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

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Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine how urban night spaces have been, and how they are currently produced, imagined, experienced, and narrated among the Cabo Verdean migrant community in Rotterdam. Night spaces are produced in intersecting and overlapping ways. Indeed, the simple act of ‘getting together’ as a community does not ‘produce’ a night space *per se*. Instead, I argue that one must take into account not only what goes on at night, but what flows through it. With reference to Cabo Verdean night spaces in Rotterdam, these are particularly produced through an interweaving of specific narratives and representations. In this context, night spaces are essential for generating a collective sense of self, which is supported by what I have described as processes of cultural and political myth-making.

An important finding in this study is that the city spaces in which Cabo Verdean myth-making occurs, and in which the construction of a diasporic identity takes place, are simultaneously integrated into a network of community spaces, providing for a localised sense of belonging. The myths of the community can be found in the political ideas that inspire nightlife events, in music and other cultural expressions that are enjoyed together, or in the sharing of stories of lives lived in similar and shared ways. Yet this study also highlighted that the ways in which night spaces are experienced by Cabo Verdean migrants, or narrated for that matter, are hardly ever homogenous. How these migrants are able to navigate the city, during day or night depends variously on their legal status, economic position, or gender. As such, the production of space is also always indicative of a certain exclusion from space.

When discussing the various representations found in the community’s cultural expressions, such as in music, whether these construct imaginations of the homeland or narrate life in the city of Rotterdam at night, it is important to recognise from what perspective these representations are produced. Considering that the first migrants to arrive to



Rotterdam were male sailors, cultural productions both from the start of migration, as well as contemporary events, unevenly reflect the male perspective. It is important to emphasise that this determined the lens through which the community's story was created. This, I argue, has essentially shaped the image of the community's history, its important figures and events, as well as popular representations of everyday life.

The construction and development of the community in Rotterdam is mainly attributed to male pioneers, who admittedly were the first to arrive and who played a hugely important role in this. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that the stories of female migration and their importance for community-building often remain unrecognised in contemporary narratives. This is also relevant considering the role of female pioneers such as Tomázia Teixeira. Capturing and recognising their endeavours is particularly urgent considering the age of first-generation migrants. I have highlighted that several female cultural producers recognise the importance of these endeavours and in this sense seek to bring balance to the stories of migration that circulate. The urgency of this should also be reflected in future academic work.

This thesis highlighted issues of domestic violence, work-life balance and the invisibility of women with regard to their contributions to the community. I contend that women's roles in political life and in community organisations, such as in the cultural and religious sphere, are significant yet often unconsidered and overlooked. Nocturnal work also deserves more attention, taking into account its often informal and clandestine nature, such as in nightclubs or in sex work. As such, future studies will have to continue to explore these themes.

The archive of music that has been constructed in cooperation with Jorge Lizardo, of which a selection of songs is included in this thesis, provided a unique insight into the

narratives of Cabo Verdean migration to Rotterdam. As far as my knowledge goes, it is particularly unique because no other migrant group has so extensively sung about the Netherlands, nor about a Dutch city in particular. The music that emerged during the course of this research sheds light on life in the city in different ways: artists sing about their sadness and the longing for home, about the hardships of life in migration, but also about their experiences in the city at night. The stories found in music describe daily rhythms of work and going out, from a multitude of perspectives. However, I have found that Cabo Verdean music about Rotterdam is particularly distinctive in that it contributes significantly to processes of place-making. It uniquely reflects on and generates representations of very specific places which were important during the times in which that music was written. As such, I argue that Cabo Verdean artists trace places and routes through the city and uncover daily and nocturnal rhythms, echoing particular atmospheres.

Some composers were also critical of the ways in which Cabo Verdeans are treated in the port city, others were critical of how Cabo Verdeans behaved in the port city, and still more were critical of this criticism. As such, this study called attention to the importance of music as an instrument of community self-reflection and discussion. It must be underlined, however, that it does so only from a particular position. Indeed, in reflecting on daily life in migration, whether this is with regard to work life or nightlife, music about Rotterdam is almost exclusively composed by men. On the one hand, this means that what is being sung about in terms of the livelihood of women in migration is minimal. On the other hand, it is important to recognise that what is being sung about is a delineated version of a certain reality.

Music, in this context, reflects a romanticised or idealised version of particular lifestyles and occurrences. Although, for example, artists sing comically about the sex workers that Cabo Verdeans would talk to in front of Habanera nightclub, or about the desire



to consume alcohol or drugs, this says little about the actual consumption of these goods and as such it lacks a critical notion towards these issues. Alcohol and drug abuse, for example, severely affect households and families, yet these issues are not reflected on in the music. Future studies should continue to explore these topics, both considering real-life situations as well as how cultural productions, such as in theatre, deal with these concerns.

Ultimately, this study has highlighted how, while maintaining awareness of the history of migration and its associated imaginations of both the homeland and diasporic identity, younger generations of Cabo Verdeans renovate and innovate the ways in which Cabo Verdeanness is dealt with. The engagement with both traditional and modern cultural products is a constantly creative process, influenced by the rich cultural and ethnic makeup of the city that produces ever more new forms of expression at night. Assisted along the way by the ever-developing character of the city of Rotterdam, the engagement with particular night-spaces is constantly updating, and this will continue to occur in the future, endlessly changing the diasporic layout of Cabo Verdean Rotterdam.