead showing a more ethnically diverse, though predominantly black, audience in promotional material.

This suggests the inclusion of Cabo Verdean nightlife into a Dutch (and predominantly Afro-) club scene. Not only is this multiplicity of imaginaries visible in events organised exclusively by people with a Cabo Verdean background, but also in collaborations between organisers with different cultural backgrounds where, for example, a Cabo Verdean DJ hosts a hall within a broader R&B event.[17] Both organisers and audiences are able to switch between more traditional scenes and hybrid scenes. Not only does this include intercultural ambidexterity, but also an intergenerational fluidity; as new sociabilities and mobilities emerge from social, cultural, historical and political interfaces between music and migration, new forms of generational interaction are also created from this intersection (Varela, Raposo

[17] In an interview DJ Hermes Delgado speaks very positively of his cooperation with R&B Café, an event organised by Bonbon Entertainment, a large player within the R&B Scene.

and Ferro 2017: 128). While Afro house might become mainstream for a new and younger generation of Dutch Cabo Verdeans, presenting a new way of identifying with Cabo Verdean culture and descendants, there is a simultaneous consciousness present of past cultural references that are being re-appropriated at contemporary nightlife events.

Nightlife practices evidence the entanglement of politics, culture and commerce in the construction of spaces of belonging. Nightlife was, and still is, a means to signal cultural affiliation and generate a connection to the imagined homeland for younger generations, while simultaneously seeking integration into the Dutch context. Night spaces, in this sense, also play an important role in the construction and positioning of migrant communities towards both the local and the global, towards the host society and the homeland. Present nightlife events reconstruct and re-imagine past nightlife experiences through commercialised promotional narratives. The importance of places that are remembered, reappropriated, and reimagined brings to light the community's intimate connection to particular locations in the city as communal nightlife spaces.