In the last few decades, especially leading up to and in the wake of the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles on 10-10-10, debates on national identity and cultural heritage have taken off in the various countries within the Dutch Kingdom. On the island of Curaçao, public figures such as former Minister of Culture Rosalia and the late politician Wiels emphasized the historical repression of Afro-Curaçaoans and the systematic undervaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture. Meanwhile, migration and integration also gained ground as topics central to the European Dutch debate on national identity.

The dissertation *A Song for Curaçao* researches ways in which Curaçaoans moving between the Netherlands and Curaçao construct collective identities through music practices. How do they deal with conflicting expectations within two societies? What is the role of music in this process? The cases analyzed here show a flexible attitude to dealing with Curaçaoan identity, engagement with two diasporas and the use of two important identity discourses; an Afro-Curaçaoan and a creolized Curaçaoan one.
A Song for Curaçao
Musical Performances of Double Diaspora

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Guiselle
Introduction

**Meaningful Music**

In 1961, my father, a self-taught musician and a metal worker by trade, moved as one of the first Curaçaoan guest workers from his Caribbean home to Rotterdam. In what follows, I sketch his journey to illustrate the interrelation between music, migration and identity that I aim to explore in this dissertation. Inspired by the opportunities offered by his new surroundings, my father took classes at the Rotterdam school of music and proceeded to explore Europe. In 1965, he moved from the Netherlands to Spain, where he worked for many years and studied Spanish classical guitar. Following his return to Curaçao in 1972, my father would continue to remember his time in Europe with fondness. Similarly, the music he had discovered there also remained important.

In fact, music and migration were intimately connected in his life story. As he sat at night on our porch, playing his guitar, he would tell me stories about his years in Spain and the Netherlands, or about his pre-migration life in mid-twentieth-century Curaçao. He would recount his own experiences, or those of his friends, as some of the very few black people in Costa Brava at that time. In addition, he would speak of his performances in Europe as a guitarist, or those of his friend Ibi, a Curaçaoan guest worker who had studied opera.

The genre of classical Spanish guitar music played an important role in these stories, not only as a carrier of distant memories, but as a way to relive, remake and share these memories. Spanish music became ours; a connection between us and that small group of young men on their
journey from the island to Europe. As much as my father’s experiences drew him –and by extension, me– to the wordless music of Segovia and Tárrega, we also thoroughly enjoyed the cheeky tumbas sung in Papiamentu by Boy Dap and Harry Zimmerman, the soulful and romantic bachatas performed in Spanish by the Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra and, of course, music by African-American artists such as Aretha Franklin and the Jackson Five. Our life in Curaçao was accompanied by this ever-changing multicultural soundtrack. When I in turn embarked on my own journey as a transmigrant and amateur musician, I found myself surrounded by other Curaçaoans whose lives seemed remarkably connected to music in a number of ways. The Curaçaoan transmigrants I met had musician friends and family members, and their personal stories often prominently included (their love for) music.

How can we understand the role of music in the context of transnational communities? This personal anecdote serves to introduce the issues at stake in this dissertation: the interrelation between music, senses of belonging and the construction of multiple cultural identities by transnational Curaçaoans within a simultaneously creolized and globalized context. My research studied how transnational Curaçaoans, while moving between the Netherlands and Curaçao, crafted a range of cultural products including music and video clips through which they performed different discourses on Curaçaoan identity. These artistic performances can be seen as ways of negotiating the politics of culture on both sides of the Atlantic. In Curaçao, there were ongoing discussions about nation-building, related to social and political debates on the island’s post-colonial status. In these debates, public
figures such as Helmin Wiels and scholar-turned-politician René Rosalia highlighted what they saw as a historically rooted, persistent repression of Afro-Curaçaoans and Afro-Curaçaoan culture, and its relation to a systematic self-undervaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity. In the Netherlands, public debate and policy emphasized the importance of migrant ‘integration’. Curaçao remains part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Curaçaoans hold Dutch passports, but in the Netherlands they are often categorized with other groups of migrants. Moving between the Netherlands and Curaçao, transnational Curaçaoans found themselves in a double bind, faced with conflicting expectations as these parallel debates on culture and belonging developed.

Mindful of these debates, and the complex ways that transnational Curaçaoans negotiate them from an ‘in-between’ space, this project addresses the following question: **How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building, and what role do musical performances play in this process?**

This question can be split into two separate but interconnected components: **How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building? How do transnational Curaçaoans construct discourses on Curaçaoan collective identities through musical performances?**

In the rest of this chapter, I situate these research questions in relation to the existing literature on transnationalism, postcolonialism and music, outlining the three main contributions the dissertation seeks to
make. Next, I elaborate my conceptual approach to musical performance in the context of postcolonial nation-building, explaining how I conceptualize the socio-political meaning of these performances and why I emphasize the role of colonial past. This is followed by a detailed discussion of my methods, and an explanation of the structure of the dissertation.

**Contributions of the dissertation: main aims and relevance**

This dissertation engages with debates on the construction of national identities in an era of globalization. As transnational movements of people, goods, ideas and capital facilitate new and multiple forms of cultural and political identifications, and destabilize earlier understandings of national community, discourses on collective identity become increasingly contentious (Schiller and Çağlar 2013). The widespread emergence of amalgamated, kaleidoscopic and transnational identities coincides with a desire for essentialist identification. We can recognize this struggle to construct clearly bounded national identities in the Netherlands, in the broad societal search for a ‘Dutch identity’ and in attempts to ‘integrate’ migrants and their descendants. In Curaçao, these processes are evident in the political project of nation-building and attempts to construct a stronger and ‘more authentic’ Curaçaoan identity.

In analyzing transnational Curaçaoans’ musical performances in relation to these ongoing debates in and between Curaçao and the Netherlands, this dissertation aims to make three distinct contributions
to the existing literature, which I outline below. The first is to connect debates on transnationalism and postcolonialism, by pursuing the idea of a Curaçaoan ‘double Diaspora’. The second contribution is to develop a more in-depth understanding of the role of musical performance within cultural policies that seek to grapple with transnationalism and broader processes of globalization. Third, the dissertation will contribute to existing studies of contemporary Curaçao, utilizing a cultural perspective to understand the island’s recent history.

Exploring a ‘Double Diaspora’ Experience

A first contribution this dissertation seeks to make is through connecting debates on transnationalism and postcolonialism. Scholars working on transnationalism and identity construction have placed great emphasis on the interrelated and ongoing movements of people and of cultural flows. As I discuss in the first chapter, this body of literature has focused on the ways in which people adapt to the societies between which they move, and on how their (cultural) practices across national borders ultimately create “virtual spheres of identification in which they perform a common transnational identity” (Vertovec 1999; see also Schiller et al. 1992; Faist 2010; Ben Rafael 2009). However, this literature often disregards the continued importance of the colonial past. Yet this past and its legacies play a prominent—if not always explicit—role in the construction of collective identities, both in European countries and in their former colonies. In fact, the transnational communities that emerged following the
movement of people from the former colonies to the colonizing countries in the post-WWII period highlight the interrelation of transnationalism and postcolonial processes.

In postcolonial studies, authors have pointed to the continuing influence of the colonial past in contemporary processes of identity construction. In the Caribbean, where much of the population is of African descent, postcolonial scholars have argued that an important legacy of the colonial past, and in particular of slavery, is a strong sense of dislocation. The sense of alienation or ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois 1903; see also Gilroy 1993) that affects the so-called African Diaspora (which extends beyond the Caribbean to the United States and Latin America) is linked to a violent, highly racialized colonial past, and results in Caribbean subjects constructing themselves as ‘Other’ (Benítez Rojo 1989; Césaire 2000; Hall 1997, 2003; Siapera 2010). However, much of this postcolonial literature is focused on Caribbean societies, and does not encompass the extensive transnational communities that have formed over the past century through Caribbean migration to Europe and North America.

In this dissertation I argue that the case of Curaçaoan transnational identity construction is of special interest because it enables an exploration of a phenomenon we might call ‘double Diaspora’. The first form of dispersion relates to an Afro-Diaspora consciousness, which became increasingly central in discourses of Curaçaoanness. The second type of dispersion refers to the rise of a transnational Curaçaoan community through late 20th and early 21st century migration to the Netherlands. In the first form of dispersion a violent, traumatic past of slavery plays a part. In the second, no obvious
traumatic event precedes the migration stream. Rather, recent Curaçaoan migration has been triggered by economic and social issues. As Curaçao is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Curaçaoans hold Dutch passports and are able to migrate freely to the Netherlands. While some Curaçaoan migrants to the Netherlands return to Curaçao permanently (‘return migration’), other engage in an iterative pattern of migration (‘circular migration’).

As a former Caribbean colony marked by the lasting racial legacies of slavery, Curaçao struggles with how to negotiate Afro-Curaçaoan heritage, and what its role might be in the construction of a collective identity. Yet these struggles are not limited to the space of the island of Curaçao. They also play out in contemporary transnational Curaçaoan community that moves between the Netherlands and Curaçao. In exploring how transmigrants construct their own identity and position themselves in and in-between the multiple postcolonial societies they inhabit, we must take into consideration the role of the colonial past. This dissertation offers the opportunity to explore this phenomenon.

In this study I seek to develop a more historicized transnationalism. I connect transnational and postcolonial studies, bringing debates on Caribbean political and cultural decolonization into conversation with discussions on collective identity construction in the context of transnationalism. Specifically, I explore how transnational Curaçaoans demonstrate a constructive musical engagement with the ‘double Diaspora’, in which they actively embrace rather than passively suffer from their sense of dislocation. Within these musical performances, I argue, dislocation becomes a tool for Caribbean flexibility and agency.
A second contribution this research aims to make is through its focus on the role of musical performances in the postcolonial politics of culture, both in everyday life and formal state policy. Various authors have studied how music and musical performance form the site of negotiations over power and political meaning, both in everyday struggles over (national) belonging and in the projects of specific states or political leaders (Averill 1997; Thomas 2004; White 2008). This dissertation builds on this work, studying the meaning of musical performance in everyday, ‘bottom-up’ cultural politics and state-led ‘top-down’ cultural policies together, and situating these processes in the transnational, postcolonial sphere. This approach involves analyzing musical performances in relation to performers, audiences, policy-makers and policies in contexts on both sides of the Atlantic.

I seek to contribute to a better understanding of the role of music in (trans)national identity construction in general. More specifically, I explore this role within postcolonial nation-building policies, both in the former colony and in the former colonizing country. These themes are the topic of the second and third chapters of this study, where I focus on the policy aspect and the use of musical performances, by the national government in Curaçao and the municipal government in The Hague, to foster a sense of belonging and a collective identity. In both contexts, I research the connections between, on the one hand, governments’ nation-building efforts through cultural management, and on the other, the everyday life experience and performance of Curaçaoan identity from the bottom up, that is, by Curaçaoans.
themselves, including the performing musicians as well as the music consumers or audiences.

**A Cultural Perspective on Recent Curaçaoan History**

My third aim is to contribute to Curaçaoan historiography, by examining the recent past through the lens of popular music and everyday life. While more colonial accounts of Curaçaoan history (e.g. Hartog 1961; Hoetink 1958) have been amended by social historical studies that appeared in the late twentieth century (e.g. Römer 1979; Oostindie 1997), these histories draw on a social and political, rather than a cultural perspective. Other scholars (e.g. Allen 2007; Römer 1977; Rosalia 1997) have produced important works on Curaçaoan cultural history, including the role of music and dance. These accounts emphasize the importance of music as a form of expression, a way of constructing and maintaining a cultural identity. Music was used to celebrate and grieve, as a form of leisure but also in protest as a means to denounce social injustice. However, these studies focus primarily on the history of slavery, and the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and do not extend to the recent past.

Those few accounts that do provide descriptions or analyses of Curaçaoan musical genres and their social context from the mid-twentieth century onwards tend to shed light only on specific musical genres rather than the broader field of Curaçaoan performance activities (Rosalia 1997; De Jong 2012). These texts tend to focus on specific, historic cultural expressions such as tambú and tumba, that
have their roots in the slavery past, implicitly equating Curaçaoan culture with Afro-Curaçaoan traditions. In this dissertation I situate discussions of these musical traditions within broader societal debates on definitions of Curaçaoan culture, in which the role of Afro-Curaçaoan heritage is a point of contention. Furthermore, these accounts generally focus on the island context, overlooking the role of transnationalism, and specifically the experience of Curaçaoan performance in the Netherlands.

Through my analysis of twenty-first-century Curaçaoan popular culture, and drawing on my own fieldwork in the Curaçaoan community in both the Netherlands and Curaçao, I seek to further our understanding of contemporary ‘Curaçaoan life’ and the social, political and cultural changes the island has experienced in the last decade. I understand this period as an important moment in the ongoing process of Curaçaoan decolonization, which started in the 1950s. This period has included important political moments, such as the birth of Curaçao as a country on October 10, 2010, following changes to the constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but also the murder of Curaçaoan politician Helmin Wiels on May 5, 2013. These events are connected to ongoing efforts by Curaçaoans to reinterpret their history and to reinvent collective identities in order to claim an ‘independence of the mind’. It is of paramount importance that this pivotal moment in the decolonization process is documented and analyzed, with a focus on not only the impact of the postcolonial legacy and current Dutch-Curaçaoan relations on Curaçaoan society, but also on phenomena such as transnationalism and the ubiquity of global culture which also heavily influence this small Caribbean island.
and the lives its people live. This ongoing process can give us more insight into worldwide changes with reference to restructuring of conceptions of national identity and transnationally active communities.

**My Approach: Transnational Music, Postcolonial Policies and Everyday Life**

While listening cheerful carnival tumba\(^1\) and fiery tambú music, or watching the colorful creative costumes donned by couples swaying to and fro to the sound of the traditional Curaçaoan waltz, a casual observer might be hard pressed to conceive of this Caribbean island’s music as permeated by a strong political and social agenda. Yet, the ways that respondents expressed themselves, and the tone of the public debate in regard to matters of culture, made it clear that this was the case. Drawing on postcolonial theory, in this dissertation I understand Curaçaoan music as encompassing a political and social agenda that centers on the postcolonial struggle for both political and ‘mental’ independence of a people negotiating not only modern-day transnationalism and globalization but also a painful colonial past that was most evident in the continued undervaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture.

Against the background of the three main contributions this dissertation seeks to make, outlined above, this section both explains the conceptual approach I take in answering the research questions and

\(^1\) Afro-Curaçaoan rhythm nowadays mostly heard in its modern form during carnival season.
provides an introduction to the politics of culture in contemporary (transnational) Curaçao. A core dimension of my approach is a transnational contextualization of Curaçaoan identity discourses, as they are experienced and performed in everyday life by transnational Curaçaoans, by attending to the governmental use of cultural management in nation-building efforts, both in Curaçao and the Netherlands. In my view, it is imperative to take this bottom-up/top-down interrelati on into account in order to understand the complexity of collective identity construction within transnational communities such as the Curaçaoan community. Connected to this, a second dimension of my approach is to understand this intersection between such ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ processes of musical identity construction as a postcolonial socio-political struggle. In Curaçao, this struggle involves a renegotiation of the role of Afro-Curaçaoan heritage in the construction of national identity, and in a move towards political and/or ‘mental’ independence from the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the former colonial power, top-down cultural policies implicitly or explicitly seek to assimilate postcolonial migrants into dominant constructions of national identity.

Drawing on vignettes from my fieldwork, this section elaborates first, on how Curaçaoan music can be understood as central to a transnational social field. Next, I discuss the extent to which Afro-Curaçaoan music featured as a contested form of heritage in relation to processes of identity construction. This contested nature was reflected in the mixed responses that discussions of this heritage evoked, from pride to anger and shame. This is followed by an explanation of the explicit postcolonial politicization of culture in ‘top-down’
government approaches. Specifically, I introduce the connection between (Afro-)Curaçaoan culture and independence made in recent cultural policies. The third subsection goes into more detail on how I approach musical performance as a realm of socio-political meaning-making in everyday life. Here, I briefly introduce the perspectives of performers to introduce an understanding the less formal and often unintentional role of music in shaping socio-political identity, belonging and community.

**Transnational Music**

I approach Curaçaoan music from a transnational studies perspective, exploring its centrality in the Curaçaoan transnational social field and its role in both constructing and crossing borders. My approach draws on understandings of transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Schiller *et al.* 1992). Similarly, Vertovec (1999: 1-2) defines transnationalism as: “a condition in which despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common—however virtual—arena of activity.” Following these definitions, I take transnationalism as hinging on two phenomena: the creation of a transnational social field and on the (physical or virtual) crossing of borders.
Central to the development of the field of transnational studies is the call to go beyond methodological nationalism (Basch et al. 1994). However, transnational studies also places particular importance on the influence of state institutions on transnational processes and on the role of borders and state politics on the way transnational communities function (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Levitt and Schiller 2004; Schiller 2009; Schiller and Çağlar 2013). As Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004: 1178) note, “states and the politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action.” Transnational studies thus constantly negotiates a balance between phenomena that require us to move beyond the nation-state as a defining entity, and the influence of specific states within transnational social fields. As explained in more detail below, this dissertation emphasizes the role that different cultural policies aimed at nation-building play in transnational constructions of Curaçaoan identity. The negotiation between national and transnational social fields is echoed in the performances of Curaçaoan identity that I encountered in my research.

Several academics within the field of migration, Diaspora and transnationalism have addressed the idea of virtual field or space in which transnationalism takes place. This has resulted in concepts such as transnational social space (Faist 2010), transnational social fields (Levitt and Schiller 2004) and the related concept of Diaspora space (Avtar Brah 1996). These concepts have broadened our understanding of the actors within a transnational social field, involving a deconstruction of the notions of native and ‘other’ and the inclusion of the ones who ‘stay home’ within these fields (Brah 1996; Schiller and
Çağlar 2013). Following these developments I understand this broad range of actors within a transnational social field to be transmigrants with transmigration including both virtual and physical movement. Throughout my research, I observed that music played a key role in the construction and consolidation of a Curaçaoan transnational social field. The connection between music and transnationalism is evident first, in the constant movement of Curaçaoan musicians between Curaçao and the Netherlands. This is described by Stanley, one of my interlocutors, and a gaita musician, who explained how musicians moving from the Netherlands to Curaçao, or vice versa, can seamlessly join other musicians as they share the same musical repertoire and style of playing.

“Mi tin un kompader, e ta bība na Hulanda aworakí, pero ora k’ e bin Kòrsou ku nos ta tokando, k’ e yega, k’ e tende nos toka un sèt asina’ki, e ta bira, e ta bisami: Kompadu, bis’e gaiei nami pas’ un sèt.”

“I have a friend, he’s living in the Netherlands right now, but when he comes to Curaçao and we are playing... If he arrives and he hears that we are playing a set, he turns around and says to me: ‘Kompadu [friend], tell that guy to let me do a set’” (Stanley, Los Paranderos).

In Stanley’s words, a musician can join a set effortlessly even after a long stay ‘abroad’; musicians do not experience any sense of separation or disconnect.

In addition to the movement of musicians and their joint performances, the Curaçaoan transnational social field is enabled and strengthened through music broadcast through (digital) media. Specifically, online
radio stations that play Curaçaoan music and that have Curaçaoan audiences listening on both sides of the Atlantic produce a shared space of listeners. In Chapter 1 I show how these geographically separated audiences do not necessarily experience a sense of disconnection, but rather, narrate a contiguous social field. Music itself also contributes to the construction of the transnational musical field. For instance, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 4, Izaline Calister’s lyrics imagine the possibility of being Curaçaoan without being on, or even exclusively of, the island. Similarly, in their innovative takes on traditional Curaçaoan genres, Ola Caribense, an ensemble based in the Netherlands, creates new and more inclusive ways of being Curaçaoan outside of the island itself.

In Chapter 1 I further expand on my understanding of Curaçaoan transnationalism and elaborate the idea of the Curaçaoan community as a transnational community. Although the starting point of this research was to study how Curaçaoan identities are constructed through music within a transnational social field, and the research did not presuppose Diaspora experiences or a diasporic consciousness, the incorporation of a postcolonial focus led me to concentrate on two forms of dispersion that can be argued to be diasporic. While the concepts of Diaspora and transnationalism are often used interchangeably in studies researching migration, this dissertation remains an analysis of multiple musical identities based on the concept of a Curaçaoan transnational social field in which Curaçaoans interact. Despite this primary conceptual engagement with transnational studies, rather than with Diaspora studies, I use the term ‘double Diaspora’ throughout this dissertation as an encompassing term to
denote two forms of dispersion I encountered during my research, and to discuss the role of discourses on African roots in constructions of Curaçaoaness.

**Afro-Curaçaoan Music as Contested Heritage**

During my fieldwork with musical performers, I encountered an emphasis on Afro-Curaçaoan heritage that echoed the social and political debates on the island. Engaging with these preoccupations and debates, my dissertation, including my selection and analysis of cases, reflects a concern with issues of colonial heritage, a duality in attitudes towards Afro-Curaçaoan identity, and the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoans through music. The social debates and changes within the transnational Curaçaoan community that were ongoing during this research prompted me to understand the legacies of colonialism as a main issue.

As issues of ‘redress’—of seeking to repair colonial injustice—became more central within Curaçaoan public debate, many of the respondents I spoke to during my fieldwork specifically linked Afro rhythms and Afro-Curaçaoan culture to being Curaçaoan. In my exchanges with respondents, Afro-Curaçaoan rhythms such as tambú, seú and tumba were framed by a discourse which centered on community and legacy. During interviews, several tambú musicians emphasized that their music came from the people around them: it was taught to them by their peers and by their elders. They presented it to me as a part of themselves, as something they instinctively discovered and played. It was their heritage and connected them to others through time. As Tula,
vocalist and songwriter of the modern tambú group Limania, told me:

“Tambú ta family. […] M’a èrf no. […] Pa esun ku ta bini despues di mi tambe sigi. […] Un kabuya nos tin ku mara bai.”

“Tambú is family. […] I inherited, didn’t I? […] So the one who comes after me also continues […] We have to weave one enduring rope” (Tula, Limania).

While a sense of responsibility, community and pride, expressed here by Tula, was undeniably part of the discourse on Curaçaoan music that I encountered, a sour note often marred my respondents’ formulations. During my inquiry into Curaçaoan music and listening habits in the Netherlands, I was struck by a deterministic, even fatalistic way some respondents spoke of their own link to what they perceived to be Curaçaoan music. Several of these respondents referred to the music as something which was engrained within their very being, an inescapable inheritance. As one respondent, a 55-year-old woman, said switching from Dutch to Papiamentu:

“Het zit in je bloed, maske ki bo hasi.”

“It’s in your blood, no matter what you do.”

In Chapter 3 I will elaborate with regards to this issue, but suffice it to say here that I repeatedly encountered this dissonance between
embracing music as your own and framing it as something you might want to escape but could not. This was apparent when talking to people about music in general, but especially during discussions of Afro-Curaçaoan music. In particular, the way people spoke of tambú revealed this duality. Such conversations, about tambú and the community, often left my respondents falling silent, mumbling or scrambling for words to explain. In addition to pride, the history of tambú was, more than other genres, also accompanied by anger, outrage and even, it seemed at times, an underlying sense of sadness, confusion and shame.

The interview I held on Curaçao with the musicians/baseball players of Grupo Power exemplified these themes. They suggested a link between music and a supposed innate Curaçaoanness, framing their music both as intrinsic to Curaçaoan identity and as a valuable bottom-up movement embedded in Curaçaoan everyday life. However, during our interviews a different side of tambú also arose, albeit briefly. Allee told me

“Antes, nami bisabo […] mi no tabata bai e tambúnan. Paso dimes bo ta’ chikitu bo ta’ tende […] tambú ta’tin nan kosnan strañonan ta’ sosodé. Ami tabata skucha mas tantu i mi ta’ tin lòmplay.”

“In the past, let me tell you […] I didn’t go to the tambú. Because, of course you’re little and you hear....” [He mumbled, not able to find the right words, then said], “Tambú had its weird stuff happening. I mostly listened and I had vinyl records” (Allee, Grupo Power).

During my fieldwork in Curaçao I often encountered this ‘darker’ side
of tambú’s history. It is the history of a tambú that was not accepted. While some played the tambú as children, others were told tambú performances were a place where indecent or strange things happened. Tambú was not something people of good standing went to; it was either for *hende bruá*\(^2\) or it was something only enjoyed within the own home. This seemed to cast a shadow of shame and secrecy on tambú. As Rudsela Tela Sambo, a well known tambú singer, told me:

| “Hendenan ta keda bisabo e no ta nèchi! Tambú ta ko’i hende bruá k’eseinan.” |
| ——————————————————————————————————————————————————— |
| “People keep telling you, it isn’t good! Tambú is for *hende bruá* and that kind of thing” (Tela Sambo). |

The duality that was displayed towards Afro-Curaçaoan culture went hand in hand with a expressed need to formulate a positive discourse with regards to Afro-Curaçaoan identity. My respondents framed current Afro-Curaçaoan culture within a discourse of colonial legacies, emphasizing their dismay about the persecution of tambú in the 20\(^{th}\) century. According to them, tambú's bad reputation was partly due to the colonial past in which powers and institutions such as the catholic church had repressed tambú. This negative valorization of tambú was formulated as the negation of ‘real’ Curaçaoan culture and identity.

\(^2\)‘*Hende bruá*’ is an expression meaning bewitched, confused, disorganized, or messed up people. It always refers to another person in a negative sense and encompasses sexual behavior, rowdiness, a disregard of accepted group morals and so forth. Contemporary Curaçaoan youth also use the expression ‘*hende frus*’ although this last expression seems to be more linked to ‘loose morality’ when it comes to sexuality.
From this perspective, the condemnation and persecution of tambú had been supported by the Curaçaoan government, a fact that needed to change.

**Music and Postcolonial Policy-Making**

The themes of a contested colonial past and its renegotiation in constructions of Curaçaoan identity was a dominant theme within the Curaçaoan public debate. This theme was also visible in through ‘top-down’ discourse in Curaçaoan cultural policy that formulated a quest for political and mental independence.


“The process to reach independence starts with an independence of the mind, so that this independence can later serve as a motor for complete independence: political independence. This process is long but certain. The only way to reach the goal is through perseverance. The cultural policy has to be the tip of the main spear in order to reach both levels of independence. By accepting this goal today, December 2001, we create a basis for the realization of independence of the mind and political sovereignty in the course of the twenty-first century. The current generation has the duty to comply with this sacred mission” (Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou [FK] 2001: 1).
This quote is taken from an influential 2001 Curaçaoan policy document, titled *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental* (Policy document: Roadmap towards Independence of the Mind) and issued by the governmental institution Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou, which was officially founded in February 2002. The document and the establishment of this governmental cultural institution mark a pivotal moment in an ongoing project, aimed at the construction of a specific Curaçaoan nation in the twenty-first century. The document is explicit in its formulation of both its ultimate goal—a sovereign Curaçaoan nation that is politically independent from the Netherlands—and its proposition of cultural policy as the tool to reach this goal. It takes a first step towards its goal by constructing a formal discourse in which music and performance are integrated as intrinsic parts of Curaçaoan identity, grounded in everyday life. A further step is taken by presenting music and performance as ways to change people’s experience of being Curaçaoan. Cultural policy, then, becomes a tool for molding people’s minds and achieving political change. Cultural policy is even referred to as a weapon in a project marked as sacred. Importantly, the document puts a special focus on the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan music and culture.

Chapter 3 explores in detail how this document presents ‘culture’ and its role in revaluing and changing Curaçaoan society. It is important to note here that the policy document distinguishes itself most markedly

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3 The document was commissioned by the then deputy of culture Emily De Jongh-Elhage, who asked Dr. René Rosalia to research the Curaçaoan cultural field and propose a structure for a new institute ‘in charge of culture’. This resulted in a preliminary document called *Djawe na weló* and the organizational plan to found the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou. The third product of this research was this new Curaçaoan cultural policy document *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental*.
from earlier Curaçaoan attempts to formulate a coherent cultural policy by advocating a bottom-up approach as its key premise. In so doing, it refers to the strong link between on the one hand culture and art, and on the other hand the everyday construction of identity discourses. In his foreword to *Rumbo pa Independensia Mental*, its main author, Dr. René Rosalia emphasizes the inclusion of the Curaçaoan people in not only the conception but also the implementation of such a cultural policy plan. Despite this emphasis, the plan also proposes managing a collective Curaçaoan identity through a top-down involvement with cultural expressions. In tandem with its approach to endorse ‘change from below’, the document argues for the state’s involvement in eliciting the desired change. It thus moves between a ‘festive state’ approach (Guss 2000), in which festivals and similar spectacular state-organized events serve as sites for redefining nationhood, and a much less traditional call to recognize the importance of everyday life and bottom-up action (De Certeau 1984). The policy plan proposes enlisting and harnessing the power of cultural expressions, such as music, to construct a specific Curaçaoan identity: an identity that involves a ‘New Curaçaoan’ who has achieved the desired freedom of the mind.4

The instrumental use of culture in nation-building on the island touched upon here can be identified on both sides of the ocean. The

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4 A similar call was issued in *Wretched of the Earth*, in which Franz Fanon, using a socialist discourse, encourages Africans to create a new Man, not in a simulacrum of Europe, but in a whole new manner. He uses the USA as an example to underscore his point that ‘we’ should not copy Europe: “Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions” (Fanon 1963 [1961]: 213).
Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands finds itself in a context in which approaches remarkably similar to that of the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou are being implemented. Dutch governmental projects intended to foster ‘social cohesion’ prominently include cultural and sport programs. Music is a key ingredient in many such programs, as it is seen as an effective way to engage Dutch Antillean youngsters (Muskens 2004; Meeng 2008).

**Music, Socio-Political Meaning and Everyday Life**

Various scholars have highlighted that the construction of identity through performance is a dynamic process, characterized by an interaction between performances and our understanding of our everyday lives and ourselves (DeNora 2000; Cohen 1995; Guss 2000). In her comparative study of Liverpool’s Irish and black populations, for instance, Sara Cohen (1995) found that music played an important role “in the practical and symbolic organization of space, in the spatial politics of everyday life and in the expression of ethnic identity” (Cohen 1995: 442). Such theoretical understandings of social and political change as grounded in everyday life also evoke questions with reference to the role of the enactment of cultural expressions such as music in changing Curaçaoan self-perceptions. Within the contemporary transnational Curaçaoan community, music and musical

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5 Cohen also recognizes the use of particular musical styles in everyday situations within Liverpool’s Jewish community as ways to symbolize specific values. Furthermore, she notes that such musical styles “can be used as a tool to transform notions of place and identity in order to maintain or challenge a particular hierarchical order” (Cohen 1995: 442). In other words, music can form a gateway to social mobility.
performances not only facilitate the expression of a pre-existing Curaçaoan identity. Rather, people construct Curaçaoan identity through the flexible (re)production and adaptation of music, a dynamic process that promotes agency and allows room for change. While music can be used as a nation-building tool, as proposed in the policy document discussed above, it also offers the opportunity for Curaçaoans to conceive of counter-discourses within music and through musical performances.

Dutch Caribbeanist scholars have highlighted the historical and contemporary role of music in shaping social life and expressing specific identities (Hoetink 1958; De Jong 2003, 2003b, 2009, 2012; Allen 2010; Witteveen 2013; Guadeloupe 2009), as have Caribbean scholars more generally (e.g. Thomas 2004; Gilroy 1993). As Paul Gilroy has argued, music has been an important way in which the black Diaspora is able to express “self-identity, political culture and grounded aesthetics” (Gilroy 1993:102). As a way to construct a counterculture, music is “especially important in breaking the inertia” and escape “a squeamish, nationalist essentialism and a skeptical, saturnalian pluralism” (Gilroy 1993: 102). Within the specific context of Curaçao, Nanette De Jong (2006) similarly identifies music as historically one of the main ways of expressing a specific cultural identity. It functioned as “the primary mechanism by which distant cultures were introduced and accepted by Afro-Curaçaoans” (De Jong 2006: 166). Music thus became a “creative—and effective—system to represent and maintain identity” (De Jong, 2006: 166).

In January 2011, my fieldwork took me to the brightly lit green of a baseball field in Curaçao, surrounded by four baseball players.
Raymond Allee, Eugene (Baka) Sambo, Rudi (Lili) Mingueli and Toni were not only a team on the baseball diamond, but also members of the tambú group Grupo Power. That night, standing in the center of the diamond, they regaled me with stories of how, as little children, they used to play Curaçaoan tambú music on empty cans and buckets. They recounted how they would join existing tambú groups or form new ones, and how these bands were part of the community of their bario (neighborhood).

“Ami ta chapista! Cha-pis-ta!” [Toni emphasized the syllables.] “M’a lanta fo’i chikutu… Mi no sa di na unda m’a haña e don dje chapi […] Tabatin un grupo den bario, Grupo Venenoso, di mi famianan grandinai. Nos t’a toka den bario. Despues di bario nos a bai afô.”

“I am chapista! Cha-pis-ta!” [Toni emphasized the syllables.] “Growing up, from when I was small… I don’t know where I got the gift of playing the chapi […] There was a group in our neighborhood, Grupo Venenoso, consisting of my family, my elders. We performed in the neighborhood. After the neighborhood we went further afield” (Toni, Grupo Power).

In their stories, Toni and the other members of Grupo Power emphasized the pride and love they felt for both tambú music and the bario community. Other musicians drew similar connections between music and community. Stanley, a member of the gaita group Los Paranderos, discussed his membership in gaita groups as part of his life history. He spoke fondly of how making music together functioned to connect him and the other group members, and to produce and consolidate a broader community. He described gaita as a musical
social space where people would meet, get married, and have children who would eventually join the same gaita group themselves. In the process, the group became an emotionally close community through and beyond its music.

“Ora nos kab’i toka, hopi bia, esun tiki sèn ku nos a haña sea nos ta huz’é pa kumpra instrumènt pa otro añ, of nos ta kue e sèn, huntu, kumpra nos konan, bai un wikènthuis, keda tres, kuater dia. Gosa, baila, hasi nos fiesta, nos mes ta toka. Kue un par di instrumènt ku nos tin bai ku ne. Nos ta toka ayabounan pasa dushi, landa, bin kas.”

“When we finish performing, often, the little money we get, we use either to buy our musical instruments for the next year or we take the money, together, buy our stuff, go to a vacation home, stay three, four days. Enjoy, dance, do our partying, play our own music. Take a couple of instruments that we need to take along. We perform down there, have a good time, swim, return home” (Stanley, Los Paranderos).

The interviews and participant observation I conducted as part of my fieldwork underlined the importance of musical performance as an analytical lens through which to understand formulations of community, belonging and identity. While music’s role in this sense was not always articulated overtly or consciously, for many Curaçaoans I interviewed, it was in fact an important cultural object that ran through their everyday life and that was reflective of their identity and heritage. For Toni and Stanley, for instance, music was not necessarily part of a conscious national political project, but it did play a key role in the construction of Curaçaoan identity, belonging and community.
Drawing on approaches from anthropology and cultural studies, this study approaches music and musical performance as inseparable from everyday life. Both artists and audiences (two analytically categories that are not always easily separated in Caribbean musical performance) interact with music: they adapt and re-purpose it, using it in their own lives in multiple ways, many of which can be understood as ‘political’. The central role that music and musical performance play in the construction of discourses of ‘who we are’ is largely through this relation to everyday life. Music both reflects everyday experiences and constructs our understanding of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ (Foucault 1981). The significance of musical performance –of making music together– to processes of political subject formation lies in both its on-stage and off-stage forms, and the relations between them (DeNora 2000; De Jong 2003a, 2003b, 2009, 2012). Its socio-political meaning takes shape both in public performances and in more intimate spaces. Its influence on these processes of shaping socio-political identity, belonging and community, may be intentional, the objective of cultural policies that promote specific musical genres or artists as part of nation-building projects aimed at ‘integration’ or ‘social cohesion’. I discuss such ‘top-down’ political uses of music in the second and third chapter of this thesis, focusing on government-sponsored projects in the Netherlands and Curaçao, respectively. However, the socio-political effects of musical performance may also result from the less formal endeavors of musicians themselves. In the fourth chapter, I focus on the more ‘bottom-up’ practices of Curaçaoan artists –many of whom live transnational lives– in crafting Curaçaoan identity through musical performance.
Methodology

In order to find an answer to my main research question, I drew on an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on cultural studies and anthropology, and combining discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork both in the Netherlands and on Curaçao. Researchers of transnationalism have specifically highlighted ethnographic methods such as participant observation and multi-sited approaches as ideal methods to obtain a better understanding of the virtual social field in which transnational practices take place (Levitt and Schiller 2004). From the extensive empirical data I gathered during my fieldwork, I selected a number of cases of musical performances that I analyze in more detail in this study. For each of these cases, I apply discourse analysis to understand the performance in connection to a theoretical framework that brings together theories of postcolonialism and transnationalism. My detailed analysis of these individual cases is supported by an extensive body of interpretative contextual data collected during fieldwork. This data allowed me to consider both on-stage and off-stage performances and integrate the individual subjectivity of performers with the broader social and political context in my analysis, rather than focusing on the cases in isolation from this context. I provide the information used for the interpretation of the specific cases throughout the dissertation.

To achieve methodological and data triangulation, I used various data collection methods of over a longer period, and in both the Netherlands and Curaçao. I used three methods to gather data during my fieldwork: participant observation, semi-structured in-depth
interviews and a small sample of structured interviews. Employing these methods across different points in time, different places and different respondents, allowed me to iteratively develop and test my understanding of the context in which Curaçaoan identity discourses are constructed.

From February 2009 to December 2012, I conducted fieldwork in the Netherlands by attending social gatherings within the Curaçaoan community where music often took central stage. On these occasions I conducted participant observation and collected audiovisual material. In addition, I attended a number of musical performances of Curaçaoan artists, observing the moments of interaction between the audience and the performers. I also performed as part of a musical ensemble, Tipiko Den Haag, during Curaçaoan events in the Netherlands, performing what we described as ‘traditional’ Curaçaoan music. From December 2010 to March 2011, I conducted participant observation and held interviews with performers and audience members on Curaçao. During this period I attended many performances, and interviewed performers, mainly on the topic of the Afro-Curaçaoan genres tambú, seú and tumba. In March 2012, I spent an additional four weeks in Curaçao doing archival research as well as following up on previous contacts, conducting a few more interviews and collecting audiovisual material. Below, I give a more detailed overview of the fieldwork and methods that shaped the empirical basis of this dissertation.
**Participant Observation**

The fieldwork I conducted generated a large amount of empirical data. For practical and privacy reasons (and in line with ethnographic conventions in anthropological research) the entire corpus cannot be included in this study. However, the data collected allowed me to greatly expand my knowledge of contemporary cultural expressions and performances in the Curaçaoan community. I observed performances, reactions to these performances, cultural artifacts used within the community and at these performances (e.g. clothing worn at such gatherings). Curaçaoan radio and television provided additional sources of information. These media facilitated my access to cultural products including musical genres, popular programs and websites, as well as related information on the social context for my analysis.

Both in the Netherlands and on Curaçao, the field of Curaçaoan performance can be roughly divided into commercial performances and non-commercial musical performances. There are also a host of small musical performances that can be understood as in-between commercial and non-commercial, which are organized by groups from within the community that function as Curaçaoan carrier groups in the Netherlands. These small, non-profit organizations are often geared towards the improvement of the position of Curaçaoan migrants, the propagation of Curaçaoan culture or the integration of Curaçaoans in

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6 Commercial performances include genres such as the popular ritmo kombiná but also hip hop and bubbling. However, over the years I witnessed an increased popularity of Latin American music such as salsa, merengue and so forth. Curaçaoans are visibly present within this scene, both as musicians and dancers. In the Netherlands, non-commercial performances include folkloric performances during official events and during public cultural events and festivals.
During my fieldwork in the Netherlands I observed that these kinds of events and performances place significant emphasis on the social aspect of getting together. In addition to musical performances, food also played a major role. The audience attending these events consisted mostly of Curaçaoans, and was often very diverse in terms of age, including elderly people, youngsters and children. The events, which functioned as family outings, were often organized around specific dates such as Carnival, Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day, the Day of the Flag and of course other religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter. The events and performances organized by these groups were often free or could be attended for a small fee in order to cover the expenses of the organization itself. Interestingly, these groups appeared to work together with Dutch organizations or the local government and made use of cultural subsidies or other governmental provisions, an observation confirmed during conversations with two respondents active within the carrier group scene. I discovered that they were very much in tune with the local government’s integration policy and expectations. However, they balanced this with their target audience’s need to express and experience Curaçaoan culture. I detected a willingness to comply with integration expectations and an echoing of a discourse in which Curaçaoans and especially Curaçaoan youngsters are described as a problematic group. The respondents expressed the desire both to show

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7 In the last few years I observed an increase of small commercial events organized by individuals or unofficial small groups as a way to make money. Such events include Bingo evenings, celebrations of specific days e.g. Christmas or simple parties. Curaçaoan music and food are central to these events.
society that they were ‘not that bad’ and to help their group because they felt that there were ‘a lot of problems’. These types of events were a well of information to better understand the social and cultural scene of Curaçaoans in the Netherlands.

Another significant phenomenon within the Curaçaoan field of performance is the traditional collective celebration of a number of cultural events on the island of Curaçao, partly repeated on a smaller scale in the Netherlands. These annual events structure a public sense of the national calendar. Carnival season for example, bleeds over into the harvest season, which is followed by the annual Un Kanto pa Kòrsou (‘A song for Curaçao’) festival, discussed in Chapter 3. This national festivity is followed in turn by the new and popular Curaçaoan North Sea Jazz Festival and the governmentally supported ‘Siman di Kultura’ (the Week of Curaçaoan Culture). Lastly, Curaçaoan society extensively celebrates the end-of-the-year festivities –Christmas and New Year’s Eve– with an explosion of public and commercial traditional Curaçaoan cultural performances. All these events center on specific musical genres such as tumba, tambú, seú and jazz, many of which can be linked to an Afro-diasporic culture. The events are celebrated in a highly public manner with parades, music festivals and large gatherings on public squares. They are often stimulated by the local government and covered extensively by the local media. In other words, this virtual calendar of public events is part and parcel of Curaçaoan identity, and for this reason it is important to incorporate these types of events into my analysis of musical performances of Curaçaoan identity.
Interviews

In addition to employing participant observation, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 24 respondents, the majority of whom were performers themselves, including Pincho Anita (Pincho i su grupo), Stanley (Los Paranderos gaita), Johnny Concepcion (Los Energikos, auinaldo/ gaita), Rendel Rosalia (Tambulero), Gibi Doran (Gio), Ella Bernabela (Zoyoyo i su grupo), Rudsela ‘Tela’ Sambo (former Trinchera member) and multiple long conversations with Mistica Stefania and Zoyoyo (Zoyoyo i su grupo). Both in the Netherlands and in Curaçao I also held many short informal conversations with respondents in-between songs during band training sessions or performances. Although it was not my main focus, when possible I included short interviews with members of the audience, such as with Maria Pinedo, an elderly lady from Brievengat. I also held a number of informal conversations with members of the community who were not performers, but who I noticed moved frequently between the Netherlands and Curaçao.

Whenever performers agreed to it, I made audio and video recordings of the interviews and used these to supplement my observations in order to better understand the research field. Sometimes the performers felt more comfortable speaking without being recorded or the environment was not conducive to recording because of issues such as background noise, poor lighting or because of my own assessment regarding safety. In these cases I made notes either on the spot or immediately afterwards. I assured the respondents that the recordings

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8 A list of the respondents is available in the appendix.
and information would be treated with utmost discretion and be used either in this dissertation or possibly for teaching purposes. This allowed us to speak more freely of social, political and even spiritual issues in relation to (Afro-) Curaçaoan music and culture. During the semi-structured interviews I attempted to better understand the performers and their views and motivations by allowing the interviews to flow freely and with a minimum of directing, using questions as prompts. The most important questions followed the format below:

1. What was and is the respondent’s personal motivation for performing?
2. How did they come to be a musician?
3. What is their personal investment in Curaçaoan music?
4. What does music mean to Curaçao in their view?
5. What does their specific genre mean to Curaçao?

The first two questions pertain to musicians’ personal background and were aimed at deepening my understanding of the ways that respondents positioned themselves in relation to music. The last question focuses on how the respondents perceive themselves in relation to Curaçaoans as a group and how they construct this group. These questions not only allowed the respondents to further discuss their points of view on the subject of performance; they also prompted stories surrounding the state of affairs regarding Curaçaoan music. For example, people reminisced about how they used to make music in the past and on the changes they had seen over time in the music scene, which they discussed in tandem with changes in contemporary Curaçaoan society. It also led many of the respondents to comment on
other topics. These results emphasized the relevance of looking at Curaçaoan musical identity construction as an interrelation between on-stage and off-stage practices. Two recurring topics were, first, the political state of affairs on the island and support (or lack thereof) for their genre; and second, the importance of other, related cultural expressions such as dance, parades and rituals for understanding Curaçaoan culture. In this research I take these two recurring topics as important elements in developing an in-analysis understanding of Curaçaoan identity construction through music. This means that I incorporated both the political context and the use of other cultural expressions as interrelated with, and important to, Curaçaoan identities constructed through music. For my analyses of the cases I thus move between music and socio-political context, supplementing the musical cases with information on other forms of cultural expression such as accompanying dance.

Finally, in the Netherlands I conducted short structured interviews with 21 members of the audience during the Day of the Curaçaoan Flag celebration in the Dutch city of Nijmegen in July 2011, with the assistance of two other researchers. Eleven of these 21 interviewees were over 40, ten were younger than 40; nine were women, twelve were men. I used the results of this small enquiry to triangulate the results of my observations and structured interviews. We asked the respondents following questions, originally in Papiamentu:

9 The respondents referred to rituals in general, but many also stressed specifically the importance of ‘underground’ spiritual rituals which were linked to tambú music.
10 See appendix for list of questions and answers in Papiamentu.
1. What kind of music do you like to listen to?

2. If I say ‘Curaçaoan music’, what kind of music do you think of and which type do you like most?

3. Do you listen to other types of music in Papiaments?

4. Where do you find Curaçaoan music or music in Papiaments?

5. Why do you listen to Curaçaoan music? What’s so special about it?

Overall the respondents said they mostly listened to the following genres in their everyday life: a variety of Latin American genres such as salsa, merengue and so forth; ‘modern Curaçaoan music’ (mostly ritmo kombiná, sometimes bubbling); and ‘traditional and other Curaçaoan/Antillean music’ such as reflection; and lastly, R&B/hip hop. The respondents related the expression of Curaçaoan music mostly to ‘traditional’ genres: tumba, tambú, seú, mazurka, waltz and ka’i òrgel. The results also showed an emphasis on Latin American genres. They listened to Curaçaoan music mostly through television and online media such as internet radio, at social gatherings such as parties and church and finally at home, for instance on CDs or old cassette tapes.

Many respondents expressed that Curaçaoan music evoked specific emotions, making them feel better, evoking alegria (happiness) and a certain ambiente (atmosphere). Equally often they referred specifically to a sense of nostalgia connected to Curaçaoan music. The music allowed them to “korda riba kas” (remember home), as one 35-year-old woman put it. They also referred multiple times to maintaining Papiaments as a reason to listen to Curaçaoan music; the language served as a link to home and the community. The cloud

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11 The Papiaments word ambiente is often used in a positive sense, as short for bon ambiente, meaning an atmosphere that gives a good feeling.
below gives an impression of this last question through the most often used words: ambiente next to Kòrsou (Curaçao) and kòrda (remembering). Lanta (Growing up/brought up in a certain manner), gusta (liking/loving). A central word is nos (Us, indicating belonging to an in-group).

Reflections on Fieldwork and Positionality

During the fieldwork I often checked Papiamentu websites and newspapers and listened to Curaçaoan radio, in order to know where musical performances and cultural gatherings would be held on the island and in the Netherlands. Whenever I attended these performances I would approach the performers and either interview them on the spot or make an appointment in order to speak at a later date. This strategy allowed me to attend band rehearsals, visit the respondent’s homes or –since many of these performers have ‘day jobs’– their places of work. Being a performer myself, I was often able to take my own instrument
along or I could in some other way use my own musical experience to break the ice. Since I perform traditional Curaçaoan music, this tended to get the musicians talking about their own link to Curaçaoan music in particular and to music in general.

On some occasions my own network as a performer and later on as an organizer allowed me to get a glimpse of what happened behind the scenes. This allowed me to better situate and understand issues such as the focus of events such as the Ut Haags Notûh festival and the Mozaïek multicultural festival. My participation in these events also provided insight into the municipal encouragement to construct more of an inclusive cosmopolitan The Hague. My analysis of the cosmopolitan *Hagenaar* and the inclusion of a Curaçaoan identity within the *Hagenaar* identity were directly influenced by information gleaned through participant observation in both of these festivals.

My own notions of the music that my band and I perform and my own preconceived notions of Curaçaonianess—being part of the community—certainly were of influence at specific moments, such as during the performance of Tipiko Den Haag detailed in Chapter 2. At that time, as a consequence of a question posed by an audience member, I was tempted to ‘educate’ this audience member on what would be ‘real traditional’ music and thus ‘really Curaçaoan’. Another member of the audience, who apparently had the same urge, beat me to the punch. It was especially in hindsight and rereading my notes that I became aware and could analyze the situation and my own response to it. Such experiences made me aware of the extent to which my investment in the community, as a Curaçaoan and as a musician, carried with it the risks of over-involvement and of succumbing to my own preconceived
notions. I countered these risks as much as possible by my awareness of this pitfall. Furthermore, by triangulating the results obtained through structured and semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and my own observations, I was able to formulate a coherent picture which helped me with both the selection of the cases and the analysis of these cases later on in the process.

The major shift in the social and political context of the Curaçaoan community that occurred during this study proved to be one of the biggest challenges I encountered during this research. Conducting fieldwork-based research necessarily means accepting that the social processes under study continue after fieldwork and writing is completed. Still, the ongoing nature of the heated discussions and broad societal engagement with the project of constructing a Curaçaoan national identity made it difficult to finalize the analysis.

Other, smaller challenges encountered during my research included the lack of available data and research on Curaçaoan transnationalism and Curaçaoan performance in the late 20th and early 21st century. In addition, the use of academic, policy and popular terminology complicated attempts to find exact information on the population under study. The majority of Dutch literature, and especially Dutch policy documents and reports, referred to Curaçaoans as Antilleans – along with migrants from the other islands of the former Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire, Saba, St. Martin, St. Eustatius)– while in unofficial texts, the term Antillean sometimes also seems to incorporate Arubans. The use of the overarching term ‘Antilleans’ was officially discontinued in 2010, but in practice, the term is still frequently used in the public debate. Noteworthy is the fact that over 75 percent of
first generation Antilleans in the Netherlands are of Curaçaoan
descent (Harmsen 2005). Another problem regarding terminology and
government registration relates to generation. In the Netherlands second-generation Curaçaoan
migrants are officially registered as ‘allochtonen.’ While some
documents differentiate between people of (partly) Curaçaoan descent
born in the Netherlands and those born on Curaçao, not all of the
documentation makes this distinction or even refers to it. As I showed
through the case of Fresku, first and second generations cannot always
be easily distinguished from each other. Due to circular migration –as
experienced and put into lyrics by Fresku– the experience of
transnationalism influences not only the ones who move versus the
ones who stay. While I was initially frustrated by these problems with
official categories, my fieldwork and the notion of transnationalism
helped me think beyond the linearity suggested by the administrative
concepts of first vs. second generation migrants.

**Selection of the Cases**

To better understand how the transnational Curaçaoan community is
musically constructed through specific discourses of collective
identity, and in order to answer the main research question, this
dissertation concentrates on a number of cases involving Curaçaoan

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12 In view of this fact and the focus of the research I use the term Curaçaoan
in this dissertation, save for where I refer to or quote specific documents,
thinkers or respondents who use the term Antillean.
performers and musical performances within the community. The final selection of cases presented in this dissertation includes various genres of popular music and artists who move between both Curaçao and the Netherlands, both ensembles and solo artists who in one way or another identify as Curaçaoan or perform music that can be perceived as Curaçaoan. This includes musical performances in a social setting identified as Antillean or Curaçaoan and performances attended or viewed by a group of Curaçaoans. I wanted to present a diverse selection of cases including different musical genres, ranging across what is often deemed higher vs. lower culture and so forth. The cases were selected with the aim of providing an overview of how a wide variety of musicians perform Curaçaoan identity discourses. To this end, the cases include both male and female artists, artists performing both popular music such as hip hop or ‘urban’ music and those performing ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’ Curaçaoan music. Because of the length of time over which the research was conducted, the actual choice of cases was a long and intensive process during which I adhered to two main considerations: first, it was imperative for the selected cases to reflect the important social and political shifts taking place in Curaçao, since these shifts were prominently present during the fieldwork period, in conversations with locals, during interviews, in the media and during cultural performances. For this specific purpose I incorporated in the first chapter two cases I encountered in the media during my fieldwork on Curaçao: that of the

13 The selection process was based on my fieldwork findings, but also on the coherence of the Ph.D. thesis; thus, much to my regret, several case studies were eliminated from the final dissertation. Specifically, a more extensive examination of hip hop performances did not make the final cut.
Radio Krioyo and that of the debacle Wilsoe vs Q-Sign. While these two cases are not on-stage musical performances, they are very relevant in demonstrating the public discussions with reference to Curaçaoan identity going on in the media at the time of the research. Furthermore, the use of the Radio Krioyo case reflects the results of the structured interviews held with 21 visitors of the 2011 Day of the Flag. From these interviews and my own observations during fieldwork in the Netherlands, and from informal conversations held with transnational Curaçaoans, it became apparent that online radio was an important source through which Curaçaoans in the Netherlands listen to Curaçaoan music. When asked where they listened to music from Curaçao, respondents mostly indicated the internet or (internet) radio. This was followed by live performances/parties and other places of gathering such as church. As one 27-year-old male respondent said

| “Na kas, na misa, online radio, via Basilachill.com. Bo ta haña tur kos einan.” |
| “At home, at church, online radio, Basilachill.com. You can find everything there.” |
These two cases, of the Radio Krioyo and Wilsoe vs Q-Sign, also show the urgency of the issue of transnationalism within the Curaçaoan community. By incorporating these two cases at the start of my dissertation, I aim to provide a picture of the Curaçaoan transnational identity discussions and their interlinkages with music and everyday life. The case of the group Q-Sign incorporates an aspect reflective of Curaçaoan everyday life through ritmo kombiná. Both during my in-depth interviews and within the small inquiry held among Curaçaoans in Nijmegen, ritmo kombiná proved to be one of the most listened to genres amongst transnational Curaçaoans. Since these cases concern the Curaçaoan community on both sides of the ocean, they provide the first outline of a contextual framework to better understand Chapters 2 and 3, in which I focus on the two distinct geographical locations of The Hague and Curaçao. The context sketched out in the first chapter also helps to frame the last three cases discussed in Chapter 4, which involve three specific bands or artists. Within the second and third chapters, dedicated to discursive constructions within specific these geographical locations, I chose to
zoom in on three musical events: the annual *Un Kanto pa Kòrsou* (A song for Curaçao) song festival in Curaçao, the performance of Tumbábo in the Hague, and the performance of a number of Curaçaoan performers in the Hague city hall. I use these cases to analyze the relationship between the specific social context – specifically policy and nation-building projects – and constructions of identity by Curaçaoans. The fourth chapter focuses on three artists/bands: Fresku, Izaline Calister and Ola Caribense. I chose them because their music demonstrates a direct engagement with Curaçaoan identity. It is my intention to offer a diverse and broad understanding of musically constructed Curaçaoan identities, and the diversity in musical genres gives a well-rounded impression of the broad spectrum of music my respondents reported listening to in daily life. With these cases I diversify the case studies in terms of the level of popularity of the artists and in reference to what I perceived to be their target audiences within the Curaçaoans community. My selection thus includes artists who are known in the Curaçaoan community both in the Netherlands and in Curaçao. Izaline is highly popular in Curaçao and is becoming increasingly popular in the Netherlands. Fresku is known in the Curaçaoan community, but he is most famous in the hip hop scene in multicultural Dutch society. The three cases also reflect specializations in different musical genres. The fourth chapter thus includes traditional genres (Ola Caribense), often more popular with an older generation, a contemporary genre (Fresku’s hip hop) often heard in popular and commercial settings and addressing a newer generation and lastly, an artist (Izaline Calister) who moves between the contemporary and the traditional. My discussion of multiple genres
in relation to Curaçaoan identity discourses offers the opportunity to identify distinct patterns and recurring discourses.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

To answer the main question in this dissertation (*How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building, and what role do musical performances play in this process?*) I take into account the social contexts in which Curaçaoan identity discourses are constructed and explore a number of case studies to analyze musical constructions of collective identity. As a result *A Song for Curaçao: Musical Performances of Double Diaspora* consists of a total of five chapters, the first three of which provide a macro-level analysis of Curaçaoan identity construction through musical performance. Although I address both parts of the main research question in all five chapters, the first three chapters specifically build upon one another to reach a better understanding of Curaçaoanness ‘in-between’ Curaçao and the Netherlands. Therefore, they provide a path to answer the first sub-question: *How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building?*

In the first chapter I focus on theoretical issues of location and identity. I build my argument with the works of thinkers such as Vertovec (1999); Schiller *et al.* (1992); Basch *et al.*; Faist (2010); Ben Rafael *et al.* (2009) and Benítez-Rojo (1989) on transnationalism, perceptions and constructions of place, and postcolonial identity. I relate these
theories to the two cases of Radio Krioyo and Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign. This first chapter lays the foundation for my research by presenting both Curaçaoan transnationalism and colonial legacy together as constituting a ‘problematic’ Curaçaoan ‘postcolonial condition’ characterized by alienation. In this chapter I argue that Curaçaoans perform a highly flexible attitude towards identity and place, allowing them to dodge top-down nation-building policies and to identify themselves with multiple cultures and places.

In order to further explore the possibility of a flexible Curaçaoan attitude towards collective Curaçaoan identity linked to both transnational practices and Curaçaoan colonial past, resulting in a ‘postcolonial condition’ of alienation, the following two chapters tackle the two different contexts in which such a flexible Curaçaoan identity discourse could be constructed. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 both address the social context of policy and history in which current discourses on Curaçaoan identity are formulated.

In Chapter 2 I discuss the notions of representation and discourse (Hall 1997; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) to better understand the way in which Curaçaoan collective identity is constructed through music. I explore two cases: one focusing on the The Hague city hall, and one of a performance of the Curaçaoan musical group Tumbábo. I develop a discursive analysis approach to performances of Curaçaoan identity, using Stuart Hall’s racialized regime of representation and the specific tools he provides within his theory to explore the construction and contestation of these two identities. Through my analysis of the Tumbábo case I argue that the strategic flexibility discussed in the Chapter 1 is used by Curaçaoan performers and their audiences to
revert stereotypes regarding Curaçaoan identity.

By grounding the third chapter in the postcolonial theoretical framework laid out in Chapters 1 and 2, I take on a social-constructivist point of view in my exploration of the way the island context influences Curaçaoan identity performance as framed by the racialized regime of representation and double consciousness. To understand which Curaçaoan collective identity discourses are prevalent on the island, and how double consciousness is dealt with, I draw first on an important cultural policy document *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo Pa Independensha Mental*. The state promotion of a collective Curaçaoan identity discussed on the island focuses on a transformation of Curaçaoan subjects and towards the construction of a New Curaçaoan through culture and art (Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou 2001).

Chapter 4 zooms in on the process of musical negotiation of collective identity of three Curaçaoan transnational musicians, in order to understand how they musically construct alternative discourses of Curaçaoan identity. This chapter focuses most directly on the second sub-question: *How do transnational Curaçaoans construct discourses on Curaçaoan collective identities through musical performances?* This chapter moves between the Dutch and Curaçaoan contexts in its analysis of the cases, focusing most of all on the question of how different Curaçaoan transnationals musically negotiate belonging while being in-between two different contexts. In this chapter I specifically explore the cases of the musicians Fresku, Ola Caribense and Izaline Calister to discover how these two discourses are constructed within musical performances between the Dutch and the
Curaçaoan island context. This allows me to expand upon the idea presented at the start of this introduction: that Curaçaoan transnationals are able to construct a flexible collective identity through musical performances that offer them a way to deal with fixed Dutch and Curaçaoan collective identity projects.

In the fifth and concluding chapter I summarize the findings of my research, reflecting on the research and suggesting strategic points of departure for future academic research and cultural policy management. I set out an answer to the main research question and discuss possible implications of the discourses of Curaçaoan identity presented throughout the dissertation.

In *A Song for Curaçao: Musical Performances of Double Diaspora* I argue that musical practices are discourses that together constitute a discursive formation, that is, a body of knowledge that explains ‘what it means’ to be Curaçaoan. I approach musical performances, their production, framing and governmental management as practices that result in discourses on Curaçaoan culture and Curaçaoan collective identity. My research thus aims to bring into focus Curaçaoan transnationals’ search for their own voice. This is a search that encompasses coming to terms with difficult aspects such as Curaçao’s colonial past, but also a hopeful search of a brighter future, for instance through the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture. This is also a search that reveals Curaçaoans’ creativity in dealing with historic as well as contemporary cultural influences with African, European and Latin American roots. Music is revealed to be much more than a background factor, a soundtrack to ‘what is really happening’ in the transnational social field. Music plays a pivotal role in experiencing
and expressing Curaçaoanness. Through musical performances, Curaçaoan transnationals perform their own, ever changing ‘song for Curaçao’. By doing so, these transnationals claim their own place in a 21st century world that is characterized by a kaleidoscope of interlinking national and supranational identity discourses. In their own way, they become one with a context as flexible and ever-changing as their own song.
Chapter 1
The In-Between Zone: Transnational Practices and the Colonial Past in the Construction of a Curaçaoan Collective Identity

The main questions of this thesis are: How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities while being ‘in-between’ Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building and collective identity construction, and which role do musical performances play in this process? Researching these questions involves acknowledging and analyzing the conditions that mark these Curaçaoan performances of identity. Such an analysis is the goal of the first three chapters of this thesis. They are an exploration of Curaçaoan identity construction on a macro level. In them, I sketch the social context in which transmigrants perform a Curaçaoan identity by exploring issues such as the prevalent discourses and regimes of representation, colonial history and political ties between the Netherlands and Curaçao, projects of nation-building and social cohesion and Curaçaoan mobility. I aim to understand how the two social contexts, the Netherlands and Curaçao, influence the construction of Curaçaoan identity and how a flexible, transnational state of being ‘in-between’ the Netherlands and Curaçao influences Curaçaoan formulations of collective identity and belonging.

Just a quick scan of where the majority of Curaçaoans are located shows a divided community, roughly half of which lives on the island and participates in Curaçaoan society, while the other half is (semi-)permanently settled in European Dutch society (Taskforce, 2008).
Curaçaoans, then, are positioned in two very different geographical spaces and social contexts: the European Dutch context and the Curaçaoan context.

However, since Curaçaoans are transnationally active, this seemingly clear division between European- and Caribbean-based Curaçaoans is anything but simple. Many Curaçaoan-born individuals and their children and grandchildren either live in the Netherlands while maintaining strong bonds with the home island or alternate between the Netherlands and Curaçao, and many of those living on the island are part of social and family networks that include Curaçaoans based in the Netherlands.

Between February 2009 and September 2012, through numerous interviews and informal conversations I had with Curaçaoans both in the Netherlands and Curaçao, as well as participant observation during fieldwork, I was exposed to the many ways in which Curaçaoan migrants are in contact with the home island: through travel, by phone, through the internet or through everyday practices such as the attendance of ‘Curaçaoan events’ or the consumption of ‘Curaçaoan products’. Applications such as WhatsApp, social media (particularly Facebook) and websites through which Curaçaoans in the Netherlands can listen to Curaçaoan radio stations, read Curaçaoan newspapers, watch TV and visit so-called Antillean party sites where they engage with elements of Curaçaoan culture, are highly popular.¹⁴

However, Curaçaoans do not only interact with the island through (new) media. Many ‘Curaçaoan’ social events are held in the

¹⁴ These 'party sites' are actually online community websites that often include a forum where various topics are discussed, as well as a section with news from the former Antilles.
Netherlands. Just to name a few: Catholic church services in Papiamentu in the Dutch city of Delft, bingo events in Maastricht, commercial and public celebrations of the Day of the Curaçaoan National Anthem and Flag in Nijmegen, Rijswijk or Tilburg, a Curaçaoan Father’s Day celebration in The Hague, tambú (drum music) parties in clubs in Rotterdam and The Hague. Especially popular with the younger crowd are the commercial ritmo kombiná parties held throughout the Netherlands, where Curaçaoan bands based either in the Netherlands or Curaçao perform. Curaçaoan products are sold in Curaçaoan specialty stores, such as Toko Gauw in The Hague. All of these Curaçaoan events and places allow for a dynamic context in which influences from both Curaçaoan and Dutch society are present, as is evidenced by the use of both Dutch and Papiamentu during many of these events. Further research in the Netherlands also showed sub-communities performing Curaçaoan music such as tambú, ritmo kombiná and others in the Netherlands. Curaçaoan transnationalism also manifests itself through circular migration. The position of Curaçao as a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, coupled with Curaçaoans’ Dutch citizenship, allows them relatively free passage between and right of settlement in both countries. Transnational social connections, in combination with unrestricted travel and settlement of Curaçaoans in Curaçao and the Netherlands, make it virtually impossible to speak of two separate Curaçaoan communities. As people move back and forth both physically and virtually between the Netherlands and Curaçao, music can also become a link uniting the two places. The following story told by Stanley illustrates this.
On a December night in 2010 on Curaçao, my respondent Stanley and I were sitting on the steps of an unfinished building talking about gaita music and Curaçaoan life. Behind us, on the patio next to the main house, the training of Los Paranderos, the gaita group Stanley performed with, was in full swing. Stanley, an elderly man who had experienced his share of performances, had agreed to talk to me about his band, gaita music and music in general in Curaçaoan society.

After an extensive discussion of the nuances between gaita and aguinaldo and the changing face of gaita music in Curaçao, the conversation turned towards Curaçaoans playing gaita in the Netherlands. Stanley knew of several musicians who had migrated to the Netherlands, although they often returned to Curaçao periodically. Once back in the Netherlands they could easily pick up where they had left off, he told me, since many of the musicians or vocalists they had known in Curaçao were already living in the Netherlands.

“Si, m’a tende nan ta’tin grupo di aguinaldo na Hulanda tambe. Yu Kòrsounan djakinan, ku ta’ den grupo k’a bai ayanan. Nan ta’ tin grupo ayanan. […] Hopi bia nan ta hasi’è paso ora nan yega ayananan ka’i bo por bisa, e grupo ta kasi kompleto ayanan anto e or’ei nan ta skohe un par di hende djayariba mes, musikant… Nan ta harma grupo gewoon.”

“Yes, I've heard they have aguinaldo groups in the Netherlands too. Curaçaoans from here that join groups there […] They often do this, as practically the whole group is there already when they arrive and then they just choose some people (originally) from up there, musikant (musicians)... They form the group just like that” (Stanley, Los Paranderos).
Like Stanley, several other respondents I spoke to on the island mentioned former friends and band members (or people they had taught to play an instrument) who had moved to the Netherlands. Some performers I spoke to, such as Erwin Prudencia, had lived in the Netherlands themselves in the past and had returned, while others still lived in the Netherlands for part of the year. When on the island, their music allowed them to resume their position with the band as if they’d never left. They kept up with ‘Curaçaoan’ music in the Netherlands, Stanley explained:

“Ora nan bin Kòrsou… Hopi bia ora nan bin Kòrsou… Mi tin un kompader, e ta biba na Hulanda aworaki, pero ora k’ e bin Kòrsou ku nos ta tokando, k’ e yega, k’ e tende nos toka un sèt asina’ki, e ta bira, e ta bisami: ‘Kompadu, bise gaiei nami pas' un sèt.’ Ke men ela tende e piesanan kaba, ta yega e ta yega toka. Normal.”

“When they come to Curaçao… they often come to Curaçao… I have a kompader, he’s living in the Netherlands right now, but when he comes to Curaçao and we are playing… If he arrives and he hears that we are playing a set, he turns around and says to me: ‘Kompadu, tell that guy to let me do a set.’ I mean, he’s already heard the songs. He just shows up and plays. Like normal” (Stanley, Los Paranderos).

Stanley goes on to tell me how the kompadu does this, moving between countries while still being able to fit within the island community.
In this case, music thus becomes a way to be ‘normal’ and to fit in with the Curaçaoan community on the island. Stanley’s account of his kompadu shows his transnationally engaged kompadu remained in touch with what was happening in Curacao, and as a consequence was able to move back and forth between the two societies: the Dutch European society and the Curaçaoan island society. When the musician living in Curacao takes a break, Stanley’s kompadu fills in with no qualms and the music still continues to flow “normal” (Stanley).

The Curaçaoan transnational practices discussed above constitute a state of being in-between two localities. In this chapter, I explore the link between the Curaçaoan in-between status and a collective Curaçaoan identity by focusing on the issue of location: How do Curaçaoans deal with belonging? What is the center from which a Curaçaoan collective identity is constructed? Answering these
questions involves theorizing Curaçaoan perceptions and constructions of place and identity. I do this through two cases: the case of Radio Krioyo, which illustrates flexible Curaçaoan constructions of identity and place, and the Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign case, which I use to analyze Curaçaoan political objections to transnationals’ flexible location of the Self in Curaçaoan everyday life. I base both cases on observations made and material collected, including newspaper articles, interviews and recordings of conversations held during radio programs, during my fieldwork on Curaçao in 2010 and 2011.

**Case 1: Radio Krioyo: Location and the Construction of Identity**

*Transnational Practices and Social Fields*

New Year’s Eve 2010, 7:30 PM, on Curaçao’s Radio Krioyo:

| “Mi ta manda un felisitashon i un saludo pa mi mama. Bendishon na gran eskala pa Thelma aya na Band' Abou aya for di Dordrecht. I pa tur mi rumannan na Kòrsou ei, i plüs mi ke manda tambe un felisitashon pa famia Camelia tambe. Camelia, Kom, Antonia, Willem, Tur famia, Tur ruman, subrinanan na Kòrsou. [...] Un bendishon grandi pa Kòrsou.” |
| “I’d like to send congratulations and greetings to my mother. Many blessings to Thelma, there in Band’abou, from Dordrecht. And to all my siblings on Curaçao, and I’d also like to send congratulations to the Camelia family. Camelia, Kom, Antonia, Willem, all family members, all siblings, nieces and nephews on Curacao. […] Great |
The call above was made by a Curaçaoan woman living in the Netherlands. Listening to a Curaçaoan radio station –Radio Krioyo– through the internet, she decided to call in and use the program as a medium to connect with her family and friends back home. Her greetings to her immediate family were followed by greetings to her extended family and finally, to the island as a whole. This was the first of many calls I listened to that night, sitting in my parent’s living room on the island. Most of the calls were made from the Netherlands, reciting long lists of names and good wishes, a great number of which were directed to very close relatives (children, mothers, fathers and so forth) living on the other side of the ocean.

For the next couple of hours, through a combination of internet and telephone, the callers constructed a virtual bridge between the Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands and its counterpart in Curaçao, crossing not only the physical distance, but also the time difference between the two countries –one of which by then had already entered 2011. Mothers called in to extend greetings to their young children, wishing them a happy New Year. Sons and daughters living in the Netherlands called in to start off the New Year, which had not reached Curaçao yet, and to extend their best wishes to their parents, grandparents, aunts, nephews, siblings and friends or –like the caller above– to all the Curaçaoans ‘at home’.

In the telephone conversation quoted above, one phone call enables the caller to (re)establish her bond with not only her extended family on the home island, but also with the Curaçaoan community as a
whole. Her sentiment, “[I wish] a ‘great blessing’ upon Curaçao,”
demonstrates her emotional attachment, and sense of belonging, to
Curaçao and the Curaçaoan community. This emotional attachment
and sense of belonging indicate identification with the group in
question (Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2007). Listening to these callers
establish their links with their kin on the island and with the island as
a whole, I couldn’t help but ask the following questions: What does
identification with Curaçao and the Curaçaoan community entail,
when expressed by a person based in a different society? What are the
implications of this caller identifying with Curaçaoans and Curaçao
while living in the Netherlands? In order to answer these questions, I
will first expand on my earlier discussion of the concept of
transnationalism.

The notion of transnationalism, introduced as a scholarly concept
through the work of Schiller et al. (1992) and later expanded upon in
Basch et al. (1994), aims to encompass and elucidate border-crossing
phenomena such as the ones described above by Stanley and the call-
ins to Radio Krioyo. Schiller et al. (1992) initially defined
transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants build social
fields that link together their country of origin and their country of
settlement” (Schiller et al. 1992: 1-2). One of the key points in their
initial understanding of transnationalism is thus the creation of social
networks between different countries.

These transnational networks are actively constructed by
transmigrants: according to Schiller et al., “Transmigrants develop and
maintain multiple relations -familial, economic, social, organizational,
religious, and political- that span borders. Transmigrants take actions,
make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Schiller et al. 1992: 1-2).

Two years later Basch, Schiller and Szanton-Blanc supplemented their initial definition, saying that transnationalism was “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch et al. 1994: 7).

Both of these early definitions are emphasized by Stephen Vertovec. Vertovec’s concise definition of transnationalism describes the phenomenon as follows, “Transnationalism describes a condition in which despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common -however virtual- arena of activity” (Vertovec 1999: 1-2).

Vertovec’s definition of transnationalism proves very useful. It neatly incorporates three issues which I understand to be key to the concept of transnationalism. First, he proposes a view of transnationalism as something which takes place in a (virtual) common space. Second, he touches upon a problematic side to border-crossing relating to state presence. Lastly, his understanding of the transnational field as a virtual arena of activity centralizes action. These three characteristics have been expanded upon by a number of scholars researching
transnationalism. I will discuss the three points briefly below. Since the two issues, border-crossing and the construction of a social field between and beyond borders, are so interrelated, I will first discuss them in tandem.

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction, the idea of common transnational zones, to which Vertovec refers as ‘virtual arena[s] of activity’, has been discussed by a number of scholars through concepts such as transnational social space (Faist 2010), transnational social fields (Levitt and Schiller 2004) and so forth. These concepts refer to “sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms” (Faist 2000: 189). They presuppose a physical or virtual crossing of national borders in order to construct transnational networks and, more importantly, they include the notion of the impact of the different local social and political contexts upon the transnational social field.

Vertovec’s definition highlights the problematic aspect of border-crossing. This is also reflected in transnational studies where scholars researching transnationalism place particular emphasis on the role of the state and state institutions which are seen as influential to the transnational social field (Levitt and Schiller 2004, Schiller and Çağlar 2013, Levitt and Schiller 2004, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, Ben Rafael et al 2009). In other words, these scholars emphasize the existence of different societies in which each state enforces specific rules. As Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) state: “States and the politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the
options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178).  

The problematic side of crossing ‘political borders’ is accentuated when we take into account the importance of local nation-building projects in cases such as the Dutch multicultural society and the Curaçaoan post-colonial non-sovereign context. According to Thomas Faist, transnationalism elicits questions with regard to the integration of migrants within the ‘host’ societies and their impact on both ‘home’ and ‘host’ societies. He refers to questions such as, “Are migrants’ transnational orientations at odds with their social integration in societies of settlement? Or is there complementarity and if so, in what circumstances?” (Faist 2010: 11, 12). These questions, which have been expressed in one way or another in the Dutch migration public debate, show a preoccupation with the social impact of transnational practices. The point of view represented by these questions perceives transnational practices as potentially disruptive to social cohesion. Akin to Faist’s concern with integration, the definition of transnationalism proposed by Ben Rafael et al. (2009) also addresses

15 Despite their focus on moving past ‘the ethnic lens’, Schiller and Çağlar (2013) also discuss the importance of the state in the constructions taking place within social fields such as the transnational social field. “Social fields are networks of uneven power that may be locally situated or extend nationally or transnationally and link individuals to economic, political, social and cultural institutions (Schiller, 2003). Social fields are the aspect of social relations through which broader social forces enable, shape and constrain individual migrants and their networks. States are significant actors within the constitution of these fields of differential power. Through their institutions states impose territorial and legal borders; however, an analysis of the forces that shape migrants’ emplacement cannot be restricted to or contained within state institutions and actors.” (Schiller and Çağlar 2013: 499).
the likelihood of problems arising from transnational practices. While Faist points towards social problems involving integration, the definition of Ben Rafael et al. is more concerned with a problematic relationship between transnationals and the state. Transnationalism involves dealing with two or more social contexts and sets of “official directives and rules” (Ben Rafael et al. 2009: 568). Ben Rafael et al. argue that transnationals deal with these official directives and rules by acting “independent of and sometimes in opposition to official directives and rules” (Ben Rafael et al. 2009: 568).

According to Faist, transnationals also perform transnational practices in the political arenas of both ‘home’ and ‘host’ countries. If transnationals perform transnational political practices, how does this transnationalism impact –or how is it impacted by– politically created official rules and directives?

Similar to the scholars discussed above, Schiller and Çağlar see states as entities shaping transnationalism. However, they add that “States shape, but do not contain these crossborder interconnections or flow of people, ideas, objects and capital.” Through transnational studies we are able to study how governments exercise political power: “[Transnational studies] notes the presence of specific national forms of ‘governmentality’ that make up people’s daily lives as they live within transnational social fields, and it examines the nation-state building that occurs within transnational cultural processes” (Schiller 2009: 26).

These views not only integrate border –crossing and construction of social fields in their understanding of transnationalism. They also show transnational social fields as spaces that are in constant
interaction with local actors and in particular with local “forms of 'governmentality’” (Schiller 2009: 26). This national and transnational overlap and interaction signifies a shift in the way we should look at societies. According to Schiller, “If social relations exist as part of normal life, we need to think of society as exactly this network of networks, rather than as anything that has a single sense of consensus, unity, organicity, wholeness, the very starting points of all social theory since Comte” (Schiller 2009: 34). Transnational social fields would thus be “composed of interlocking networks of interpersonal connections that stretch across borders” (Schiller 2009: 29).

The notion of overlap between national and transnational also results in a broadening of the notion of the actors in these transnational social fields. These actors now include both locals and migrants (Snel et al 2004). This particular perspective on societies and transnationalism argues that we must move on from notions of native versus non-native, while still taking into account the practical influence of states within these interactions.

My research within the Curaçaoan community indeed made it apparent to me that Curaçaoan transnationalism cannot be understood to involve only Curaçaoan migrants in the Netherlands. Curaçaoans on both sides of the Atlantic are involved in national border-crossing activities. Thus, I find the conception of interacting national and transnational networks helpful in better understanding transnational

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16 Snel, Engbertsen and Leerkens also pose that the definition of transmigrants can be taken a step further, including migrants who do not necessarily travel between countries, but maintain close ties with the country of origin (Snel et al 2004: 77).
processes and the influence the different social contexts can have on identity construction within transnational social fields.

Following the views discussed above, I take transnationalism to be an interactive process functioning both within and between borders. In this dissertation, this take on transnationalism is reflected in my multi-local approach. In chapters 2 and 3 I address both contexts; the Netherlands and Curaçao. In particular, I look at governmentality in both contexts. I take local processes, including nation-building efforts and state rules and regulations, to be of influence in the construction of musical collective identities in the transnational Curaçaoan community. The understanding of the transnational phenomenon as an interaction between local and non-local actors, and the inclusion of a less rigid approach when it comes to nativeness, are also reflected in my analysis in Chapter 4.

In the understanding of transnationalism discussed above there is a third, interrelated point: the importance of everyday actions in the construction of transnational social fields. In this dissertation I view transnationalism as “grassroot activities” (Ben Rafael et al. 2009:568). In this sense transnationalism is used to connote in particular “everyday practices of migrants engaged in various activities” (Faist 2010: 11). According to Faist (2010), these everyday practices include “reciprocity and solidarity with kinship networks, political participation not only in the country of emigration but also of immigration, […] and the transfer and re-transfer of cultural customs and practices” (Faist 2010: 11).17

17 Faist (2000) identifies three types of social spaces: transnational communities, small groups and circuits. In his view, these three have different primary mechanisms: transnational communities are built on
Transnational social spaces allow for and reinforce discourses of collective—in this case Curaçaoan—identity through everyday transnational practices. These practices do not necessarily involve face-to-face interaction, but they do elicit feelings of solidarity and unity. Transnationalism is therefore not a mere compilation of transnational practices, but a compilation of meaningful practices that construct relationships and feelings of attachment. It is precisely the relationships evolving from transnational practices and the meanings attached to them that may cause transnational practices to be perceived as problematic, as suggested by Faist.

Following the view on transnationalism discussed above, I will focus on transnational practices performed in everyday life by Curaçaoans in Curaçao and the Netherlands. I take these everyday practices to include such transnational acts as the one described by Stanley, the call to Radio Krioyo, or musical performance constructed and performed within the community.

In the first case I discuss in this chapter, the Radio Krioyo case, I identify a flexible Curaçaoan identity discourse constructed through the ‘shout-outs’ sent by transmigrants to their kin and other Curaçaoans both on the island and in the Netherlands. These transnational acts contribute to the imagination of collective places of belonging.

In my analysis of the second case I explore the link between ‘governmentality’ or “official directives and rules” (Ben Rafael et al.)
transnationalism and the construction of a flexible Curaçaoan identity. This flexibility may allow Curaçaoan transnationals to move in-between the Netherlands and Curaçao and ‘deal with’ demands put upon them in both the Dutch and the island context. For this purpose I approach transnationalism from a governmental perspective, discussing the challenges that transnationalism poses for the nation-state. I focus on the Curaçaoan state’s emphasis on border-crossing, discussing how tense interstate relations between the Netherlands and Curaçao influence perceptions of belonging with regard to transmigrants. I use the case Wilsoe vs. Q-sign to understand some of the complications arising from performances of collective identities under transnational circumstances, and how different takes on belonging and location serve to either incorporate or exclude Curaçaoan transmigrants.

Identification lies not only in practices, but also within the feelings of belonging attached to these practices. This also means that the virtual sphere is maintained through feelings of belonging and solidarity. Below, I will further explore the Radio Krioyo case to understand how transnational practices and the feelings attached to them can construct a collective virtual Curaçaoan sphere of identification.

This chapter then addresses the representation and positioning of Curaçaoans between the Netherlands and Curaçao. It sets the fluid transnational ‘stage,’ as it were, introducing the challenges and possibilities the postcolonial condition brings to the performance of a collective Curaçaoan identity.
Dòdò: The Construction of Transnational Curaçaoan Identity and Place

As is the case with Radio Krioyo, most radio stations based on Curaçao are available through the internet. This seems to be one of the primary ways for Curaçaoans in the Netherlands to listen to Curaçaoan music and follow news of their homeland.\textsuperscript{18} The interactivity of Curaçaoan radio is remarkable. Especially popular on the island are the numerous talk shows where Curaçaoans call in to discuss social issues and current affairs. These shows function as platforms for Curaçaoans on both sides of the ocean to express their views, address their political leaders and question the behavior and policies of these politicians. It is not uncommon for Curaçaoan politicians to call back in and respond to criticism or expand on certain political decisions. Later at night, in similar types of radio programs also relying on a high level of interactivity, listeners are encouraged to call in and give shout-outs to friends and family. During these shout-outs it is customary for the caller to mention where they are calling from. Another characteristic of this second type of radio program is that Papiamentu slang is often used, by both callers and DJs. Curaçaoan neighborhoods such as Mahuma, Montaña, Buena Vista and so forth are enthusiastically renamed and referred to as Mahuma City, Montaña City and Buena Vista City. The ‘City’ suffix evokes the image of a clearly defined place with distinguishable city borders. In

\textsuperscript{18} The TV station Tele Curaçao, a number of Curaçaoan newspapers, and many Curaçaoan community and party websites are also available online.
reality, nothing is further from the truth. Curaçao’s extended suburban landscape consists of neighborhoods merging into each other. While the centers of these neighborhoods are clear to most, the borders remain rather blurry to all but their residents. Mahuma, Montaña and so forth flow seamlessly into other neighborhoods. The use of the ‘City’ suffix does not express the morphology of these Curaçaoan neighborhoods, but rather the way they are experienced and (re)constructed. In a similar manner, Curaçaoans use (re)presentations of Dutch cities to convey the experience of the Dutch city as a Curaçaoan bario (neighborhood).

During a conversation held with Jenny Fundador on Curaçao in 2010, this respondent told me she had been asked to organize the election of a carnival queen and her ‘prens i pancho’ (the queen’s male companions). One of her tasks, which she also performed in Curaçao, was writing speeches for the participants.19 The election in question would be held in the Netherlands, during the Dutch summer carnival. It would be Jenny’s first trip to the Netherlands. I asked Jenny if she would have to write the speeches in Dutch or Papiamentu, upon which she responded:

| “No, na papiamentu, pasó nos ta hasí’é ku yu’i Kòrsou […]” |
| Pero e no ta un elekshon di Karnaval, mi ta kere. E ta mas bien un elekshon di kada bario. Kemen, Rotterdam, Amsterdam… Kada bario.” |

| “No, we’re doing it in Papiamentu with yu’i Kòrsou […]. But I don’t think it’s a carnival election. It's more of an election |

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19 On the island she focused on the children’s carnival. It was not clear to me if that would also be the case with regard to the Dutch election.
Instead of a centralized, national carnival election, Jenny thus envisioned the proceedings as pertaining to alternate Curaçaoan communities or *barios* in the Netherlands, similar to the Curaçaoan island *bario* where smaller cultural events in different community centers (*sentro di bario*) are commonplace. She showed a particular way of looking at these Dutch cities/Curaçaoan *barios* as places where Curaçaoans would naturally be addressed in Papiamentu, thus linking Curaçaoan culture to these Dutch/Curaçaoan *barios*. She also intimated that these *barios* were interlinked and would participate in one event competing against each other.

A similar way of viewing ‘place’ was displayed by Curaçaoan callers based in the Netherlands when they called in with shout-outs to friends and family on Radio Krioyo on December 31st that same year. They constructed a perceived Curaçaoan transnational *bario* in a number of ways which I will discuss below.

In keeping with Curaçaoan radio’s highly interactive character, on New Year’s Eve ‘shout-outs’ are encouraged even more than usual. In the last few hours of 2010, the popular Radio Krioyo (*krioyo* being the word used to describe something perceived as authentically Curaçaoan) was bombarded by calls from listeners who wanted to go on-air to send shout-outs to their friends and family. What started out as just a few well-wishers, developed into a torrent of calls and text messages from the Netherlands, which took the DJs a few hours to
sort through. Unsurprisingly, the first question the DJs asked the callers was where in the Netherlands they were calling from:

DJ 1: “Felis anochi Dordrecht.”
[...]
Caller: “Felis añá aki!”
DJ 2: “Felis añá pa bosnan tambe ayanan na Dòdò.”
[The woman utters a surprised and appreciative sound]:
Caller: “Eeeeeeeh!! Tur tur!”

DJ 1: “Happy evening, Dordrecht.”
[...]
Caller: “Happy New Year!”
DJ 2: “Happy New Year to you too there in Dòdò.”
[The woman utters a surprised and appreciative sound]:

During this short interaction, Dòdò is used as a nickname for the Dutch city of Dordrecht. DJ Number Two sounds out the nickname, pronouncing it as if it were a Papiamentu name: ‘Dòdò’. The first syllable is strung out in comparison with the second, and the tone pattern flows ¯¯V¯¯. The vowel sound is sharp. The pronunciation with this specific emphasis is recognizable by Curaçaoan listeners as ‘popular’ or krioyo. The DJ’s use of language ‘of the people’ is rewarded by the caller’s surprised “Eeeeeeeh!!” (a sound of approval) and “Tur tur,”20 emphasizing her approval, with which she includes herself in the assessment of Dordrecht as ‘Dòdò’. In other words, although the caller does not deny the first DJ’s description of her location as Dordrecht, she agrees more specifically with the

20 Slang for ‘totally.’
second DJ’s assertion that she is calling from ‘Dòdò’. Her recognition and enthusiastic agreement also indicate the extent to which ‘Dòdò’ is a known and accepted name for Dordrecht amongst members of the Curaçaoan community (the popular European Dutch nickname for Dordrecht is Dordt).

The case of Dòdò shows the social construction of place. According to Tim Cresswell (2004), space – as in geographic location – is always devoid of meaning. However, while physical space itself is devoid of meaning, when a space is experienced and named, it becomes a place, that is, it becomes “a meaningful location” (Cresswell 2004: 7). The construction of a place such as Dòdò also means the expression of experiences, emotions and a certain sense of attachment towards the place. Cresswell describes this process of creating place from space as follows: “All over the world people are engaged in place-making activities. Homeowners redecorate, build additions, manicure the lawn. Neighborhood organizations put pressure on people to tidy their yards; city governments legislate for new public buildings to express the spirit of particular places. Nations project themselves to the rest of the world through postage stamps, money, parliament buildings, national stadia, tourist brochures, etc. Within nation-states, oppressed groups attempt to assert their own identities” (Cresswell 2004: 5, 7).

People thus transform spaces into meaningful locations through constant action. This action is designed to differentiate one place from another and one group which is attached to a place from others attached to different places. Through speech patterns and discourse, Curaçaoan transnationals give new meaning to the location Dordrecht, creating a meaningful place that reflects feelings of belonging and a
shared Curaçaoan identity. Although this meaningful place, Dòdò, refers to the Curaçaoan experience of Dordrecht, it is not necessarily bound to the geographical location Dordrecht. Instead, it represents a collective Curaçaoan identification.

On the one hand, the phenomenon of Dòdò reveals a parallel place, not necessarily representative of a common European Dutch collective identity. On the other hand, the Curaçaoan identification linked to Dòdò also shows that Curaçaoan identity may be constructed separately from the island Curaçao. The separation between location and collective identity means that for transnational migrants, social groups are not necessarily perceived as attached to a specific territory. Dòdò thus reveals disjointedness between geographical location and group identity.

This separation makes the creation of Dòdò as a Curaçaoan place away from Curaçao, set in a Dutch city, possible. Curaçaoanness is linked to the constructed place Dòdò. Linking the group identity to the constructed place also frees the subject from previous conceptions, exclusively tying group identities to geographical points. Since places can be constructed everywhere, the link between group and place also means a more fluid construction of belonging. While the national territory still plays a symbolic role, the migrants’ collective identity construction is no longer tied to it.

Snel et al. confirm transmigrants’ separate understanding of social group and national territory referring specifically to the migrant experience. “Today’s transmigrants’ primary social groups are not located in one or the other national society, but in border-transcending communities” (Snel et al. 2004). This means that such a separation
does not just leave transmigrants free to construct images of home that may include other locations than the direct physical one. It also means that these constructions of belonging are not exclusionary. Rather than being tied to a territory or location, the collective identity is linked to the group itself, in this case set in two locations. From this point of view, Curaçaoan collective identity may encompass either the home island or the host country or both. Waldinger and Fitzgerald confirm this by saying that intense transnational connections can result in an expansion of migrants’ “range of ‘home’.” This would mean a non-exclusionary identification encompassing both their 'here' and 'there' (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 118).

Not only do transmigrants construct collective identities that span multiple geographical locations, they also position their group and therefore themselves flexibly. Since transmigrants can identify through a flexible process with multiple locations and/or groups, their identification is not merely relegated to the physical ‘here.’ Home can be both ‘here’ and ‘there’ and subsequently, you should be able to be ‘yourself’ in both places.

In the case discussed above, the vocal act of renaming the space Dordrecht constructs a place called Dòdò. The different name assigns a different meaning, and thus a lived experience, to this place, a meaning that the conventional name cannot convey. Inhabiting the place Dòdò also shows an assertion of a collective Curaçaoan identity. The construction of place is, in this sense, also the construction of a collective Curaçaoan identity. Simultaneously, Dòdò incorporates both ‘here’ and ‘there’, unifying Curaçaoans on Curaçao and the experience of Curaçaoans in the Netherlands. That is, Dòdò is the
embodiment of a public transnational Curaçaoan social field where collective identification takes place.

Dordrecht and Dòdò share the same geographical coordinates, but it is the specific Curaçaoan name, alluding to a specific Curaçaoan experience, that gives the space meaning. For DJ 2, Dordrecht is not just a name, a random space or geographical point. It is a meaningful place. But Dòdò is not the only city embodying a Curaçaoan transnational identity. Other cities are also re-named in a similar manner:

DJ: “Bonochi! [...] Di unda shon ta yama?”
Caller: “Nos ta yamando di Hulanda.”
DJ: “Ki parti di Hulanda?”
Caller: “Rotterdam.”
DJ: “Oh, Ròtò!”
[...]
Caller: “Nos ta manda saludo pa tur nos famianan eibounan, mi mama, mi yu, di parti di Shakira, Miluska, Sharon Shamala, Mama Li, nos tur akinannan.”

DJ: “Good evening! [...] Where are you calling from?”
Caller: “We’re calling from the Netherlands.”
DJ: “Which part of the Netherlands?”
Caller: “Rotterdam.”
DJ: “Oh, Ròtò! [...]”
Caller: “We’d like to send greetings to all our family around there, my mother, my child, from Shakira, Miluska, Sharon, Shamala, Mama Li, all of us around here” (Radio Krioyo 2010).

The fact that the caller does not use the Papiamentu name for Rotterdam in this last quote does not deter the DJ. He still re-names
the city Ròtò, contributing to a representation of Curaçaoan collective experience and consequently of a collective Curaçaoan identity that includes life in Dòdò. This collective Curaçaoan identity is tied to life as experienced in the transnational places Ròtò and Dòdò.

The construction of a collective Curaçaoan identity not only serves a purpose from the point of view of the caller. It also serves as a form of identification for the DJ. Since Radio Krioyo represents itself as ‘the people’s radio,’ the use of these nicknames for Dutch cities may be seen as telling. By re-naming the city, the DJ creates a bond between the caller and himself, placing himself in the ‘in-group.’ He shows that he knows this place, Dòdò, as a true Curaçaoan, and proves his link with the transnational Curaçaoan community. His re-naming of the city demonstrates a desire to express his and the station’s link with the Curaçaoan people there. He underscores this bond between ‘his’ radio and the transnational Curaçaoan community with the following:

“Ban tuma un par di yamada mas for di Hulanda pa e hendenan na Hulanda també por ekspresá nan felis añ pa nan hendenan aki na Kòrsou pasó ta hopi importante pasó t'esaki t'e radio di pueblo, di Hulanda i di Kòrsou.”

“Let’s take a few more calls from the Netherlands, so the people in the Netherlands can also express their wishes for a Happy New Year to people here in Curaçao, because it’s very important. Because this is the people’s radio, from the Netherlands and Curaçao” (Radio Krioyo 2010).

This comment also underlines the emphasis placed on the link between Curaçaoans in the Netherlands and on Curaçao. Despite the
differences in location, the DJ represents these Curaçaoans as one community.
As is clear from the importance put on ‘the people,’ the collective is central to the interactions described above. The DJ’s use of these urban nicknames serves a dual purpose. It constructs a Curaçaoan transnational collective experience for the caller and it simultaneously places him, the DJ, within this transnational Curaçaoan collective. This collective identity is performed through the use of krioyo speech, the use of popular vernacular and the renaming of Dutch cities. In other words, renaming expresses a Curaçaoan transnational identification through speech. In the case described above, the radio program serves as a medium. The act of calling in, the specific speech patterns and the discourse used during the calls are practices that construct transnational Curaçaoan social fields.
Later on in the same radio program the DJ starts asking the callers more questions: What were the callers doing at that moment? How had they celebrated their New Year’s Eve? What were they eating?

DJ: “Bonochi, di unda ta yama?”
Caller: “Mi ta yamando for di Zwolle”
[...]
Caller: “Bebe biña, bebe shampaña, oliebollen.”
DJ: “Anto ki mas bosnan a kome?”
Caller: “Awòki nos ta basilando riba un zùlt.”
DJ: “Mañan ta dia di bonchi”

21 Traditional Dutch New Year’s Eve fare.
22 Traditional Curaçaoan food eaten around New Year’s Eve: pickled pigs’ ears.
DJ: “Good evening, where are you calling from?”
Caller: “I’m calling from Zwolle.”
[To the question of how they had celebrated New Year’s Eve, the caller answers]
“Drinking wine, drinking champagne, eating oliebollen.”
DJ: “And what else did you eat?”
Caller: “Right now we are chilling on a zuòlt.”
DJ: “Tomorrow is Bbeans Day?”

The DJ’s last question refers to an old Curaçaoan tradition of eating bean soup on the first day of the year in attempt to guarantee prosperity for the rest of the year.

Caller: “No, mi ta kere nos ta dal un bon yambo.”

“No,” [the woman says.] “I think we’ll have a good yambo.”
DJ: “Oh!!” [The “Oh” is echoed by others in the studio.]
DJ: “Delicious! A good yambo! That’s great! That’s great!”, [the DJ exclaims appreciatively].

Besides through the renaming of the city and the more subtle use of a Papiamentu accent, we can now distinguish a second way in which a Curaçaoan transnational identity may be constructed through the construction of a Curaçaoan place. The interaction between caller and DJs shows a negotiation of Curaçaoanness. That is, of behavior that is

23 Gumbo-like, okra soup.
expected from a ‘true’ Curaçaoan. The caller shows she is cooking and eating Curaçaoan food in the Netherlands. By enacting these customs, she constructs a Curaçaoan group identity and a Curaçaoan place in her Dutch location.

When the caller first admits that she plans to eat *oliebollen*, this does not seem to satisfy the DJ. When he keeps probing, the caller mentions *zùlt*, a traditional Curaçaoan dish eaten on Christmas and New Year’s Eve. The DJ still pushes for more. Now his focus is on New Year’s Day. Will the caller still be practicing Curaçaoan customs then, or will her Curaçaoan practices be restricted to eating *zùlt* once a year?

The caller goes all out and claims to be planning on eating “*un bon yambo*” (a good *yambo*). While her admission of eating *oliebollen* is ignored and even her confessed consumption of *zùlt* does not seem to suffice, her intention to eat *yambo* the next day is received with appreciation. In this context *yambo* is seen as a worthy substitution for the traditional meal on the first day of the new year, the *bonchi* meal. *Yambo* is not traditionally eaten on the first (Mon)day of the year, but it is considered one of the traditional dishes in Curaçaoan society and a staple dish in Curaçaoan households. This means that the caller bypasses the use of the dish as a ritual (*bonchi*) and goes on to show that she is a ‘practicing’ *yu di Kòrsou*. The caller expects the positive reaction and expressly says in a *krioyo* manner, “Un bon yambo.” By saying good *yambo* she emphasizes the *krioyo*, or true Curaçaoan, value of this particular dish.

Being Curaçaoan and belonging to the Curaçaoan group is achieved in this case through the enactment of Curaçaoan customs and cooking.
By performing a Curaçaoan identity in a setting other than Curaçao, these transmigrants simultaneously link identity to the construction of a Curaçaoan place and separate Curaçaoan identity from the island territory. The annexation of identity and place construction and the separation of place and national territory results in the construction of a flexible transnational Curaçaoan place existing in multiple geographical locations. This means an expansion of the Curaçaoan concept of home. Home is now embodied by a flexibly located transnational place, constructed through acts and speech in which references to the Curaçaoan space become important symbols in the process of construction of the Curaçaoan transnational place.

So far, I have explored Curaçaoan transmigrant construction of a collective identity discourse and its link to the construction of Curaçaoan places, such as Dòdò, Ròtò and so forth, which embody a transnational Curaçaoan public sphere. An analysis of the various callers shows Curaçaoan transnational identity discourse being constructed both through performative action (such as cooking and eating traditional dishes) and through speech acts such as re-naming the city. I argued that these acts represent a Curaçaoan experience which in turn defines and constructs a transnational Curaçaoan collective identity discourse. As was evident from the exchange between the DJs and the Dutch-based Curaçaoan caller who referred to eating both Curaçaoan zûlt and Dutch oliebollen, the performance of a Curaçaoan collective identity (through speech or acts) means an expansion of the concept of home. That is, the construction of a Curaçaoan transnational place such as Dòdò in which both the migrant’s ‘here’ and ‘there’ are incorporated (Waldinger and
Fitzgerald 2004). The awareness of the European Dutch location is present, while a Curaçaoan identity is also performed. Next to the construction of a transnational social field, encompassing both the transmigrants’ ‘here’ and ‘there’, Curaçaoan transnationalism also involves circular migration. This combination, I argue in the next paragraphs, leads to a flexible positioning and a particular view of ‘here’ and ‘there.’ Not just the way the transnational place is constructed is subject to negotiation, so is its location. In the following, I will expand on Curaçaoan negotiation of location.

**Greetings from ‘Over Here’**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ: “Eh eh! Bo ta leu ei.”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DJ 1: “Where are you calling from, sir (mi Shon)?”</th>
<th>Caller: “Maastricht.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ 1: “Eh eh! You’re far away” (Radio Krioyo 2010).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this fragment the DJ, whose physical ‘here’ is in Curaçao, virtually positions himself in a specific geographical location. His comment, made after his matter-of-fact interaction with a number of other callers from various Dutch cities, implies that he experiences certain Dutch cities such as Dordrecht/Dòdò and Rotterdam/Ròtò as ‘closer’ while

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24 The DJ refers to the caller using the title *shon* meaning 'sir/ma’am'. Shon is a traditional respectful way to address an adult. In the past it was used to address slave owners, later as a means to express respect. It may be considered krioyo speak.
experiencing Maastricht as far away. A look at Dutch topography shows Maastricht to be located at the Dutch side of the Dutch-German-Belgian border. Geographically speaking, Maastricht is indeed ‘far away’ from most of the cities mentioned by the other callers (Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Dordrecht, The Hague and Almere). In order to perceive only Maastricht as far away, the DJ’s experienced location needs to be in the Netherlands and tied to the other cities mentioned by the previous callers. Although physically ‘here’ on Curaçao, the DJ’s sense of place is expanded at that moment to incorporate both ‘here’ and ‘there.’ Moreover, at the moment he refers to Maastricht as far away, he is present ‘there,’ in the Netherlands. His experienced ‘here’ is at that moment actually ‘there.’ The DJ’s interaction with the callers shows his flexibility in positioning himself. However, as I show below, the calls also reveal that the callers experience a similar flexible view of ‘here’ and ‘there’.

**Caller:** “Nos ta yamando di Dò(r)drecht!”
**DJ:** “Dòdò. Kontá na Dòdò?”
**Caller:** “Famia Martina!”
[...]
**Caller:** “Nos ta manda bon aña pa tur hende di Dò(r)drecht akinannan!”

**Caller:** “We’re calling from Dordrecht!”
**DJ:** “Dòdò. How are things in Dòdò?”
**Caller:** “Martina Family!”
[...]
**Caller:** “We want to say Happy New Year to all the people in Dordrecht around here!” (Radio Krioyo 2010).
In this exchange two issues stand out: first, the caller’s consistent use of Do(r)drecht, and secondly, the fact that she is calling from Do(r)drecht to Curaçao to send a message to other Curaçaoans in her own city. While doing this, she does not use the name Dòdò, but calls the city ‘Dòdrègt’, pronounced with a heavy Curaçaoan accent and omitting the first ‘r’. The ‘o’ is pronounced sharply, as in Dòdò. As is the ‘e.’ Dòdrègt seems to have the same function and the same detached quality as does Dòdò. Another feature of this caller’s Dòdrègt is that the location of this place, which should be geographically set in the Netherlands, seems to be experienced as coinciding with Curaçao. So much so that Curaçaoan radio is naturally used to reach out to her countrymen in Dòdrègt.

As we have seen, the construction of a place through the lived experience gives a geographical space meaning, turning it into a place no longer primarily linked to a national territory. An inhabited place is thus not only a ‘meaningful location,’ it is a location constructed through everyday acts such as the renaming of the space. Both Dòdò and Ròtò have been described as transnational places that represent an expanded sense of ‘home’ and manage to integrate both the transmigrants’ ‘here’ and ‘there.’

One could argue that these places are located in ‘real’ geographical spaces—the countries where transmigrants are based—and that they are therefore set within ‘real’ European Dutch or Curaçaoan contexts. However, when referred to by Curaçaoan transmigrants, places such as Ròtò and Dòdò, which are constructions based on experiences, symbols and acts, seem to possess their own virtual coordinates. They are primarily set through negotiation rather than fixed geographical
facts. The perceived distance among transnational places and between these places and Curaçao depend on the self-positioning of the individual Curaçaoan. When the Radio Krioyo DJ places himself in the Netherlands, or the caller in the Netherlands experiences her ‘here’ as close enough to Curaçao to make an intercontinental call just to greet her neighbors, both exhibit a disassociation between their physical coordinates and their experienced location. This detachment from location means one can be in a specific geographical location and not fully inhabit the space, forsaking the construction of attachment to the space one physically inhabits. However, this is not the only sense of detachment Curaçaoans deal with.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss this issue of disassociation of the ‘here’ and the transposing of the self from ‘here’ to ‘there’ from a postcolonial theory perspective using the work of Caribbean theorist Antonio Benítez Rojo. Benítez Rojo sees a Caribbean detachment from the ‘here’ in Caribbean identities in general and he relates this to the Caribbean colonial past.

Colonial Legacies: Moving the Self into the Other

Based on my observations within the field and interactions with Curaçaoan respondents on both side of the ocean, I contend that understanding how Curaçaoans’ in-between status influences their construction of a Curaçaoan collective identity not only demands an exploration of current Curaçaoan transnational practices. It also mandates an exploration of the way Curaçaoans construct their
identity discourse in relation to their colonial past. In this dissertation, I posit that it is only by viewing these two aspects together that we can better understand Curaçaoan identity constructions.

In postcolonial theory, the location of the postcolonial subject has been connected to social dynamics in colonial times (Benítez Rojo 1989; Hall et al. 1996; Said 1978). I will explore this aspect of location and Curaçaoan identity construction through the work of Antonio Benítez Rojo. Benítez Rojo elaborates on how the colonial past has led the Caribbean subject to first, experience his own here and now as somewhere else and to second, experience his own Self as the Other. Through a discussion of Benítez Rojo's work, I will show a rift between inhabited space and the constructed place similar to the one I argued in the Curaçaoan transnational case.

In his work *La isla que se repite: El Caribe y la perspectiva posmoderna* (1989), Antonio Benítez Rojo sees alienation and constant displacement within Caribbean identity construction. This displacement out of the self and ‘here’ is, in his view, related to seeing the self as the Other as a consequence of a violent colonial past. Benítez Rojo uses the Caribbean novel to address this link between identity and location. The Caribbean novel is, according to Benítez Rojo, permeated by performance. This performance manifests itself both as a theme in the novel and through the novel as a performance in itself. The performative Caribbean novel exhibits a ‘double play.’ Through this ‘double play,’ the novel presents itself in one way while simultaneously expressing something else. “It is proposed as a doubly spectacular spectacle: one aimed at the West in terms of an excessive inventiveness and professional competency (to follow the current),
and the other aimed at the reader of the meta archipelago” (Benítez Rojo 1989; 275). In other words, the Caribbean novel ‘dresses itself up’ with one discourse while simultaneously utilizing a second one. The first discourse, the ‘dress-up,’ Benítez Rojo calls the Profane performance. This discourse is aimed at the ‘seduction’ of the western reader. Benítez Rojo shows this through an analysis of *Viaje a la semilla* (1944) by Alejo Carpentier. In his analysis Benítez Rojo shows that Carpentier’s novel is based on a European musical structure: the canon cancrizans. By using this structure, Carpentier shows off his knowledge of Western techniques.25

Benítez Rojo identifies a second discourse which he dubs the ‘voyage towards the seed.’ This voyage is a road retracing its steps back to a mythological genesis. The Caribbean novel is thus simultaneously a seduction of the Western reader through a show of knowledge of Western culture and prowess in Western techniques, and a Caribbean voyage of self-discovery. In this voyage, Otherness is confronted in order to understand what it is to be Caribbean. In this second discourse –the hidden agenda that Benítez Rojo calls the Ritual performance– we find a monologue of the Caribbean subject directed at himself, in an attempt to reconcile with his Otherness. It reflects the Caribbean search for an identity. Benítez Rojo sees this discourse as primarily accessible to the Caribbean subject himself, since he has access to the tools needed to decipher the hidden discourse. The reader from the West would know there is something else going on, but would not be able to decode the hidden discourse as easily. Benítez Rojo argues that the Ritual performance is “a monologue that turns

25 In this crab cannon two melodies are distinguished. One that goes from start to finish, the other going backwards: from end to beginning.
towards the ‘I,’ towards the Caribbean Being, trying to mythify, and simultaneously, transcend symbolically his unnatural genesis: that is, assuming his marginality regarding the West and talk about his Calibanesque Otherness, Otherness derived from the violence of the conquest, the colonization, slavery, piracy [...] the humiliation, the misery” (Benítez Rojo 1989: 232).

The issue of representation is central to Benítez Rojo’s analysis of the Caribbean subject’s identity construction. He sees Caribbean representation of the self as heavily influenced by the violent colonial past. This past caused a schism of consciousness which manifests in literature as a double representation of the Caribbean subject: one in a discourse which the Caribbean subject directs at him- or herself (Ritual), the other in a discourse directed at the West (Profane). The two representations, Profane and Ritual, are constructed through the creation of distance between the self and the representation of the self. That is, by changing the perception of the ‘here.’

The Caribbean subject is always trying to deal with this disassociation between the self being ‘here’ and being represented by ‘there.’ This sense of distance experienced by the Caribbean subject is expressed through his ability to use the two discourses, simultaneously placing himself in two positions. The use of a double discourse is also an expression of the Caribbean’s unease with his status as Other. Furthermore, within the Ritual performance, the discourse directed towards the Caribbean subject, there is a search for an authentic identity and a common past. The goal of this monologue is to confront his status as the Other by searching for a collective identity and a myth of genesis.
To better understand the link between Otherness, location and self-representation, Benítez Rojo introduces Roland Barthes’ concept of ‘Là-bas’ (‘Out there’ or ‘Far away’).\(^{26}\) In Benítez Rojo’s view, the Other can be found when we travel to another culture and try to describe this culture. The Other is therefore always found in a ‘there.’ The journey to discover the Other could be described as a jump from one place to another, “He jumps from his own space to fall into the Other’s” (Benítez Rojo 1989: 193). Benítez Rojo refers here to the process of writing and the position of the writer who has to transpose himself into the ‘position’ of the other. The traveler who goes from a ‘here’ to a ‘there’ cannot decipher the codes that pertain to the ‘there,’ as the Other is always out of his reach. While writing, he therefore constructs his own version of ‘there.’ He thus constructs a different ‘there’ and by doing so creates the Other. Both writing and reading the Other are processes of transforming the Other. The reader gives the written version of ‘there’ his own interpretation by constructing his own Other and his own ‘there.’ The Other is, in sum, always doubly out of reach.

In the novels of Alejo Carpentier, Benítez Rojo identifies the description of the Caribbean city as the Other. Although Carpentier’s physical ‘here’ is in the Caribbean, he describes Europe as the ‘here of his desire’ (‘el acá de su deseo’) and the New World as the ‘there of his desire’ (‘el allá de su deseo’) (Benítez Rojo 1989: 196). Confronting the Caribbean Otherness in this respect refers to the Caribbean search for identity. According to Benítez Rojo, the “violence of the conquest, the colonization, slavery, piracy [...] the

\(^{26}\) According to Benítez Rojo, this text is a sort of preface to a book in which Barthes narrates his visit to Japan. (Benítez Rojo: 193).
humiliation, the misery,” all of this history which creates the Otherness, locates the Caribbean subject in another ‘here’ than his physical one (Benítez Rojo 1989: 232). This means that the Caribbean subject may be physically in the Caribbean, but his desired location is European, African, Asian or American. Since the Caribbean subject finds himself in a real ‘here’ that is exchanged for a ‘desired here,’ he analyses himself as the Other.

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed a disassociation of identity construction and geographical location caused by Curaçaoan transnationalism: being in Dordrecht while constructing a Curaçaoan identity. This disassociation is followed by an expansion of home to include both the Curaçaoan’s ‘here’ and ‘there’; the experience of being in Dòdò. However, the disassociation described by Benítez Rojo seems to go further and does not merely reflect incongruence between geographical location and constructed place. It also reflects a schism between being Caribbean and being conditioned to seeing oneself from a foreign point of view. Benítez Rojo’s analysis of literary construction of a Caribbean identity serves to understand the role of the colonial past and the historical relationship between the Caribbean and the Metropolis (Europe) as factors influencing how the Caribbean subject constructs his own identity and positions himself. In his analysis he offers a violent colonial history and skewed power relations as causes of a Caribbean’s disassociation with his location and identity. Colonialism provides the lens through which the Caribbean subject sees himself, categorizing himself as the Other. This underlying postcolonial condition of detachment from the Caribbean location and from himself seems to be a constant subjacent
condition complicating the transmigrant construction of identity and place.

Partha Chatterjee supports this view in *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories* (1993). He understands double consciousness as a consequence of colonial violence and argues that “even our imaginations must remain forever colonized” (Chatterjee quoted in Emoff 2009: 7). Chatterjee refers to the concept of imagined communities developed by Benedict Anderson (1983). Identities of postcolonial nations are, according to Chatterjee, not only constructed through their own imagination, but from the process of counterpointing. Similarly, Schiller explains that European structures were implanted in Caribbean societies for the sole benefit of the colonizer. Caribbean societies were therefore created, not to function independently or to be self-sufficient, but to function in relation to, and for the benefit of, the European center. “From the perspective of the Caribbean, it was possible to develop the concept of part societies that could be understood only in relation to distant locations” (Schiller 2009: 23). Looking back to anthropological research in the 20th century, she presents the view of migrant communities as different due to their history and their origin as dated and proposes the “politization of ethnicity in the context of nation-state building” as the culprit (Schiller 2009: 23).

The views of Chatterjee, Hall, Schiller and Benítez Rojo all point to a lack of awareness of the Caribbean subject’s own position as well as a flexibility in the construction of the ‘here’ and ‘there.’ In the words of Benítez Rojo, “In truth the Caribbean Being needs to start his utopian voyage towards his own reconstitution from a cultural space that falls
necessarily ‘outside,’ whether it refers to Europe, Africa, Asia or America as a dominant focal point of his syncretism” (Benítez Rojo 1989: 266). When the Caribbean being confronts this tension between ‘the desired here’ versus the physical reality, he can locate his identity.

Benítez Rojo’s ‘double play,’ as part of the Caribbean process of constructing a collective identity discourse, is similar to the concept of doubleness mentioned by Stuart Hall in his understanding of cultural identity and is also referred to by W.E.B. Du Bois as a ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois 1903, Hall 2003, Gilroy 1993).

Paul Gilroy also borrows this concept of ‘double consciousness’ which he perceives to be characteristic of modern-day black Atlantic culture, in which blacks live with the knowledge that they are not the center of the societies they find themselves in. In this dissertation I will argue that this concept is also characteristic of the double Diaspora condition in which Curaçaoans find themselves, not only discursively engaging with a African Diaspora or a black Atlantic, but also with a transnational modern-day Diaspora between the Netherlands and Curaçao.

27 Although many have discussed the merits of the concept of double consciousness, I refer here to the description of double consciousness by W.E.B. Dubois in his text *The souls of black folk* (1903) which I read to be a negatively valued ‘condition’ that causes the black individual to see himself through a ‘veil’. One could argue that this ‘veil’ is positive in that it also moves him to strive to ‘become himself’. But it seems to me that the veil and the double consciousness discussed here are the hindrances he needs to shed, in order to ‘attain his place in the world’. His aim is to unite his two warring parts without changing them. In my understanding of this original concept, it is the awareness of the veil which seems the key important and positive element, rather than the veil itself, namely double consciousness.
The views on Caribbean identity in relation to the colonial past mentioned above are part of a scholarly and social tradition in which the issue of Caribbean identity construction is often formulated as problematic. This entails the construction of a discourse of a ‘condition’ of disassociation and of viewing the Self as the Other. In the next chapters, I will address how the idea of a Curaçaoan double consciousness is also used as a justification for interventions such as nation-building efforts in the Curaçaoan social context, and how the same dissociation and Otherness underlies an Afro-Curaçaoan discourse constructed by Dutch-Curaçaoan rapper Fresku. Later in this chapter, I show how the postcolonial sense of disjointedness is coupled to transnationalism in the discourses of two Curaçaoan politicians: the late Helmin Magno Wiels and the ex-minister of Justice, ‘Kadé’ Wilsoe. In my view, the combination of these two phenomena results in a postcolonial condition that accounts for a flexible Curaçaoan attitude towards place and identity. When the Caribbean history of disassociation, or double consciousness, is combined with the described Curaçaoan construction of a transnational place in which the Curaçaoan feels free to position himself alternately ‘here’ and ‘there,’ she is able to express a fluid sense of identity. By this I mean the expression of a claim to flexible identification as well as mobility. The flexibility I refer to here thus not only concerns physical movement, but also a matter-of-fact attitude, constructed through a transnational mindset aided by a post-colonial untethering.

If the image of an unencumbered coming and going of transmigrants as ideal, flexible cosmopolitan beings seems too idyllic, it’s because it
is. From the state perspective transnationalism and the Curaçaoan claim to flexibility vis-a-vis location and collective identity can be viewed as problematic. Transnationalism certainly results in challenges for both the societies transnationals live in-between and for the transnationals themselves.

In the Netherlands, for example, ‘permanent temporary-ness’ and mobility are seen as impediments to the integration of specifically young Curaçaoans (Kiem 2005: 9). Attempts to assimilate ‘problem groups’ in the Curaçaoan transmigrant group have proved in vain. In an unofficial exchange with a Dutch government official in June 2012, this person shared their thoughts on this with me, saying that the Curaçaoan group was difficult to reach and individuals belonging to that group were hard to pin down. The official complained that Curaçaoans often changed location, moving from city to city, or disappeared from the radar.28 Curaçaoan transmigrants’ integration, or rather the lack thereof, is often connected to their flexibility and impermanence (Kiem 2005).

During my research I found that this flexibility and impermanence was not only relegated to Curaçaoan youngsters. The matter is reflected in Stanley’s earlier description of his kompadu. The ease with which he refers to going ‘down’ to Curaçao is not unique. During informal conversations I held with other members of the community I saw a similar matter-of-factness regarding location and movement. I observed and spoke to multiple respondents on the issue of seasonal

28 My respondent did not refer specifically to criminal youth. At that moment he was telling me about the difficulties in reaching Curaçaoan youngsters in general to offer them the opportunity to participate in projects and workshops for (Dutch) language development.
migration. These conversations and my own observations confirmed the ease and frequency with which Curaçaoans, at least these, seemed to move between the Netherlands and Curaçao.

The respondents I questioned about this issue were mostly middle-aged or past middle age. Some were women who had children on both sides of the ocean and who were living between the Netherlands and Curaçao while their husbands stayed on the island. I also spoke to men who moved because of job opportunities and met an elderly lady who was not able to choose between the commodities offered by a life in the Netherlands and missing her siblings on the island.

Despite the fact that I encountered multiple examples of people moving seasonally between the two nations, it became clear to me that this movement was not unchallenged. The position of Curaçaoan migrants living in the Netherlands has also been debated in Curaçaoan society. While on one level, transmigrants are accepted as belonging to the Curaçaoan in-group on the island, on a more formal level they are set apart or even resented for their lack of permanence, which is interpreted as a lack of loyalty and dedication. Furthermore, transmigrants are not the only ones engaging in transnational activity. Curaçaoans based in the homeland are also, in a sense, maintaining transnational bonds and leading transnational lives. Both Curaçaoans in Curaçao and in the Netherlands practice and deal with transnationalism and border-crossing. In the following case of Wilsoe vs. Q-sign I explore the possible problems arising from the Curaçaoan flexible way of being in-between.
Case 2: Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign: The State and Transnationalism

People from ‘Outside’

Curaçao was bustling between December 2010 and February 2011. Individuals and organizations were engaged in traditional end-of-year celebrations. Simultaneously, preparations for the 2011 Curaçaoan Carnival were already in full swing. As was customary, the Carnival season consisted of a list of consecutive events set to take place between January and the end of February, many of these activities being either coordinated or facilitated by government agencies. Carnival on the island is an important national event during which a great number of actors in Curaçaoan society, including businesses, schools, and citizens, form groups to participate in parades, write songs to participate in the tumba music festival, and organize animated Carnival parties called ‘jump-ins.’ The 2011 Carnival would be the first Carnival of Curaçao as a ‘true country,’ as the island had become an independent country within the Kingdom the previous year. This meant that the festivities were assigned an even more symbolic meaning than usual. They became part of the celebration and definition of Curaçaoan collective identity and culture. The popular tumba music festival, during which the Carnival anthem would be chosen, had the theme ‘the local artist.’ The importance and value of these local artists for Curaçaoan culture was especially emphasized by Manfred ‘Feko’ Gomes, president of the association for Curaçaoan musicians and head of the Carnival commission. However, between looking forward to the Carnival season and engaging in the end-of-year festivities, a seemingly peculiar issue was brought to attention...
and discussed extensively in the media: the debate on the issue of ‘foreign bands.’

In 2010 members of the Curaçaoan Farandula (musical scene) had approached the Minister of Justice regarding an issue they identified as a yearly recurring problem during the end-of-year and Carnival festivities. Bands ‘from outside’ (bandanang djafo) were being contracted to play on the island during the season. The complaint was especially directed towards ‘certain Aruban bands.’ The claim the locals made was that while Aruban bands often performed in Curaçao without being subject to bureaucracy, Curaçaoan bands were not allowed to enter or perform in Aruba without being subjected to red tape and taxes. The Curaçaoan faranduleros, musicians and people working in the music industry, complained that since they could not just go to Aruba and perform there, why should Arubans be allowed to play without restrictions in Curaçao? While Aruba is often referred to as the ‘isla hermana’ (sister island), relations between Aruba and Curaçao have not always been idyllic. After extensive discussion that oscillated between border-monitoring questions and monetary issues, with scores of Curaçaoan musicians and their representatives featured commenting on the issue in the media, the Curaçaoan Minister of Justice, ‘Kadé’ Wilsoe, was contacted to deal with the Aruban matter. Aruban officials failed to comply in a timely manner with the Minister’s request to level the field in such a way that Curaçaoan musicians could perform more easily in Aruba. Wilsoe then issued an ordinance that prohibited free entrance to all foreign bands during the Curaçaoan season of festivities, the exception being artists who had
applied for and been granted an official permit beforehand. No bands from ‘outside’ could be contracted over bands ‘from here.’

This move by the Curaçaoan government, enforcing the monitoring of the Curaçaoan border in reaction to Aruba’s policy, is especially significant when Aruba’s political status is taken into account. While Aruba has been a country within the Kingdom since 1986, Curaçao had just become a country on October 10th 2010, two mere months before this case played out in the media. By enforcing the monitoring of borders, Curaçao and Aruba could function on an equal basis. While the country of Aruba had already put restrictions in place and had been enforcing them for some time, the restrictions on border-crossing issued by Wilsoe may be seen as action taken to cement the Curaçaoan position as a new country, and as a step in constructing a new Curaçaoan nation-state. It is this issue of border-crossing and the state restrictions upon it that causes clashes between Curaçaoan flexibility with respect to place and identity construction and the Curaçaoan state.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, transnational migrant communities are certainly impacted by how the state deals with transnational practices: “States and the politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178). Waldinger and Fitzgerald distinguish four issues to be considered while researching transnationalism and the way internal politics influence transnational activities. These four issues are useful in further understanding the problem with transnationalism from the state perspective.
Firstly, they argue that states are bound to monitor any border crossing. The transmigrants’ freedom of movement between states should not be considered a given. The level of freedom of movement must be determined to understand the possible extent of transnational activities. In the case of Curaçaoan transnationalism, this means that Curaçaoan transnational practices are influenced by Curaçaoan and Dutch policies on border crossing.

Secondly, Waldinger and Fitzgerald emphasize that the degree of institutionalization and policing of internal and external boundaries must be assessed. Since the change in status of Curaçao has led to an increased awareness of its position as a country within the Kingdom, projects focused on the promotion of a Curaçaoan collective identity through culture, such as the focus on local artists during the tumba festival, go hand in hand with state actions such as the protection of bands ‘from here.’ This means a new level of border monitoring enforcement, as seen in the case of the Aruban bands. Further on I discuss this issue in more depth in relation to specific transnational practices between the Netherlands and Curaçao.

Thirdly, similar to Faist (2010), Waldinger and Fitzgerald discuss the issue of dual loyalty, the encompassing of ‘here’ and ‘there’ within the concept of belonging and collective identity, which tends to be looked upon unfavorably by social actors in both host and home countries. “The terms of national belonging are almost always the subject of conflict; variations in political culture ensure that they also differ from one nation-state to the next” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178). The case Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign, which will be further discussed below, embodies Curaçaoan preoccupation with many questions on national
identity and belonging central to Curaçaoan society and politics post 10-10-10: Who are ‘we’ as a people? What is Curaçaoan culture? Who does belong? Who does not? Who is allowed in?

Finally, interstate relations also influence the way the issues mentioned above are dealt with. According to Waldinger and Fitzgerald, “Dual loyalty becomes a particularly intense issue when belligerency develops between host and sending countries” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178-1179). Concerning these relations between countries, Curaçaoan (circular) migration, postcolonial relations, and neo-colonialist Dutch policies all add to a tense political relationship between the Netherlands and Curaçao. Curaçaoan ease in border-crossing and integration in Dutch society have also been sensitive issues in this context. This is evident from the follow-up to the ‘bandanan djafó’ affair.

As the December festivities ended and the Carnival season began, the ‘bandanan djafó’ affair was in the news again. This time, the affair had taken a peculiar twist; a band called Q-sign, consisting of Curaçaoan musicians residing in the Netherlands, had been bound to perform in Curaçao during the Carnival season. However, it seemed the band did not have all the required permits in place and was therefore not allowed to perform. It was, the minister had judged, a ‘foreign band,’ and could not be admitted without express permission—for which their petition came too late. This was to be Q-Sign’s last Curaçaoan tour before the band ceased to exist. They had various standing appointments with Carnival groups to perform during the season. In the end, they were granted an exception for only one of these performances, as they had signed the contract a year before. All
other performances were to be cancelled. The Q-Sign issue sparked an intense discussion in the media regarding who was ‘from here’ and who was ‘from outside.’ Emotions flared, transnational Curaçaoans finally being discussed in the context of the new country Curaçao. During this affair, questions were raised specifically related to transmigrants to Curaçao: Do they belong here with us, are they part of the collective? Are they Curaçaoans? Are they ‘performing a Curaçaoan identity’? Are they ‘authentic’? Are they putting in the work? That is, acting out their Curaçaoanness in the day to day as expected by the association of musicians?

The public discussion sparked by this affair was played out in the Curaçaoan media. People who supported Q-sign –many of them faranduleros themselves– appealed to the public’s sentiment, saying that Q-Sign's musicians were ‘ours,’ our people, living afar, but still belonging to the island.

However, the faranduleros’ flexible construction of ‘from here,’ in which Q-Sign was included, was not shared by Curaçaoan politician Helmin Wiels. On a popular evening radio show Wiels claimed that while ‘Curaçaoan’ bands based in the Netherlands paid either no taxes or a minimal amount, they charged an absurd amount of money for their performances, relying on the fact that they were from ‘outside’ – from the Netherlands– to attract a greater audience, thus earning more than their fair share. They paid taxes in the Netherlands, Wiels said, therefore they were based in the Netherlands and were foreign. According to Wiels:

“Esnan ku ta papia di ku [e músikonan di Q-sign] ta yu’i Kòrsou...
Wiels claimed that the main issue here concerned monetary gain and that the band was patronized by their friends on the island. This was, in his opinion, a consequence of persistent Eurocentrism in island mentality.

Wiels refers here to Fèko Gomes in his capacity as head of the music association. He finds the stressing of the importance of local artists to be in contradiction with the calls for dispensation for Q-Sign, which were allegedly also originating from AMAK (Association of Curaçaoan Musicians and Performers) musicians.
Wiels’ arguments combined nationalist sentiments, reflections on the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoans and the drive to promote critical thought to the general population. The result was a passionate monologue in which he presented issues of injustice in Curaçaoan society, patronage, nepotism and Eurocentrism, that is, favoring what comes from the Netherlands, as interconnected:

“The island mentality’, racism and bias towards everything Western (European, Dutch, American) Wiels refers to is illustrated by an example of how, he says, Curaçaoan musicians were treated at the new Hyatt Hotel:

“Q-sign is not from here, that’s why they charge that much, isn’t that right? Because they’re not from here. Because the ones ‘from here’ don’t charge that amount. Q-Sign is not from here. That’s why everybody is crazy about them. Because they are from ‘outside’!” (Bos di Boneiru 2011).

The ‘island mentality’, racism and bias towards everything Western (European, Dutch, American) Wiels refers to is illustrated by an example of how, he says, Curaçaoan musicians were treated at the new Hyatt Hotel:

“Na Hyatt nan a ofresé nan kuminda di pago pa toká. Pa bo sa kon deningrante nan ta trata nos músiko. […] Òf ofresènan kamber gratis. […] Bo tin kamber na bo kas kaba, tòg? N’ ta ku bo kasa bo ta bai eiden […] kon nan ta rebajá, menospresiá nos artistan lokai […] anto aya banda abo ta defendé un banda djafò ku ta bin kobra 15.000 heldu.”
“At the Hyatt, they were offered food for a performance. So you know with how much contempt they treat our musicians [...] Or offer them free rooms. You already have rooms at home, don’t you? It’s not with your wife that you’re going into that room! [...] how they denigrate, look down upon our local musicians [...] and on the other hand you defend a band from outside that comes in and charges 15.000 guilders” (Bos di Boneiru 2011).

The last comment, he added referring to the people defending Q-sign. Wiels used the Hyatt hotel, which at that time had a lot of negative press for their policy of contracting mostly foreign (Asian) workers and snubbing the local Afro-Curaçaoan population, as an example of neocolonialism. He also emphasized the fact that, as a consequence of colonialism, the Netherlands still functioned as a central focus to their way of thinking for many Curaçaoans. In his opinion, Curaçaoans needed to learn to appreciate what he saw as really being theirs.

From Wiels’ perspective, geographical location is equated with belonging to the Curaçaoan group. He makes a distinction between on the one hand being ‘from here,’ living in Curaçao, which he links to belonging to the Curaçaoan group, and on the other hand being ‘Curaçaoan’, which is a more general definition and does not grant automatic access to the in-group. He also makes quite a direct link between living in the Netherlands and a lack of loyalty towards Curaçao. Bands based in the Netherlands are portrayed as taking advantage of the fact that they are ‘from the Netherlands.’ The advantage is based on preconceived notions stemming from the colonial past. These bands are seen as perpetuating socially embedded
stereotypes portraying anything European Dutch as superior to (Afro-) Curaçaoan. In other words, living in the Netherlands is equated with a lack of loyalty towards Curaçao. This view on location and loyalty is tied not only to the colonial past and the difficult current relations between Curaçao and the Netherlands, it is also linked to the more traditional perception of social group identification as tied to territory. Wodak and Krzyzanowski argue that “As bureaucratic ‘thresholds of citizenship’ [...] have acquired various meanings for different groups of migrants, it has become clear that ‘porous boundaries’ and multiple identities undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership” (Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2007: 100). Whereas before, living in a specific country, being a citizen of that country and belonging to the collective were taken as given, currently “increasing numbers of citizens who do not belong’ have appeared […], as have strict gate-keepers (within state-systems) guarding and controlling access to membership, recognition, and citizenship” (Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2007: 100). This means that while Curaçaoans transmigrants construct a transnational public sphere and express a flexibility concerning place and identity, there is a second stream of thought, represented by the state, in which national territory is key in the construction of an ‘authentic’ Curaçaoan collective identity. This idea is also influenced by the issues proposed by Waldinger and Fitzgerald, such as strained trans-state relationships between the Netherlands and Curaçao, resulting in Curaçaoan state attempts to protect its borders.

From the perspective expressed by Wiels, Curaçaoans in the Netherlands lack loyalty towards Curaçao. Living in the Netherlands
is an impediment to full citizenship and cultural belonging in Curaçao. Wiels’ preoccupation with the influence of the colonial past on Curaçaoans’ mentality and with the social consequences of the relationship between the Netherlands and Curaçao is reflected in Curaçaoan cultural policies concerned with nation-building. In Chapter 3 I will further explore this issue. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, Dutch integration policy sees transnationalism and the experience of a great sense of belonging towards a social group not based in the Netherlands as impediments to full citizenship and cultural belonging to Dutch society. This being between two sets of expectations exposes the position of Curaçaoan transnationals as controversial.

A perspective similar to that of Wiels was expressed by Curaçaoan minister Wilsoe on another afternoon radio talk show, ‘Interkambio ku JJ’, on Fiesta FM. Wilsoe stressed the difference between those who were ‘from here,’ doing the hard work, and those who only came to perform on stage and reap the rewards. Referring to the tumba songs composed for the 2011 children’s tumba festival, Wilsoe said:

Nos a sembra tur e tumbanai […] Nos a tende e tumba dje muchanan k’á kana i inspirá nos… Kon bon nos kultura ta. Kon bon nos por hasi sierto kosnan. Anto ora tur e trabou ei a wòrdu hasi… A plug e tereno, a sembra tur e tumba bunitanan ei. Anto ora e kosecha bini […] kaminda por tin algun sèn ku nos bandanan por gana bèk di loke nan a inberti den e periodo promé einanan… Anto ami no ta kai den e wega: ‘Si pero yu’i Kòrsou nan ta!’. Mi ta proteha e […] yu’i Kòrsounan ’ki ku, henter e ruta’ki, a traha. […] anto ta bini un banda djafo, ku no a partisipa na festival di tumba, no a hasi niun gastu, no ta un banda konosè kome un banda tumbero tampoko […] pasó ora nan bini ‘ta banda djafo mi ta’ nan ta kobra mas karu k’è banda local.”
“We sowed those tumbas […] We heard the children’s tumbas... [The children] who walked and inspired us... how great our culture is, how well we can do certain things... And when the work is done: the land has been plowed, those beautiful tumbas sown, and it’s time to harvest […] where our bands could earn back some of the money they invested in the previous period... I am not fooled by ‘Yes, but they’re Curaçaoans!’ I try to protect [...] the yu’i Kòrsou that worked here for the whole period [...] and then comes a band from outside, that did not participate in the tumba festival, that made no expenses, that’s not known as a tumba band [...] When they come saying ‘I’m from outside’ they charge more than the local bands” (Interkambio ku JJ 2011).

Wiels and Wilsoe seem to agree on the fact that foreign (Western) culture and thought seem to be held in high regard within Curaçaoan society. Like Helmin Wiels, Wilsoe goes on to say that the issue is not about Q-Sign’s musicians being yu’i Kòrsou or not. It is in fact about business. He argues that these musicians just want to sweep in, make a lot of money at the expense of the hard work put in by local musicians and then return to the Netherlands. Although the issue of Q-sign’s musicians being Curaçaoans or not is denied relevance, it still plays a role in the discourse of both politicians. Wilsoe’s tone and emphasis when talking about Curaçao’s ‘own’ musicians and about Q-sign’s musicians using the island and then returning to the Netherlands without putting in the hard work, certainly seem to indicate a value judgment regarding Q-Sign not being settled on the island. The same can be said about Wiels’ stressing that these transnational bands do not pay enough taxes and that they exploit the fact that they live in the Netherlands. Although
both politicians are ready to concede that Q-Sign’s musicians are Curaçaoans, they make a distinction between ‘those’ Curaçaoans and the local ones. The difference between the two types of Curaçaoans is based on Q-sign’s wages as well as the ‘special’ treatment Q-Sign receives from some factions on the island. The politicians see this treatment as undeserved and based on a bias giving what is foreign precedence over the local. The issue of the position of ‘outside’; the West in general, but the Netherlands in particular, within Curaçaoan society, is brought to the forefront as an underlying issue influencing the construction of Curaçaoan identity and belonging of transnational migrants. Wilsoe blames the fact that the affair caused such a controversy on a lack of patriotism.

“Nos a palabrá ku niun banda d’jafó ta bin. Dikon? Duna nos artístanan, nos músikonan, nos bandanan un luna […] di henter añ, pa nan so. E problema ‘ki no tin na Aruba […] pasó einan tin un patriotismo, un respèt, un goso, un sosten pa loke ta di nos mes.”

“We agreed that no bands from outside would come. Why? Give our artists, our bands one month […] out of the whole year, only for them. This problem doesn’t exist on Aruba […] because there there is patriotism. A respect, an enjoyment and a support for what is ours” (Interkambio ku JJ 2011).

In referring to Aruba, Wilsoe refers to an island which has a comparable political relationship with the Netherlands. Wilsoe uses Aruban patriotism as an example of how Curaçaoans should deal with their new status as a country. The idea of patriotism he wants to instill
is especially directed toward revaluation of what he sees as truly Curaçaaoan in relation to what he deems Dutch culture and thought. The case of Wilsoe vs. Q-sign shows the way Curaçaaoan construction of the own identity and location are interrelated. The valuation of what is from ‘outside’ over what is seen as ‘own,’ as identified by Wilsoe and Wiels, may reveal an underlying reality of Curaçaaoan confrontation with their self-imposed Otherness. This is in accordance with the concept of a Curaçaaoan double consciousness I discussed through Benítez Rojo, in which he understands Caribbean identity construction by the postcolonial subject as incorporating a virtual switch between the imagined ‘here’ and ‘there.’ The subject’s actual location, in this case, Curaçao, becomes the ‘there of desire’ and what is actually far away (the Netherlands), becomes the ‘here of desire.’ As a consequence, he or she experiences what is from the Netherlands as preferable to what is from the actual Curaçao. This switch between ‘here’ and ‘there’ is also referred to in both Wiels’ and Wilsoe’s assessments of Curaçaaoan thought patterns. According to both politicians, Curaçaaoans prefer what is from ‘outside’ over what is ‘their own.’

If we take into account the state’s emphasis on border-crossing, the challenges to Curaçaaoan transnationalism reveal themselves. Waldinger and Fitzgerald argued that “States and the politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178). In the Wilsoe-Q-Sign case, the monitoring of borders was in place in Aruba first, and Curaçao followed later. Within the public discussion, relations between the two islands took a
dive during the affair discussed above. The result was a mandate implementing monitoring at the Curaçaoan border. As a consequence, restrictions arose that limited access to perform on the island for the transmigrant band in question.

The case described above shows how certain actors within society, such as politicians and musicians, had a problem with free border-crossing and the dual nature of transmigrants’ loyalty. This worked in tandem with historical relations between the Netherlands and Curaçao, which also appeared to be of influence. The presence of ‘foreign bands’ and their profiting from the fact that they were ‘from’ the Netherlands served (from Wilsoe's and Wiels’ perspective) to perpetuate stereotypes and representations of Curaçaoans as less than the Dutch.

Although Q-Sign was performing Curaçaoan identity through music on-stage, according to Wilsoe, they were not putting in the labor and were not physically on the island all the time. This seems to concern an issue of authenticity. Putting in the labor meant really being ‘from here,’ while performing Curaçaoan music on-stage was interpreted as just acting as if you were ‘from here’ when it proved convenient. In other words, multiple loyalties and flexibility of location were deemed undesirable in this context. The transnational Q-Sign musicians are seen as embedded in the Dutch state system because they pay Dutch taxes. The state structure shows itself to be an impediment to the incorporation of Q-Sign in the Curaçaoan community in Curaçao and to the construction of a true transnational community. This shows a fissure between the state's and subject’s ways of dealing with belonging.
At the start of this chapter, I discussed the construction of virtual spheres of collective identification of Curaçaoan transnationals. These spheres are in fact a compilation of meaningful practices that construct relationships and feelings of attachment. Within these transnational spheres, migrants are able to relate to both ‘here’ and ‘there.’ However, the flexibility suggested by the ability to connect and construct collective identities through transnational practices is put into question by the Wilsoe and Wiels standpoint. They detect a tendency towards self-marginalization within the Curaçaoan community. That is, they see a tendency towards the positioning of the self as less and as Other. Thus, although Curaçaoans have a tendency to move between ‘here’ and ‘there’ and engage in transnational practices, as shown by Q-Sign, seen from the Wilsoe and Wiels perspective this flexibility is an illusion. They see Q-sign as embedded in the Dutch context. Furthermore, they argue that Curaçaoans are weighed down by the mental and social consequences of the colonial past. In other words, Wiels and Wilsoe understand transnationalism to be a negative symptom of a postcolonial way of thinking which values the Dutch over the ‘own.’ Transnationalism in this sense is problematic with respect to the Curaçaoan nation-building project.
Conclusion

In this chapter I delved into the way Curaçaoan in-between status influences constructions of Curaçaoan identity discourse by focusing on the issues of location and the self. How do Curaçaoans deal with belonging? What is the center from which the Curaçaoan collective identity is constructed? I posed these questions vis-a-vis Curaçaoan identity construction and belonging and set out to answer them through theories on transnationalism, on the perceptions and constructions of place and postcolonial identity.

I argued that current Curaçaoan transnational everyday practices and Curaçao’s colonial past add up to a postcolonial condition. This postcolonial condition is a sense of disassociation for the Curaçaoan and manifests itself through the construction of a flexible understanding of place (as home) and the adoption of a flexible approach towards collective Curaçaoan identity. In fact, it entails Curaçaoan engagement with two ‘diasporas’: a modern-day transnational Curaçaoan community and the African Diaspora.

I provided two case studies to better understand this postcolonial condition: the case of Radio Krioyo, which elaborated on Curaçaoan flexible constructions of identity and place, and the case of Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign. In this last case I analyzed Curaçaoan political objections to transnationals’ flexible location of the Self in Curaçaoan everyday life. These objections focused on two issues. First, the favored treatment Curaçaoans groups based in the Netherlands received when on the island. Politicians denounced this as a consequence of persistent colonial thought patterns within the community. Second, the
rejection of transnationalism, as voiced by Wilsoe in his indignation over musical groups that only came to the island to enjoy the fruits of the labor of Curaçaaoans who live and work on the island permanently. Through these two cases I argued that Curaçaaoans experience a sense of double consciousness as a consequence of the colonial past and a sense of alienation due to their transnational existence.

In the first case I argued that the construction of a virtual transnational Curaçaaoan sphere goes hand in hand with a fluid sense of location. That location itself is marked by a fluid sense of ‘here’ and ‘there’ on which colonial history has had its influence. Similar to the neighborhoods on the island itself, the neighborhoods created out of Dutch cities by Curaçaaoans in the Netherlands have blurry borders: Dòdò spills into Ròtó as Damsko does into Suax (a Curaçaaoan neighborhood) and so forth. The setting seems to be flexible rather than fixed. Transnational places like Dòdò are constructed not only by renaming the city but also by enacting a perceived collective culture. In constructing such places, transnationals build a transnational Curaçaaoan collective identity. Such an identity unites both halves of the community.

I proceeded to apply Benítez Rojo’s view on Caribbean colonial past and Otherness to the Curaçaaoan case and showed that Curaçaaoan perceptions of ‘here’ and ‘there’ reveal a sense of ‘double consciousness’ –understood here as a sense of self characterized by displacement and alienation. I then argued that we should view Curaçaaoan ‘double consciousness’ and the Curaçaaoan transnationalism I explored in the first case in tandem. The combination of this colonial legacy of disassociation and current
transnational practices results in a perceived right to freedom of movement and identification by transnational migrants. This flexibility with regard to identity and location is incorporated in the performance of Curaçaoan collective identity as characteristic of Curaçaoans.

Taking into account a sense of displacement as a consequence of the colonial history, I thus take current construction of flexible Curaçaoan transnational social fields to be analogous to the construction of flexible transnational Curaçaoan collective identities.

In my analysis of the second case study, Q-Sign vs. Wilsoe, I revealed how the perceived right to multiple identification and free relocation, which I argued to be part of Curaçaoan identity constructions, can be understood as problematic from the island point of view. The focus on border-crossing and monitoring seen in Curaçao is the result of an effort to construct and protect a new Curaçaoan nation. Cultural performances in general and Carnival in particular in this case are seen as symbolic of Curaçaoan identity and culture. Transmigrants not fully engaged in the nation-building process (the Carnival cultural events) may be seen as threats to social cohesion. This state view clashes with the flexibility adopted as a Curaçaoan trait. Other aspects that must be taken into account include the tense relations between the Dutch and Curaçaoan states and the intention to revalue Afro-Curaçaoan identity, breaking away from Eurocentrism linked to the colonial past.

All of this adds up to anti-Dutch sentiment differentiating between Curaçaoans from ‘here’ and from ‘there.’ From this viewpoint, transnationalism is seen as problematic. While transnationalism may allow for a more empowered individual with a flexible construction of
her Self, from a state perspective it can thus also be understood as a threat to nation-building efforts. As I showed in the case study above, this can cause a clash between state and societal perceptions of location and belonging.

The main research issue of this chapter was the way Curaçaoan in-between status influences collective identity construction. On the basis of the theoretical literature and the two case studies, I can conclude that despite the Curaçaoan flexibility in dealing with place and identity discussed in this chapter, Curaçaoan being in-between two social contexts, due to transnationalism and the colonial heritage, also proves problematic. Caribbean disassociation as well as the phenomenon of transnationalism have often been problematized both in academia and in the public debate.

I propose that the combination of ‘double consciousness’ and transnationalism which results in the postcolonial condition can also be viewed as a positive conflation of circumstances. It is not solely a condition of hyper-disassociation. This disassociation also causes a flexible attitude towards identity construction, which in itself can function as a type of identification that is empowering and lends the Caribbean subject agency. In other words, this same postcolonial condition can be viewed as a discourse on a flexible Curaçaoan identity. Throughout this dissertation I research ways in which Curaçaoans construct collective identity discourses to reconcile with their Otherness through performance and deal with their position between two social contexts. I thus also explore the idea of a flexible Curaçaoan identity as an empowering identity discourse.
In the following chapters I explore the performance of collective Curaçaoan identity in respectively Dutch and Curaçaoan contexts, discussing how the discourse of a flexible identity introduced in this chapter is constructed and interacts within these contexts. I will address two issues. First, how different collective discourses refer to a reconciliation with- or solving of the alienation associated with the postcolonial condition. Second, how a flexible identity construction as inherent to the Curaçaoan experience is negotiated through Curaçaoan performances.
Chapter 2
Representation, Power and Performance in The Hague

This is the second chapter in a three-part macro-level inquiry into the interrelation between the particular social contexts of Curaçao and the Netherlands and a Curaçaoan identity construction which is flexible and includes a need to deal both with transnationalism and the colonial past. In this chapter I focus on the Dutch contexts. In the Netherlands, questions arise that are similar to those posed by Faist concerning the social consequences of transnationalism: “Are migrants’ transnational orientations at odds with their social integration in societies of settlement? Or is there complementarity – and if so, in what circumstances?” (Faist 2010: 11, 12). These questions reveal specific social conditions that influence Curaçaoan identity discourse constructions in the Netherlands and how Curaçaoans perform these discourses. The issue of integration and the construction of a prevalent Dutch national identity play a great role.

The present chapter poses the following central question: How is the Curaçaoan identity discourse influenced by the Dutch context? To answer this question, I first address the dialectic between transmigrant constructions of collective Curaçaoan identity through performance and the governmental promotion of a regional Dutch identity. I refer specifically to the city of The Hague in this context.

For the past ten years I have performed in different musical groups within The Hague. In doing so I have built an extensive network of
musicians who focused on traditional Latin-American and Caribbean music in this city. The past six years I specifically performed in the band Tipiko Den Haag performing Curaçaoan traditional music. We have performed during official occasions, for organizations such as OCAN (the Organization of Caribbean Dutch in the Netherlands) as well as in less formal settings, such as during smaller gatherings of Curaçaoans in church, in community centers, and on cultural podia or festivals subsidized by the The Hague municipality.

My fieldwork in the Hague was thus in a way an extension of the work I have been putting in as a performer for the last decade. During this period I had the opportunity to get to know many performers and could also meet and talk to audience members. My occasional vantage point on stage did allow me a privileged view of the audience and their reactions to the music we performed. Meanwhile it also brought me into contact with the municipality and other official instances. This allowed me to observe the way The Hague citizen policy was interrelated with art and culture and how this impacted Curaçaoan performers. This unique position contributed to the choice of The Hague as a case site within this dissertation and my observations are incorporated within this chapter.29

29 My embeddedness as a musician and as a member of the community in this city also had its drawbacks when it came to the perception of my neutrality. Since the community in The Netherlands is relatively small and the cultural sector within it tends to be competitive, I was confronted by the issue of allegiance. Implicitly or explicitly the question was posed with which group within the community did I work? Who were my parents? However, my position as a musician and later on organizer and the fact that I am a Curaçaoan, also worked as a plus when it came to establishing a relationship with members of the community. My music worked in a sense as a binding element eliciting people’s participation and positive reactions. I constantly received input which helped me to interpret the cases I observed.
The Hague’s citizenship policy considers the use of ‘art and culture’ essential for reaching integration and social cohesion within the city (Gemeente Den Haag: 2006). ‘Art and culture’ are sites in which specific cultural identities of minorities are negotiated. In this case this means that Curaçaoan migrants are able to construct a Curaçaoan identity within the dominant Dutch social context by performing, for example, Curaçaoan folklore, popular music, and dance and theater in Papiamentu.

The two main ideas I want to present in this chapter are the following: first, the need to consider these performances as tools through which the Hague municipal power technologies concerned with integration construct and reinforce specific discourses in regard to migrant representation. These performances are used to construct a Hagenaar identity. Second, the possibility of these same performances being used as practices that allow Curaçaoan migrant performers and audiences to construct a counter-discourse of representation.

Here, I approach performance as the site where these discursive constructions of identities intersect: that of the Hagenaar, a citizen of The Hague, as a main focus of identification for all cultural groups in The Hague, and that of a specific Curaçaoan collective identity by Curaçaoan migrants in the city. These two discourses battle for prominence. I will then focus on the performance of counter-discourses of Curaçaoan identity within the setting of The Hague. In this chapter I explore top-down and bottom-up constructions and negotiations of collective identities within the Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands. The two identities I analyze in the Hague, the Hagenaar and the Curaçaoan, are not only constructed in the same
domain—within arts and culture—, but also function as potentially competing identification; the creation of the Curaçaoan cultural identity also bolsters the construction of a national identity among Curaçaoan migrants. Since the *Hagenaar* image aims to install itself as the primary collective identification of all cultural groups of the city, it clashes with the transnational Curaçaoan identity performed by migrants. These two identities, functioning within the same space and on the same level, allow for a transnational Curaçaoan identity discourse to become a competing collective identification for Curaçaoan migrants, endangering the integration of this group in The Hague. This in turn, threatens the envisioned social cohesion of the city.

The intersection between these two identity constructions, the *Hagenaar* and the Curaçaoan, within the same performances, creates a conflict where state and subject struggle for prominence. As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the characteristics of the collective Curaçaoan identity constructed by transmigrants is flexibility; the adoption of a flexible attitude towards the construction of identity as a Curaçaoan characteristic. I showed how such a flexible attitude can become problematic from the perspective of the Curaçaoan project aiming for a cohesive national identity discourse. In this chapter I will discuss whether this flexible attitude can also be seen as a threat to the *Hagenaar* identity in its quest for saliency.

To better understand this field of tension between the two identities as well as the meaning of a flexible Curaçaoan approach to collective identity, and to shed light on the possibilities and limitations of performances as sites of identity construction within a multicultural
context, we need to consider the following issues: How are the *Hagenaar* and Curaçaoan identities constructed within performance? How do they relate to each other? And, how can Curaçaoans perform an alternative discourse on Curaçaoan identity through musical performances in the Hague?

Taking into account the flexible construction of the Curaçaoan collective identity, as a consequence of being in between two contexts, I will first discuss the construction of difference and the representation of the Self and the Other as premises for the construction of the *Hagenaar* identity. I will then discuss how this difference leads to practices of ‘normalization’. I will explore how both difference and what is deemed ‘normal’ are constructed using the concepts of representation and discourse. I use these theories on discourse and production of knowledge to identify the two collective identities, Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar*, as competing discourses within a field of discursiveness. I focus on Michel Foucault’s theory of the construction of knowledge/power to develop a discursive analysis of performances of Curaçaoan identity. Finally, building upon the conception of Otherness discussed in the previous chapter, I discuss Stuart Hall’s racialized regime of representation and use the specific tools he provides within his theory to analyze the construction and contestation of both the Curaçaoan and the *Hagenaar* identities.

I make use of two cases, the city hall and Tumbábo, to explore the construction and contestation of identity discourses through performance in The Hague. These cases are live musical performances that I attended in the city. Both these cases reflect the interaction between officials and Curaçaoan migrants. They are set within the
center of Dutch political power: the Binnenhof and the center of The Hague political power; the Hague municipality building. These settings with their great symbolic meaning add in my opinion to the relevance of the interactions.

In both cases I used participant observation as a method to gather information. I analyzed this information within the framework of my broader fieldwork within the Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands, which I conducted throughout my PhD research period. During this period, I immersed myself in the world of Curaçaoan cultural organizations in the Netherlands. As I observed above, my own background as a musician facilitated my participation, and as such, I made contact with Curaçaoan musicians and dancers in order to participate in and observe many performances. This fieldwork informed me on the customs and the specifically transnational practices within this ‘world’. I was privy to the existence of a very competitive interaction between grass-root and professional groups directed at the propagation of Curaçaoan culture in the Netherlands and at the integration and participation of the Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands. I used the knowledge I had obtained as a general background in my analysis and interpretation of the cases.

In the first case, that of The Hague’s city hall, I will discuss the construction of the discourse of a new *Hagenaar*. I will also discuss the representation of the *Hagenaar* and the Curaçaoan within a performance in The Hague’s city hall. This case also reveals that the process of incorporating the image of a Curaçaoan cultural identity within a new *Hagenaar* identity can be problematic. In the second case, Tumbábo, I discuss how contestation of a racialized regime of
representation can take place within performance. To explore this last issue I use the concept of performativity to better understand the process of creating alternative Curaçaoan identities within a context in which the Curaçaoan identity and *Hagenaar* identity are immersed in a power struggle.

**The Hague and the Construction of the Hagenaar**

The Hague is one of the four largest cities in the Netherlands, but its position of prominence within the country can be accredited to it being the governmental capital of the Netherlands. The Dutch government is seated in The Hague’s city center. The Hague is also the residence of the Dutch monarchy. As a consequence, it is often called the *Hofstad*, the City of the Court, implying a certain air of elitism. The city is a place of great contrasts: picturesque neighborhoods with stately embassies, a historical center where the government is housed (Binnenhof) and urban ghettos where many migrants and their descendants live, such as the infamous Schilderswijk and Laakkwartier, all of them separated from each other only by a few minutes’ drive. It is the Dutch city with the highest concentration of migrants and their offspring, so-called *allochtonen*, grouped together in specific neighborhoods (CBS 2001). 30 In the past

30 Allochthons; derived from ancient Greek, meaning ‘from another part of the world’ or ‘outside’. In an essay on race and Dutch culture Essed and Trienekens argue that the use of the word *allochtoon* (allochthon) in the Netherlands “capture(s) the mix of racial and cultural hierarchies” (Essed and Trienekens 2008: 57). It is used to differentiate between ‘Us’, the real Dutch, and ‘Them’ who are not really Dutch. Within the allochthon category a distinction is made between ‘Western’ allochthons and non-Western
decade, citizenship policies in The Hague addressed migrants and their offspring through a variety of projects and subsidies aimed at strengthening their bond with the city through an envisioned concept of the *Hagenaar*: a citizen of The Hague (Gemeente Den Haag 2006).31

Underlying the need to strengthen the bond between migrants and the city lies an understanding of the migrants as ‘different’. Migrants have a ‘different’ culture, come from a different place, belong to a ‘different’ group. Gupta and Ferguson address this perceived link between ‘originating’ from specific locations and having different cultures. According to them, concepts such as ‘society’ and ‘culture’ have been linked to the names of nation-states with apparent ease “when a tourist visits India to understand ‘Indian culture’ and ‘Indian society’, or Thailand to experience ‘Thai culture’ or the United States to get a whiff of ‘American culture’” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 7). In this sense, culture is a denominator used to construct a sense of belonging to a certain national group and to a certain territory such as Curaçao, India and so forth. In the case of The Hague, this means that difference can also lead to a clear discursively constructed distinction between natives and non-natives.

The link between nation-state and culture as discussed by Ferguson and Gupta (1992) has increasingly been brought into question and has become the object of research in recent decades, stretching well past the domain of social sciences. In spite of this development, and

allochthons. The use of this term leads among other things to the treatment of the allochthons as second class citizens. (Essed and Trienekens 2008).

31 Entzinger speaks later of citizenship policy instead of integration policy. The same movement is still discernible in the Netherlands.
although concepts such as ‘Dutch society’ and ‘Dutch culture’ are questioned and seem to be more flexible than ever, these same concepts are still often implicitly juxtaposed to the Other, to a ‘non-Dutch’. When, through migration, this Other is inserted within the context of another, dominant culture, as is the case with the construction of a Curaçaoan cultural identity within the greater constructed Dutch identity, these two cultural identities find themselves in conflict with one another.

Later on in this chapter, Stuart Hall’s understanding of a racialized regime of representation will help show how the groups of non-natives with their foreign cultures are not only portrayed as different from the Dutch. They are in fact portrayed as opposite to the European Dutch who are attributed a discernible ‘Dutch’ identity.

On the one hand, integration policies such as those in The Hague adhere implicitly to a view of migration based on the image of ‘different’ cultures, ‘different’ cultural identities and the imaginary territories divided and enclosed by borders and differences between ‘peoples'. On the other hand, the municipal approach also aims to eradicate difference by creating a cohesive *Hagenaar* identity. These are two seemingly contradictory sides of the same approach: the establishment of both difference and cohesiveness come together in the *Hagenaar*.

The special focus on people of foreign descent, so-called second and third-generation migrants in The Hague, consists of two seemingly contradictory steps: first, they are identified as a specific group that deserves special attention. This identification marks them as different. What is more, they are not only different, but they are also represented
as lacking; in this discourse they need to be helped in order to enjoy full social citizenship. Secondly, citizenship or integration policies represent these migrants of different origins as an intrinsic part of the city and as part of the image of a new hybrid citizen of The Hague as envisioned by the city council: the new *Hagenaar*.

In her work on Dutch multicultural society, Baukje Prins discusses this particular paradox within the Dutch racism and integration debate. She cites the columnist Stephan Sanders as he explains the contradictory message sent out to non-natives in the Netherlands. On the one hand, Sanders says, the Dutch environment expects non-natives to ‘act normal’, that is, not to refer to their ethnicities or to different cultural identities. On the other hand, when it is ‘needed’, their ethnic differences are emphasized: “the conflictive demands put upon them by their environment. Sometimes [the environment] doesn’t want to acknowledge difference ('act as normal as possible') to then again, if it suits it, make a powerful distinction” (Sander quoted in Prins 2009: 107).

These contradictory messages show an acute awareness of a specific concept of cultural and ethnic difference, that is, same and not the same. The idea of difference not only serves to distinguish the own group from others, it is also biased and expresses a certain social order, as is evident from the concept of acting ‘normal’. The idea of ‘acting normal’ leads us to deduce that within this difference there is a certain value judgment that places one’s ‘own’ culture as the norm. In the Dutch case, what is seen as Dutch is the norm, and non-natives are expected to assimilate and adopt this culture. The dual movement described by Prins and Sanders is akin to the one perceived in The
Hague citizenship policy which incorporates migrant collective identities in the conception of Hagenaar, but at the same time targets them as different. They are from a different culture which does not belong to the norm and as such they pertain to groups of interest and need to be integrated.

Integration policy aims to ‘deal with’ difference in order to achieve social cohesion. The Temporary Commission for Research on Integration Policy, appointed in 2002 by the Dutch Parliament to research Dutch integration policy implemented from 1970 onwards, also underscores the importance of the adoption of Dutch norms and values as part of the integration process. According to the commission, integration also means that newcomers have to adhere to the Dutch norms and values that are embedded in the law when in the public space. However, in the private sphere there is room for “differentiation and own interpretation as long as it does not go against the law” (Tijdelijke Commissie 2004: 517). This very tenuous formulation of the integration rules as concerns norms and values is followed by a reference to norms and values that are not in the law but with which newcomers still should “orientate themselves” (Tijdelijke Commissie 2004: Ibid). Although the commission is unclear on the exact status and nature of Dutch values and norms that are not embedded in the law, it does clearly state the importance of cohesion in the public space and only allows for differentiation and ‘own interpretation’ in the private space.

Although this description sounds quite rigid, in my view, integration is not a one-way street and can create new, hybrid types of collective identity. The incorporation of other cultures within the image of a
Hagenaar, for instance, also mutates the norm to a certain extent; the new Hagenaar is transformed to become a subject who has many faces, a multicultural, cosmopolitan subject. Non-native cultures are still specifically targeted, emphasizing their Otherness and expressing the need to transform them into citizens who can act ‘normal’ and ‘function’ in society. This last point leads to the conclusion that although the norm is changing, it still exists in the form of a specific set of values that non-natives are expected to adopt.32

32 When discussing integration it is important to note that in host countries such as the Netherlands these debates involve socio-economic integration as well as cultural integration. Hagendoorn et al. tentatively posit that there is interplay between these two (Hagendoorn et al. 2003). In the Dutch public debate on integration socio-economic integration and cultural integration also appear to be linked to each other, leading to discussions in which the concept of Dutch norms and values plays an important role in defining the expectations of the Dutch towards newcomers. Acquiring these norms and values is part of the migrant’s cultural integration which may lead to a socio-economic integration. When discussing integration in the Netherlands I will specifically focus on cultural integration and the idea of acquiring Dutch norms and values. Within such a normalizing context, the performance of transnational practices, leading to the construction of a transnational community with its own specific values and norms, may be seen as contradictory to the concept of cultural integration as the adaptation of Dutch norms and values and therefore a possible threat to cultural integration. From Hagendoorn’s perspective, integration is a constant negotiation between the new citizens to be integrated and the host population. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, integration is not only focused on the increased interaction between host population and immigrants and the resulting cultural negotiation. Within public debate the consensus leans towards upholding and propagating a set of rules, which are perceived as Dutch ‘norms and values’. In other words, while in daily life there may be negotiations between different Dutch and non-Dutch cultures to define these ‘norms and values’, public discourse still places an emphasis on the preservation of a set of prescribed Dutch ‘norms and values’ rather than on the renegotiation of these values. In a sense these Dutch values and norms stand in for a sense of collective and belonging to the Dutch group, that is, for a sense of nationalism and loyalty towards the Netherlands. In the process described above, the focus on citizenship moves from having a certain nationality and passport to having a specific culture; what critics have called the
Three issues are now clear: first, the concept of difference is key in understanding The Hague’s citizenship policy, especially with regard to the construction of the new Hagenaar identity. Second, difference goes hand in hand with a value judgment in which a set of perceived Dutch values and norms, that may or may not be embedded in the law, are taken to be the norm to which newcomers have to adapt. Third, there is a dual, contradictory movement in The Hague citizenship policy which incorporates different cultures and simultaneously integrates people belonging to these cultures.

While the construction of the new Hagenaar and the incorporation of the image of the Curaçaoan within the Hagenaar is by no means unbiased, it also attempts the introduction of social cohesion. Difference is thus integrated within a cohesive new identity. The result, the new Hagenaar, is indeed not a carbon copy of old images of the Hagenaar as strictly white, ‘native’ Dutch. In this sense the concept of the Hagenaar does show its own flexibility and propensity for change.

To understand how the Dutch context influences the construction of a Curaçaoan identity, I posed questions in the introduction: How is the culturalization of citizenship (Allen 2010, Tonkens and Duyvendak 2010). In this sense the Dutch project of nation-building framing the musical performance of Curaçaoan identity discourses in the Netherlands is similar to the Curaçaoan search for an ‘own culture’ which is separate and distinctly different from the Netherlands. In both the Dutch and Curaçaoan case the culturalization of citizenship takes place as the construction of national identity is linked to culture and specifically to the construction of the ‘own’ culture as different from that of an ‘Other’. As I discuss in this dissertation through a number of transnational performers, moving between these two contexts demands a constant (re)formulation of the Self and the Other.
Hagenaar identity constructed within performance? How does it relate to the Curaçaoan identity constructed in The Hague? I argued that in the case of The Hague, integration happens through identification and differentiation. This is followed by the incorporation of the image of the Curaçaoan and the integration of difference. This latter action, integration of the difference, indicates a value judgment; one culture and set of values and norms, that of the natives, is chosen over the Others. The Dutch culture, represented in this case by the *Hagenaar*, is shown as the best and normal culture. Curaçaoan migrants in The Hague find themselves thus caught in-between a Curaçaoan and a *Hagenaar* identity.

**Integration in the Matching Game**

As discussed above, collective identity is constructed through the conception of difference: different areas and peoples are divided along selected characteristics. In the case of The Hague’s multicultural environment, the different non-native cultures are juxtaposed to the ‘native’ Dutch culture, the so-called ‘old’ *Hagenaar*. I have mentioned the dual nature of the *Hagenaar* image as it integrates difference as well as incorporates it. How can this dual action be accomplished? To answer this question regarding the way the dual move works, we must take a closer look to both integration and incorporation in practice.

Part of the answer to this question may lie in the comparison of an ‘old’ *Hagenaar* to a ‘new’ *Hagenaar*. This is the premise of a government-supported integration project in The Hague called ‘The
Hague Meetings’ (Haagse Ontmoetingen). The ‘Hague Meetings’ project is a continuation and extension of an earlier program designed to encourage people aged fifty-five and older to be more active and to get more involved in their community. By volunteering, they can use their experience as citizens of The Hague to help migrants who are participating in the citizenship trajectory (inburgeraars) through the integration process.

Two groups were targeted in the earlier program: first, elderly citizens. Through their participation they were able to become more active and productive members of society. They could also reap certain benefits of higher levels of interaction with other people, such as warding off loneliness and subsequent social exclusion. Elderly volunteers would also help improve communication between the two groups, the old Hagenaar and the newcomer. The active participation of the people of The Hague in the integration project is designed to also be beneficial to the Hagenaar himself. It is intended to stimulate his mental and physical health and help cut costs of elderly Hagenaars cared for by state institutions.

Second, the original matching program’s main targets were ‘newcomers’ who were getting the benefit of one-on-one integration coaching in addition to the standard citizenship trajectories. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the ‘newcomer’ migrants relatively new to the Netherlands and the image of the new Hagenaar. While the old Hagenaar is represented by the image of the native European, white Dutch, the concept of the new Hagenaar is more complex. As discussed previously, this new Hagenaar is the new norm. It incorporates migrants as ‘new’ cultures in the city. These newcomers
are paired with the old Hagenaar who is usually white and European, resulting in an exchange in which the ‘old’ Hagenaar is brought into contact with a number of cultures, while the ‘newcomers’ with different cultural backgrounds are all brought into contact with the old Hagenaar. The balance within this setup implies that qualities or knowledge possessed by the old Hagenaar are intended to be normative. The earlier project targeting the inburgeraars (people expected to integrate into Dutch society), who were oftentimes asylum-seekers, was extended to include a broader group; ‘new citizens of The Hague’. This meant that in the new ‘Hague Meetings’ project, other migrants and their offspring became a target group. They could also be matched to an ‘old’ citizen, that is, to mostly white, European Dutch. The mentor category was expanded to not only include people aged fifty-five and older, but to a much broader group of citizens.

The project described above was only one of the projects supported by The Hague with the aim of incorporating ‘newcomers,’ that is, migrants and their offspring. It is also exemplary of The Hague’s policy that was based on a dichotomy: new–old, native–non-native, Self–Other.

In this case the norm seemed to be the ‘old’ Hagenaar. This means that there is a value judgment implicit in the casting of the native, the Self, as the teacher and role model and the migrant, the Other, as the pupil who needs guidance and must aspire to become like the old Hagenaar. However, this casting is not simple or clear-cut. As discussed in the introduction, the process of integration is not a one-way street. Through contact with different people with different
backgrounds, the old *Hagenaar* is exposed to a multicultural environment. The newcomers as a whole thus add to the image of the new *Hagenaar*. Furthermore, the role of the teacher, fulfilled by the old *Hagenaar*, also functions as an incentive to be a ‘good’ role model and thus may be seen as a method to manage the old *Hagenaar*’s own behavior and his understanding of his identity.

**Representation and Discourse**

In the previous chapter I showed how Curaçaoans construct both a virtual Curaçaoan transnational public sphere and a Curaçaoan identity discourse through speech and through practice. Above, I discussed that The Hague policy promotes the discourse of a different identity that is expected to serve as the primary identification of people living in The Hague. These explorations of how Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar* identities come to be, how they interact with each other and how they are contested and how they are rooted in a social constructivist approach to collective identity. In accordance with this approach I address collective identity as a discursive construction. From this point of view, the collective or group does not exist prior to its representation (Laclau and Mouffè 1985). This means that in order to answer the questions regarding the workings and contestation of the Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar* identities, we need to first understand the concepts of discourse and representation.

In *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (1997), Stuart Hall first defines representation as “the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” (Hall
1997: 17). He outlines the way language is central to the construction of meaning through the signifying process. He later broadens this definition of representation by including Michel Foucault’s work on discourse as a way of producing meaning and therefore knowledge. This broad understanding of the concept of discourse means that an object can be represented not only through speech but through a wide array of representational practices that can be understood as statements about this object. It is through these statements that subjects are able to construct discourses.

Foucault sees discourse as a system of representations that encompasses not only overall grander strategies of power, but more importantly, it includes “localized circuits, tactics, mechanisms and effects through which power circulates –what Foucault calls the ‘meticulous rituals’ or the microphysics of power” (quoted in Hall 1997: 50). According to Foucault, discourse not only reveals an ongoing struggle for power. A dominant discourse also means power: “Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but it is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault 1981: 52, 53). A discourse analysis of Curaçaoan performances of identity is therefore also an analysis of struggle for saliency of different discourses regarding Curaçaoan identity. The struggle for prevalence is important not only because discourses allow us to position ourselves as subjects in relation to others, creating our identity. Discourses also reveal the meanings attached to these identities. These meanings in turn dictate how we give meaning to and understand the world around us.
To understand the way discourse both constructs identity and gives meaning to the world around us, it is important to emphasize that discourses are never fixed. They are constantly being constructed through representations. Both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Laclau and Mouffe’s Discourse Theory assert that our reality is constructed, up to a certain extent, through discourse. This also means that discourse plays a central role in the construction of identity, making identities a constant becoming (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002; Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

Since the collective is a social construct, the act of representation simultaneously becomes an act of construction of the group. In a sense, the construction of a discourse of collective identity is a highly social process, because it also entails the contrasting of the group to the context and to other supposed groups. Similar to the construction of difference and the concept of ‘normal’ discussed earlier in this chapter, the construction of a collective identity discourse is a process that formulates meaning both for one’s own group as well as for the ‘other’. By identifying what ‘We’ are not, a ‘Them’ is constructed and awarded certain characteristics. Furthermore, the way that groups are formed constructs the way members of the groups view society. Conversely, the way members of the groups view society influences the formation of collective identity discourses.

Both CDA and While CDA scholars such as Fairclough make a distinction between socially constructed discourses, Laclau and Mouffe take an even more post-structuralist stand and even argue that social reality is always mediated. This means that although they do not deny the existence of a material reality, in this material reality every “object is constituted as an object of discourse” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 108).
Michel Foucault approaches discourse from a different perspective than Laclau and Mouffe. While they focus on the construction of identity through language, Foucault views the ways discourses function in relation to each other and stresses how they are connected to power, knowledge and truth. According to Hall, Foucault refers to the construction of truth through discursive formations as regimes of truth. These regimes acquire authority through the production of knowledge. As Hall puts it, knowledge “has the power to make itself true. […] Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices” (Hall 1997: 49). As a consequence, knowledge leads to what is perceived to be truth and therefore guides practices in society. In the same manner, the practices within institutions for dealing with certain topics, “certain ways of talking about these topics,” and so forth can uncover discourses and the current conceptions of truth (Hall 1997: 45).

When I discussed the construction of the new Hagenaar as based on the establishing of difference, I argued that this difference is not neutral. It goes hand-in-hand with the construction of a norm that shows bias. I showed how this bias is evident in a dual action: on the one hand, the integration of difference and of different cultures into the new Hagenaar; and on the other hand, the new Hagenaar means the construction of a new norm in which different cultures are up to a point still deemed ‘different’ and there is a bias that leans towards the ‘old’ Hagenaar. This bias reveals the link between the construction of this new Hagenaar and power. In other words, the construction of the new Hagenaar entails a struggle of saliency of certain characteristics that are included in the image. Within this power struggle, both
migrant cultural identities and the ‘old’ Hagenaar identity have to give some ground in order to reach a new Hagenaar image. The ‘old’ Hagenaar has an advantage, because not all discourses are equal and certain discourses can become less flexible and more established. Hall refers to these discourses as regimes of representation. If we take Foucault’s view on representation as linked to the construction of knowledge and power into account, representations of the new Hagenaar can be understood as constructions of knowledge and truth. The discourse of the new Hagenaar sets the new Hagenaar up to become an image that both ‘old’ and new inhabitants of The Hague consider a reflection of their reality. In other words it aims to position itself as a collective identity. Then the new Hagenaar would not only shape how citizens of The Hague see themselves but also how they see and categorize the world around them. The question then is how do power and knowledge work, and how are representations such as the Hagenaar constructed through their lenses?

**The Racialized Regime of Representation**

Discourses and regimes of truth are not only constructed through grand, overall strategies, but also through small, everyday practices. What is deemed ‘normal’, and subsequently a regime of truth, is constructed through these practices. These regimes of truth not only help us to understand our ‘reality’, but they also construct this reality by giving specific meanings to objects and situations. As such, they structure our world. Foucault adds that, “This will to truth, like other systems of exclusion, rests on an institutional support: it is both
reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy, of course; and the systems of book publishing. Libraries, learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorized, distributed and in a sense attributed, in a society” (Foucault 1981: 55). This means that while power generates truth and knowledge, truth and knowledge also generate power. Since truth, power and knowledge are linked, we can learn more about both the construction of truth and knowledge by looking into the way power works.

In his body of work on power, Michel Foucault (1981) discusses the mechanics of power on two different levels. On the one hand he looks at the role of history and ideology in order to explain how power technologies developed during the centuries. On the other hand, Foucault examines the mechanics of power by focusing on technologies of power. These technologies of power are put into motion by ideology and produce representations, which then again influence discourses. Eugenia Siapera (2010), discussing theories of representation, implicitly equates the concept of ideology to that of discourse. She explains Foucault’s understanding of discourses as systems of “knowledge that determine(s) what something is, what can and cannot be said about it, and how to deal with it” (Siapera 2010: 121). She also asserts, the same way Said does with the image of the Oriental, that the representation of a group is constructed by already existing discourses.34 This means that specific ‘established’ discourses influence mechanics of power to create and fortify certain

34 Siapera refers here to Hall's regimes of representation which I will discuss further in this chapter.
representations, such as the condensed representation of the Curaçaoan, which I will discuss further along in this chapter, or that of the cosmopolitan, multicultural *Hagenaar*. In turn, these representations feed discourses.

The distinction between European Self and Other, upon which I touched in the previous chapter, is also embedded within regimes of representation. Edward Said argues that the dichotomy between the West and the Rest is imagined in Europe through an Orientalist discourse (Said 1978). This discourse is constructed throughout time, starting with a geographical imaginary of the Orient followed by a myriad of discourses: literary, political, academic and so forth. In this discourse, the Orient and the Oriental are repeatedly represented in a specific manner until the image of the Oriental as the Other in relation to Europe is imprinted in both East and West. The Other is Europe’s antithesis, and as such, the Oriental is represented in these discourses as uncivilized, naive and dangerous, making it possible to conceive of a civilized, wise, peaceful West. This Other is then not merely a way to distinguish between one group and another; it is a discourse incorporating a value judgment. It defines the European Self as superior and the Other as inferior (Said 1978).

A similar theoretical distinction is proposed by Stuart Hall in his essay *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power* (1996). He argues that the West is a construction that mirrors itself to another: the Rest. This Other is represented as the antithesis of the West using a stereotypical image: “a one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into simple ‘cardboard cut-outs’” (Hall *et al.* 1996: 215). Different characteristics are put together and condensed
into one. This exaggerated simplification is then attached to a subject or place. Its characteristics become the signs, the “evidence” by which the subject is known. They define its being, its “essence” (Hall: Ibid). In his essay, Hall identifies the system of representation that he calls the West and the Rest and through which the construction of the stereotyped image of the Other can be understood. The stereotype is “split into two halves – its ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides which are both represented as true” (Hall et al. 1996: 216). Next to stereotyping, this system is characterized by “idealization, the projection of fantasies of desire and degradation, the failure to recognize and respect difference and the tendency to impose European categories and norms, to see difference through the modes of perception and representation of the West” (Hall et al.: Ibid). This system of representation corresponds to Hall’s further elaboration of the Foucauldian concept of regimes of truth.

A racialized regime of representation has been very dominant and persistent throughout time, with deep roots in imperialism. At the end of the nineteenth century, imperialism resulted in a great number of representations of racial difference in British popular culture. Hall pinpoints representations through “maps and drawings, etchings and especially the new photography, in newspaper illustrations and accounts, diaries, travel writing and so forth” (Hall 1997: 240). He emphasizes the role of advertisement in the production of racialized images of what he refers to as “the progress of the great white explorer-adventurers” and their encounters with “the black African exotic” (Hall: Ibid). Advertisement served to translate objects into an imaginary “visual display of signs and symbols” (Hall: Ibid). This
way, he adds, the “production of commodities became linked to the Empire” and became a main motive for imperialism (Hall: Ibid). Hall thus identifies a link between consumption and colonialism, “between imperialism and the domestic sphere, public and private” (Hall: Ibid). Of many products pushed in the era, soap became a symbol for this movement aimed at the “the ‘domestication’ of the colonial world” and the “‘racializing’ of the domestic world” (Hall: Ibid). Soap not only represented the ability to wash away dirt, but also washing off the black skin color and cleansing the imperial body in the “racially polluted zones” (Hall: Ibid).

Hall’s analysis of the origins of the racialized regime of representation as rooted in imperialism provides a framework to better understand how the construction of the Other and the process of double consciousness, discussed in Chapter 1, influence current constructions of Curaçaoan identity. Viewed from this perspective, double consciousness is possible because of the naturalization of certain representations that originated during the colonial period. These discourses established themselves within the racialized regime of representation and as such, have been influencing representations of Curaçaoan identity over time.

Hall’s take on regimes of representation and his analysis of the racialized regime of representation proves to be useful to understand the position of Curaçaoans in the Netherlands, how the construction of ‘different cultures’, and the valorization of Europe as center come into being. It also serves to illuminate questions regarding the insertion of the concept of a Curaçaoan identity within an encompassing Hagenaar identity. Individual or collective expressions of cultural
identity are incorporated within an overall Hagenaar identity through municipal management of, for example, traditionally white, native festivals such as the ‘Ut Haags Notûh’ festival for amateur musicians in which I participated for several years as a member of Tipiko Den Haag. This participation led to an understanding how this festival and other cultural events in the city were very much dependent of municipal subsidies. Fellow participants intimated that there was a change in the view of the municipality towards these festivals. The financial support had become minimal and these festivals were encouraged, in order to keep receiving government financial support, to become more ‘diverse’, more in keeping with both ‘the new reality’ of The Hague and The Hague’s multicultural agenda. Other events were contrived by the municipality with the specific aim of putting a spotlight on the variety of cultures living in The Hague and on the many languages spoken in the city. A remarkable example of such a project was the such as the The Hague Mozaïek Song Festival, in which I participated in 2010 with a mixed group of Dutch and Curaçaoan musicians performing a Latin-American song. Describing the festival the then-alderman in charge of citizenship and founder of the event, Rabin Baldewsingh stressed the festival’s importance in showcasing the great cultural diversity of The Hague. At first glance his approach seemed at odds with Dutch policy on a national level, which focused on integration and homogeneity. The contrast between the two approaches is well embodied by the life-sized banner hanging in the then-entrance hall of the ministry in charge of integration (VROM/WWI), also based in The Hague. The banner sported a slogan often heard on Dutch TV at the time: “The
Dutch language connects us all!” (De Nederlandse taal verbindt ons allemaal!). This slogan was part of a governmental campaign to encourage migrants and their descendants to speak Dutch.

The Hague chooses to market itself as the ‘City of Peace’ referring to the Peace Palace, the Yugoslavian and Rwanda tribunals and the Europol offices located in the city. It thus presents itself as a cosmopolitan city, referring to the many international institutions located in the city as well as to the variety of countries of origin of the sizable migrant population.

The promotion of different cultural identities in The Hague goes together, as I have shown, with a judgment value. Plurality and the multicultural ideal should therefore not be confused with the idea of equality of cultures. The promotion of Dutch as the core language does not have to clash with the promotion of diversity within the Hagenaar ideal, since within this diversity, a choice in favor of Dutch culture as the norm has been made. Within the ideal image of the Hagenaar, various languages can co-exist while the Dutch language, the norm, is still dominant. However, the promotion of so many languages can have more than a cosmopolitan Hagenaar image as a result. It can also facilitate the construction of a space in which minority cultural identities such as the Curaçaoan identity can be better formulated and maintained. These identities can become competing identities for the Hagenaar.

The question remains: How are both a Hagenaar and a flexible Curaçaoan identity constructed within the same performances? In order to answer this question, I will use this understanding of how discourses on the Hagenaar and the Curaçaoan identity are
constructed through regimes of representation to analyze the case of The Hague’s city hall performance.

**The Case of The Hague City Hall**

I would like to discuss the events of January 31st, 2010 in The Hague’s city hall, where the combination of the citizenship policy and performance proved to be quite difficult. I attended this evening and through participant observation I could not only take the performances in stock, but I was also able to observe, take notes and gauge the reaction of the audience from up close.

That evening The Hague city council signed an agreement with both Aruba and Curaçao with the goal of strengthening the bonds between the city and the two islands. The Hague and Curaçao were, in the words of the mayor of The Hague, ‘bound together’ by various factors, one of them being the high number of Curaçaoan migrants living in The Hague. The signing of this agreement was celebrated in the city hall and was preceded and followed by a score of musical and dance performances as well as a buffet offering Curaçaoan cuisine. The city hall was originally designed to be the heart of the city and the spacious atrium where the event took place was designed to be the ultimate public place. The atrium was decorated with a huge banner carrying the logo of The Hague, but there were no Curaçaoan or Aruban flags on display. Overall, there was scant mention of Curaçaoan norms and values, but Curaçaoans performed folklore, music and dance during the evening.
The program consisted of five performances in total. The night started off with the performance of ‘La Banda Loca’\(^{35}\) led by Curaçaoan musician Edsel Juliet. The band’s ‘philosophy’ is presented on their website: they emphatically do not pretend to be more than a ‘party band’. The band members dress in accordance to this philosophy in festive, colorful ‘Hawaiian’ or Caribbean-style shirts and jump around on stage, interacting with the audience throughout their performances. After their performance, a Curaçaoan gospel band started off with a rendition of the US gospel classic, ‘Oh Happy Day’, and went on to sing two more mellow gospel songs, one of which was sung in Papiamentu. Next, the agreement was signed. This was immediately followed by a group of middle-aged and older women dressed in traditional Curaçaoan costumes performing traditional dances: an Antillean waltz, a mazurka and finally a tumba during which the dancers approached the front rows inviting the men to dance with them. They especially went towards the male representatives from The Hague and Aruba.\(^{36}\) Others in the audience also started dancing. The fourth performance was by another dance group, this time including men, performing a dance to traditional Curaçaoan music. There was a fifth performance by a group of youngsters performing hip hop dance. Remarkably, the event, organized to commemorate the unity of Curaçaoan migrants and The Hague, was celebrated and underscored only by the performances of Curaçaoan migrants. There were no folkloric presentations of ‘Dutch culture’. Instead, Dutch ‘norms and values’ stood central in the speeches. European Dutch people participated only on two occasions. Some of them were officials

\(^{35}\) Spanish for 'The Crazy Band'.

\(^{36}\) The Curaçaoan representative was female.
required to give speeches and participated in that manner. Others who were part of the audience joined in when a group of elderly Curaçaoan ladies dressed in folkloric costumes invited them to dance during a performance. The focus on Curaçaoan music and dance constructed the image of Curaçaoan as physically dexterous and rhythmic. Dutch Europeans were represented as part of the establishment and were present either as official envoys or as part of the audience watching the Curaçaoan performance. If we take into account the understanding of difference discussed earlier in this chapter and the importance of representations in the construction of discourse, these events reveal the construction of a difference between Curaçaoans and Dutch as distinct roles and characteristics.

The events in the city hall not only show an emphasis on difference, they also reveal the other side of the dual integration move: the incorporation of difference within the concept of the new *Hagenaar*. The description of the events in the city hall underscores that specific traditional folkloric elements such as dance, song and food were extracted and performed as Curaçaoan culture. This seems in keeping with Hall’s formulation of the ‘West and the Rest’ regime of representation. Dutch culture and values stood as the norm while the Rest, in this case Curaçaoan culture, was presented in a condensed form. Such a Curaçaoan identity can then be integrated into an overall discourse of a new multicultural *Hagenaar*.

The focus on Dutch values was also evident during the speeches; the speakers’ core message was the importance of the integration of Curaçaoans in The Hague and of the Curaçaoans’ inclusion in the overall conception of the new *Hagenaar*. During his speech the mayor
described the spirit of the city as not only multicultural but cosmopolitan, a city where many cultures lived together in harmony, “second in diversity only to New York.” Baldewsingh, then in charge of citizenship policy, repeated this view of The Hague as a multicultural hotspot, emphasizing that all Curaçaoans and Arubans living in The Hague were real citizens and real **Hagenaars** belonging to the city. Even though it was important to celebrate diversity and the bonds with other countries of origin, The Hague was the Curaçaoans’ new home. Proudly quoting the Dutch humanist Erasmus, he said,

“Waar het me goed gaat is mijn vaderland.”

“Wherever I fare well is my ‘fatherland’.”

A murmur of protest rose up from the audience upon hearing his statement. From my position within the audience, I observed that many did not seem to wholeheartedly agree with the alderman. After Baldewsingh’s statement, the presenter proceeded to move on to the next part of the ceremony by introducing the representatives of Curaçao and Aruba. Before doing so, and apparently unaware of the political implications, she thanked the alderman by saying:

“Dank u, wethouder Baldewsingh, ik ben het helemaal met u eens! Ja, we zijn allemaal Hagenaars, maar toch moet ik wel zeggen: ik blijf altijd een Curaçaoënaar, **yu di Kòrsou**.”
“Thank you, Alderman Baldewsingh, I agree with you completely! But I do have to say: I will always be a child of Curaçao.”

The alderman protested, as this statement was at odds with his political vision. His protests were drowned out by the audience reaction, many of whom were nodding and murmuring in assent. Apparently, both the alderman and the mayor had a different conception of being a *Hagenaar* and being Curaçaoan from the presenter and many of the audience. At that moment the alderman and the mayor were not promoting the specific Curaçaoan culture, but its incorporation into a mix of cultures. Within the official discourse, the city is presented as a collection of cultures and the *Hagenaar* is presented as a compound of different backgrounds. The creation of a multicultural, cosmopolitan city and a multicultural, cosmopolitan citizen both includes and suppresses the differences between the various cultural groups. While creolization implies a mixing of different cultures into something new and native, multiculturalism refers to the existence of these cultures living alongside each other. However, these cultures need to be condensed in order to be able to incorporate them into one cohesive multicultural and cosmopolitan *Hagenaar* with Dutch values and norms. Curaçaoans are represented in this construction of the *Hagenaar* as part of a kaleidoscopic identity.

However, the interaction between the alderman and the presenter showed that the process of accretion and adoption of such a discourse by a greater group is not straightforward in practice. Furthermore, in the case of Curaçaoan carrier groups, a goal of
propagation of Curaçaoan culture in the Netherlands and the integration and participation of the Curaçaoan community in the Netherlands may not be that easily synthesized.

While on the surface the presenter did not reject the condensed version of the Curaçaoan identity, she added to it by expressing Curaçaoan nationalist sentiments. In this way, she expanded the meaning of the performed Curaçaoan identity beyond a condensed cultural identification. The presenter and part of the audience seemed to agree, saw the Curaçaoan identity as part of her identity and when presented with a choice between the two, she tried to incorporate both. Her statement showed that maintaining cultural bonds with the country of origin was not enough for her. ‘Being Curaçaoan’ meant more than that. Her exclamation that she could be both *Hagenaar* and a child of Curaçao intimated a broader understanding of being Curaçaoan than the one presented on that day. This broader understanding meant an infringement into the domain of values and norms, which in the discourse constructed by the officials present, were to be the Dutch values and norms. Instead of the condensed cultural identity only including identification with Curaçaoan cultural expressions such as song, dance and food, which were presented on that day, the presenter expressed a collective identity that incorporated a sense of national pride.

The exchange between the presenter, the alderman and the audience shows that the use of performances and events to implement The Hague’s integration policy also creates room for reinterpretation and performances of different identity discourses. While trying to promote the cosmopolitan *Hagenaar*, even though a condensed image of
Curaçaoan culture was used and the focus was maintained on Dutch values, the performance platform ultimately provided a way to voice a Curaçaoan national sentiment. Confronted with the alderman’s representation of her Curaçaoan identity, the Curaçaoan presenter felt the need to amend the alderman’s statement and establish a counter-discourse in which being Curaçaoan took another form. In this sense, the performances of Curaçaoan cultural expressions constructed a public transnational identification sphere where Curaçaoans based in The Hague showed emotional attachment to their transnational community and displayed flexibility on the matter of national identification.

Earlier, I posed the question of how the dual action of integration and incorporation could be accomplished simultaneously. The simplification of the Curaçaoan identity to certain specific cultural performances makes this identification non-threatening. It then no longer competes with the *Hagenaar* as identity; it does not work on the same level anymore. At the same time, the cosmopolitan *Hagenaar*’s inclusion of Curaçaoan identity shows that the cultural identity produced is one of hybridity, not of distinct cultures. In other words, the *Hagenaar* is not expected to simultaneously identify fully with a Curaçaoan group identity. He is expected to be ‘diverse’ while adhering to a main identity as *Hagenaar*.

I have already referred to disequilibrium of power which shows the native Dutch as the norm. While Dutch-ness is equated with universal principles in the public discourse and in Dutch cultural policy, non-natives are pictured as belonging to specific traditional cultures where very culture-specific norms and values are the rule, “cultures where
specific norms, customs and values are guiding principles” (Prins 2009: 32). The value judgment attached to the Dutch Self is evident here, showing that within the Dutch cultural zone, Curaçaoan culture is imagined as Other. Not only is the Other represented as different, but also as traditional and specific and as such, lesser than the dominant culture, which is represented as possessing universal values. From a transmigrant point of view, Curaçaoan use of flexibility may be seen as a way to counter this dichotomy. In the case of the new Hagenaar, Stuart Hall’s regime of representation shows that the image of the migrant as newcomer in need of guidance is a condensed image, which in turn is divided into two parts.

The first one is an image of the pupil who does not fit in and needs to be mentored. This can be seen in the case of the Curaçaoan migrant. The city of The Hague has one of the highest concentrations of Dutch Antillean migrants in the Netherlands (Sharpe 2005). As a consequence, a fair amount of attention was paid to this group within projects and events directed to help migrants and their descendants enjoy full citizenship. In this context, policies specifically aim at the management of Curaçaoan ‘at-risk’ youth between the ages of twelve and twenty-four (Baldewsingh 2009).

This happened through a variety of projects, such as mentoring projects for ‘problematic’ young Curaçaoan by successful Curaçaoan migrants. These matching projects seem to be based on the conception of citizenship being passed on from one citizen to another, the one used as a role model, set therefore as the norm, and the other being able to learn from the old Hagenaar. Such programs also display the ‘Other-Self’ dichotomy. Within this specific Curaçaoan mentoring
project, however, the Others closest to the norm, or better-integrated Curaçaoans, function as role models for less-integrated Curaçaoans. Next to the image of the bad migrant needing to integrate, the condensed, stereotyped image described by Hall also consists of a second, more positive part. This is the image of the exotic Other from whom the *Hagenaar* image can gain a certain colorfulness. The old *Hagenaar* and the newcomer are both to be transformed into a new, more cosmopolitan *Hagenaar* who is more in touch with various exotic cultures. The incorporation of migrants in The Hague happens not only through projects in which people are matched in the hope of creating role models and changing the behavior of the migrant. It also happens pointedly through the organization and financial support of events where performance is central. An image of The Hague as a multicultural city full of different cultures is the starting point in both the projects in which the individual is matched to a role model and the projects in which the individual or collective expressions of cultural identity are incorporated within an overall *Hagenaar* identity through the ‘management’ of staged performances.

The case of The Hague city hall, which took place during the signing of the agreement between Curaçao and The Hague, reveals the tension between the two Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar* cultural identities. On the one hand, the government representatives clearly favor a version of ‘being Curaçaoan’ that excludes the migrant’s allegiance to Curaçao as a nation while encouraging the incorporation of the cultural Curaçaoan background into the *Hagenaar* identity. On the other hand, the presenter obviously did not agree with this construction and presented the performance of Curaçaoan culture and the allegiance to
a Curaçaoan nation as a package deal. Her view seems to reflect the idea that a Curaçaoan migrant does not just have bonds with the country but is Curaçaoan. This understanding of a full Curaçaoan identity is flexible and is able to incorporate the *Hagenaar* image. I will explore how such flexibility allows for a construction of counter-discourses on Curaçaoan identity.

**Changing Discourses**

The case of the *Hagenaar* above shows the discourses of Self versus Other, native versus non-native, revealing an ongoing power struggle. These discourses contain the idea of a passive Other. In this sense they question if this Other is able to truly represent himself. The Other’s presumed inability to represent himself can also be traced back to the double consciousness I explored through Benítez Rojo in the previous chapter. According to Benítez Rojo, the Caribbean subject not only sees himself represented as the Other, but he also refers to himself as the Other. This distorts his view of his own ‘reality’ and allows him to see himself from the point of view of ‘The West’. If we take Hall’s discussion of representation as well as his account of Foucault’s view on discursive formations and on regimes of truth into account, the construction of Otherness is revealed as a regime of truth. This particular regime of truth is ruled by representation through discursive practices, images and symbols such as the previously-mentioned soap. Seen as such, the process of double consciousness simply means that the group that is represented as the Other, in this case, Curaçaoans, has adopted and functions within this dominant discursive system.
Looking at these processes through the constructivist lens provided by Hall allows us to see the flexible Curaçaoan approach towards identity as a way to produce counter-discourses. But how are such counter-discourses produced and how do they function?

More than the construction of a regime of truth through a web of racialized representations, the construction of the Other reveals the skewed power relations within the colonial period and onwards. Although the inequality of power is reflected within the field of power relations and certain discourses carry more weight and make up dominant discursive formations, both ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ still function within the field of power and are subjected to these discourses. This means that not only blacks, but also whites are categorized through the same racialized discourse. As I mentioned earlier, group identities are constructed through a process of elimination and a discourse of what ‘we’ are not. This, together with the fact that discourses are constantly being contested, creates an opening in which representations can become more than constantly repeating, self-fulfilling prophecies. If knowledge/power is constructed through discourse, change within discourses could mean a change in what we see as truth and ultimately a possible change within the field of power relations.

While double consciousness may be a consequence of Curaçaoans functioning within a racialized regime of representation, this same process of viewing the self as the Other in combination with transnational practices has led to the construction of a flexible Curaçaoan identity. This new discourse may, if not completely
displace, at least compete with or alter the existing discursive formations that promote Otherness.
The possibility of change through new representations is further emphasized if we take into account that Hall’s analysis also underscores the productive and creative capacity of power. In this sense power does not only function “from top to bottom – and coming from a specific source” (Hall 1997: 49). This view on power allows for the possibility of change from below, through a creative process consisting of everyday life practices. To understand the performance of Curaçaoan identity I look at musical performances as representational practices through which Curaçaoans construct discourses on what it is to be Curaçaoan and on their culture. Seen from this perspective, musical performances not only reproduce existing discourse, they may be able to create new discourse. In view of the link between power and discursive practices, performances can be understood as moments that allow for a production from bottom to top, opening up possibilities for counter-discourses.

Hall discusses how stereotypes play an important role in a racialized regime of representation. The difference between the West and its colonies is symbolized by binary oppositions and by the construction of stereotypes. Binary oppositions construct a racialized discourse in which blacks and whites are represented as physical and intellectual opposites. According to Hall, culture and nature are represented differently in the two groups. Within the white group culture and nature are represented as two opposing themes. For this group, culture is developed to overcome nature. Within the black group, culture is represented as synonymous with nature. Overall, the discourses that
conformed to this racialized regime equated blackness with negative images, wildness and so forth. Meanwhile, they connected being white, which was constructed as the polar opposite, with positive qualities and with civilization. Differences between the two groups were thus created and related to the concept of race. The old racial stereotypes changed with time but did not disappear. They still function through the racialized regime of representation.

Hall argues that the Other is represented as the antithesis of the West using a stereotypical image, “a one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple ‘cardboard cut-out’” (Hall et al. 1996: 215). This condensed image is created by putting together different characteristics and condensing them into one. This becomes the Other’s being, “its essence” (Hall et al. 1996: 215; original emphasis). In other words, “Stereotyping reduces essentializes, naturalizes and fixes ‘difference’” (Hall 1997: 258).

Stereotyping also has an exclusionary function, separating and expelling everything that is deemed ‘different’. In doing so, stereotyping helps maintain the order of things and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, separates ‘Us’ from ‘Them.’ Finally, stereotyping reveals the existence of great inequalities regarding the subject of distribution of power. “Stereotyping is what Foucault calls a ‘power/ knowledge’ sort of game. It classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as ‘other’” (Hall 1997: 259). In a sense, the racialized regime of representation works in the same manner as the Foucauldian concept of regimes of truth: it constructs knowledge and therefore exercises power. Hall emphasizes that power needs to be understood in this context as “not only in terms of
economic exploitation and physical coercion, but also in broader cultural and symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain regime of representation” (Hall: Ibid). As I showed in the case of the city hall, such constructions of representation can be contested. Similar to the discursive formations discussed before, the regime of representation also allows for room for change. According to Hall, power also produces new practices and discourses. He places this regime within the level of everyday life: “It operates on a micro-level as well as in term of wider strategies” (Hall 1997: 261). Furthermore, everyone is caught up, although not on equal terms, in the field of power relations. Hall suggests that the racialized regime of representation can be contested through trans-coding, which he defines as “taking an existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meaning” (Hall 1997: 270). He discusses three ways in which trans-coding takes place, which may be useful further along to understand the construction and contestation of discourses through Curaçaoan musical performances. The three ways in which trans-coding takes place, according to Hall, are by reversing stereotypes, by substituting negative images for positive images of black people, and by using stereotypes to confront us with the regime of representation. These three ways of trans-coding reflect the view on power discussed before as a creative act that works from the bottom up and is in set in everyday life.

In this chapter, I introduced representation and discourse as a frame to understand how collective identity is constructed. Viewing collective identity as a discursive construction reveals the interconnectedness
between conceptions of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. This interconnectedness in itself reveals collective identity to be a flexible construction. This view on the social construction of reality corresponds to Foucault’s view on discourse as a tool to construct knowledge/power. Since the constructions of discourses that are accepted as knowledge are deemed truth, these discourses also have and construct power.

I also discussed the formation of regimes of representation that are related to the concept of the construction of knowledge and truth I mentioned before. I explored Hall’s notion of a racialized regime of representation as a dominant regime of representation and the power relations embedded within and instigated by this particular regime of representation. The concept of this racialized representation seemed to correspond with the construction of identity and place discussed in Chapter 1. More importantly, Hall’s racialized regime showed how constructions of the marginal, postcolonial Other are still present within current representations. Hall’s view on stereotypes as tools that “reduce,” “essentialize,” “naturalize,” and “fix” difference (Hall 1997: 258) is useful to help uncover the way the racialized regime of representation works through the conception of a Hagenaar identity. However, since discourses are not completely static, discourses about both the Curaçaoan and Hagenaar identities can also be changed. In the following paragraph I will delve further into the last question posed in the Introduction: How can Curaçaoans perform alternative discourses on Curaçaoan identity through musical performances in The Hague? I will answer this through an analysis of a second cultural event organized in The Hague where the group Tumbábo performed.
Performativity

Although some discourses such as a racialized regime of representation can become embedded in our day-to-day life and way of thinking, there are always multiple discourses at work and in contention in specific fields. Not only that, but at their core, discourses always maintain a degree of flexibility. This means that they are constantly subject to change.

In an essay on performativity, Judith Butler argues that gender identity is created through the constant reenactment of a set of social conventions. This means that gender, initially perceived as a given, is actually constructed and can be changed through actions. The production of identity through action is in Butler’s eyes a creation of identity; it does not refer to a preexisting identity but creates identity directly and constantly during the act. “there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor objective ideal to which gender aspires [...] because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all” (Butler 1988: 522). If other types of identities, such as the Curaçaoan identity, are understood in these terms, this puts both self-representation and representation by the state on level ground. There is no essence that awards Curaçaoans when creating their identity, nor do discourses such as that of Otherness reveal a true Curaçaoan image based on a supposed Curaçaoan essence. This means that the image of the Curaçaoan and that of the Haginaar are both constructs. If the flexibility in Curaçaoan construction of identity that I discussed in Chapter 1 is taken into account, performativity offers a
way to better understand how a collective identity can still be flexible. Both the Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar* identity are representations that can only gain prevalence through their ability to ‘become an act’. While performativity means identity is constantly constructed, it still relies on existing discourses and social conventions. These established discourses are regimes of representation that are taken to be true and influence how we should see the world around us and subsequently how we should behave within it.

A performed discourse, then, cannot completely distance itself from existing, even competing discourses. This means that while identity is a construct, and as such flexible, these representations of Curaçaoan and *Hagenaar* happen within and in relation to a certain context (van der Tuin *et al.* 2007). This context is the web of existing discourses. These images are part of the established and wide-spread racialized regime of representation. The detachment following from Otherness allows the subject to move between perspectives and detach from one particular discourse. An identity constructed by Curaçaoans can alternately base itself on or distance itself from the existing grid of representations. From the perspective of performativity, both the performance, as in acting out, of representation and its repetition are key in constructing a representation that is able to gain authenticity. Saliency, therefore, is a question of ‘acting out’ performative identity. In the same way that performativity relies on existing discourses, the Curaçaoan construction of a new counter-discourse in performance is intermingled with the discourses already in use. Although the word ‘performativity’ is of the same origin as ‘performance,’ it is imperative to establish the difference between these two, since the
performativity of Curaçaoan identity through performance is key here. Mieke Bal summarizes the relationship between the two concepts and the differences between the two by arguing that “Performance – the unique execution of a work – is of a different order than performativity, an aspect of a word that does what it says” (Bal 2002: 175). Bal refers here to the conception of the word as being able to create ‘reality’, that is, to act. This view has been elaborated first by Austin regarding the spoken (illocutionary) word in his Speech Act Theory, and later by Derrida on the written word. Derrida’s work on the acting written word leads to the conception of the word as independent of the author; the word was not bound anymore by the initial intention of the writer (Siapera 2010, Bal 2002: 178). In fact, the meaning of the word and the transformation of the word become an act dependent on the social context in which it is read. The social cadre that is needed for an uttered word to become a speech act is translated in Butler’s performativity as the necessity of a relation with social conventions and discourses (Bal 2002, Butler 1995). Repetition or iterability is another key aspect towards the change from word to action, from action to performativity. The acts are to be repeated time and time again to create reality. In the next case study I will explore how representations can be changed and used to construct a counter-discourse.

**Tumbábo**

On August 29th 2007 I attended a performance of Curaçaoan musician Randal Corsen and his orchestra in The Hague. From my vantage
point in the audience, I was able to not only watch the lively show but closely observe the reaction of the audience. Corsen’s performance took place on the Binnenhof, the famous square between the buildings of the Dutch House of Parliament, during the ‘2007 Binnenhof Festival’. The attending crowd consisted of both Curaçaoan and European Dutch. In the front rows sat many elegantly dressed, predominantly white European Dutch and Curaçaoans. Behind them stood the rest of the audience, mostly Afro-Curaçaoans and Curaçaoans of mixed heritage.

Corsen is a jazz pianist trained in the Netherlands. At this specific event he performed together with other Curaçaoan musicians in an orchestra called Tumbábo. The concept of this orchestra was to present traditional Curaçaoan music with a twist. On stage Corsen and performed jazz variations of Curaçaoan and Latin-American music. However, at the end of the performance, Tumbábo played a modern tumba originally composed and performed by the late Macario Prudencia. Nowadays this type of tumba is often danced exuberantly and enjoyed without reservations during Carnival season or at popular Curaçaoan parties. It can thus be said to embody Curaçaoan popular culture. The song they performed was ‘Den bo bèshi’ meaning literally 'in your berry'. It is a purposely suggestive composition, the expression ‘Den bo bèshi’ commonly taken to mean either to enjoy yourself or any number of sexual acts.\footnote{In an interview in 2014 with the now deceased renowned Curaçaoan artist and original composer of the song, Macario Prudencia, he told me his version of the origin of the expression. In his explanation he confirms that although nowadays this text is often sung in an attempt to elicit controversy and the audience often understands the text 'Djumbala den bo bèshi' to contain a double entendre, the text originally referred to an innocent children's game.}
From my perspective, there was a striking contrast between the more straightforward sound of ‘Den bo bèshi’ and the music and ambience that had been created by the orchestra up until that moment. The crowd watching the performance went wild. People started to dance and many Curaçaoans within the audience were alternately shouting or singing the suggestive lyrics back to the performers in a call and response pattern often seen in Caribbean music. As I looked up and away from the stage and the performing orchestra I could see the contours of dozens of people in the windows of the government buildings dressed in gala attire dancing enthusiastically to the tumba music. In the front rows, where men dressed in tuxedos and women in gala gowns had been sitting through the performances, people were now also standing and dancing.

Both Curaçaoans and native Dutch people responded with enthusiasm to the rendition of this song. It was clear that this interaction with the audience was exactly what the band had intended, since the song was the closing piece and it was performed in an informal manner; the pianist was standing behind his piano while playing, the musicians and singers were riling up the audience.

How can this response be interpreted in the light of the discussed web of representations? It is clear that the performance is set in the field of negotiation of different regimes of representations. On the one hand it adds to the discourse of a multicultural *Hagenaar* as the festival was subsidized by the government and the Curaçaoan performance was programmed in between many other genres and music pertaining to other cultures, and it was set in the Binnenhof, the heart of Dutch
government. On the other hand, Tumbábo’s unique and original combination of music styles, that included a mix of jazz, Latin-American, and Curaçaoan, surpasses a simplistic, folkloristic image of being Curaçaoan.

During their performance, Corsen and his Tumbábo orchestra had first presented a cosmopolitan Curaçaoan musical performance in which they mixed jazz with Curaçaoan rhythms, such as the Antillean waltz, referencing both the hybridity and ‘modernity’ of Curaçaoan culture. Gert Oostindie points to the link between the valuation of certain types of Curaçaoan music, identification and postcolonial relations. He mentions the acceptance and valorization in the Netherlands of specific Curaçaoan musical genres, such as the waltz and mazurka, which he links to the Curaçaoan upper class and denominates as European Dutch heritage (Oostindie 2010). The perceived link between these expressions and the Netherlands means that referring to this music during the Tumbábo performance can be construed as a link between Curaçao and the Netherlands. This is certainly a nod to a contested colonial legacy, but by presenting the Antillean waltz that originated from the European waltz, this attains other, parallel meanings. It becomes a nod to the European Dutch in kinship and a link to ‘modernity’ and European civilization through the waltz as a symbol of European cultural heritage. The waltz presented is a creolized version; it does not negate an element of Curaçaoanness as much as it presents a more hybrid, entertaining, non-threatening Curaçaoan identity, and in so doing presents the image of a less alien, more ‘civilized’ Curaçaoan. With the performance of ‘Den bo bèshi’, Tumbábo went even further. This song is part of Curaçaoan popular
culture, and the manner in which it was performed as a modern tumba is almost reminiscent of the popular ‘Road Fire’ music often heard during the Curaçaoan Carnival season; this suggested a link to Curaçaoan lower classes. Additionally, the tumba is also a genre that has received little recognition by mainstream Dutch society (Oostindie 2010).

The performance was therefore not a simple repetition of commonly known Curaçaoan images, but constructed a complex new identity by using music and dance elements that are positively linked to the image of black Curaçaoans in the Netherlands. In fact, Tumbábo presented quite a cosmopolitan and flexible view on Curaçaoanness. By acting out a performance with mixed musical influences and presenting them as part of their Curaçaoan image, Tumbábo constructs a Curaçaoan who is able to move from one genre to the other. This Curaçaoan is able to perform and enjoy the lively, popular tumba or a jazz piece as well as a formal waltz, which is more recognizable from a Dutch cultural perspective. By performing these elements and by engaging the audience in a constantly repeated call and response pattern, both vocal and involving the body, Tumbábo embodies a Curaçaoan identity. This Curaçaoan identity is then able to contend with other images of the Curaçaoan such as the ones created by The Hague’s citizenship policy. This happens through Tumbábo’s representation of tumba as at least equal to the previously performed genres. The performance of tumba within this setting challenges set beliefs with regard to ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ culture. It is simultaneously a negotiation of power and representation.
Previously I argued that musical performances not only reproduce existing discourse but can be understood as moments that allow for a production from bottom to top, opening up possibilities for counter-discourses. Based on Butler’s concept of performativity, discourses can attain prevalence through ‘acting out.’ Seen from this perspective, I can conclude that Tumbábo’s performance offers insight in the construction of counter-discourse on Curaçaoan identity through the enactment of musical representations of Curaçaoanness. This is in congruence with Stuart Hall’s notion of trans-coding.

In the performance described above, Tumbábo was able to both reverse stereotypes and submit negative images for positive images of Curaçaoans. First, they established Curaçaoan music within a very formal Dutch setting through the waltz and the formal use of a grand piano as well as the incorporation of jazz music. Then Tumbábo inserted the image of Curaçaoans dancing to louder, more exotic and festive sounding music within this image. Through this process the Tumbábo performance served as a way of “taking an existing meaning,” that of Curaçaoan music, and “re-appropriating it for new meaning” (Hall 1997: 270). That is, Tumbábo provides its own ‘twist’ on Curaçaoan music and assigns new meaning to Curaçaoan music through its performance.

Looking at the audience shows that a less simplistic, folkloristic image elicits an enthusiastic reaction; the Curaçaoan part of the audience even entered into a musical exchange with the musicians supplying the chorus to the song. The involvement of the audience was reminiscent of the call and response pattern prevalent in certain traditional Caribbean genres. In this sense this interaction created a
‘krioyo’ feel – a sense of being truly local and of the Curaçaoan people – in which the ‘common’ people also engage in a practice they might recognize from ‘home’. This krioyo feel is created by the call and response pattern as well as the tumba music.

I observed this construction of a feeling of community and home through music on various occasions during my fieldwork, both as a member of the audience and as a performer.

In November of 2011 OCAN, a The Hague based Dutch-Caribbean organization which has the express goal of looking after the interests of Dutch Caribbean Diaspora in the Netherlands, organized a conference on education at the Holliday Inn in Leiden. The day was structured around keynote speakers and various workshops on the subject. It ended, as is customary, with drinks in the hotel lounge. OCAN had contracted our ensemble, Tipiko Den Haag to perform for the occasion.

The word tipiko, which literally means typical or traditional, refers to the music our ensemble plays, framing this music as traditional and belonging to Curaçao. By naming the group tipiko, we also position ourselves in the tradition of a number of Curaçaoan ensembles, also called tipiko. Since these tipikos were often named after the neighborhood they were set in such as Tipiko Santa Martha and the on Curaçao well known Tipiko Santa Rosa, the name Tipiko Den Haag actually positions The Hague as the equivalent of a Curaçaoan

Tipiko Den Haag consisted during that performance of two Curaçaoans – including myself. I played the kuarta – a four string instrument native to Venezuela, but also used in Curaçaoan music-, Ingmar, the other Curaçaoan musician, played a variety of percussion instruments ranging from bongo’s to the traditional wiri. The other members of the ensemble were Ali, an Aruban bass player and a Julian, European Dutch bandleader and mandoline player.
neighborhood, referring to the Curaçaoan community living in the city.\textsuperscript{39}

On that particular day, we set up in the hotel lounge. As we started to play, the OCAN conference attendees were leaving the various conference rooms. They walked toward the hotel exit, passing by the lounge –a separate room. The lounge room was dark and the band was positioned just out of the line of sight of passersby. As a consequence, the attendees were not able to immediately place the source of the music. Still, after some hesitation in the doorway, people started to fill the room.

As they filed in, a bottleneck formed at the entrance. Despite the mention of the \textit{tipiko} in the program, the Curaçaoan audience reacted visibly surprised to seeing us. The congress attendees halted in their tracks just past the doorway and both acknowledged the musicians and appraised the room they were stepping into. The connotation of life music seemed especially exciting and elicited a number of reactions. I had the opportunity to observe the reactions up close both at the moment and later on through video footage. Many of the visitors started smiling and nodding to us as they entered. The changes in body language of some of the people entering the room were striking. An older gentleman entering the room at a slow, careful pace seemed to best embody this phenomenon.

As he entered he saw the band and started to nod approvingly. His posture became more erect. His walk acquired a swagger. Even the way he held his drink changed, the cup in his hand almost becoming a fashionable accessory. As he swayed past us, a new man, entering

\textsuperscript{39} Others had more generic names, such as Tipiko Alegria (Tipiko Happiness).
what I'd like to describe as a collective Curaçaoan musical zone, it seemed all hesitation or shyness had fallen off him. While entering the room in which the music was played, the audience seemed although curious, reserved. Once past the doorway and seeing us they appeared more relaxed and reassured.

In between sets a young woman in her twenties approached me, seeming excited. She had just stepped off the dance floor and was still 'in the zone'. In an overly enthusiastic tone she asked “Do you also play salsa?!”

The truth of the matter is that we do, albeit with a slightly different setup and under a different name, since in our minds, that genre does belongs to a whole different concept. However, my first reaction to her question was indignation. I shook my head, confused and at a loss for words. I was also still in the zone, completely submersed in what my experience of the evening, which was that of tradition, Curaçaoanness and tipiko music.

Before I could utter more than an indignant “No” the woman who had asked the question and I were interrupted by her friend with a prompt “Of course not!” The friend held on to the young woman’s arm and her voice carried a patronizing tone as well as a touch of embarrassment as she corrected her friend. This, she meant to say, is tipiko music, and salsa is a whole different ball game. What she seemed to convey was the same thing I had wanted to say. To us, salsa was not traditional Curaçaoan.

Confronted with the normative equivalent of a national border the woman who had initially asked the question laughed. Shamefaced, she hastened to express her appreciation for ‘true’ tipiko music. On my
part I tried to smooth things over by agreeing with her assessment of there being a cosmopolitanism element to the Curaçaoan identity discourse. I did this by assuring her that some of us did play in a different salsa band. Just not in this particular setting and with these particular band members.

At the moment the enthusiastic woman asked if we played salsa, the meaning of being Curaçaoan which is always constructed through a process of negotiation was narrowed down to exclude salsa music. Salsa then became in-authentic. The salsa request shows that there still is a personal experience and interpretation within the group experience: that of the woman who wanted to hear that particular genre. However, the discourse constructed remains a negotiation. The woman's question vis-a-vis salsa music and my and her friend's reaction to this question show this negotiation of authenticity. The two experiences: on the one hand the woman's single experience and on the other hand the 'co-experience' of the woman's friend and me, did not necessarily match. This resulted in a situation in which the woman's experience, that included salsa, was deemed inauthentic. Through this exchange I also found myself confronted with my own preconceived notions of a Curaçaoan discourse of identity.

The response of both the Tipiko Den Haag audience and the Tumbábo audience described above indicated that the actions of the performer can elicit a sense of unity expressed by a collective reaction of the audience. In this reaction a pattern can be created together and echoed over and over again. This sense of collectivity, of belonging to the same group, can be understood through Judith Butler’s concept of performativity. Creating a counter-discourse like the one above still
only puts this new discourse in contention with other representations such as the *Hagenaar* identity. By creating the Krioyo feel, the performance also becomes the arena of a transnational practice uttering a sense of belonging to the Curaçaoan community and a longing for ‘home’. Such transnational practices are problematic for the construction of a prevalent Dutch collective identification.

If we factor in reiteration, the counter-discourse can achieve more authenticity and gain more saliency. In the Tipiko Den Haag case I refer to above, for example, the setting, characterized by a Dutch Caribbean organization and many Curaçaoan attendees, allowed for the audience to enact Curaçaoanness through dance and demeanor. As musicians, we encourage the audience to engage with us and the music, dance and express themselves. We do this by consciously playing tumbas which are very lively and uplifting and mostly choosing older songs that, as we surmise from the reactions we tend to get from the audience, often speak to the audience’s memory of Curaçao creating a sense of nostalgia.

During the Tumbábo performance, a vocal pattern of repetition between the performer and the audience was created. This makes the performance more than a single solitary act of self-identification and creates a collective act that gives it the authentication needed for saliency. Staged performances can therefore be a valuable way of creating a stronger, new representation of the Curaçaoan or the *Hagenaar*. However, our reaction to the audience member’s simple question concerning salsa music indicates that a representation is not necessarily or automatically accepted by the group. This would mean
a process of acceptation and possible rejection of specific Curaçaoan identity discourses could be in place.
Throughout the Tumbábo performance, Curaçaoan music was gradually defined through ‘Latin-Americanness’, ‘blackness’, ‘Caribbeanness’, the colonial link with the Netherlands, hybridity, etc. Simultaneously the valuation of high and lower culture shifts and becomes more flexible. However, action and the creation of flexible identity are not performed in a bubble. Performativity, that is, the constant and direct creation of identity through action, happens within a context in which it interacts with other social processes. As much as the performance of identity creates reality, it is also influenced by the context. While creating a Curaçaoan identity and revaluing Curaçaoan popular culture through performance, this identity is also influenced by the setting in which it is produced. This may transform the act of performing a specific Curaçaoan identity in a specific place into an act that can influence the way Curaçaoan identity is perceived. In other words, the performance can become a means of contestation.
Corse’s Tumbábo performance not only brought together ‘lower’ class and ‘upper’ class Curaçaoan musical genres. Because of the performance’s position on stage and the prominent location, it was exemplary in representing the social conventions linked to Curaçaoanness in a highly significant location. In my view, this performance of Curaçaoan culture in the heart of the Dutch governmental structure had more than a symbolic value. The Tumbábo performance shows that migrants do not necessarily passively accept their ‘given’ identity. Through events such as the one discussed above, the Curaçaoan identity moves from being a passive
phenomenon or a simple reenactment of a set of social standards linked to the Curaçaoan group. The performance creates an arena in which the meaning of being Curaçaoan is able to shift and be changed. Within this arena, regimes of representation can be trans-coded.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I researched how Curaçaoans perform Curaçaoan identity discourse within the Dutch context. I addressed the dialectic between transmigrant constructions of collective Curaçaoan identity through musical performances and a governmental project promoting a regional Hague/Dutch identity. I looked at performances both as tools for integration that help construct and reinforce specific discourses with regard to migrant representation and as practices that allow Curaçaoan migrant performers and audiences to construct a counter-discourse of representation. From this point of view, performances are the sites where the discursive constructions of the two identities intersect: that of the *Hagenaar* as main focus of identification for all cultural groups in The Hague and that of a Curaçaoan collective identity constructed by Curaçaoan migrants in the city. These two discourses compete for prominence.

I attempted to better understand this field of tension between the two identities as well as the meaning of a flexible Curaçaoan approach to collective identity. To explore these issues in context of The Hague, I formulated and answered the following questions: How are the *Hagenaar* and Curaçaoan identities constructed within performance? How do they relate to each other? And how can Curaçaoans perform
alternative discourses on Curaçaoan identity through musical performances in The Hague?

After a brief discussion of the concepts of differentiation and integration in The Hague, I used a social constructivist theoretical framework to answer the first two questions. I discussed performances as discursive constructions within a wider web of regimes of representations. Then I focused on a specific dominant regime of representation; the racialized regime of representation which paints a dichotomy between the West and the Rest. This influential regime also places the West as the center. I used this theoretical frame to analyze the case of the The Hague city hall performance. Through this case I looked at how both a *Hagenaar* and a flexible Curaçaoan identity are constructed within the same performances. I argued that the *Hagenaar* identity is in conflict with the Curaçaoan identity construction of migrants in order to position itself as the prime cohesive collective identity for citizens of The Hague. This struggle between the two identities reveals a power struggle in which there is a partiality towards the *Hagenaar* identity as the norm.

Hall’s racialized regime revealed constructions of the marginal, postcolonial Other to still be present within current representations. I used his view on stereotypes as tools that “reduce,” “essentialize,” “naturalize,” and “fix” differences (Hall 1997: 258) to help uncover the way the racialized regime of representation works through the conception of a *Hagenaar* identity in which a condensed version of a Curaçaoan identity can be incorporated. However, I argued that the flexible approach to Curaçaoan identity results in an incorporation of a ‘fuller’ Curaçaoan collective identity within the *Hagenaar* identity.
Such flexibility can be a conduit for the construction of counter-discourses. I discussed how these counter-discourses are performed by Curaçaoans through the case of Tumábó.

Based on the theory on performativity (Butler 1988), the construction of identity through discourses and representation (Foucault 1981, Hall 1997) and the cases discussed in this chapter, I can conclude that if knowledge/power is constructed through discourse, change within discourses could mean a change in what we see as truth and ultimately a possible change within the field of power relations. While double consciousness may be a consequence of Curaçaoans functioning within a racialized regime of representation, this same process of viewing the self as the Other in combination with transnational practices has led to the construction of a flexible Curaçaoan identity. This new discourse may, if not completely displace, at least compete with or alter the existing discursive formations that promote Otherness.

As I discussed in this chapter, power does not only function “from top to bottom – and coming from a specific source” (Hall 1997: 49). This view on power allows for the possibility of change from below, through a creative process formed through everyday life practices. Within this perspective, musical performances not only reproduce existing discourse, they may be able to create new discourse. In view of the link between power and discursive practices, performances can be understood as moments that allow for a production from bottom to top, opening up possibilities for counter-discourses.

Both in Chapter 1 and in this chapter, I discussed how the postcolonial subject performs a strategic flexibility as a form of contestation. The
second case I discussed in this chapter, that of Tumbábo, explores how this strategic flexibility can be used in performances to revert stereotypes pertaining to Curaçaoan identity. By performing a flexible Curaçaoan identity, the Tumbábo artists represent Curaçaoan identity in their own way. The interactivity of the performance also suggests the possibility of copying and repetition by the audience, which may result in the construction of a new discourse on Curaçaoan identity. In other words, strategic flexibility through performance is used here as a way to trans-code and contest existing regimes of representation such as the racialized regime.

Both the case of the city hall and that of Tumbábo show discourses of Self versus Other, native versus non-native, which are in fact part of an ongoing imbalanced power struggle. These discourses are dominated by the racialized regime of representation and contain the idea of a passive Other. In other words, these discourses implicitly question if this Other is able to truly represent himself.

In this chapter I argued that Curaçaoans are able to use strategic flexibility to formulate a counter-discourse because of two things. First, collective identity is a discursive construction and is, as such, flexible. Such flexibility allows for Curaçaoans to approach their own identity as fluid. Secondly, as I argued through the concept of performativity in the case of Tumbábo, reality can be constructed through representation and repetition. Agency is key in this process, opening up room for contestation of regimes of representation.

Within the Dutch context Curaçaoans come face to face with integration projects and are simultaneously confronted with a dominant racialized regime of representation that influences the way
identity discourses are constructed. However, as I showed through Tumbábo, it is still possible to influence representations and construct counter-discourses on Curaçaoan identity through performance and repetition.

The confrontation with representations of themselves as the Other through the racialized regime is not new for Curaçaoan transmigrants. It means a confrontation with the postcolonial condition of alienation which, as I discussed in Chapter 1, is part of the Curaçaoan identity construction. On the basis of the theory and cases discussed in this second chapter, I can conclude that when confronted with their Otherness, Curaçaoans in The Hague adopt a flexible attitude towards identity construction. Such an attitude allows them to either incorporate, as was the case in the city hall, the *Hagenaar* identity within their vision of being Curaçaoan, or adapt and try to construct a counter-discourse such as was the case through Tumbábo.

The case of the performance of Curaçaoan collective identities on the island, which I will discuss in the following chapter, differs most markedly compared to the Curaçaoan collective identity discourses off the island. While in the Netherlands, Curaçaoan collective identity discourses constitute one of the minority discourses competing for saliency within the specific Curaçaoan group, Curaçaoan identity discourses on the island are endorsed and even actively promoted through state policy. In the cases I discuss in the following chapter, I will focus on the internal struggle for prominence of multiple Curaçaoan identity discourses.
Chapter 3  
Curaçaoan Collective Identity Management and Transformation

On the evening of the 31st of December 2010 my family and I had gathered on Curaçao to listen to tambú music on the radio and to usher in the New Year. Around 10.30PM the radio was playing an old tambú song of the great Shon Kolá. My mother, a retired teacher, started to move to the beat of the drum in her rocker. “These are the tambús I like,” she exclaimed, “I grew up with these tambús.”

“E tambúna'ki mi gusta. Den e tambúna'ki ma krese” (Judith Martha Anita).

I laughed incredulously. Similar to my respondent Allee of the Grupo Power, I had grown up with a perception of tambú music as surrounded by taboo. Tambú parties were definitely not a place for children.

“Antes, nami bisabo […] mi no tabata bai e tambúnan. Paso dimes bo ta’ chikitu bo ta’ tende […] tambú ta’ tin nan kosnan strañonan ta’ sosode. Ami tabata skucha mas tantu i mi ta’ tin lômplay.”

“In the past, let me tell you […] I didn’t go to the tambú. Because, of course you’re little and you hear […] tambú had it’s weird stuff
Like Allee, I had grown up listening to tambú music. As a child and later a teen, I had sung along with Mistica and Tela while dancing the tambú myself and seeing family members moving their hips to the beat of the drum.

All of this happened behind closed doors, though. Never too loudly. And never outside of the house. I could scarcely recall seeing a real-life tambú performance as a child. Thus the unconscious perception of tambú as something taboo, something ‘not done by decent people,’ had stuck with me for a long time. Despite the fact that I had gladly immersed myself in the tambú season, consciously and willfully shaking off these old, buried preconceptions during my research, my mother’s sudden exclamation and revelation of my family’s tambú heritage took me by surprise.

I expressed my doubt and said “Well, Judith. That’s something you never told me. Tell me more about it.” “Yes,” she answered, “My father played the tambú, didn’t he?” “Tata played the tambú?” “Yes, every year he stretched a hide like this and prepared. All of his friends came [...] they played the tambú together, drank and laid down on the floor and fell asleep.”

“Ha! Den e tambún’aki b’a krese? Oh, Judith, bo n’ kontami e ko’i. Kontami esei”
“Si, ata mi tata t'a toka tambú.”

See the introduction.
“Tata tabata toka tambú?”
“Si, Tata t'a toka tambú. Tur aña nobo e ta rek su kueru asina'ki, prepara. Tur su amigunan ta bin [...] nan t'a toka tambú ku ne, bebe anto kai drumi plat abou pega soño” (Judith Martha Anita).

Maybe it was our talk about my research, the New Year’s Eve setting and hearing the traditional tambús on the radio. Maybe it was the feeling of excitement and focus on cultural heritage that seemed to permeate the island in 2010, or a combination of all of these elements. The result, in any case, was that at that moment, at least for me and my mother while listening to the tambú, a space opened up in which this Afro-Curaçaohan genre became something personal, something of our own to be proud of. For us, for the moment, somewhere in the forging of a new Curaçao, Afro-Curaçaohan culture had finally broken through and become less of a taboo.

I was unable to ignore the link between this personal experience and the conversations I’d had with my respondents in which they had told me about their mothers or grandfathers playing or singing tambú and how they had not been involved or aware of this. As I will discuss in this chapter, this message of revaluation of Afro-Curaçaohan culture was echoed by respondents throughout my research. During my fieldwork I experienced the sound of a previously undervalued Afro-Curaçaohan culture being outed reverberating throughout the island. It was certainly the sound of my own (re)discovery of tambú. However, more than that, it was the sound of the children in the neighborhood who that year had started their own tambú group, practicing weekly. It was the sound of the pride and purpose of people involved with tambú music that I noticed throughout my research. It
was an echo of the sounds demanding change within the political and public debate on the island’s future and its position as a new country vis-a-vis the Netherlands, a neighboring Chavez-led Venezuela and the rest of the Caribbean.

This chapter explores the postcolonial subject’s performance of identity on Curaçao during this period. This performance of identity takes place in an island context in which there is an explicit cultural policy aimed specifically at collective identity construction. While Dutch governmental actors in The Hague frame Curaçaoan identity as an element to be incorporated into the desired Dutch collective identity, the position of Curaçaoan identity as a desired main identity makes the situation and approach on the island different. Rather than integration of migrants, the main focus of the Curaçaoan cultural policies discussed in this chapter is the articulation and development of a collective Curaçaoan identity.

In order to answer the main question of this chapter – How is the Curaçaoan identity discourse influenced by the island context? – I explore the roles of culture and music in the construction of discourses on Curaçaoan collective identity on the island and pose the additional questions: What is the role of culture and music in the construction of discourses on Curaçaoan identity? And, which discourses of collective identity are stimulated through the Curaçaoan state’s cultural policies? The exploration of the Curaçaoan cultural policy I provide in this chapter indicates that the identity promoted through policy in the first decade of the 21st century hesitates between the revaluation of a main Afro-Curaçaoan identity and the integration of all ethnic groups
through the adoption of a creolized, cosmopolitan view. I discuss these two discourses within the Curaçaoan context. The chapter builds upon the previously discussed theory of representation and postcolonial theory of Otherness. It describes the construction of Curaçaoan identity discourses as a way to resolve this ‘mindset,’ that is, the Caribbean subject’s sense of alienation of his self and perception of the self as Other. I discuss how a transformation of the mindset through a change in the discourse on Curaçaoan identity is taking place on the island. More specifically, I embark on an exploration of the roles of cultural performance and music as tools in creating these changes.

In my exploration of the role of cultural performances in general and music in particular in the construction of a Curaçaoan collective identity on the island, I draw on an analysis of events revolving around performance and music that are co-organized and/or subsidized by the government. I analyze two such events: the annual ‘Siman di Kultura’ (Week of Culture) and the musical festival ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ (A Song for Curaçao). These two cases allow me to delve deeper into cultural management in practice and to see the change over time in the way people, see, think about and talk about Curaçaoan and specifically Afro-Curaçaoan culture. The case of the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ in particular reflects this. It invites people to reformulate what it is to be Curaçaoan in a direct way and it has a strong demagogic undercurrent in sync with the policy I discuss here.

The cases that I analyze here are composed of material I gathered through participant observation and semi-structured interviews during two fieldwork periods on Curaçao; the first from December 2010 to
March 2011, the second in May of 2012. This information was supplemented by an analysis of video clips and articles in Curaçaoan newspapers, most of which are available online. I searched for these specific online sources after having ascertained the relevance of the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival and the ‘Siman di Kultura’ in the performative constructions of collective Curaçaoan discourses during my initial fieldwork.

During my 2010-2011 fieldwork I paid special attention to performances in the media in which national symbols such as the flag and anthem played an important role. This reaffirmed observations I had made during previous visits to the island with regard to the importance of the ‘Week of Culture’ in Curaçaoan nation-building efforts. This was later corroborated in an interview I held in 2012 with a respondent active in the cultural scene on the island who discussed the 2011 performances revolving around the theme ‘Representations of Past, Present and Future’.41

During the 2010-2011 fieldwork period I also noticed a recurring musical anthem performed by a trio of well-known artists on the island; Reinier Lijfrock, Liesje Lispiër, and Igmar La Reine. The video clip to their song ‘Un bon yu di tera’ (A Good Child of the Land) aired frequently on the national television channel ‘Tele Curaçao.’ This song turned out to be the 2010 winner of the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival. During this fieldwork on the island I also held informal interviews with several respondents about the role of music in the inauguration of the new status of Curaçao as a country. During these conversations I was referred to the festival ‘Un Kanto pa

41 Further along in the text the respondent is referred to as Anna.
Kòrsou’ and to the efforts—supported by the organization Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou—to promote and revalue Afro-Curaçaoan heritage. This information drove me to the analysis and interpretations to be found in this chapter, in which the Curaçaoan nation-building efforts and the Afro-centric turn to Curaçaoan identity are of especial interest. Another important source of information turned out to be a document on Curaçaoan cultural policy which was then available through the Fundashon Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou, the Curaçaoan institution dedicated to the promotion of Curaçaoan culture; and which I already touched upon in the Introduction. I found this document, called Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental (Roadmap towards an Independence of the Mind), useful in framing the many initiatives on the island geared towards nation-building and involving music and performance.

In the following section I explore the link between music and identity construction in Curaçaoan island society. Then, I discuss the Curaçaoan cultural policy plan Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental, emphasizing the concept of transformation propagated in the plan. The chapter ends with an exploration of the case of ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou,’ using a discussion of this festival to analyze not only Curaçaoan identity management and nation-building through culture, with a focus on musical performances, but also transformational policy in action. This means that in order to understand how Curaçaoan identity discourse is constructed on the island additional questions arise: How does policy aim to engender Curaçaoan transformation and ‘freedom of the mind’ through music and culture? What does this ‘freedom of the mind’ entail?
The Creolized Cosmopolitan Discourse versus the Afro-Curaçaoan Discourse

Throughout my research I observed two specific discourses on Curaçaoan identity expressed nowadays through music and in public debate: first, the discourse of a creolized Curaçaoan identity and second, the discourse of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity. Both have in common that they refer to the myth of Curaçaoan flexibility and cosmopolitanism, while simultaneously incorporating well-defined, essentialist notions of Curaçaoan identity.

The first discourse, that of a creolized, cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity constructs Curaçaoans as unique and simultaneously globalized, integrating many different cultures into one. It is grounded in a myth of origin that includes diversity in cultures, united through a creolization process to construct a Curaçaoan culture and identity.

A similar discourse has been formulated throughout Curaçaoan history. In this discourse Curaçaoan creolization has been linked to cultural expressions such as Papiamentu, the Curaçaoan creole language. It has also been constructed through the formulation of what can be considered ‘Curaçaoan music’ (Allen 2010). Below, I will explore this further. It is important to note, however, that historically, this discourse also ties into other Caribbean discourses such as Caribbean and Latin-American discourses on creolization, theoretical formulations such as Glissant’s ‘Antillanité,’ and political national projects such as the Jamaican creole multiracial nationalist project with the motto ‘Out of many, one people’ (Thomas 2004, Glissant 1992). Glissant’s work on Antillanité posits a Caribbean identity
essentialist in its opposition to the universality of identity. It proposes a specific Caribbean identity constructed out of oppositions. In this sense this view on Caribbean identity is flexible, adapting constantly (Schnepel 2004).

Although it is in a sense flexible, this discourse is also simultaneously essentialist in that it is based in the idea of an authentic, unique Curaçaoan culture developed from specific, diverse origins.

Römer’s (1977) characterization of Antillean music formulates this discourse beautifully. In his view Antillean music bears the influences of various regional musical traditions. He presents a detailed account of different categories, distinguished by origins. Römer’s categorization of types of Antillean music, based on the idea of genres originating in specific countries, is typical of the relation between music and identity frequently adopted in the Curaçaoan past. Although at first glance the difference between the genres seems to be determined by formal musical differences such as melody and rhythm patterns, the division also reveals a set way of thinking in which regional or national boundaries are equated with the existence of different styles, rhythmic patterns and so forth.

In this way of thinking two issues are accentuated: first, the supposed origin of a genre, and second, the creolization process which has recreated this genre as a Curaçaoan version of itself. This results in a picture of a flexible Curaçaoan music scene in which Curaçaoans pick

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42 Römer describes; first, musical traces from the European Romantic era of the 19th century, with an emphasis on Viennese and Spanish music; second, the influence of 'African folk music', especially with regard to specific use of percussion and certain rhythm patterns; and, finally, the influence of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Römer divides Antillean, or Curaçaoan, music into five categories (Römer 1977: 168-169).
and choose between different genres, claiming authenticity due to their supposed historical ties to many different cultures, while simultaneously creating their own unique blend from these different elements.

Despite the flexibility proposed by the creolized Curaçaoan identity, this way of viewing identities is still essentialist in two ways: first because of its focus on ‘authenticity,’ based on rigid ideas of origins linked to specific territories, and second because of the notion of an essentially creolized Curaçaoan identity.

Römer’s way of thinking pertains very much to the starting point of difference I described in Chapter 2, in which the social field is mapped in accordance to specific characteristics, culture and so forth, related to specific geographical locations. Within this discourse specific genres are expected to have not only certain musical characteristics attached to them, but certain cultural elements as well. By including a connection with the supposed country of origin of the musical genre, this discourse engages in a negotiation of authenticity. Its claim to possess a historical connection to these specific countries and cultures means that the performance of the musical genres ‘pertaining to these areas’ is close to authentic. This means that despite the discourse’s seeming quite flexible, it maintains an essentialist core in which territories and cultures are primarily interlinked, well-defined, and distinguishable one from another. Through this myth of historical links with other cultures, Curaçaoans are able to claim a type of cosmopolitanism.

The focus on creolization also reveals a process in which the Curaçaoan is actually well-defined. It is a consequence of a specific
myth of origin in which different cultures and musical genres are allowed to mingle and Curaçaoans make something new and special out of them. This, again, becomes something perceived as authentically Curaçaoan. In this sense Römer’s dual approach presupposes a link between music and culture and argues for the understanding of Curaçaoan music and identity as not only creolized but also cosmopolitan.

By categorizing many different genres under the collective label of Antillean music, Römer works within the discourse of different cultures, at the same time emphasizing Curaçaoan creolized musical heritage and the resulting creolized musical identity. He argues that as all of these genres are part of Curaçaoan musical heritage, all these cultural identities are therefore part of the Curaçaoan collective identity. In essence he also constructs a flexible Curaçaoan identity in which the ability to pick and choose between different genres, cultures and identities is incorporated into the collective identity as a characteristic of being Curaçaoan. Perceiving these genres as Curaçaoan allows Curaçaoans a plethora of ways to ‘be Curaçaoan.’ By switching between genres they can switch between different representations of Curaçaoan identity. This in turn enables them to contest the discourse in which the Afro-Curaçaoan element is negatively valued.

Römer’s discursive construction of Curaçaoan music as creolized and cosmopolitan thus offers a way to include the Afro-Curaçaoan element without fully embracing the negative stigma of African culture and heritage. The creolized discourse on Curaçaoan identity
allows the construction of a Curaçaoan identity without the stereotypical and negative connotations linked to the African heritage. The second discursive construction I identified throughout my research is that of the Afro-Curaçaoan identity. Theoretically, this discourse can be aligned with discourses such as those formulated in the tradition of the Négritude movement.43 According to Curaçaoan anthropologist Rose Mary Allen, since the end of the 1960s, authentic Curaçaoan identity on the island has been discursively linked to Afro-Curaçaoans (Allen, 2010). In December 2010 and January 2011, during my fieldwork on Curaçao, I could see a growing sense of a specifically Afro-Curaçaoan national identity and what is perceived as Afro-Curaçaoan music. Within the public debate I observed this discourse of Afro-Curaçaoan identity embedded within musical performances to be constructed as oppositional to that of a creolized Curaçaoan identity.

During my extensive conversations with respondents within the tambú and tumba music scenes, several respondents linked the importance of Afro-Curaçaoan music to a process of revaluation of African heritage and identity. They equated its history, especially that of tambú music, to the history of enslavement of black people on the island. Several of the respondents presented African heritage as not only culturally, but biologically ingrained within Curaçaoan people. In a sense, they represent it as inescapable.

Some respondents also specifically tied the ingrained African heritage to musical patterns and to the sound of the drum. Two musicians,

43 This movement, which originated in the 1930s, proposed the conception of a Caribbean identity based on the idea of one common black origin (Constant and Claver Mabana 2009).
Rendel Rosalia and Gibi Doran, in fact individually referred to a specific percussion pattern both of them said is instinctively played by little children on the island. Using an onomatopoeia, musician and band owner Doran called it: ‘Kabe’i kachó’ (Dog’s head).

“We have an African influence that came. It came here. This is in us. Whatever we do, this excites us. And look, when a child is little… If you look closely… The first thing he plays is this” (Gibi Doran, GIO).

After saying this Doran demonstrates the specific rhythm on the table. During their training near Koral Partier, Santa Catharina, Stanley of the gaita group Los Paranderos also refers to African rhythms and the need people feel to stop and listen to the drum. In his view the drum is undeniably part of Curaçaoans.

“I mean, that’s how you see, from when we’re small… Tambú,
actually, the hide, it’s normal. The blood that we have… The moment you hear,
[He hits his legs in a rhythmical pattern.]
dudumdum dudum dudum, the way of a negro, like that. That’s it! Music explodes.”
[“You feel it,” I supplied.]
“Immediately. Ey! There is tambú down there. As soon as you hear budum budum budum, Ey! There is tambú down there. Tambú is what you need to go watch” (Stanley, Los Paranderos).

In this sense, the increasingly popular discourse of Afro-Curaçaoan identity is also a quite problematic one. Although the respondents here express the perceived biological and cultural link to music and the drum as a positive, their comments also expose a lingering value system which is a consequence of the earlier presence of a racialized regime of representation.

If we take into account the racialized regime of representation and the colonial legacy of double consciousness, it is not surprising that in the history of the Afro-Curaçaoan tambú specifically, this association between Curaçaoan identity and music resulted in a negative social valorization of this genre: “The Dutch and the Catholic Church cited African music as 'slecht gedrag' (‘bad behavior’) and encouraged Afro-Curaçaoans to practice more 'respectable' music, such as the waltz and mazurka [...]. By dissociating from African musical types, blacks living in Curaçao quickly learned that if they could not identify directly with the Dutch, they could certainly do so with their value system, claiming a place in society precisely because they met the standards that had been set by their colonial masters” (De Jong 2006: 168).
Hoetink (1958) showed that such a negative attitude towards Afro-Curaçaoans was common in the first half of the 20th century. This position was institutionalized between 1936 and 1952 when tambú music was made illegal on the island. The prohibition of tambú music can be read as an early form of governmental collective identity management through culture. By condemning ‘African’ music and emphasizing the ‘European’ creole music genres, Curaçaoan identity was reconfigured to be ideally European. This negative discourse put the Curaçaoan with his partially African heritage in a bind, confronting him with his Otherness.

In contemporary Curaçaoan society I found that this use of a racialized discourse and the attached negative stereotyping indeed resulted in expressions of a duality towards the self. One of my respondents in the Netherlands directly expresses this need and inability to escape the self when asked about the link between being yu di Kòrsou and enjoying music:

“Het zit in je bloed, maske ki bo hasi.”

“It’s in your blood, no matter what you do.”

Stanley’s reference to “The blood that we have [...] the way of a negro, like that. That’s it!” can thus simultaneously be read as incorporating pride and as being a reference to Curaçaoan Otherness and the inability to escape this Otherness.
In my introduction I referred to this contested side of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity which I often found to be represented by tambú music. Although both tambú and tumba are originally Afro-Curaçaoan, the people I spoke to more often linked tambú to African heritage. A respondent, Jenny Daal, told me

“No ta hopi hende gusta e ritmo di tambú, i e tumba si”.

“Not many people like the tambú rhythm” (Jenny Daal).

Tambú player Rendel Rosalia also confirmed this.

“No hende no gusta tambú.”

“Many people do not like tambú” (Rendel Rosalia).

Tula, vocalist of the popular tambú group Limania, also finds that people indeed still do not value and adopt tambú music. According to him Curaçaoans tend to show preference for music from outside. That is to say, for other genres from other places.

“Tambú ta di nos. Pero tambú no ta di nos pa nos. […] E ta di nos komo kultura, pero pa nos mes tambú n’ ta di nos. Ta bachata ku merengue ku balada ku salsa ta di nos.”

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“Tambú is ours. But it isn’t ours for us [...] It is ours as in culture, but for ourselves tambú isn’t ours. Bachata and merengue, balads and salsa, those are ours” (Tula, Limania).

In a sense he contrast a discourse he sees around him in 2010 with common practice, saying that within everyday life Afro-Curaçaoan culture competes with the second discourse of creolization and cosmopolitanism. The idea of the inescapability of the Afro-Curaçaoan heritage seems to go hand in hand with a sense of unease and not accepting Afro-culture. Creolized cosmopolitanism thus becomes a means to try to escape Afro-Curaçaoanness. During my fieldwork I also observed that these two views, that of Curaçaoan cultural identity as creolized and that of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity, were juxtaposed in the public debate. Within this juxtaposition the discourse on creolization and cosmopolitanism seems to be more open and flexible towards the adoption of different cultures from within the experience of Curaçaoanness.

**Appropriation and creolization as strategies for escape**

During an account of his impressive music career Curaçaoan musician and composer Erwin Prudencia described to me how, after having finished his studies at a Dutch conservatory, he was very active in the Curaçaoan musical scene during and just after the mid-twentieth century. According to him, before the nineteen-sixties, musical bands
focusing on Latin-America music were very popular within the community. In the sixties the influence of black American music grew. The Latin-American music bands (*combo’s*) remained in the background. Although the process of appropriation in itself includes the adaptation inherent to recreation, the focus here is on the reproduction of specific genres. Erwin Prudencia confirms this copying of music on the island. “They copied the American music,” he said to me. “There was no conversation yet.” To give me an indication of the copying and borrowing going on he starts counting them off:

| “Rocksteady i sleu sleu fo’i Franse Antillen, bachata i merengue for di Republika Dominicana, müzik Cubano i müzik Merikano manera e beatbandsnan tabata toka. Ta müzik di e hendenan kolo skur di e regio.” |
| “Rocksteady and sleu sleu from the French Antilles, bachata and merengue from the Dominican Republic, Cuban music and American music like the Beat bands used to play. That is, music from the black people of the region” (Erwin Prudencia). |

Researcher Nanette De Jong also points towards flexibility in the construction of Curaçaoan identity through appropriation of specific genres. She refers to this as an ‘interactive system’ within Curaçaoan society, through which Afro-Curaçaoans experience a fluid sense of identity. By relating to various types of music, Curaçaoans are able to escape the binary choice between being Dutch or African. This is a “home-grown resistance,” she argues (De Jong 2003b: 167).
According to De Jong music gave the Afro-Curaçaoans agency, “allowing them to assume the role of active participants in a society that traditionally marginalized them as subject and passive” (De Jong Ibid). A flexible Curaçaoan identification can therefore be seen as a tactic of subversion because a link to different cultures can be achieved through everyday musical practices. This link is interpreted by De Jong as an escape from a system in which the Afro-Curaçaoan is ‘held back’. She also sees this practice of subversion in the incorporation of Afro-Cuban music in the Curaçaoan collective identity, as she explains:

“When music emerged as the primary force through which Afro-Cuban identity found expression, Afro-Curaçaoans also assumed these musical genres as their own. Through the musical fusion of African and Iberian forms, Afro-Curaçaoans were provided with a comfortable frame through which to maintain their own appreciation for European forms while exploring an African past most had been too intimidated to acknowledge in their home country” (De Jong 2009: 356).

De Jong argues that Cuban music allowed Curaçaoans to construct a new discourse on Curaçaoanness. This new discourse functioned as a way to escape the European versus African dichotomy: “Cuban music empowered Afro-Curaçaoans to challenge assumptions regarding origins and cultural boundaries, setting into motion a new way to define their own cultural background. Cuban music emphasized the heterogeneity of the Diaspora experience, enabling Afro-Curaçaoans to redefine themselves through a cultural space fitting in-between ‘being African’ and ‘being Dutch’” (De Jong Ibid).
This would mean that in the case of Afro-Curaçaoans the copying of Afro-Caribbean and African-American genres described by Erwin Prudencia might have allowed them to construct an alternative identity placing them outside the existing hegemonic system.

Through my research I found that the ‘home-grown resistance’ identified by De Jong does not only mean an appropriation of different genres and a claim towards musical cosmopolitanism. As urban music artist Oz told me in 2010 when I asked him about his love for hip hop, an originally US lifestyle:

“Tur kos ta bin djafō eigenlijk. Si bo wak e bon. Style di ritmo kombiná tambe ta ritmonan djafō nan a kue hinka den otro hasi algu ku ne.”

“Everything comes from ‘outside’ actually. If you look closely. Like ritmo kombiná is also rhythms from outside that they put together and did something with” (Oz).

Oz pinpoints here the element of change within appropriation. The creolized cosmopolitan discourse I observed is indeed strongly grounded in a notion of change which seems to co-exist and interrelate with the process of appropriation through copying. It incorporates the idea of creation of something new and ‘own’ through appropriation and thus revolves around the idea of authenticity in a different manner.

Prudencia formulates the process of change Curaçaoan music went through within the twentieth century from his point of view as a music composer:
“Un kompositor no ta bini for di nada. Bo ta sine fo'i otro műzik prome bo desaroya algu di bo mes.”

“A composer doesn’t appear out of thin air. You learn from other music before you develop something of your own” (Erwin Prudencia).

Prudencia’s account of copying turns into the recounting of how they ‘made their own’ through creolization and bricolage.

“Den tumba mes bo ta mir’ê. Den tumba tin hopi influensha dominikano, por ehempel. […] Paso hopi músiko di Santo Domingo a kontribuí. […] Element di merengue tìn, element di guaracha ku montuno […] soneronai tei. I bo ta sinti’ê. I tin ora tambe si bo paga bo tinu den e tumba, bo ta sinti e tumba anto bo ta sinti ku ta manera un guaracha of un salsa. Pero bo n’ ta sinti’ê den e ritmo. E ritmo ta keda tumba pero rib'e trompèt nan ta toka un salsa terwijl ta tumba e ta keda. Anto e ta duna un kontraste otro […] Praktikamente bo por bisa ku e tumba ta 6/8ste anto bo ta haña un salsa ta wòrdu huzá einan anto nan ta huza e salsa den estilo d 2/4 ariba anto e or’ei e ta trese un otro spanning. Un sabor.”

“You easily see it in the tumba. In the tumba there are a lot of influences from the Dominican Republic, for example […] Because many musicians from the Dominican Republic contributed […] There are elements of the merengue, of the guaracha and montuno […] the sonora’s. And you feel it. And sometimes if you listen closely you hear the tumba and you feel like it’s a guaracha or salsa. But you don’t feel it in the rhythm. The rhythm stays a tumba, but on the trumpet they are playing a salsa while it stays a tumba. And it gives a contrast […] Practically you could say that the tumba is a 6/8 and you find the salsa being used and they use the salsa in the 2/4\textsuperscript{th} style on it and then they bring a tension. A sabor” (Erwin Prudencia).
From the process of change and creation arises thus a sense of an authentic Curaçaoanness: a *sabor*.

As indicated by Oz, the concepts of appropriation and creolization are indeed also incorporated in the discourse of ritmo kombiná rhythm, which developed on Curaçao in the second half of the twentieth century. According to my respondents, nowadays this genre is the most popular genre on the island. Gibi Doran, the creator of ritmo kombiná described to me how the genre was conceived:

“Un kreashon nobo a nase. Paso ora m’a bai ‘Eksplosivos’ nan tabata un banda ku tabata hopi konsentra riba merengue […] anto mi di, nos tambe por toka un ritmo di nos mes ku ta bailabel, meskos ku bo tin, soka, kadans.. […] ku merengue. Paso nos tambe por tin un kos. […] Anto mi di, nos mester tin un ritmo ku por toka de (sic) hele jaar door, no na okashon so, paso seú ta okashon, tumba ta okashon, tambú ta okashon. […] Anto e or’ei mi a kuminsa pensa, anto e koi tin ku bira un kombinashon, mi ta kue un tiki di merengue, un tiki di soka, un tiki di kaseko, bruinan huntu anto wak kon e koi tei bira. Anto asina ei eigenlijk e nasementu di ritmo kombiná a bini.”

“A new creation was born. Because when I entered ‘Eksplosivos’ they were a band that was centered very much on merengue […] and I said, we can also play a rhythm of our own that is danceable, just like you have soca, kadans […] and merengue. Because we can have something too […] And I said, we need a rhythm you can play all year round, not only on special occasions, because seú is for occasions, tumba is for occasions, tambú is for occasions. […] And then I started thinking, it needs to be a combination, I will take a little merengue, a little soca, a little kaseko, mix them together and see what will turn out. And that is actually how ritmo kombiná started” (Gibi Doran, GIO).
Within this most popular Curaçaoan combined rhythm all elements are brought together: appropriation, copying, change and the remaking of other genres into something new and ‘own.’ While the Afro-Curaçaoan genres listed by Doran, tumba, tambú and seú, are restricted to specific periods and places, this new creolized music is free of that legacy.

It seems also of interest that to the question ‘What is actually ritmo kombiná?’ which I often posed during my field research, most respondents barring Doran either referenced me to Gibi Doran or said something along the lines of, “All bands do it differently.” It seems that this most popular Curaçaoan genre has indeed become, as its creator seemed to imply, something which Curaçaoans are able to use and (re-) create flexibly and without restrictions imposed by the past.

The Flexibility of the Creolized Cosmopolitan Discourse

The discourse of a flexible, cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity discussed in this chapter shows how culture and music in particular are tools allowing Curaçaoans construct a sense of belonging to different groups without living in a specific territory. This means that Curaçaoans may claim influences from different cultures, or even claim to belong to different groups at once. They are able to experience multiple identifications and be both ‘here’ and ‘there’ while configuring this flexibility as truly Curaçaoan.

The association between music and identity also offers the possibility to express a different identity by performing a different genre. As I
showed in the previous chapter in the Tumbábo case, variations on a Curaçaoan identity can be constructed through the performance and repetition of a specific view on Curaçaoan identity. In current Curaçaoan society, and through transnationalism and globalization, the discourse of a creolized cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity thus incorporates the concept of a flexible, authentic Curaçaoanness constructed through interaction with and incorporation of other cultures.

The discourse on Curaçaoan flexibility and cosmopolitanism allows Curaçaoans to use the creolized discourse as a counter-discourse, escaping the negative connotations attached to a solely Afro-Curaçaoan identity, while still using the Afro-Curaçaoan discourse. This flexible attitude towards the construction of identity allows Curaçaoan transnationals to supersede geographical bounds and belong both ‘here’ and ‘there.’ Culture can be changed and formalized in order to fulfill state expectations of a particular collective identity.

Up until now I discussed both the Curaçaoan subject’s flexible Curaçaoan collective identity and his or her adopting of flexibility as Curaçaoan traits. They are part of a tactic to simultaneously function within the existing discourses of Otherness and transcend these discourses, allowing for a different Curaçaoan identity from the ones expected in either the Dutch or Curaçaoan context. De Jong’s understanding of music as a form of ‘home-grown resistance’ supports my view of flexibility as a strategy of self-identification. However, although adopting flexibility as a Curaçaoan characteristic allows Curaçaoans to move between identities and gives them a flexible, cosmopolitan identity, it does not offer a solution for the specific
problem of negative connotations linked to an Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity. This problem is addressed by the Curaçaoan government through a dual approach within its cultural policy. The first element of this approach concerns education on history and the solidification of the concept of Afro-Curaçaoan culture through a process similar to that of the village bands described by Nanette De Jong. She notes a top-down formalization and folklorization of Curaçaoan traditional music through village bands. The process of formalization she describes entails a change in which music is performed and which culture is imagined. In the case of village band music, De Jong argues that it is used as a way to present the people to visitors, creating the image of a creolized Curaçaoan separate from negative connotations of a colonial past. According to her, village band members wear colorful costumes, playing their instruments with a renewed technical excellence “to present a cheerful, unceasingly optimistic world... [which negates] any mention of true historical conditions and replaces them with the staged creation of a mythic, detemporalized past” (De Jong 2003: 248). Curaçaoan cultural policy encourages a similar process of formalization and folklorization aimed at Afro-Curaçaoan culture. This process allows Afro-Curaçaoan culture to be reframed, giving it new meaning and value.

The second element of the Curaçaoan top-down cultural approach focuses on inciting self-reflection and transformative thought through art and culture. Curaçao has a history of collective identity construction tied to culture, with Afro-Curaçaoan culture linked to

44 Through De Jong’s description one can surmise that she refers to tipikos.
negative values. This practice has led to flexible forms of cultural identification as a way of subverting and escaping the hegemonic system. Curaçaoan flexible identity construction indicates the possible use of music to escape fixed constructions of identity in general and thus reconcile the postcolonial condition and its Otherness.

During this research I observed that certain genres, such as Afro-Curaçaoan genres and ‘traditional’ music or folklore, seem to be more easily or prominently used in overt discussions on national identity. However, the discussion on Curaçaoan identity is led through music in general and includes a variety of genres. This was obvious on the eve of Curaçao’s 2012 elections when a popular local ritmo kombiná band was enlisted to attract crowds during political rallies.

Overall, during my fieldwork I noticed that not only were musicians and performers themselves joining the nation-building project through their performances, commerce also used music and certain artists to appeal to a sense of Curaçaoan national identity in order to market their products. During the Carnival season local and international companies such as Pizza Hut and KFC adapted their TV commercials to include tumba music or popular local musicians. Using this tactic these companies performed Curaçaoanness and claimed a sense of being ‘krioyo’, that is, truly local and of the people. During the end-of-the-year festivities shop owners hired local musicians to play gaita, aguinaldo or tambú music in front of their stores in order to attract more customers and create a bond with the Curaçaoan community.

Today, the link between music and a sense of national collective identity is used by different actors within Curaçaoan society. Curaçaoan businesses, for example, both local store owners and US
fast food chains, use local musical genres such as the tumba in TV commercials to promote their business during, for example, the Carnival period. This both reinforces and proves the effectiveness of the discourse linking music and identity. However, the main player in managing and reinforcing collective identity through culture remains the Curaçaoan government. In the following paragraphs I will therefore explore how Curaçaoan collective identity is governmentally managed by further examining the 2001 Curaçaoan cultural policy plan. I will discuss the construction of the ‘New Curaçaoan’ through policy on the island as well as the use of a predominantly Afro-Curaçaoan discourse.

**Introducing the Policy Plan: ‘Roadmap towards an Independence of the Mind’**

We have seen that the Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse and that of creolized identification are in conflict. On the one hand, within current Curaçaoan public discourse there is a social call to revalue African heritage. This need for revaluation is expressed by the government, cultural organizations and individuals in Curaçaoan society. On the other hand, African heritage and culture have historically suffered insidiously negative connotations on Curaçao. Within Curaçaoan society, there has been social pressure not to discuss the colonial past, slavery, or their impact on current Curaçaoan society. Instead, part of the community stresses the acceptance of an idealized version of Curaçaoan multicultural reality as a main reference for Curaçaoan identity. This tension is also present in Curaçaoan cultural policy,
intended to both revalue the African heritage and maintain social cohesion. While the Curaçaoan flexible identity and focus on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism allow movement between discourses and an escape from hegemonic structures inherited from the colonial past, this does not address the issue of Afro-Curaçaoan revaluation head-on.

Curaçaoan cultural policy aims to resolve this by constructing a predominantly Afro-Curaçaoan collective identity which is both creolized and multicultural. During the process leading up to Curaçao’s birth as a country, this discursive construction of identity was supported by a governmental policy document being implemented today by the governmental organization Fundashon Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou (Curaçaoan House of Culture). The Curaçaoan House of Culture promotes Curaçaoan art, culture, ‘tradition’ and folklore through cultural and educational activities and larger projects such as the ‘Year of Culture’ (2009) and the increasingly popular annual ‘Siman di Kultura’ (Week of Culture). (Allen 2009). During my fieldwork on the island, I observed that musical performance plays an important role in the implementation, as evidenced by governmental support of cultural and musical festivals and parades during the seú (harvest) season and the Carnival season. Musical and cultural performances are used as tools to construct and promote the Afro-Curaçaoan collective identity.

This approach seems to be gaining ground within the community. When I talked to Ella Bernabela, vocalist of the tambú group ‘Zoyoyo i su grupo,’ she said she could see a difference in the way people
treated Afro-Curaçaoan culture within the community compared to the past.

“Ami si ta mira un kambio, paso mas tambú ta wòrdu toka na radio[...] tambú ta wòrdu toka den misa, tambú den komedia. [...] No ta un kos ku nan ta wanta nos mas abou [...]. Aworakí e komunidat a kuminisa na asepta ku ta parti di nos kultura e [tambú] ta.”

“I do see a change, because more tambú is being played on the radio, tambú is being played in church in theatrical productions [...] It’s not like they are repressing us any longer [...] Now the community has started to accept that it’s part of our culture” (Ella Bernabela, Zoyoyo i su Grupo).

Ruben Rosalia of the traditional tambú group Trinchera also sees a growth in the number of tambú groups in the last few years. According to him:

“E hobennan ta atende ku tambú hopi awoki. [...] Si bo wak un seis añ pasa asinakí Kòrsou ta’tin seis grup’i tambú so, lagabisa. Awoki Kòrsou tin kasi sinkuenta grup’i tambú.”

“The youngsters are dealing with tambú now. [...] If you look at about six years ago, Curaçao had let’s say about six tambú groups. Now Curaçao has almost fifty tambú groups” (Ruben Rosalia).

Ruben tells me that the members of grupo Trinchera have given many workshops teaching people how to make tambú instruments.
“Kiko a pasa? Ta e hobennan a kuminsá atendé ku tambú. Nos di Trinchera, ami ta duna hopi workshòp over di tambú. Over di tra e instrumènt. […] Kemen trahando e instrumènt ba kuminsá atendá ku ne ya kaba. […] Karabela també ta un dje gruponan ku a yuda hopi n’e parti’ki. Grupo karabela. Nan a kue hopi hoben siñanan toka tambú.”

“What happened? The youngsters started to deal with tambú. We of Trinchera, me, I have given many workshops on tambú. On making the instrument […] Meaning, making the instrument, you’ve started dealing with it already […] Karabela is also one of the groups that helped a lot on this front. Grupo Karabela. They took many youngsters and taught them to play tambú” (Ruben Rosalia).

Ella also indicated that her band has been doing the same at schools as part of the Week of Culture organized by the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou. Ella finds that these events influence how people perceive tambú.

“Portá antes tabata tin problema na tambú. Anto fo’i dje dia ei nan a kue e kos generalisé ku […] tambú ta un kos kaminda tin problema. Ora bo duna e tipo di tayernanei, e muchanan ta sa e base, nan ta sa e informashon korekto pa nan no tambe bin ku e persepsion ku tambú ta asinei.”

“Maybe in the past there were problems at tambú performances. And from then on we took that and generalized that […] tambú was something, somewhere where there were problems. When you give these types of workshops, the kids get to know the foundation, they
Both Ella and Ruben thus seem to see a link between the change within the way Curaçaoans view Afro-Curaçaoan culture and specifically tambú and the workshops which are being organized. These workshops are often supported or organized by the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou in cooperation with cultural actors. I thus find that the most direct way to better understand the Curaçaoan identity promoted as the main identification on the island, and to assess the governmental cultural influence on collective identity construction on Curaçao, is to look at a key policy document on Curaçaoan culture, *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensha Mental* (Roadmap towards an Independence of the Mind), which was featured as a guiding document on the website of the Curaçaoan House of Culture during the period around the dissolution of the Dutch Antilles. This 118-page document was published in 2001, nine years before the ‘birth’ of Curaçao as a country, by the governmental organization Fundashon Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou, and is based on the importance of art and culture as vehicles for the construction of a nation and the education and overall development of its citizens (FK 2001).

As I indicated in the introduction to this dissertation, an important point about this document is its focus on cooperation with cultural actors. Contrary to previous cultural policies this document was formulated after extensive research within and cooperation with actors
within the cultural field. The document describes a process involving 12 conferences in the year 2000. These conferences were reportedly attended by a total of 325 people (a whopping 80 percent of the invitees) (FK 2001). The cooperation between the researchers and actors from the cultural field resulted in a restructuring of Curaçaoan cultural policy.

During my fieldwork I found that the views expressed in the document are still very influential in current Curaçaoan society, even after the restructuring of the Kingdom. Several respondents such as Ella and Ruben referred to the impact of workshops within the Week of Culture, organized by the Fundashon Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou.

According to the policy document there had been few other Dutch Antillean cultural policy documents before its publication. The first one, titled “Met eigen geest in eigen lichaam naar de onafhankelijkheid” was written by A. Salsbach and T. Hermelijn in 1981 and also focused on independence as an ultimate goal. The second one, with an insular focus, also stemmed from the 1980s and was written by V.B. Domacasse. According to the 2001 policy document, these earlier documents had in common that they were written without the input of actors within the cultural field (FK 2001). The third policy plan, which was never implemented, was written in 1995 by a committee led by Dr. M. Dijkhoff.

One of the conclusions of these summits was that “there was no coherent or balanced cultural policy on Curaçao” (FK 2001: 16). A second point concerned the previous governmental department charged with culture, the Servisio Asuntunan Kultural (Dienst Cultuur) which according to the researchers and cultural actors did not function properly. Many points of concern were mentioned amongst which patronage and evaluations which had indicated misuse of funds within the department. Furthermore the conclusion was that there was no research nor documentation and no transparency of policy (FK 2001:16). While the Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou cultural policy was available to the public in 2010, I was not able to access information on other cultural policy plans from that period of time. Nor was I able to personally interview the then-minister Rosalia. However, I did research the topics highlighted in the document as I will discuss in this chapter. Throughout my fieldwork I came to the concluded that this document was indeed strongly linked to the real-life collective identity constructions of my respondents. I therefore included it in my account of Curaçaoan collective discourses through music.
Furthermore, throughout my research within the Curaçaoan cultural scene, I found many traces of the personal influence of Dr. Rene Rosalia, author of the document, and his family, which indicated the importance of his views on and message concerning Curaçaoan identity.

Multiple respondents refer with much respect to the group Trinchera, with which Ruben Rosalia and his son Rendel Rosalia are linked, and to Fundashon Stripan, where Rene Rosalia worked as an anthropologist, publishing various written texts on Afro-Curaçaoan culture. My respondents also referred to Rene Rosalia in particular as intimately connected to and invested in the Curaçaoan cultural scene.

In a candid conversation, well-known tambulero Pincho Anita of Pincho i su Grupo told me that in 1991 he founded FUPI (Fundashon Pincho i su Grupo). He had organized many cultural events, including the old annual Batimentu di Huda (Hitting Judas) ceremony, a festival of seú songs, a tambú festival, and artisanal workshops with the children from the bario. Pincho’s foundation was founded with the help of Rene Rosalia.

“Mi tabata papia e tempu ei ku, aworakí ta nos minister di Kultura, doktor Rene Rosalia, anto e a, eigenlijk a traha e base, pa hasi'é un fundashon. E a traha tur e papel’ei pa mi por a kana na notaris k'eseinan anto pa mi tin mi statuuut.”

“I was talking at that time with –now he is our minister of culture– Doctor Rene Rosalia, and he actually made the basis for us to become a foundation. He arranged for all of the papers so I could go the notary and so I would have my statute” (Pincho Anita, Pincho i su Grupo).
Another respondent, Johnny Concepcion, an experienced musician and band leader of several aguinaldo/gaita bands, told me point-blank:

“Ami personalmente, fo’i ora ku má tende ku t’e (Rene Rosalia) ta minister, mi di: Eh eh! Nos lo tin un alivio, paso e sa nos dolonan. Kada bia ku ta’tin reunionnan e ta’ta sintá ei. Paso t’e tei. Anto e sa nos dolonan, kemen, e ta bai tra riba nan. Esei am’a pensa anto esei mi ta verwacht.”

“Me personally, from the moment I heard that he (Rene Rosalia) had become the minister, I said to myself, ‘Eh eh! We will have a respite, because he knows our pain.’ Every time when there was a meeting, he was there. Because he’s there. And he knows our pain, so he’ll be working on that. That’s what I thought and that’s what I expect” (Johnny Concepcion).

During my research the document thus seemed to not only represent a top-down vision on Curaçaoan culture and music. It was interrelated with Curaçaoan lived experiences of culture through the influence of former Minister of Culture Rene Rosalia, who was also a main player behind this policy document. Furthermore, Rosalia’s vision on Curaçaoan culture and specifically on the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture were echoed frequently during my talks with Curaçaoan musicians and people within the Curaçaoan cultural scene. This was particularly evident when it came to the issue of revaluation of an Afro-Curaçaoan culture. In his PhD dissertation Rosalia explains
that the history of tambú is one of repression by social and political actors (Rosalia 1997). The cultural policy document itself has a strong ideological tone, approaching culture and art as intrinsically linked to political and social issues. The independence sought in the document does not limit itself to the final goal of political independence, but argues for a transformation of the Curaçaoan as well. It points towards a connection between Curaçaoan political independence and the self-worth of Curaçaoan citizens and links this to the process of revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture and the goal of establishing a social ‘balance’ of equality.

The document has multiple layers. The political, emotional and intellectual aspects are linked in an appeal to reach an ‘independence of the mind’, in other words, a mental emancipation. On the one hand it functions as a manifesto, and on the other it offers a path to the goal it envisions as key for the Curaçaoan people: full mental and political emancipation. This approach is dual. The first element consists of the solidification of culture. The attempt to solidify Afro-Curaçaoan culture goes hand in hand with promoting its practice and value. This can be seen through the efforts to index Curaçaoan cultural initiatives and bands by the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou as well as through initiatives to support and initiate (Afro-)Curaçaoan cultural projects in an attempt to revalue this culture.47 Second, the policy document uses culture as a catalyst for development of self-reflection in all Curaçaoans. This is done by emphasizing the role of representation

47 As reported by Jenny of the tambú group Hisa buta in an interview in 2011, the Fundashon Kas di Kultura Kòrsou coordinates and assigns the performances of the various tambú groups.
and the malleability of culture, which is informed by an understanding of culture as a construct, as something that can be influenced and changed. These elements are combined to reach the ultimate goals of transformation and the desired ‘freedom of the mind’.

**Pinpointing the Problem**

The policy document, ‘Roadmap towards an Independence of the Mind’, gets its sense of urgency from the view of Curaçao as a community in crisis. It describes an imbalance when it comes to a number of social issues in Curaçaoan society. The imbalance expresses itself in a lack of social cohesion, hidden poverty and a lack of self-worth in Curaçaoans in general and the Afro-Curaçaoan in particular. This is addressed in the document’s focus on restoration:

“Mester rekuperá i koregí loke histórikamente a bai malu i no-balansá. Posishonnan tumá i aktividatnan entamá enkuanto di rasa, sekso i desendensia ètniko ku tabata robes i ku por a trese inkonbeniensia i desbalanse mester ser restourá. Den restourashon mester traha pa yega na logro di nivel profeshonal i asta ekselensia. Mester propagá i stimulá kreatividat, eksperimentashon i renobashon artístiko.”

“We need to recover and correct what has gone wrong and what has been historically imbalanced. Positions that have been taken and acts that have been performed, with regard to race, sex, ethnic identity, that were wrong and cause inconvenience and imbalance, must be restored. For this restoration we must work to gain a professional level and even excellence. We must propagate and stimulate creativity, experimentation and artistic renewal” (FK 2001: 20).
One of the specific issues in need of restoration is the Curaçaoan political status:


“Seen from a political point of view, Curaçao has a limited autonomy. That means that Curaçao [...] is still a colony. We must keep the discussion regarding sovereignty alive. The colonial situation is emphatically included in the restoration category” (FK 2001: 20).

This means a search for not just social, but also political change through this policy. In other words, the new Curaçaoan is envisioned in a politically independent country. While in reality the political independence of Curaçao was and still remains a controversial point, both in Curaçaoan politics and in Curaçaoan society in general, the idea of political independence is key to understanding further choices made in the plan.

To reach this independence, the plan presents the restoration of balance as a much-needed step. The goal is to reach the proposed restoration of balance through better management, that is, supported by policy based on actual research.

In this case, the document argues specifically for management and governmental interference in the way culture is transferred, even within the family circle. It supports this by stating that transference of culture from one generation to the other does not happen the way it
did in the past anymore because “its social context and content have changed.” “Su kontenido i konteksto sosial a kambia” (FK 2001: 7). Therefore, according to the document, a hands-on approach by the government is necessary. People should not continue to produce and transfer culture without guidance. Governmental guidance and development of the transfer of culture will lead to fortification of particularly the primary social groups of “family, neighborhood organizations, clubs, schools, work and so forth.” “famia, organisashonn nan di bario, klup, skol, trabou, etc.” (FK 2001: 7). In other words, the policy document argues for national identity micromanagement. By doing so, it represents Curaçaoan subjects as lacking true agency. The government must step in to help Curaçaoans develop and transform in order to improve their existence.

Social cohesion and poverty are presented as two of the main issues upon which to act. Regarding the first point, social cohesion, the document sketches an image of social fragmentation. It points out that different cultural groups live next to each other on the island with limited interaction. According to this policy document, a coherent cultural policy is a tool to achieve social cohesion. It also emphasizes the need to research ethnic identities within the Curaçaoan community specifically.

The policy plan also refers to poverty as a hidden, but real phenomenon in Curaçaoan society. This phenomenon has a great impact on the lives of people living on the island. The document seems quite critical of the previous governmental approach on the subject of poverty reduction, because it sustained inequality. Instead,
the focus should be on fostering and utilizing creativity and human capacity.
Not only does the policy plan propose government management of culture as necessary to economic prosperity and social cohesion, it also strongly argues that there is a general lack of self-worth inculcated in the mentality of the Curaçaoan people. This lack of self-worth is seen as conducive to an identity crisis, which can be traced back to colonial rule and slavery. Both the memory of Dutch colonization and current Dutch European influence and relations between the Netherlands and Curaçao are presented as causes of repression of Curaçaoans in general and Afro-Curaçaoans in particular. Repression has resulted in feelings of inferiority in black Curaçaoans as well as in racism and prejudice, still present in Curaçaoan society (Allen 2009). The discourse found in the policy document then argues that Curaçaoan political and cultural ties to the Netherlands are obstructions to Curaçaoan development and the achievement of a healthy Curaçaoan identity. Government management is needed to rectify the situation discussed above.
In conversations with several respondents this view on the history of tambú as a history of repression was echoed. Musician Rendel Rosalia:

“Nos por identifiká nos mes ku ne, paso tambú ta nos. Tambú ta nos lucha eigenlijk. Pasobra nos komo hende pretu tabata tin hopi problema pa wòrdu rekonosé, pa haña sierto puesto den sosiedat. […] Tambú ta’tin ku lastra p’e wòrdu rekonosé. Tambú ta'tin ku lastra p’e libera su mes. Tambú a wordu oprimi dor di religion. Dor di leinan. Hende tambe ta wòrdu oprimí akinan i eigenlijk mundialmente dor di religion i dor di leinan.”
We can identify with tambú, because tambú is us. Tambú is our fight, actually. Because we as black people, had a lot of trouble to be recognized, to achieve a certain position in society [...] Tambú had to crawl to be recognized. Tambú had to crawl to be liberated. Tambú was oppressed by religion. By laws. People are also being oppressed here and worldwide by religion and laws” (Rendel Rosalia).

Tambú vocalist Tela Sambo told me what she herself had learned during workshops:

“Antes tabatatin hopi bataya kontra tambú. [...] for di aña 1989 ku mi a kuminsa den e direkshon di kanta den e ritmiko te pa mi bai na tambú, e tabata, ya... hendenan ta keda bisabo e no ta nèchi! Tambú ta koi hende bruá k’eseinan, pero ami no a prekupá k’esei. Kemen ma purba a krese den... buska mi informashon nan. Tin bukinan ku Rene [Rosalia] a skibi, tin buki ku Shon Kolá... nos por a lesa... di nan bida... Tin diferente kos.”

“In the past there was a great resistance against tambú. [...] from the year 1989 in which I started in the direction of singing in the ritmiko to the point I went into tambú, it was... well, people kept telling you: that is not good! Tambú is for lesser people, (hende bruá) and so forth. But I didn’t trouble myself with that. I mean, I tried to grow in... finding information. There are books that Rene (Rosalia) has written, there are books that have Shon Kolá... We could read... about their life... There are a lot of things” (Tela Sambo).

The policy document presents the revaluation of the Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity as key to solving the situation of economic, social and racial imbalance. It emphatically proposes such a revaluation as a way to restore the balance in the community. This revaluation has
been implemented on Curaçao through the promotion of tambú, seú festivals and so forth. The revaluation of the Afro-Curaçaoan culture means subjecting it to a formalization process. As I discussed before, formalization also means change; a new mode of creolization. Following the course outlined in the policy plan, Afro-Curaçaoan culture is increasingly reconstructed and performed on stage. This means a turn towards the folklorization of Afro-Curaçaoan music, similar to the folklorization of village band music described by De Jong.

While Dutch policy focuses on migration and sees transnational practices in particular as the main threat to social cohesion and migrants’ allegiance to the Netherlands, in my view, the Curaçaoan policy argues that there are two main threats that impede Curaçaoans in reaching a ‘freedom of the mind’. The first threat is the colonial past and its consequences for the ‘mindset’ of Curaçaoans. The second is the current political position of the island. The ‘mindset’ of the postcolonial Curaçaoan subject is the main threat addressed in the document. It is formulated in accordance with the issues of perceiving oneself as the Other which I discussed extensively in previous chapters. In the policy document, double consciousness is formulated as a mindset that promotes an over-dependence on the Netherlands and a world view that centralizes the Dutch. This entails a colonial world view in which Curaçaoans still look towards the Netherlands as the center. In other words, the idea of freedom or independence of the mind constitutes a freedom from double consciousness, Otherness and the pervasiveness of the racialized regime of representation, all of which hinder Curaçaoan self-representation.
Although the policy plan intends to address the situation of repression of the Afro-Curaçaoan, it also recognizes the multicultural element on the island and tries to unify all Curaçaoans within one collective Curaçaoan identity. However, the document proves contradictory when correlating these two aims. Despite the fact that the document acknowledges multiculturalism on Curaçao and a Curaçaoan cosmopolitanism, it argues mostly for a view of an essentialist, dominant Afro-Curaçaoan culture, equated to ‘authentic’ Curaçaoan culture. In this sense, the document often overrules the multicultural aspect of Curaçaoan identity.

As I showed in the previous chapter, the *Hagenaar* identity functions in a similar manner. It focuses on a collective Dutch identification, accommodating Curaçaoan identity in a condensed version as part of the overall *Hagenaar* identity. It is precisely this Dutch identity which is rejected by the Curaçaoan identity constructed on the island. This means that transnational Curaçaoans based in the Netherlands and on Curaçao are targeted by competing cultural projects and identity management. While, as I discussed in the first chapter, transnationals construct transnational public spheres and flexible identities on different sides of the Atlantic, the Dutch and Curaçaoan national projects both aim to construct cohesive collective identities, albeit quite different ones.
Developing an Approach to Reach an Independence of the Mind

My discussion of the Curaçaoan policy document shows how it uses culture and art as tools for restoring balance, including poverty and social cohesion. This entails a broadening and democratization of Curaçaoans’ conceptions of culture and art. The policy document values art and culture as key elements in the development of Curaçaoan citizens and as appropriate tools in reaching the ultimate goal of political independence. The plan intends to address the citizen on three levels: matter, mind, and spirit or self-worth.

“All people living on Curaçao must be able to enjoy culture in an optimal manner and without obstacles. Those who want to participate actively and those who want to do this passively both have rights. […] [The subject] must be able to get to know and enjoy natural cultural heritage, expressions of other international cultures and so forth. She must have the opportunity to develop her creativity, to enjoy art and culture more, be it actively or passively” (FK 2001: 6).

The view on culture and art is a dynamic one, as the plan declares the necessity of education and broadening of the scope of what the common citizen understands to be art and culture. Creativity is to be developed through education. The document therefore argues for an
accumulation of cultural capital through formal education of Curaçaoan citizens, leading to a creative, better developed Curaçaoan and to independence of the mind. This means that the plan aims to encourage a ‘democratization’ of culture. This presupposes a current state in which ‘culture’ is something ‘belonging to’ a particular group; that is, a state of imbalance. Strategies to restore the balance and democratize culture are used in the conception of the document both through simplification of the language of the plan and by using the language of ‘the people.’

The cultural policy documents aims to ultimately transform Curaçaoans and achieve political as well as mental freedom. Within the document, the new Curaçaoan is envisioned as having the following characteristics (FK 2001: 15). He or she:

- tin rèspèt pa bida humano
- respetá tur persona di otro religion, otro desendensia, otro rasa i ku otro forma di bida i di biba for di esun di dje
- mira diversidat kultural komo un rikesa i un fuente pa forha union
- mira e importansia pa biba den harmonia ku naturalesa i medio ambiente
- tin apresio pa famia i relashonnan familiar
- adoptá e balornan rèspèt i koperashon komo balornan sentral den su bida familiar, den grupo, bario i organisashon
- tin rèspèt i apresio pa hende grandi komo e ser ku tin e sabiduria di pasado
- mira hende grandi komo esnan ku por kontribuí awendia ainda a base di nan eksperensia i konosementu pa yega na un mihó sosiedat
- tin rèspèt pa herensia kultural i natural, kerensia i kustumber
- tin un mente krítiko, analítiko i habrí
- ta konsiente di e identidat kurasoleño-karibense
- tin orguyo propio
The plan is thus focused on achieving the transformation of the old Curaçaoan, who is seen as characterized by a lack of self-worth and living in a dependent, imbalanced society, into a new, improved human being; a new Curaçaoan who lives in an independent country and has achieved mental emancipation. Such a transformation requires a search for liberation from the colonial discourses that caused Curaçaoans to perceive the Self as Other. It also requires a specific revaluation of those Afro-Curaçaoan people and cultural practices that were oppressed and repressed in the past.
Implementation

The policy plan discussed above proved to be pivotal in the nation-building efforts on the island. In the following years the Fundashon Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou became ever more visibly active in Curaçaoan society. Following the introduction of the policy plan discussed above, the Kas di Kultura di Kòrsou introduced the national ‘Siman di Kultura’ (Week of Culture). The first ‘Siman di Kultura’ was launched in 2004. In the following years, each annual ‘Week of Culture’ has been structured around a theme. In 2008 the week was officially dedicated to the Curaçaoan Olympic athlete Churandy Martina and featured the slogan ‘Lanta bo Kara i Biba bo Kultura’ (Lift your head high and live your culture). The governmental aim of fostering Curaçaoans’ pride in their culture was the most explicit that year. A flyer announcing the event described the goal of the ‘Week of Culture’: to have people engage with, think about and debate topics related to Curaçaoan culture (FK 2008). Curaçaoans were encouraged to experience their culture in order to regain a sense of self-confidence. Similar to the policy plan, this pamphlet also referred to a ‘crisis of identity of the Curaçaoan people’.

“Lanta bo kara i biba bo kultura. Ta ku nos kultura nos por ta orguyosó i ta ku nos kultura nos por rekobrá konfiansa. Ban traha duru pa eliminá e krisis di identidat. Ban traha pa siña konosé, aseptá i biba nos kultura.”

“Look up and experience your culture. It is with our culture that we can be proud and it is with our culture that we can regain confidence.
Let’s work hard to eliminate the crisis of identity. Let’s work to learn to know, accept and live our culture” (FK 2008).

This narrative evidences an image of Curacaoans as a people in the midst of an identity crisis, a people lacking self-confidence. Confidence is envisioned as something ‘lost’, suggesting the myth of a proud and confident people who have lost something essential to them. The constructed myth of a proud Curacaoan origin matches the view on Curacaoan society and on (Afro-)Curacaoan heritage expressed in the cultural policy plan. In the 2008 pamphlet, culture is again presented as a vital tool in recovering this self-confidence and solving this identity crisis. There is less of an emphasis on creativity and more on the propagation of a formalized Curacaoan culture. Yet, the described goal also contains an element of change and transformation. Culture is not only seen as a symbol of Curacaoan identity, but also proposed as a possible mode through which to change this identity. Indeed, it is seen as a way for Curacaoans to fully transform themselves and make their way out of the presumed identity crisis. The proposed way to achieve this change is through the practice of culture: Curacaoans must perform culture in everyday life. In this sense, the Curacaoan is taught that his or her way to salvation is through action: solving the identity crisis is in his or her own hands; salvation can only be achieved by taking action.

The project of constructing a Curacaoan collective identity and changing Curacaoans through culture described in the policy plan starts with an expansion of the scope of the Curacaoan vision on culture in general and art in particular. As I observed during my
fieldwork on Curaçao, the term culture is often used in public discourse to expressly refer to music and performance-related events. In the policy document, the concept is expanded to include both customs and a variety of artistic expressions. It describes its expanded view on culture as follows:

“The struggle of a human being to survive and to deal with others, nature and his environment in this struggle for survival.”

“E lucha di e ser humano pa mantené su mes (sobrebibensia) i e manera ku ta anda ku otro, ku naturalesa i ku su bisindario den e lucha di eksistensia akí” (FK 2001: 12).

Culture, it goes on to say, is formulated through certain specific “values, ideas, language, beliefs, norms and rules” that allow people to act and judge situations. Key in this understanding of culture is that the customs and values can be considered traditional, that is, they are transferred from one generation to the next.

The policy document understands art as a means of expressing human emotion and reflecting human experience. It is defined as “all means of expression where an individual or collective expresses creativity” using a variety of techniques. “Tur medio di ekspreshon kaminda un individuo òf un kolektividat ta ekspresá kreatividat” (FK 2001: 12).

In this sense, art is portrayed as intrinsically linked to culture. Although art is not the only thing that comprises culture, art and artists play a key role within culture:

“They (artists) help to mold life. They use art to visualize life. Through them all others express themselves” (FK 2001: 39).

People align themselves with artists and identify with the world views and emotions expressed by them, and they are influenced by “the way the artist expresses, reproduces, sees and interprets society and what happens in society.” “e manera ku e artista ta ekspresá, reprodusí, mira i interpretá sosiedat i loke ta pasa den sosiedat” (FK Ibid). The policy document also stresses the moral responsibility of both the artist towards society and of society towards the artist. Seeing that artists have such a big impact on the construction of society they must “be serious, have integrity, and aim to constantly reach a higher level.” “[E mester ta] serio i íntegro i buska semper pa yega na un nivel kada bes mas i mas haltu” (FK Ibid).

In response, society, through the government, must facilitate the means for the artist and art to flourish. Art is then understood in this context as a reflection of society, but simultaneously as forming a collective identity. The governmental plan also argues that art is more than mere entertainment:

- Arte ta ekspreshon i desaroyo di idea i pensamentu.
- Arte ta stimulá reflekshon riba sosiedat, su fenómenonan i riba e individuo.
- Arte ta stimulá análisis i rasonamentu.
- Arte ta lanta un sentido krítiko i hasi e individuo mòndu.
- Arte ta reflehá bida diario di sosiedat; e ta reprodusí sosiedat manera e ta, kambiá òf su kontrali.
- Arte ta un parti esensial den bida di e ser humano.

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<tr>
<th>Art involves the expression and development of ideas and thought</th>
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<td>Art stimulates the process of reflection on society and its phenomena and on the individual</td>
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<td>Art stimulates reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art elicits a critical attitude and empowers the individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art reflects daily life in society: it reproduces society the way it is, changed or its contrary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art is an essential part in the life of human beings</td>
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(FK 2001: 39)

Art is thus seen as a way to change the Curaçaoan citizen. By promoting art, the plan argues for a citizen who is constantly developing her thoughts, is self-reflective, and has good reasoning skills. A citizen with a critical attitude. Art as a reflection of society also means that many people may recognize themselves in art, as a result becoming fans or collectors. The artist is awarded an almost metaphysical role here as the harvester/(re)producer of the “deepest feelings” (FK Ibid, de Groot 2005).48

48 Translation from Papiamentu by author. In a sense the viewpoint described in the document is in accordance with Paul Gilroy’s assessment of an ontological essentialist discourse characterized by 'a brute Pan-Africanism'. This essentialist perspective is based on the presence of an, albeit difficult to locate, essence of 'black artistic and political sensibility' and highlights the role of black intellectuals and artists as leaders (Gilroy 1993). In his analysis of the role of polyphony in Edward Said’s writings Rokus de Groot also addresses Said’s view on music as having “the potential to serve as a powerful 'contrapuntal' voice in the texture of human expression” (De Groot...
Participation and creativity are then central in the creation of a newly transformed Curaçaoan citizen. By linking art and culture, the policy plan opens up the possibility of culture being more than the reproduction of the past through action. It offers the possibility of culture as changeable and as both a prompt towards and a representation of self-reflection and action.

By using a broad definition of culture and linking art and culture, the policy document targets the link between artistic production and social behavior. The way people behave, their struggle, their customs and values are linked to performance and art. This approach opens up the opportunity to look at musical performance, art and other cultural expressions as being reflective of society, but also forming tools through which society can be molded and influenced. Culture is described as dynamic, constantly changing through processes of acculturation.

“Hende mester haña edukashon p’e siña sa di e dialéktika akí [entre kulturanan].”

“People must be educated to know of this dialectic [between cultures]” (FK 2001: 38).

De Groot proposes to re-think the musical concept of counterpoint and in particular polyphony as a model for humanistic emancipation.
The people’s own agency in this process is emphasized. They are able to “plan and add adaptations and innovation to their culture.” “planifiká i trese adaptashon i inovashon den su kultura” (FK 2001: 39).

The definitions of culture and art in *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental* are key in better understanding the direction offered by this policy plan. The plan incorporates a direct concern with both our understanding of culture and art and with the way people position themselves within a society with regard to their context, interacting with this context. Both are seen as malleable. This malleability is linked to human agency. This means that the policy documents promotes the idea of people being able to affect their own destiny and change their position in the world. At the same time, it also promotes the idea of the need for government management to educate people and guide their transformation process.

The concepts of this policy document have since been implemented in Curaçaoan society. The last decade saw the rise of collective events, including musical performances in which the general public has the opportunity to enjoy and participate in cultural expressions. As an example, the festivities around the seú (harvest festival) have expanded, growing into a major event resembling those surrounding Carnival, which is extensively celebrated on the island. The harvest festivities now also include a seú parade with professionally made costumes, more orderly parading and more and amplified musical accompaniment. Moreover, the parade is now preceded by a seú musical festival where judges select the *Kantadó Mayó* (First Singer). People are invited to participate in these contests with their own
original compositions of respectively tumba or seú. Another practice advocated in the approach described in the policy plan is the annual ‘Siman di Kultura’ that I already mentioned.

In 2013 I had an informal conversation in the Netherlands with Anna⁴⁹, a Curaçaoan woman who had been very active in the island cultural scene, and who had been particularly involved in the Afro-centric cultural scene on Curaçao in the previous years. During this conversation I learned that in the early stages of the ‘Siman di Kultura’ project, an emphasis was placed on folklore. Anna indicated that this changed throughout the years. She described the 2011 ‘Siman di Kultura’ which linked the concepts of Past, Present and Future. According to this respondent the ‘Past, Present and Future’ theme served as a way to rethink the concept of culture. She said that people are starting to look at culture in a different manner. Anna explained that the general concept of culture, which many Curaçaoans used to interpret as folklore, had been extended to incorporate more than traditional music, dance, dress and customs. The change described by Anna indicates a shift from the first focus of the cultural policy, solidifying Curaçaoan culture and educating the people on Curaçaoan heritage, towards the second focus of the policy; the development of transformation and self-reflection.

The transformation described in the policy document is aimed at a change in attitude. The goal is for Curaçaoans to change their view of what they perceive to be true. As a consequence, they can change their own reality and their actions within this reality. Cultural performances

⁴⁹ Anna is an alias, the full name of the respondent is known to the author. The name has been changed for privacy reasons. Anna and I held an informal conversation in The Hague in April of 2013.
are used as a tool for this re-education of the Curaçaoan people and to achieve the change in attitude. This process is in accordance with the discussion of representation, knowledge and truth discussed in the previous chapter. Identity construction and discourse are interconnected through the production of ‘regimes of truth’. By presenting certain images, discourses are constructed which can establish themselves as truth. This means that people functioning within these regimes will also act with these discourses as frames of reference, repeating them and reinforcing them. We may recall how Hall has argued that knowledge “has the power to make itself true. […] Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices” (Hall 1997: 49).

Cultural performances as tools for education and transformation do not just revolve around repetition, but also focus on creativity. The policy document also places an emphasis on creativity and consciousness and on the importance of representation as a process of negotiation when dealing with culture. The ‘Siman di Kultura’ event of 2011 sent the message to Curaçaoans that culture and therefore identity is subject to its representation and that the represented culture and identity can be changed through creativity. During this event culture was also used to encourage creativity and reflection on identity and the citizen’s place in not only Curaçaoan society, but in the world as a whole. Anna recounted how during that year’s (2011) theme, ‘Past, Present and Future’, youngsters performed a fashion show in which they represented a creative version of fashions of the past, present and future. By linking these three temporalities, the
representational quality of what is seen as culture was underscored. In other words, the show emphasized the fact that culture can change over time. Past fashion is itself revealed as a reproduction and representation of materials and actions, such as traditional knotting of headscarves, which are no longer produced or used in daily life. In this sense the ‘Week of Culture’ representation of past fashion was similar to De Jong’s description of the formalized village band dress. The emphasis moves to the ‘mode of creolization’ or changeable quality of the representation of the past.

In this context, thinking about how to represent past fashion becomes a way for youngsters to reflect on how past and culture are in fact always subject to representation in one way or another. Folklorization of culture can therefore be seen as not merely an inauthentic representation of the past, but as becoming conscious of representation. In other words, a realization that the past is always a representation. It is a discourse which is constructed through negotiation. By dressing in creative renditions of historical fashion, Curaçaoan agency and its ability to represent its own past is underscored. This is also emphasized by the framing of this past as part of a creative fashion show. Not only the past, but culture and identity in general are presented as subject to change by the Curaçaoans' own acts. This representational quality was also present in the presentation of contemporary fashion during the ‘Week of Culture’ fashion show. The presentation of today’s fashion became, as an extension of the way in which past fashion was (re)presented, more of a whimsical view on how Curaçaoans dress and act in current society. The relativistic view on the past and present helped

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youngsters to conceive of possible fashions for the future. If the past and present are representations and subject to negotiation, the future may also be negotiable and might thus be influenced by the participants.

Anna’s description of the future fashion part of the show showed an emphasis on creativity and reflection. In this part of the show, the youngsters walked in with their pants down to their knees, their underwear showing. At that moment, their representation of the future became a comment on Curacaoan society. Urban youth culture in which youngsters wear low-hanging jeans is often linked to hip hop and accompanying notions of loss of morality and even criminality. By exaggerating this fashion and pushing their pants down to their knees and exposing their underwear, the youngsters posed the question: What is next? A total lack of morality? They questioned the way things were going in Curacaoan society. The youngsters’ gag shows a comical view of a future in which values are being lost. It was not merely presented in a moralizing manner, but performed with a sense of humor, which also served to engage Anna, who laughed as she told the story. The presentation of the future and its preoccupation with the loss of dignity and norms and values can be understood as a reflection of Curacaoan cultural policy’s involvement with self-worth and the construction of a critical Curacaoan. Art and culture are united in a way that triggers thought and opens up the possibility for self-reflection, the development of self-awareness and change. This happens by making the youngsters aware of the fact that their surroundings are discursively constructed. By allowing them to present their own representations of the Past, Present and Future, they
are made aware of the fact that they themselves are able to construct and adapt these discourses. This awareness of the constructed reality and of their own role in constructing it can lead to empowerment. Not only does this event illuminate the directive manner in which cultural events are used by Curaçaoan government, but also the many possibilities that can arise during such events. The ‘Week of Culture’ is but one of the many ways in which culture in general, and music in particular is engaged as a governmental tool for Curaçaoan nation building. This is done in a dual move that incorporates first, objectification of Curaçaoan culture and education on Afro-Curaçaoan culture and second, the promotion of self-reflection and change through culture. Creativity is key in this second part of the process. Creativity is promoted by the organization of events during the seú and Carnival festivals, which are more than mere representations of the past as they involve the development of costumes, the writing of music and so forth. Two of my respondents, Jenny Daal and Jessica Damon, both very active within the Carnival ‘scene,’ confirmed this. Both emphasized the role of creativity and education, in particular in the case of Curaçaoan carnival. These events are combined with competitions inviting Curaçaoans to use their creativity to rethink relevant themes and positive messages they want to share with others, and translate those themes into their own interpretation. During the events these representations are referred to as ‘Fantasia di...’ meaning ‘Fantasy’ or ‘Representation’ of a specific theme or topic. The case of the fashion show discussed above reveals how the goals formulated in the document are pursued through culture and art. These
performances are indeed geared towards the fulfillment of the characteristics ascribed to art in the policy document. That is, “art stimulates the process of reflection on society, its phenomena and on the individual,” “Art reflects daily life in society: it reproduces society the way it is, changed or the contrary” and so forth, in order to reach a new Curaçaoman who has amongst other qualities “a critical, analytical, open mind,” “self-pride” and “confidence in his or herself, her country and future” (FK 2001: 15, 39). Clearly, art is used as a way to operationalize and construct the discourse on Curaçaoman identity formulated within the policy document.

In a conversation with two respondents, Orlando Clemencia and Erwin Prudencia, they recounted a Curaçaoman past in which cultural actors used music to promote societal change and human development. Orlando in particular reminisced about how he himself had used music to try to prompt change in Curaçaoman society and in people’s way of thinking in the nineteen-sixties. Around 196850 he was studying to become a teacher. Back then he was also part of the Grupo Kanto i Protesta (Group Song and Protest). They had written their own songs in various genres, from boleros to dansa and ballads. Orlando added:

“Duele pa bisa ku tur tur e piesanan nan palabranan ta valido ahinda. Pasombra e kambionan ku ta’tin... no ta'tin kambio grandi ku bo ta bisa ku […]
Kemen tur e protestanan ku nos tatin antes mi ta kere ku nan tei

50 On the 30th of May in 1969 the island was rocked by an uprising against Dutch domination and social and race inequality in Curaçaoan society. What had started as a strike by workers at the Shell oil refinery, eventually turned into riots. Part of Willemstad was looted and burned.
“It is a pity to have to say that all these songs, their lyrics are still valid. Because the changes there have been... there hasn’t been a big change […] Meaning, all the protests we had in the past, I believe they are still here” (Orlando Clemencia).

Then he sang:

“Uni pa lucha.
Rumannan uni pa lucha pa drecha komunidat.
Rumannan ta bo ku ta wòrdu huzá i malhuzá. Abo ku ta blanku, pretu i hel.
Ban, ban ban krea un nashon ku pas i libertat.”

“Come together to fight.
Brothers and sisters, let’s get together to better the community.
Brothers and sisters, you are the ones who are being used and abused.
You who are white, black and yellow.
Come, come, come let’s create a nation of peace and liberty” (Orlando Clemencia).

Triggered by this perspective, I saw that the use of music as a means of transformation has not remained restricted to the nineteen-sixties. Starting in the first decade of the 2000s, Curaçao had a new festival centering on the construction of Curaçaoan identity. Through the case of this festival, the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ song festival, I will now explore the use of musical performances as tools for identity construction. This annual festival prompts vocalists and songwriters to rethink Curaçaoan heritage and add to Curaçaoan culture. They are
invited to develop new views on Curaçaoan heritage by writing new songs to add to this heritage. These projects allow culture to move from being a symbol, a mere reflection of society, to becoming a means of transformation, instigating praxis, introspection and new consciousness. It is an extremely popular event and the winning composition can be heard over and over in the media on the island. The winning song is also tied to the national Day of the Flag and the Week of Culture. All of this makes the case of this particular song festival of great interest to better understand the discourses of Curaçaoan identity promoted in the public sphere in this new century.

**The Festival ‘A Song for Curaçao’**

During my fieldwork on Curaçao I noticed the popularity and extensive use of the song ‘Un bon yu di tera’ (A Good Child of the Country). Although I was on the island months after the *Dia Di Himno i Bandera*, the day on which Curaçaoans annually celebrate national identity through the symbols of the national anthem and flag, the song could still be heard on the radio and the clip was regularly shown on TV. The song turned out to have been the winner of that year’s ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ song festival.51 Through informal talks

51 In the last few years, after completing the fieldwork period of this research, I came across still more attempts at nation-building. One of these projects is the extensive television campaign on the island promoting the concept of a ‘Bon yu di Kòrsou’ (Good Curaçaoan). This campaign as well as other, smaller initiatives, seemed geared towards a more inclusive, multicultural, image of Curaçao incorporating a number of ethnic groups on the island. A first assessment indicates that these nation-building efforts may be taking root. The words of Harlianne Sylvanie, winner of the 2015 Un Kanto Pa Kòrsou musical festival, certainly seem to convey this. After
with respondents and through the media I was able to gather information about the history of this festival.

‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ is the latest in the tradition of music festivals and events organized both by citizens and government organizations with the purpose of preserving Curaçaoan cultural heritage and promoting national collective identity. The initial idea for this festival came from the committee in charge of organizing the annual Curaçaoan national Day of the Flag which is held every year on July 2nd. AMAK (the Association for Curaçaoan Artists and Musicians), the Institute for Musical Education (Instituto pa Formashon Musikal) and the Curaçaoan government decided to take up the suggestion (Peters 2008). In 2008 the government (Dienst voor Culturele Zaken en Onderwijs) and the Institute for Musical Education organized the first installment of this national song festival. Experienced as well as up-and-coming songwriters are invited to participate. The contending songs are expected to express love and appreciation for Curaçao and the singers are accompanied by the Curaçaoan National Orchestra. The winning composition is played extensively on and around the Day of the Flag (Glamurfmb 2011). The main aim of this festival is not only to preserve but also to expand Curaçaoan cultural heritage (Peters 2008). During a short online interview I held in 2012 with Julia, a respondent who had also been a contestant during the 2011 ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival, she emphasized the importance of creativity and winning, Sylvanie proclaimed: “My song was dedicated especially to us good Curaçaoans. Because we know that we are bon yu’i Kòrsou”
change as key elements of the festival.\textsuperscript{52} She stressed the importance of developing new music, as

\begin{quote}
“nos no por keda kanta mesun kantikanan di Rudy Plaate ketu bai.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
“we can’t keep singing the same Rudy Plaate songs forever” (Julia 2012).
\end{quote}

There is thus an emphasis on heritage as something that does not only exist in the past, but can be constructed and expanded upon. This shows a certain flexibility on the matter of cultural heritage and identity. Understanding cultural heritage, and as an extension, cultural identity, as flexible also means a movement from the phase of the solidification of Curaçaoan identity and the education of Curaçaoans with regard to folklore towards the inclusion of creativity and the incitement of self-reflection. These two elements are combined in ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’. The emphasis on national heritage is evident through the annual act of dedicating the festival to a Curaçaoan personality, a musician or vocalist considered important to Curaçaoan cultural heritage. The first festival was dedicated to the late George Willems, best known on Curaçao for his renditions of the ballads ‘Chuchubi ta kanta’ and ‘Atardi’ (Peters 2008). The following

\textsuperscript{52} Julia is an alias, the full name of the respondent is known to the author. The name has been changed for privacy reasons. Julia and I held an online interview on July 29\textsuperscript{th} 2012.
festivals were dedicated to other artists such as Greta Martha in 2011 and Ced Ride in 2012. This honoring of the past is combined with looking forward and finding new additions to the national heritage. This emphasizes the thought of culture and collective identity as something subject to change and development. The fact that this change comes through a song festival open to the public underscores the idea that Curaçaoans themselves can construct and change their culture and identity.

In 2008, in a lyrical account of the first ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ event in a local newspaper, Curaçaoan journalist May Peters referred to the emphasis the festival puts on national identity and heritage. She describes the remarkable expressions of love and appreciation for Curaçao that could be heard and seen during the first ‘Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival. These driving components of the festival – national heritage, love and appreciation for Curaçao – were evident in that year’s theme, patriotism and love for Curaçao:

| “de liefde voor het Papiaments, voor Curaçao, voor onze vlag en onze broeders, de liefde voor de flora en fauna. Kijk, en dan worden natuurlijk harten geraakt!” |
| “the love for Papiamentu, for Curaçao, for our flag and our brothers, the love for the flora and fauna. See, that surely touches our hearts!” (Peters 2008: 5). |

Not just the festival’s theme encouraged feelings of patriotism and national pride and love. The format also tapped into nationalistic
feelings, by encouraging certain lyrics and through the setting and design of the event itself. Referring to the genres people were expected to perform, Peters says:

“Men mocht uit de Curaçaose schatkist van ritmes delven: de wals, de mazurka, de danza, de sehú, salsa antiana, de bolero/ balada en de tumba” (Peters 2008: 5).

“People were allowed to dig into the treasure box of Curaçaoan rhythms: the waltz, the mazurka, the Danza, the seú, Antillean Salsa, the Bolero/Balada and the tumba” (Peters 2008: 5).

During the following years the winning compositions were all ballads, with the exception of 2010, which I will go into shortly. This means that while the past and folklore are used as important guidelines, there is room for change and different interpretations of national heritage. A closer look at the five years of the festival’s existence shows that it grew from a relatively small affair to a much bigger and more commercial event. This is exemplary of the growth spurt in the Curaçaoan cultural scene in general. A comparison of the winning compositions and their performance, which have come to include the filming and distribution of accompanying video clips, shows a change in the depth of the lyrics and compositions of the winning songs. However, the two elements are still visible: a solidified Curaçaoan culture, or folklore, and the encouragement of creative new views on culture and identity.

The first winner in 2008 was Jules Andrews with his soft ballad titled “I’m a Curaçaoan!” (Yu’i Kòrsou mi ta!). The text describes
Curaçaoan scenes and the singer’s love for his island, the flag, Curaçaoan flora and fauna, the different music genres and so forth. The song addresses the island Kòrsou as a person to whom the vocalist is declaring his love and devotion. Meanwhile the musical genre conveys a melancholy feeling. During the chorus emotions were cranked up with a “Yu’i Kòrsou mi ta!” (I’m a Curaçaoan!) sung by the backing vocals. This was supplemented by the singer’s assertion, in a call and response pattern, that he truly is a Yu di Kòrsou. The 2009 winner was Charaima Perozo with her performance of ‘Love as a Destination’ (‘Amor komo destino’), a ballad that spoke of the beauty and great value of the island (TeleCuraçao multimedia 2009). The song was not merely an account of the island’s characteristics and positive points, but also described Curaçaoan struggles. Though classifiable as a ballad and including a saxophone sound, the music differs from the first winner, incorporating acoustic sounds and subtle Bolero-like influences such as percussion and flute.

In 2010 the festival had moved on to a larger stage, an outside location: Bragapoti mei mei. The orchestra accompanying the vocalists was larger and had even more of a semi-acoustic feel. The festival was held a few months before 10-10-10, the day of Curaçao’s birth as a country. The winning composition of that year was sung by a trio of well-known Curaçaoan artists: Reinier Lijfrock, Liesje Lispier, and Igmar La Reine. Together they performed the song ‘Un bon yu di tera’ (A Good Child of the Land). The show element was amped up dramatically this year. The winning three were decked out in the colors of the Curaçaoan flag: Lijfrock in blue, Lispier in yellow, and La Reine in white. They sang specific parts of the song together,
their polyphony adding to the drama and weight of these parts. In contrast to the first winner of the festival in 2008, who professed his individual Curaçaoanness by singing that he was one “Yu di Kòrsou,” the 2010 winners emphasized collectivity. It is necessary to see the importance of such elements as the flag and collectivity in the context of that year’s imminent political birth of Curaçao as a country. In this sense, the winning song not only reflected what was happening in Curaçaoan society at the time, but also reflected on the country’s future. This framework, in conjunction with the text and music, had an educational quality. The song allowed for the possibility of a teaching moment.

The last two winners were Eldridson Eugenia in 2011 with the ballad ‘Patriotismo di un pueblo’ (Patriotism of a People) and Veanira Reed (2012) with her ballad ‘Un Kòrsou bibu’ (A Living Curaçao), composed by Eugenia. While Reed’s professionally performed ballad had a gospel-like quality, Eugenia’s winning composition as well as his attire in 2011 were recognizably influenced by Mexican ballads, with a prominent brass section and his dress resembling suits worn by Mexican pop star Juan Gabriel (aa136hh, TeleCuraçao Multimedia 2012). Of the two, Eugenia’s performance stands out because of the high level of interaction with the audience. Eugenia performs the song with intensity, seen in his concentrated face, but also heard through the use of a raspier, deeper voice at specific times during the song. The lyrics to his song reveal a high level of self-reflection with regard to Curaçaoans and the process of gaining awareness and collective identity.
“The nobility of a people is the strength for a better tomorrow. Our heritage and ‘bastion’ is a gift from heaven, which we are harvesting today. Culture in general is a chronicle of life. A mirror of our society. Philosophy of life and social relations have made our ‘Children of the Country’ stronger in order to persevere!” (aa136hh).

This quote shows how the governmental attempts to encourage self-reflection through culture have paid off. The song not only appeals to the mind through the lyrics, but also elicits emotion through musical techniques. The lyrics are brought to a crescendo, the chorus is sung with much emotion, and the intensity is no longer held back. In fact it is driven to an explosion through the use of the brass section. Increasingly louder polyphonic female backing vocals reminiscent of Gospel choir effects accompany Eugenia’s voice as he sings:

“Lanta ariba Kòrsou! Awe ta awe. ‘N’ tin mañan! Kant’e himno ku amor. E bander’ei di nos e ta. Laga patriotismo, kor e den nos venanan i halsa bo bandera, kanta bo bandera pasó yu’i Kòrsou nos ta” (a136hh).

The refrain is short and a direct appeal both to patriotism and self-reflection. In fact, the singer starts the refrain by prodding Curaçaoans to ‘wake up’. “(Get/)Wake up, Kòrsou.” (aa136hh). “Kòrsou” is drawn out and given more impulse by a multilayer of voices. “Today
is today. There is no tomorrow! Sing the anthem with love.” (aa136hh). At “love,” again the five backing vocalists join in. “That flag, it’s ours. Let patriotism flow through our veins and hold your flag up, carry your flag because we are yu’i Kòrsou” (aa136hh).

The song finishes with a repeated heartfelt appeal by the singer, again heavily backed by female voices, singing “We are ‘yu’i Kòrsou’! Wake up (Get up) Kòrsou.” The phrase *Lanta ariba* means both to physically stand up and to wake up from sleep. The appeal to physically move and to rise from a metaphorical slumber is underscored by the intensity of the music that elicits both physical movement such as dancing/swaying and an emotional response by the audience. The backing vocalists also gestured towards the audience to stand up. Many in the audience obliged. The audience was able to dance and sing and through these repetitive actions, to co-construct the new Curaçaoan heritage in a performative act. But they were also included in a more direct manner in the construction of their heritage.

There have clearly been changes during the five years of ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou.’ The increase in the level of professionalism, the inclusion of commerce and of the audience are just a few. In the five years of its existence the festival has developed an interactive element, also linked to commerce. People are now able to vote via text message for their favorite composition. This gives the festival a more inclusive, interactive feel. The winning compositions reveal an increasing requirement for a message of change and a need to educate. They depict Curaçao as a beautiful island and want to make Curaçaoans aware of this beauty. The songs try to engage Curaçaoans on a
Music’s link to education is reflected in this year’s featuring of the vocalist Ced Ride, to whom the 2012 festival was dedicated. At the news of this dedication, which was brought to him as a surprise by a delegation of officials to his home, Ride seemed flustered. In the following interview, the singer stressed the importance of human agency and the expansion of the perception of Curaçaoan culture and music.

“Kiko nos ta hasi k’e konan ku nos… E rikesa, e potensia ku nos kada un a nase ku ne? Kiko nos ta hasi ku ne? […] Gewoon, eksistí? No! Nos mester biba. Nos, n’ mester eksistí, ruman […] Laga nos stòp k’e mentalidat chiki, laga nos habri nos prospekto musikal, nos prospekto di literatura.”

“What do we do with the richness, the potential we are born with? What do we do with it? Just exist? No! We need to live. We don’t have to exist, brother […] Let’s stop with this small mentality, let’s open up our musical prospect, our literary prospect” (Vos 2012).

Ride addresses the perceived shortcomings of Curaçaoans and argues for a broader way of thinking and experiencing culture in particular and the world in general. The Curaçaoan heritage is, according to him, broader than Curaçaoans give it credit for. In his view, limiting the perception of culture blocks one’s own potential for understanding and development. Ride represents the solidified heritage. This is evident during the Ced Ride TV special, when the government official
in charge of culture and sports comes in to thank the singer for accepting the honor. She does this by saying:

“Danki pa asepta nos petishon. Pasó nos ta hopi orguyoso di por a dediká e festival akí na un baluarte, ku pa medio di su arte a sa di eduká i alegrá nos pueblo di Kòrsou.”

“Thank you for accepting our petition. We are very proud to be able to dedicate this festival to a ‘bastion’ who through his art has been able to educate and bring cheer to our Curaçaoan people” (Vos 2012).

The government official acknowledges the value of Ride’s performances and his music as ways to cheer but also to educate the public.

From my observations and analysis of the clips of the winning performances, a pattern becomes clear. The music festival is focused on the propagation of expressions of love for Curaçao and on safeguarding Curaçaoan cultural heritage. These goals are linked to the musical performances. Since its conception, the festival has chosen to approach art and music not only as ways to reflect upon the Curaçaoan past, but also to ‘bring cheer and educate’ the Curaçaoan people.

Within interviews with different respondents the topic of education through music and the responsibility of performers to educate their audience came to the forefront:

“Grupo Power semper nos tin nos lema: Hende nèchi ta topa hende
nèchi […] Pa e hende mira ku no mester tin e balianan bulgar ku tin awo' ki.”

“Grupo Power has always had a motto: Nice people meet nice people […] So people see you don’t have to have those vulgar dances they have nowadays” (Members of Grupo Power).

The respondents often discussed their performance not only as a means to entertain and please the audience. They also painted the picture of an accompanying responsibility to educate and hold up certain moral values, most notably when it comes to sexuality and dance, but also violence.

“Nos mester sa, ku komo artista abo t'esun ku ta eduká e fanátiko. […] Kemen di ta dependé di abo komo grupo kon bo ta trese bo músika dilanti anto kon bo ke pa bo fanátiko ta. [E hobennan] ta hopi kreativo. Ta pesei ora ku nan ke uza nan kreatividat abo tin ku guianan si. Anto si abo mes ta push’è riba e kaminda ku e ta bai sin dun’è gia, e ta sali un tiki for di man.”

“We have to know that as an artist you are the one who educates the fan. […] Meaning, it depends on you as a group how you represent your music and how you want your fan to be. [The youngsters] are very creative. That is why when they want to use their creativity you have to guide them. And if you push him in the direction he’s going without guiding him, he will get out of control” (Ella Bernabela Zoyoyo i su Grupo).
Rendel Rosalia sees and denounces the lack of moral content especially within ritmo kombiná. He considers this genre often superficial and morally reprehensible. As a contrast he gives several examples of older tambú songs where denouncement or calling out of rivals was done in a creative or subtle manner.\(^5^3\) Rendel emphasizes that many songs nowadays are very direct and sometimes even vulgar. In his opinion, this results in an impoverishment of the language, and, he implies, an impoverishment of the mind of the people.

In an interview with Mistica Stefania, arguably the grand dame of tambú of the last few decades, she also stressed the performer’s responsibility to educate:

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“Nos tambú ta nos kultura, anto nos kultura ta bai skol tur kaminda. Anto ora k’e bai skol, mi ta haña ku e letranan dje piesa mester ta un tiki nèches. Kemen p’ora ku un mucha kant’e piesa, ta un piesa, ku e por kante.”
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“Our tambú is our culture, and our culture goes to school everywhere. And when it goes to school, I find that the lyrics of the song need to be a little decent. I mean so when a child sings the song, it is a song he or she can sing” (Mistica Stefania, Zoyoyo i su Grupo/ MIO).
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Similar to Rendel, she finds the lyrics to be very important:

\(^5^3\) One example was a tambú song written by Tula, the vocalist and songwriter of a popular youngsters’ group, Limania. In this song, titled Shon Polis, Tula in a roundabout manner describes a situation of domestic violence and airs a rival’s dirty laundry by calling him out on his marriage without saying his name. Tula sings, “You stroked her face… [Response] She was left hurting! [...] You stroked her back… [Response] She was left hurting!” “B’a pasa man na su kara, [Response] Doló a keda [...] B’a pasa man na su lomba [Response:] Doló a keda” (Aworsino 2008).
“Ami ta focus masha hopi riba e kantamentu di tambú. Paso tin hende ta referí tambú kome kos vulgar [...] pero tambú ta un kos masha nèchi. Nos kultura ta masha nèchi, pero dependé kon bo mes ta tresé dilanti tambe.”

“I focus a lot on singing the tambú. Because some refer to tambú as something vulgar […] but tambú is something very nice/decent. Our culture is very nice/decent, but it depends how you represent it too” (Mistica Stefania, Zoyoyo i su Grupo/ MIO).

She also referred to a responsibility concerning the way youngsters danced, describing a sexual way the tambú is danced nowadays:

“Tambú bo tin ku bali’è riba bo kurpa […] e hende hómber tambe riba su kurpa. Bo por drei un ratu, pero bira duna kara mesora. […] Ami, ku un hende bin balia un balia ku mi no ta gusta, mi ta par’e tambú […] Ami si ta par’è. Ma yega di hasi’è varios kaminda. Te nan a laga sa ku nos ta chapo. […] Mi di ku nan: no, ami ta hende responsabel. Pasobra ora ku e muchanai ta balia asin’ei anto mi tin ñetu… anto ami mes n’ po kanta… (pa)so ta fígurami ku ta mi ñetunan ta balia asin’ei. I mi di ku nan no, esei ami no ta hasi’è.”

“Tambú you need to dance on your own/separate […] the man also on his own/ separate. You can turn for a second, but you give face immediately […] Me, if someone comes to dance and I don’t like it, I’ll stop the tambú […] I do stop it. I have done it at various places. They even said I was old-fashioned […] I told them, no, I’m a responsible person. Because when those kids dance like that, and I have grandchildren… and I can’t sing… Because I imagine that it’s my grandchildren dancing like that. And I told them no, that I will not do” (Mistica Stefania, Zoyoyo i su Grupo/ MIO).
However, this standpoint is not fully accepted within the field. This understanding of the role and responsibility of the artist by performers such as Ella and Rendel and Mistica stands in contrast to the take of musicians whose music is more often and consistently directed towards the young. Despite his attention to lyrics, Tula of Limania does not fully accept this role of moral police. He considers his main responsibility to be to give the crowd what they want. This contrasting view was also expressed in an even more direct manner by Axel Pikero of the ritmo kombiná group Dreams. He was very clear during our conversation, explaining that his focus is on consciously and constantly seeking the margins and trying to see how far he can go. Musician Gibi Doran, the creator of the ritmo kombiná, conversely seemed more nuanced. He oscillated between on the one hand taking this responsibility and on the other, focusing on achieving or maintaining popularity without regard to any educational role. When we discussed the problems with violence and crime that often arose with Curaçaoans during ritmo kombiná performances in the Netherlands, he commented that he truly couldn’t comprehend people's need to act out through violence. However, while condemning this behavior, he still did not consider himself responsible for his audience.

“Edukashon, bo tin ku hañ’é na kas.”

“Education, you must get it at home” (Gibi Doran, GIO).
Unlike Rendel, Doran did not venture into a possible link between performances and the behavior of the audience. Instead, he referenced a musician from the band Happy Peanuts. In Doran’s opinion the Happy Peanuts musician had commented very eloquently on this point during a workshop on the genre ritmo kombiná:

“E di: tende shonnan, tur tempu ta’tin tur tipo di letra, OK? Alkontrario, ritmo kombiná su letra ta bunita mes awoki. […] Tur hende a balia. Ta ki a pasa awo? Ta mas delikado nos a bira?

[…]
Bo mester tene kuenta komo kompositor pa bo no propaga bulgaridat. […] Pero si bo mester keda komersial, si. Dun’è hende loke e ta gusta si. Bo no mester bira mas santu ku papa di Roma tampoko. […] T’ami so tin ku duna mensahe tur dia? Anto e or’ei? Ki bo ta kome?”

“He said: listen, people, there have always been all kinds of lyrics, OK? The lyrics of ritmo kombiná are beautiful nowadays. […] Everybody danced. What happened now? Did we become more delicate?”

[…]
“You have to take care as a composer not to propagate vulgarity. […] But you have to stay commercially viable. Give the people what they like. You don’t need to be holier than the pope either. […] Am I the only one that has to give a message every day, and then? What do you eat?” (Gibi Doran, GIO).

The two discourses of national identity I discuss in this chapter are promoted by people adhering to a demagogic notion of artists’ moral
responsibility which is in contrast to that of people with a pragmatic point of view such as Doran’s or a more commercial one such as Pikero’s. Ced Ride himself seems aware of the importance of culture and music in the education of Curaçaoans. He also makes a case for change and aims to incite Curaçaoan self-reflection. In his speech he appeals to Curaçaoan musicians to broaden the scope of their understanding of culture and of the Curaçaoan heritage:

“Nos komo músiiko, nos komo artista ta akinan komo lidernan di intelligentsia. Nos mester ban habri e scope di nos mes akí mas tantu. Mi ta hasi un apelashon seka bosnan, pa nos habri e scope di nos músiika mas tantu. Laga nos no keda mara den un solo ritmo. […] Pasobra nos pueblo konose asina tantu bariashon di músiika. […] Habri e kampo di seú mas tantu. Seú no mester ta tempu di seú so. Tumba no mester ta tempu di tumba so. […] Nos ta un ser komponé di kabes, pechu, dos man, dos pia, dos wowo… mira kuantu kos. Nos bida tambe ta mesun riku. Or abo ta kome, purba hinka mas koló den bo kuminda.”

“We as musicians, we as artists, we are here as leaders of the intelligentsia. We need to broaden our own scope. I appeal to you all to broaden the scope of our music. Let’s not remain tied to one rhythm. [...] Because our people know so many variations of music. [...] we should open up the seú field more. Seú doesn’t need to be played only during the seú season. Tumba doesn’t have to be performed during tumba season. [...] We are beings composed of a head, chest, two hands, two feet, eyes... look at that, so many components. Our lives are as rich. When you eat, try to add more color to your food (plate)” (Vos 2012).

Ced Ride thus encourages a creative view on culture in tune with the everyday life interpretation of Curaçaoan culture as flexible and
multicultural. Ride’s educational message revolves around the ‘opening’ of restricted views on both music and heritage. The specific understanding of art and culture shared through the platform of ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ is broad, including many influences and many ways of using the current Curaçaoan genres. In various interviews Ride refers to the richness in sound of Papiamentu, which he equates to the richness in Curaçaoan music in general. “It can’t be put in a cupboard. It can’t. Our rhythm (music), our language is like that: open,” he says. “No por hink’é den un kashi... No por. Nos ritmo, nos idioma t’asina: habrî” (Vos 2012b).

The diversity he refers to shows through the more and less subtle diverse cultural influences in the winning compositions of the past five years, such as Bolero, Mexican pop, and Gospel. ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ thus reflects the everyday interpretation of Curaçaoan culture as multicultural and flexible. The festival also includes the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan elements and the solidification of Curaçaoan culture through the guidelines for participants. These guidelines state that Curaçaoan genres such as tumba, seú and so forth are preferred. Past winning songs such as ‘Patriotismo di un pueblo’ by Eugenia have also shown a focus on self-reflection in the lyrics, while various winners have shown creativity in using elements of different genres into their songs.

These three elements –the flexible Curaçaoan identity, revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan elements, and the solidification and formalization of Curaçaoan culture– were integrated during the year of Curaçao’s birth as a country (2010), when the trio Lispier, Lijfrock and La Reine won the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival with a composition that stands out
from the other winners for its bold changes between genres. While influences from other genres could be detected in the winning ballads in previous years, in 2010 the traditional seú genre was integral to the ballad. Moreover, the ballad part had a typical ritmo kombiná sound. After the ballad part of the song, sung by each of the lead vocalists individually, the chorus followed. This is traditionally the part sung by multiple voices, that is, it is the part expected to be more accessible to the people and easy to sing along to. The musical genre here switched from soft ritmo kombiná or ballad to seú.

Seú is considered a traditional Curaçaoan genre. As I mentioned earlier, this genre has been promoted by the Curaçaoan government through a series of yearly seú activities, including the festival in which the best seú singer is chosen to become the Kantadó Mayó (First Singer). This First Singer guides the seú parade through the street as people wapa. This is a dance/walk which entails moving in a row, arms linked or circling each other’s waist, swinging from side to side to the rhythm of the music in colorful renditions of ‘traditional’ costumes. Both the activities and the music are linked to the harvest season when Afro-Curaçaoans used to celebrate and give thanks for a plentiful harvest. As the participants move through the streets people either move to the side or join in. This setup creates a clear ‘united=strong’ impression. Using the seú genre means using tradition, folklore and the collective identity in which the Curaçaoan government has been invested for the last decade. When, in 2010, the winning song for ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ combined a ballad and seú, this resulted in an anthem symbolic of Curaçaoan heritage and
including a moral lesson expressed towards Curaçaoans. The effect was compounded and heightened by the composition itself:

| “Ban interkambia kultura, kustumber musika i folklor! Amplia konosementu, idea, soño i metanan! Laga Kòrsou t’un bon ehempel den tur region i kontinente.” |
| “Let’s exchange cultures, customs, music and folklore! Expand knowledge and create dreams and goals! Let Curaçao be a good example in all regions and continents” (TeleCuracao Multimedia 2010a). |

After this, the rhythm changed, adding a very danceable modern ritmo kombiná element to the seú. In a call and response pattern, the female lead, Lispier, intoned:

| “Pesei awe mi ke...” |
| “That’s why today I want to...” (TeleCuracao Multimedia 2010a). |

Her textual buildup was supported by a small buildup in the music and intonation. It was immediately followed by a mini ‘break effect’ performed through intensified percussion and a musical release (high intensity in music and incorporation of multiple voices). Then came the chorus and the audience joined in.
Chorus: “Waya bo bandera”
“Ku honor i respèt”
Chorus: “Maner’un bon yu di tera”
“Ku norma i balor”
Chorus: “Waya bo bandera”
“Prinsipio i moral”
Chorus: “Maner’un bon di tera.”

Chorus: “Wave your flag”
“With honor and respect”
Chorus: “Like a good child of the land”
“With norms and values”
Chorus: “Wave your flag”
“Principles and morality”
Chorus: “Like a good child of the land” (TeleCuracao Multimedia 2010a).

The rhythm encouraged a slow dancing movement from the audience, with people undulating and moving from side to side, often with their hands in the air. This movement was reminiscent of the rippling of a flag, resulted in the waving of many flags as people danced to the rhythm of ‘wave your flag’. This was combined with a heightened sense of patriotism. The waving movement seemed to be a natural extension of both the physical and emotional state. By waving their flags, the audience also performed an action charged with patriotism. There is thus a concordance between the cues within the music and the actions performed by the audience. The combination of the music itself and the audience’s response to it, added a new dimension to the interaction. People were able to adopt the message expressed through
the event and participate in it, thus constructing the new Curaçaoan. Three elements combined to create a momentum that resulted in the acceptance of this song as the winning song to be sung during the year of the ‘birth’ of Curaçao as a country. The first element was the use of the symbolic, patriotic, meaning of the folkloristic seú. The second was the stimulation provided through the mixing of different genres, which in itself related to the flexible collective Curaçaoan identity I discussed in previous chapters. The third and final one was the eliciting of emotion through formal musical characteristics.

As I discussed through the case of ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’, there is clearly an understanding of performance art as tied to education and development in Curaçaoan society. Both the artist Ced Ride and the government official expressed this link. The link is also evident in the performances, music and lyrics of the winning compositions of the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ festival.54 ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ speaks to Curaçaoans, not only through words, but also through music by combining different genres and presenting them as part of the new Curaçaoan heritage, reaffirming representations of Curaçaoanness and educating them on the collective Curaçaoan identity. Sentences such

54 Nationalism and the development of the self still proved important elements to the festival in the following years. The UKK festival of 2014 was won by Rebecca Benschop performing a composition of Eldrison Eugenia titled ‘Mi Baranka’. (My Rock). The lyrics were a love song to Curaçao. “[… ] Defende i protehe mi baranka, mi rais, mi fundeshi, mi pais!” (Defend and protect my rock, my roots, my foundation, my country!). In 2015 the winning composition was titled “Profundidat di Bida” (The Depth of Life). It was performed by Harlianne Sylvanie and was a Tumba Klasiko Kominá again composed by Eldrison Eugenia. In 2016 the winners were two young women, Diveana Lopez and Deborah Gomez, who together performed the song ‘Ban desaroyá’ (Let’s develop). The lyrics included a positive message denouncing pettiness and promoting the idea of a united community.
as “We are yu’i Kòrsou”! are framed by directives of what a Yu di Kòrsou should do and feel and even of how ‘we’ should act. These directives include an open approach towards culture, which allows for diversity in the understanding of what is Curaçaoan. Curaçaoan government policy on the use of culture as a tool for the construction of an emancipated New Curaçaoan is perfectly embodied through projects such as ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is grounded in the postcolonial theoretical framework laid out in the previous chapters and takes a social constructivist point of view in its exploration of the way the performance of Curaçaoan identity is influenced by the island context. It places the performance of Curaçaoan identity within a context in which the racialized regime of representation and double consciousness play a pivotal role. I argued that the Curaçaoan identity discourses constructed are ways to escape the alienation associated with the postcolonial condition in general and the Curaçaoan’s view of himself as the Other as a consequence of the colonial past in particular.

In order to better understand how Curaçaoan identity discourse is influenced by the island social context I introduced two case studies: that of the ‘Siman di Kultura’ and that of the national song festival ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’. Furthermore, I examined the key policy document formulating Curaçaoan cultural policy on the island. During the exploration of the cases and the policy document, the following questions arose: Which discourses of collective identity were
stimulated through the Curaçaoan state’s cultural policy? What is the role of culture and music in the construction of discourses on Curaçaoan collective identity discourses on the island? Finally, I examined how musical performances and culture can trigger Curaçaoan transformation and ‘freedom of the mind’.

In my analysis I explained how the Curaçaoan government uses culture and performance to construct a collective Curaçaoan identity. I identified two main discourses: the discourse of an essentialist Afro-Curaçaoan identity and that of an essentialist creolized identity. Both discourses are dual in nature, being simultaneously essentialist – following the anti-universalist agenda laid out by their historical Caribbean counterparts Antillanité and Négritude – and, at the same time, focused on flexibility and cosmopolitanism. In the case of the creolized Curaçaoan identity discourse, cosmopolitanism and flexibility refer to the connection to a broad array of cultures. The Afro-Curaçaoan discourse refers to a narrower cosmopolitanism, engaging the African Diaspora.

From a postcolonial perspective both of these discourses can be said to engage with an African Diaspora. The focus of both is the construction of a Curaçaoan identity that allows Curaçaoans to escape their Otherness. Otherness is highly influenced by racial questions such as a historical negative valorization of blackness and of African cultural products like tambú music. Being the Other in this case is marked by Curaçao’s slavery past and by negative modern-day representations of the African Diaspora embedded within the racialized regime of representation. The quest of both the creolized Curaçaoan identity and the Afro-Curaçaoan identity to escape this
negative valorization means a confrontation of Curacaoans with their place within a broader African Diaspora. The Curacaoan project of collective identity construction thus includes a preoccupation with the African Diaspora.

Cultural policy on Curacao aims to direct the negotiation between different discourses in order to create a new Curacaoan. The Curacaoan government uses cultural policy not only to construct a Curacaoan collective identity, but also to transform the subject’s being, his way of thinking and feeling about himself and the world around him. This aim is presented as the construction of a new critical, self-assured Curacaoan who possesses a freedom of the mind. This freedom of the mind is expressly linked to a political-ideological stand and ultimately incorporates a political independence agenda. The emphasis on the need for re-education and the revaluing of the Curacaoan, which are emphatically pursued, discursively removes the agency of the Curacaoan subject. In other words, the Curacaoan is discursively constructed as a person lacking agency. She cannot save herself, but must be saved, or at least must be taught how to save herself and solve the alienation associated with her postcolonial condition. The Curacaoan postcolonial subject is seen as in crisis, only capable of reaching true change through government intervention.

Within the policy document there is a dichotomy between wanting to empower people and narrowing this transformation down to a previously specified political-ideological goal. This dichotomy is based on the view of the Curacaoan people as victims of mental and political oppression. By seeing them as in need of guidance, intervention and education, the document perpetuates a discourse of
Curaçaoan people in need of revaluation and especially of their need for guidance in achieving this revaluation. The project to achieve an emancipated Curaçaoan is hampered by an approach in which the government sees emancipation as something only the government can teach.

Despite this quite paternalistic view of change as something that must be taught to the people, the collective Curaçaoan identity presented in the plan also promotes creativity and self-reflection with the goal of achieving mental and political emancipation. That is, to find a solution to double consciousness for Curaçaoans, they must be more pro-active and must self-reflect.

The government tackles the issue of identity construction and reaching a ‘freedom of the mind’ through an approach that combines two phases: first, the objectification and folklorization of (Afro-)Curaçaoan culture which must be propagated and revalued and second, the encouragement of self-reflection and creativity. This two-pronged approach is intended to result in a Curaçaoan understanding of identity as malleable. The focus here lies on collective identity as a representation, which in turn means identity is a constant negotiation. The negotiation described above takes place through action and repetition and would entail a true change, not merely the dodging of (post-)colonial discourses holding the (Afro-)Curaçaoan in a marginal position.

The ideological agenda is carried out through the management of cultural and artistic expressions. With the cases of ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ and the ‘Week of Culture’ fashion event, I have shown that cultural and artistic performance in general, but music in particular, is
used to compound and catalyze the transformation of the new Curaçaoan. During the ‘Un Kanto pa Kòrsou’ event, the framework, already put into place by the governmental contextualization of the festival, such as the message, annual repetition, dedication, slogan, decoration and so forth, is ‘pushed over the edge’ by a concentration of factors in the musical presentations themselves. Government, artists and audience come together to create new consciousness and actions heralding a new Curaçaoan.

In the first three chapter I have discussed ways in which discourses on Curaçaoan collective identity are constructed in the Netherlands and on Curaçao on a macro level, taking into account the specific social context, including issues such as regimes of representation, colonial bonds, projects of nation-building and social cohesion and mobility. I also identified relevant discourses within the Curaçaoan context. The negotiation between these discourses entails an engagement with an African Diaspora. In the following chapter I will narrow in to perform a microanalysis, focusing even more closely on specific transnational performers and on how they construct a Curaçaoan identity through their music. The identities they construct reflect the prevalent discourses I identified in this chapter. They exhibit –to different degrees– a flexible attitude towards the construction of a Curaçaoan identity. The engagement with an African Diaspora plays a key role within the negotiation of their Curaçaoan identity discourses. As I will discuss next, these performers also engage with a transnational modern-day Curaçaoan community.

The flexible attitude towards identity construction exhibited by transmigrant performers shows a more pragmatic way of dealing with
the postcolonial condition—the sense of double consciousness and disassociation. It simultaneously deals with the consequences of mobility, everyday transnational practices and of the confrontations with both Dutch and Curaçaoan contexts and their different discourses and projects.

In the following chapter I will approach the performance of a transnational collective Curaçaoan identity discourse from the point of view of the performers through an analysis of work of two transnational Curaçaoan performers and one musical ensemble. I aim to understand how the state projects discussed so far are negotiated through performance and how musical performances serve as places for Curaçaoan transnationals to construct alternate, flexible identifications.
Chapter 4
Performances of Curaçaoan Identity

In this chapter I explore the main research questions of this thesis from a micro perspective, showing how specific performers engage with a double Diaspora: How do these transnational Curaçaoan performers negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities while being engaged by both Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building and collective identity construction?

This means that I take a closer look at specific performers and explore how they construct and deal with a collective Curaçaoan identity through their own work. While in previous chapters I explored Curaçaoan identity discourses as competing forces within a Dutch and then a Curaçaoan field of discursivity, here I will zoom in on the link between the people that perform the music, their representations of collectivity and their individual quest to belong. The process of negotiating a Curaçaoan identity of the audience and artists happens within the contexts described in the previous chapters. Therefore, the questions of prevalent discourses of Curaçaoan identity, Otherness and double consciousness and the pervasiveness of the racialized regime of representation are highly relevant to understanding the performed identities.

As I have argued throughout my dissertation, I distinguish two main discourses within the Curaçaoan community: the Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse and the creolized Curaçaoan identity discourse. In
this chapter I explore how these discourses are used by the performers in such a way that they can intersect and crossover. I will show how performers use both discourses simultaneously or alternately in a flexible negotiation of Curaçaoan identity within the Dutch and the Curaçaoan context.

The present chapter thus provides case studies that strengthen the argument that was formulated in Chapter 1. In that chapter I posed the hypothesis that as a consequence of the sense of disassociation linked to the postcolonial condition, Curaçaoans exhibit a flexible Curaçaoan identity. I argue that they express a flexible attitude towards identity discourses and the construction of Curaçaoan identity. In this chapter I further explore how this flexible attitude takes form through three different case studies.

The discourse of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity will be addressed through the work of the rapper Fresku. I will discuss the discourse of a creolized Curaçaoan identity through the case of the ensemble Ola Caribense. The third case showcases even more how the two discourses intermingle and are used flexibly by the transnational Curaçaoan artist Izaline Calister. Although all of the artists use both discourses, they do so in different and flexible ways, resulting in complex and sometimes contradictory formulations of what it means to be Curaçaoan.

The performers’ engagement with the two discourses of Curaçaoan national identity reveals an underlying preoccupation with the African Diaspora, but I will show how they simultaneously engage with another, transnational, modern-day Diaspora. This double Diaspora concern is reflected in their flexible attitude towards identity
construction. Through these cases I thus test the hypothesis presented throughout this dissertation: that Curaçaoan transnationals are able to construct a flexible collective identity through musical performances, offering them a fluid way of dealing with fixed Dutch and Curaçaoan collective identity projects.

In my analysis I take the Curaçaoan performers’ personal background and social context into account. I show how they create a link between themselves and the group through the incorporation of personal stories, points of view and backgrounds. The personal stories incorporated into the performance bring the collective identity discourses to life and make the collective identities constructed in the work of the performers a representation of both the personal and the collective. Approaching the cases in this manner allows me to theorize on how performances of a single performer or musical group can potentially adapt or change representations and shape counter-discourses on Curaçaoan identity.

My interdisciplinary approach requires a constant dialogue between formalistic textual analysis of the performers’ work and discourse analysis of supporting information regarding their personal background as well as the Dutch and Curaçaoan social contexts. This entails the incorporation of information I gathered through media research, primarily publicly available interviews and articles on the performers, as well as interviews I personally conducted with some of the performers.

In the first case study, I focus on the rapper Fresku. In this case, the great amount of available information in the media allowed me to
supplement my textual analysis of Fresku’s work with interviews and articles available through online media.

In the second case study, of Ola Caribense, I gathered information through online sources, by closely observing recordings of Ola Caribense performances and through a telephone interview I conducted with the leader of the Ola Caribense ensemble.

With regard to the third case study, of Izaline Calister, I gathered contextual information and video footage through online media. In addition I attended a number of her performances during the period 2009-2014, where I was able to observe as well as question her about her performances.

My analysis of the construction of Curaçaoan identity through the work of these performers is embedded in the postcolonial theoretical framework that I laid out in the previous chapters. Specifically, in Chapter 2 I argued through Hall and Benítez Rojo that the Caribbean subject identifies herself as the Other. This double consciousness is a consequence of the naturalization of specific representations that originated during the colonial period. The resulting discourses established themselves within the racialized regime of representation and as such influence new representations of Curaçaoan identity such as I discussed in Chapter 3.

Taken together, the three cases allow me to gain more insight into the interrelation between the performer and a collective Curaçaoan identity discourse. This will give insight into the process of negotiation of an Afro-Curaçaoan or creolized Curaçaoan identity in the search for reconciliation with Otherness.
Case 1: Fresku

“Don’t you know Fresku?” Dieter leans in, eyes sparkling. “Fresku is the bomb, man! Fresku is so good. He really speaks to me as a person, you know? All my students know him.” For a moment I am speechless. Yes, I had heard of the Dutch-Curaçaoans rapper Fresku (Papiamentu for Fresh). What stumps me is that Dieter, a self-confessed rightwing Catholic Flemish Nationalist, seems to be quite passionate about Fresku’s music. He’s a big fan, he confesses, as he proceeds to drag me to the computer to introduce me to the clip to one of his favorite songs—one from Fresku’s last CD—‘Twijfel’ (Doubt) on YouTube.

A dark, angry beat. The screen shows the back of a man wearing a hoodie and a leather jacket walking through city streets at night. As the camera follows him, he holds up a mirror and just for an instant we are able to see his face. However, instead of a man, what is reflected is a pig mask. Then the man holds up his right hand, where a question mark appears.

| “Ik ben fucking gelukkig, ik heb alles op een rijtje elke avond kan ik lekker ballen met mijn meisje Mijn carrière gaat perfect, ik werk in een fabriek en doe met passie waar ik goed in ben, ik maak riemen nigger! […] ik zweef in mijn gedachten alles is zo twijfelachtig” | “I am fucking happy, I have everything figured out, I can have sex every night with my girl My career is on a roll, I work in a factory And do with passion what I’m good at, I make belts, nigger! […] I float in my thoughts Everything is so unsure” |
onzekerheid is een groot gedeelte van mijn karakter
soms lijkt het makkelijk voor me je ziet me blijven lachen
want ik verberg in feite mijn ware zijn met grappen
ik snap het ff niet
hoe moet ik me voelen?
hoe moet ik me uiten?
je ziet me lachen met verdriet
Mijn ouders zijn gescheiden
me moeder zit in de struggle
en het is alweer een tijdje sinds ik papa heb gezien
had ik een slecht rapport gaf hij me klappen met de riem
dus om de zoveel maanden kreeg ik klappen met de riem
[…]
en m’n pa, die was een beetje streng
hij zei me vaak
verman jezelf, jongen wees een vent
je lijkt op je moeder
Mama zei me dat ik leek op hem
geen wonder dat ik tegenwoordig zo onzeker ben.”

Doubt is a large part of my character
Sometimes it may seem easy for me
You see me smiling
Because in fact I hide my true self with jokes
I don’t understand it
What should I feel
How should I express myself?
You see me laughing with sadness
My parents are divorced
My mother is ‘in the struggle’
And it has been a while since I saw my dad
If I had bad grades he hit me with his belt
So every couple of months I got hit with the belt
[…]
And my dad, he was a bit strict
He often told me
Keep a hold on yourself, boy
Be a man
You are like your mother
Mom said I was like him
No wonder I’m this insecure” (TopNotch 2009a).

Roy Michael Reymound, also known as Fresku, was born in the Netherlands, in the city of Eindhoven, where he lived with his white, Dutch mother. At the age of seven he moved to Curaçao to live with his black, Curaçaoan father. He moved back to the Netherlands in his

55 The word 'struggle' is originally in English. It can also be observed in Curaçaoan rap music. It seems to have originated from a US rap concept of 'urban (black) struggle'.

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teens. During his time on the island he ‘discovered’ hip hop. He first started rapping in English, but switched to Dutch. Fresku achieved popularity –and a record deal– in the Netherlands with his ‘Brief aan Kees’ (Letter to Kees) addressed to Kees Koning, owner of the Dutch TopNotch record label. Koning heard this rap, in which Fresku denounced the Dutch rap scene as being all about connections and more about money than product quality, and recognized Fresku’s appeal. Ironically, following this stunt Koning offered Fresku a record deal. This effectively made Fresku part of the establishment he had previously denounced. Fresku still succeeds in distinguishing himself within the Dutch hip hop scene through his lyrics, in which he bares his soul and discusses several issues he deals with personally, as well as sensitive group issues such as slavery and racism in Dutch society. His song ‘Twijfel’ (Doubt) has gathered attention from listeners in the Netherlands as well as Belgium, such as Dieter and his high school pupils.

According to Dieter, Fresku raps openly about his personal struggles and the problems he encounters; about being black in the Netherlands, about his Dutch mother and Curaçaoan father, about Curaçao, his childhood there and about the slavery past. Not only does Fresku include his own personal background and the social circumstances of the Curaçaoan group within his music, he does this in such a heartfelt way that Dieter feels the topics Fresku touches upon do not just relate to Curaçaoans, but to people in general and to himself in particular. Through his music Fresku speaks to Dieter and about him. ‘Twijfel’ is deep, Dieter says. It is raw and it is honest. Everyone has troubles. Everyone has doubts. Everyone struggles.
At first glance, Dieter’s identification with Flemish nationalist thought, which often expresses a national identity discourse that favors the white Flemish race, culture and language over non-native cultures and peoples, seems at odds with the content of Fresku’s work, in which blackness and Curaçaoan identity as well as the issue of multiculturalism dominate, both through images and language. Dieter’s personal involvement with Fresku’s music, his feeling of kinship with Fresku and the way he used this music to express strong personal emotions through Fresku’s representations of Curaçaoan identity, triggered my curiosity to know how Curaçaoan identity discourse is constructed in Fresku’s music and how it is received and used by listeners such as Dieter.

On the one hand, Dieter liked Fresku’s musical discourse and showed understanding of Fresku’s being part of a different group in the Netherlands: an in-between group with ties to both the Dutch and the Curaçaoan contexts. The music seemed to work as a way to establish Fresku’s personal identity and his link to the Curaçaoan group. On the other hand, Dieter re-appropriated Fresku’s music, re-interpreting it within his own discursive construction of identity. From this viewpoint, the emotions conveyed by Fresku through his music superseded Dieter’s strong political and social convictions. Dieter acknowledged this as he talked to me, emphasizing the universality of human emotion and Fresku’s ability to convey these emotions. He expressed a feeling of kinship and identification with Fresku’s music. However, he also recognized and spoke about Fresku’s personal story and his social position as an *allochtoon* (of immigrant origins) within

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56 Fresku performs code switching between Dutch, English and also Papiamentu in some of his songs.
the Netherlands. Fresku’s music acts as an element that unites Fresku, Dieter and, according to Dieter, Dieter’s class and gives them a sense of co-identification.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, discourses are constructed through a process of negotiation between different actors and in relation to context (Butler 1988; Foucault 1981; Hall 1997; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Siapera 2010). This means that the discursive constructions that Fresku communicates through his music are met by, consumed, adapted and re-used by listeners. They are also part of a dialogue with the social context, which consists of the performer’s background, greater regimes of representation and of other discourses. In this chapter I approach Fresku’s music from a perspective that takes into account both the performer’s personal background and social context. His music intermingles with his personal background, doubts and troubles, and is influenced by the group issues he deals with: the position of Curaçaoans in Dutch society, the question of being partly Dutch and partly Curaçaoan, feeling accepted. This means he asks basic questions of identity in his music, such as, “Who am I? Am I Curaçaoan? Am I Dutch?” and that he deals with issues of belonging in his work.

Fresku exposes his personal experiences and views and translates them into public issues throughout his work by using recurring themes in his lyrics. These themes include fatherhood, or rather the absence of fathers within Curaçaoan families, troubled mothers who are unavailable to their children, and the proximity to a life of crime. Through these concrete social problems he simultaneously describes his own experiences and his view on the Curaçaoan community in
general and, as I will discuss shortly, argues for a change in mentality within the Curaçaoan community. He uses everyday situations to situate his experiences as real and thus as representative of a larger truth.

While expressing his personal struggles and negotiating a way of belonging to both the Dutch and Curaçaoan groups, Fresku also expresses his oftentimes critical view on what it means to be Curaçaoan. He constructs a discourse of Curaçaoan identity through representations of the Curaçaoan community, its history and the current reality it has to deal with. In the following analysis I will delve into questions like: What image of being Curaçaoan does Fresku construct through his performances? How do his representations of Curaçaoan identity relate to the racialized regime of representation and to Afro-Curaçaoan and creolized discourses?

**Belonging and Being ‘Here’**

In ‘Twijfel’ (Doubt), quoted above, Fresku deals openly with issues of identity and belonging. “Am I Curaçaoan? Am I like my father as my mother said? What does this mean? Or am I like my mother, like my father used to say?” By posing these questions he discusses personal identity issues with his listeners through his lyrics. The questions reveal the relationship with his parents as an important factor in the construction of his identity. Fresku tries to understand himself in relation to his parents, in relation to the way they view each other and the way they view him. All of these factors seem to add to the construction of his own identity discourse.
In his overall work, Fresku does not merely relate to his parents but also links his father to Curaçao and his mother to the Netherlands. This is evident from the following passage from his song ‘Ik ben hier’ (I am Here). In this song, which shows parallels to his own biography, Fresku does not just discuss the parental characters, but simultaneously discusses the main protagonist’s identity and his life in two different social contexts: Curaçao and the Netherlands. The text not only deals with belonging to a specific parent, but also with belonging or not belonging to two groups. He thus treads the line between the personal and the collective.

Fresku formulates his lyrics in the third person as an account of a little boy going through the traumatic experience of being moved from one parent to another and from one social context to another, that is, dealing with issues of belonging and being in-between two groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Hij voelt de leegte bij het denken aan z’n ma en vader, weinig herinneringen van toen ze nog samen waren Het onderwerp is te zwaar beladen, plus hij is te jong daarom uit hij zich maar raar gedragen in plaats van praten Mama ziet het niet, ze ergert zich ze is verliefd en bezig met haar nieuwe vriendje dus ze merkt niks […] hij moest met zijn zus naar papa maar de jongste bleef gewoon Hij ziet z’n kleine broertje slapen in de ochtend, en als z’n broertje wakker is, is hij”</th>
<th>“He felt the emptiness when he thought about his ma and father. Few memories of when they still were together The topic is too heavy, plus he’s too young That’s why he expresses himself by acting weird Mama doesn’t see it, she gets irritated She’s in love, busy with her new boyfriend so she doesn’t notice a thing […] …He and his sister had to go to Dad, but the youngest stayed He sees his little brother sleeping”</th>
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Fresku’s use of the third person helps underscore the transition between personal and collective. The third person creates distance between him and the little boy, and simultaneously the dis-identification with the little boy allows the song to be more generic and thus appeal to a wider audience. Fresku places the boy in a recognizable social framework with a mother and siblings. The boy thus becomes a symbol to which more people can relate. At the same time, by giving the boy a Dutch and Curaçaoan social context, Fresku constructs him as belonging to a specific group. The boy can become representative of other boys within that group. Fresku thus walks a fine line between creating a personal account including specific details and constructing a neutral, though recognizable character to whom listeners can relate on a human level. As a result, the experiences of the little boy can be either read as those of many faceless, nameless boys within the Curaçaoan migrant group or as the experiences of Fresku himself.

Fresku does not just succeed in bringing his own experiences and history into a public arena by incorporating issues such as his struggles with self-categorization and labeling by others into his music. His music also serves to resolve these issues. In a sense it
functions as a tool to affiliate Fresku to the Dutch and Curaçaoan communities, while negotiating a discourse on what it means to be Curaçaoan. Within this double move of affiliation and negotiation, Fresku interacts with a Curaçaoan double Diaspora.

As I discussed in previous chapters, identity discourses are constructed through a process of negotiation and in relation to a context. That means that discourses are in constant interaction with other existing discourses and perceptions of truth (Butler 1988; Hall et al. 1996; Said 1978). In this case such negotiations take on the form of Fresku’s attempt to formulate his own identity in relation to his parents, his construction of his identity discourse in relation to alternately the Curaçaoan and Dutch groups, and his attempt to understand his parents in relation to each other. The themes of being between two parents, growing up moving between two countries and living as a mixed-race person in the Netherlands are interrelated and visible throughout his work. The issue of belonging is the overarching concept in his work: ‘Who am I?’ thus becomes ‘Where and to which group do I belong?’

While exploring the issue of belonging within his performances, Fresku also explores and (re)defines the Curaçaoan collective. His music not only serves to question and expose his own life and Curaçaoan community, it serves as a tool to construct an alternative discourse of being Curaçaoan. Through his music, Fresku specifically delves into the Dutch-Curaçaoan colonial past in order to negotiate a discourse on Curaçaoan identity to which he is able to belong.

In the following paragraph I will discuss how both the negotiation of belonging and the construction of a Curaçaoan identity figure in
Fresku’s work. First I explore how Fresku uses stereotypes and a controversial sense of humor to negotiate a Curaçaoan identity.

**The Other I: Fresku vs. Gino**

When he is not performing as Fresku, Roy Michael Reymound performs music and comedy sketches as his alter ego ‘Gino Pietermaai’. With Gino, Reymound constructs the discourse of Curaçaoans as lazy, criminal, and dumb. To do this, he not only uses lyrics, but also the character of Gino as a visual and musical example of the way that Curaçaoan rappers represent themselves. The character Gino relies to a great extent on stereotypes, referring to preconceived notions about rappers, as well as negative stereotypes of Curaçaoans. This is evident from his heavily accented Dutch, peppered with Papiamentu expressions. Other elements of the stereotypical representation of an Curaçaoan rapper include Gino’s baggy clothing, gold tooth, the dark glasses he always wears, and the teardrop tattoo near his eye. Gino is also decked out with a lot of bling and always has a billfold handy. His behavior reflects many negative stereotypes. He is rowdy, speaks too loudly and laughs even more loudly. He is always laughing and making lame jokes. His behavior simultaneously displays a lack of sophisticated intelligence and a slyness and street smarts. In his music, he uses beats similar to those used in the subgenre of Curaçaoan rap as well as ‘Bubbling’ beats, popular with

57 Pietermaai is a poor neighborhood in Willemstad, Curaçao. By using Pietermaai as his surname, Gino ties into the hip hop tradition of referring to one's neighborhood in order to cement one's authenticity. This is but one of the ways in which Gino references global hip hop and especially rap culture.
Curaçaoan youth. His lyrics are repetitive and center on money, women, partying, drugs and violence.

With biting irony and often painfully confrontational stereotypes, Reymound thus formulates the image of a stereotypical Curaçaoan rapper. This is certainly the case for the video clip ‘Terug’ (Back). In this clip the themes discussed above come together in a parody of popular hip hop videos. The clip starts off with a series of big explosions. Following these special effects we see Gino and his ‘posse’ sitting on a beach eating buckets of KFC and throwing the bones over their shoulders. The refrain of the track summarizes the Gino character:

| “Meer wijven, meer wiet, meer money, Meer crack, meer pijpen, Meer tieten, meer konten, meer sex, meer feesten. Dat zijn de Gino dingen.” | “More bitches, more weed, more money, More crack, more blow jobs, More tits, more ass, more sex, more parties. Those are the Gino things” (Teemong 2012). |

At first glance Gino appears to be the exact opposite of Fresku. Fresku ponders personal and social circumstances and comments critically on the state of both the Curaçaoan community and the Dutch social context. Gino seemingly remains superficial, focusing on material elements and celebrating issues which are generally condemned as immoral in today’s society such as misogyny, debauchery, drug use, and criminal behavior. By representing Gino in such an over-the-top manner, Reymound confronts the viewer with an undesirable image.
Through this edgy form of humor he both reaches a greater audience and holds up a mirror to the Curaçaoan group, showing an amplified, buffoonish image of how certain Curaçaoan youngsters behave nowadays.

Fresku’s alter ego of Gino functions as a living mirror of the Curaçaoan rap community and the image it reflects is not pretty. The representation of the Curaçaoan rapper embodied through Gino emphasizes the way the Curaçaoan rapper is different, representing this rapper as a negatively valued Other. This exaggerated stereotyped rapper corresponds to the negative images of Curaçaoans that Reymound also presents in his work as Fresku.

Fresku’s constructions of Curaçaoan identity, show a certain duality. On the one hand he denounces a discourse in which Curaçaoans are stereotyped as lazy, criminal, and dumb. On the other hand, he expresses a critical attitude towards the in-group. He validates the same discourse he denounces by arguing that there is no need for Curaçaoans to be lazy or criminal. Rather, they should change and return to their roots, finding their true Afro-Curaçaoan history and identity. Reymound’s negative representation of Curaçaoans and his fight for them to improve themselves is expressed through the schism between the two artistic personas, Fresku and Gino. He simultaneously constructs Gino as a negative stereotype and Fresku as a positive role model. In doing so he actually realizes two of the strategies Hall (1997) discusses as ways to trans-code existing discourses or take “an existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meaning” (Hall 1997: 270). With the image of his Fresku persona he in fact reverses stereotypes, substituting negative images for
positive images of black people. Through the negatively stereotypically constructed Gino persona, he uses stereotypes to confront us with the existing racialized regime of representation. The bleak image of Curaçaoans that Reymound constructs both through his lyrics and through his stage persona of Gino, coincides with same negative representation by ‘white power’ of what Hall (1997) calls a racialized regime of representation. As I will show by comparing two of his works, ‘Slave Behavior’ and ‘Freedom’, Fresku attempts to offer a way out of this negative Curaçaoan identity discourse by using an empowering Afro-Curaçaoan discourse that simultaneously reveals a sense of ‘double consciousness’ and being in-between.

**Slave Behavior**

Fresku expands on the role of the history of slavery in the construction of contemporary Curaçaoan society. He stresses the need to talk about this past and its link to the problems faced by Curaçaoans, because the history of slavery has had a great impact on the way that Curaçaoans in the Netherlands are treated today and on the way they behave.

 Het is tijd voor de zwarte Antilliaanse bevolking om te beseffen dat ze meer kunnen doen in hun leven dan op de straat te hangen en de boel belazeren. Onze voorvaders hebben maanden in schepen gezeten. Zonder te weten waar die lange reis hun naartoe zou brengen. Velen hebben de reis niet eens overleefd! Eindelijk aangekomen op het klein eilandje van maar zestig kilometer in de lengte, mochten ze op dat eiland op zoutplantage in de hete zon werken op blote voeten, tot ze blaren over hun voeten kregen, tot die blaren open gingen en open
The monologue quoted above features at the start of the song ‘Slaven gedrag’ (Slave Behavior). Fresku constructs his version of the history of Afro-Curaçaoans and admonishes his fellow Curaçaoans to change their behavior. It is a discourse of the origin of a people and it stresses the trials this people had to endure to survive and to finally triumph. At the end of the monologue Fresku questions this triumph, adding the current situation of Curaçaoans into the equation. The question, “What do you do with it?’” denounces Curaçaoans for not making full use of their freedom. It is a clear challenge to ‘his people’ to change their behavior and start making better use of their freedom. Fresku’s monologue in ‘Slaven gedrag’ is followed by a rap in which the description of Curaçaoan life leans heavily on stereotypes:

“Men playing dominos with gold teeth stay the same, day in day out, while Curaçao changes. Good boys hanging out with bad ones around old buildings, doing their best for men who don’t love them. They are taunted: ‘Why are you such a scaredy-cat?’ Swallowing drug pellets to fly to cold countries to earn that money fast. Men, wise up. Niggers like you give me my bad reputation. White folks don’t trust me; I have to prove myself constantly. It doesn’t matter how smart I am, I will always be a ‘stupid nigger’ in the eyes of those in power. It drives me crazy. So don’t go whining if you’re in jail. It was your own choice” (Hooliganrap 2011).

Fresku expresses a grim view of Curaçaoans in general as well as of himself as Curaçaoan. He paints a picture of Curaçaoan youth being led astray, of elders who do not live in the reality of this day and age, who do not care about the young. He also blames criminal Curaçaoan youngsters for the way that white people perceive him personally. He laments the fact that he is negatively stereotyped and has to prove himself over and over again.

By denouncing how he is stereotyped and victimized as a “stupid nigger” by the white people in power, Fresku creates a dichotomy
similar to one proposed through the Orientalist discourse in which the West and the Rest are juxtaposed (Hall 1997; Said 1978). The juxtaposition proposed by Fresku is between powerful white people – envisioned as the center – and victimized black people – as the Other. Still, Fresku also lashes out at his ‘group members’, describing them as people who “hang around in the streets, hustling” and in the second quote he confronts them, saying that they are the cause of his “bad reputation.” While he first declares himself as part of the group in his monologue, later he also resents the group and criticizes their behavior. With the end of slavery in his monologue, he shifts the emphasis from black Curaçaoans as victims to Afro-Curaçaoans as free people, who need to start taking responsibility for their own fate. Here, he describes his vision of what the group should become. However, this idealized vision is, in his view, still unrealized.

Being Afro-Curaçaoan is thus central to the work described here. Afro-Curaçaoanness is formulated as quite problematic and reveals a complex positioning between two ends of a spectrum: white versus black, and European versus Caribbean. Fresku’s use of stereotypes and the view he uses to describe Curaçaoans and the relationship between whites and blacks constructs a discourse of the two ‘races’ as oppositional. His use of the dichotomy between a white European center and an Afro-Curaçaoan Other shows that his discourse is framed by a racialized regime of representation (Hall et al. 1996, 1997).

Despite the fact that Fresku seeks a redemption of Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity, this very search implies a view of the Afro-Curaçaoan as ‘the Other’, who is in need of change and healing.
Underlying Fresku’s quest to both belong and to empower Curaçaoans to change for the better there is thus a sense of ‘double consciousness’. That is, as I have argued with Hall *et al.* (1996, 1997), Siapera (2010) and Benítez Rojo (1989), his lyrics construct a discourse of self-Othering, showing simultaneously the desire to empower through music and the sense of being caught within a racialized representation of the self.

It is not just in his songs that Fresku constructs and problematizes a discourse on Curaçaoan identity and history; in interviews he further expands his view of Curaçaoans. In an interview with Lyangelo Vasquez he declares:

“ik maak me juist boos over slachtoffers, die niets doen met hun leven. Dat noem ik slavengedrag”

“I get angry about victims, who don’t do a thing with their lives. That is what I call slave behavior” (Vasquez 2011).

Here, he refers to Curaçaoans as a people with a victim mentality. Ironically, in his lyrics he positions himself as a victim of both the Curaçaoan group that in his eyes does not behave as it should, and of white Europeans who stereotype him. In the same interview with Vasquez Fresku explains how the time he lived on Curaçao influenced him.

“De periode in Curaçao was in meerdere opzichten een heftige ervaring. Natuurlijk omdat ik weg was bij mijn moeder. Maar ook
vanwege de cultuurschock. Ik sprak de taal niet en zoveel dingen waren er anders. Het bracht me in een enorme tweestrijd, waarin ik me aan de ene kant verbond met die cultuur, maar tegelijkertijd zag ik dat het heel anders was dan wat ik uit Nederland kende.”

“The period on Curaçao was an intense experience in many ways. Of course because I was away from my mother. But also because of the culture shock. I didn’t speak the language and so many things were different. It caused a great internal struggle, in which I felt on the one hand linked to that culture, but on the other I saw that it was very different from what I knew from the Netherlands” (Vasquez 2011).

This feeling of being in-between the Netherlands and Curaçao shows in all his work, wavering between agency and victimization.

**Freedom**

In a second song on slavery, called ‘Vrijheid’ (Freedom), Fresku again denounces the poor social position of Curaçaoans, saying they need ‘to wise up’. He then acknowledges that to wise up and make ‘smart’ choices you need to know where you come from. He argues that this knowledge, this bit of history, was ‘stolen’ from Curaçaoans by the European Dutch.

Similar to the lyrics of ‘Doubt’, the lyrics of Freedom also express Fresku’s personal story, the struggles he finds himself in: between his Curaçaoan father and his Dutch mother, between him growing up in the Netherlands and on Curaçao, between him being half-white and half-black.
“Ik voel al jaren iets wat ik vroeger niet onderbouwen kon
Nu zeg ik feiten en ik hoor de mensen denken hou je mond
Nee! Je vertrouwt de bron, houd je dom
als hij je vertelt dat jouw geschiedenis verhaal in Curaçao begon
Je kan geen uitkomst vinden voor een foute som
We zijn beroofd van ons verleden diamanten goud en brons
We zijn de weg kwijt dat geldt voor oud en jong
en daarom gaan de meeste van mijn mensen zo met vrouwen om
Ik vergelijk slavendrijvers met een auto monteur
want hij steelt je weg, breekt je af en bouwt je om
Dus kijk terug en zoek de oorsprong die de slavendrijvers van ons af hebben gepakt voor een voorsprong
Op onze rug te bouwen dankzij slavernij
Maar ik moet me rustig houden ook al zit de haat in mij! Huh!
Hoe kan ik rust behouden als ik naar me naasten kijk en zie dat zij de laagste zijn van de hele Nederlandse maatschappij
En waarom falen wij en slagen zij, en waarom zijn de grootste hypocriete parasieten op de aarde rijk

“I have been feeling for years what I couldn’t prove
Now I tell facts and hear people think: Shut up!
No! You trust the source, keep yourself stupid
When he tells you that your story started on Curaçao
You can’t find a solution to a wrong equation
We were robbed of our past, diamonds, gold and bronze
We lost our way and that is true for old and young
And that is why most of my people treat women that way
I compare slave keepers with mechanics
Because he [the mechanic] steals you away,
Dismantles you and remakes you in a different way
So look back and search for the origin those slave keepers took away from us
To build progress on our backs thanks to slavery
But I have to keep calm, even though this hate is in me! Huh!
How can I keep calm when I look at the ones near me
And see that they are the lowest in Dutch society
And why do we fail and they succeed
And why are the biggest hypocritical parasites on Earth rich?

[...]

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Zorg dat je slim bent, en je begin kent, want we zijn sterk
Maar we zijn kennis kwijtgeraakt in het tijdperk.
Vandaar dat je vanzelf die mentaliteit erft

[...] Je ziet niet wat er anders kan vandaar dat het niet anders is
Kennis breekt het slot van je mentale gevangenis,
Hoe wil je vrij zijn als je niet weet dat je gevangen zit
Nu ben je alleen een statistiek dus wees je zelf bewust van welk pad je kiest
Zorg maar dat je je zelf in een vak verdiept zo dat je niet de naam van je ras verziekt, je kan meer zijn dan een tasjesdief en goed in meer dingen zijn dan atletiek en hang niet rond met die zwakke peeps die alleen maar met je chillen voor je hasj en wiet
Vroeger was ik verloren dom en agressief
Nu schrijf ik elke keer als ik mijn kracht verlies
Ik vond me rust als ik sprak op beats
De enige vrijheid die een slaaf had was muziek!
Een oud Afrikaans gezegde luidt: 'tot dat de leeuw zijn eigen geschiedschrijver heeft, zal de jager held zijn'.
Zoek je geschiedenis op, zoek je zelf, dit is niet wie we zijn!
Blijf maar rappen over ho's, coke.

[...] Take care to be smart and know your start
Because we are tough
But we’ve lost knowledge to time
That is why you inherit that mentality
[...] You don’t see what can change, that’s why nothing changes
Knowledge breaks the locks of your mental prison
How can you want to be free if you don’t know that you’re trapped
Now you’re only a piece of statistical data, so be aware of yourself and of which path you choose
Take care to learn a trade
So you don’t screw up the name of your race
You can be more than a thief
And do well in more than sports
And don’t hang around with those weak peeps
That only chill with you for your hashish and weed
I used to be dumb and aggressive
Now I write every time I lose my power
I found my peace when I spoke to the beat
The only freedom that the slave had was his music!
An old African proverb says:
Until the lion has its own history writer, the hunter will be the hero
Search for your history, search for yourself
Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the Caribbean subject is engaged in a struggle with a sense of self-Othering and a disassociation between the self which is ‘here’ while being represented ‘there’. According to Benítez Rojo (1989), this Caribbean struggle is performed through the use of a double discourse, which is also an expression of unease with this Otherness. Benítez Rojo calls these two discourses the Profane performance and the Ritual performance. The first serves to show prowess towards the West, the other is a discourse directed towards the Caribbean and is a search for an authentic identity and a collective past, as well as a way for the Caribbean subject to confront his Otherness. The pattern of moving between two groups and two societies that I pinpointed in Fresku’s work, as well as his focus on prompting the Curaçaoan collective to (re)discover its African roots, follows the same pattern as that of Benítez Rojo’s Caribbean subject. Within his work Fresku confronts his Otherness and expresses unhappiness with the way he is represented. While he wants to represent himself, he actually does so from the perspective of the Other. To influence and change the way he is represented, he searches and promotes the search for an atavistic past through his music.

In the quote above, Fresku negotiates a flexible discourse of Curaçaoanness in which he incorporates the idea of a common lost
past and identity of ‘his people’. This discourse is based on a perception of Curaçaoan identity as Afro-centric. The purported loss of an authentic Afro-Curaçaoan identity is used to explain the position of people such as himself, between the Netherlands and Curaçao. He both denounces what he perceives to be current discourses on Curaçaoan history and identity and constructs a discourse of truth, uncovering what he perceives to be the true, lost and purposefully hidden identity of Curaçaoans.

The discourse of a Curaçaoan identity constructed by Fresku is similar to the Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse promoted through the cultural policy on Curaçao that I discussed in the previous chapter, which involves an atavistic origin and a lost identity and history. Similarly to the discourse in the policy document Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental, geared towards a freedom of the mind, Fresku’s discourse on Curaçaoan identity presupposes a crippling way of thinking, inherited by black Curaçaoans due to colonialism, slavery and racism. Similar to the discourse used on Curaçao, Fresku’s discourse presents Curaçaoans as a people in crisis suffering of social problems due to a ‘mental slavery’.

While in ‘Vrijheid’ Fresku still stresses the group’s own responsibility to escape this ‘mental slavery’, he also puts the blame on the Dutch and Dutch society. He explicitly links the way black Curaçaoans are portrayed today back to slavery and the colonial past. Simultaneously, he argues that a lack of history and self-knowledge has made Curaçaoans who they are today, thus himself subscribing to the negative representation of Curaçaoans he denounces. For Curaçaoans to change, Fresku feels that this part of Dutch history needs to be
addressed and the ‘truth’ must be told. He links empowerment and the acquiring of agency to the expression of this truth. This means that his music becomes a tool to achieve agency and empower Curaçaoans.

Fresku’s use of music as a way to empower and achieve change has its challenges. Fresku’s role as ‘truth teller’ is a problematic one and again positions him between groups. The success or failure of Fresku’s constructed discourse is reflected in the reception by Curaçaoan and Dutch groups. Fresku finds that “some Antilleans find it hard to accept that that’s what my music is about.” He says, “That’s why nowadays I write differently, less explicitly. Like the song ‘Nos Baranka’ (Our Rock). I include my message without pointing fingers. By telling a story about someone who falls into the trap of slave behavior” (Vasquez 2011). Fresku struggles to find a way between being Dutch and being Curaçaoan and expresses a feeling of belonging to both groups. In another interview he confesses:

“Met 'Slaven gedrag' was ik heel kritisch naar Antillianen toe waardoor ik heel erg [...] Op gegeven moment beginnen mensen je bijna te zien als een soort van… je weet toch? Iemand die zijn eigen volk haat. Terwijl ik een keitrotse Antilliaan ben. Met Vrijheid heb ik juist te veel vanuit dat ‘Ze Ze Ze’ ding gepraat. Ik heb nou een beetje dat leren objectief te schrijven… heb ik heel erg geleerd om iets te schrijven, niet vanuit een {kijkt boos} 'Ik voel me hier zo over en hun behandelen mij zo'. Want zodra je zegt hun, dat klinkt ook racistisch, snap je? Ik zou het niet fijn vinden als een Hollander praat over Antillianen en zegt ‘hun hun hun’, ‘jullie jullie jullie’. Dat komt bij mij racistisch over. En ik heb daar heel erg… je weet toch? Daarover zitten denken van nee, je moet dat anders doen als je over dit soort zaken praat wat toch wel best wel gevoelig ligt bij iedereen. Dan moet je vanuit feiten praten, ja? Dit is er gebeurd en dit zijn de gevolgen, klaar. Daar kan je niet omheen.”
“With ‘Slave Behavior’ I was very critical towards Antilleans, that is why […]
People start seeing you almost as a type of... you know? Someone who hates his people. While I’m a very proud Antillean. With ‘Freedom’ I talked too much from a ‘They, they, they’ position. Now I’ve learned to write more objectively... I’ve learned to write something not from [looks angry], ‘I feel this way about something and they treat me like this’. Because whenever you say ‘They’ you sound racist, get it? I wouldn’t like it if a Dutch man talks about Antilleans and says ‘They, they, they’ Ýou, you, you’. That strikes me as racist. And […] I have, you know… I have thought about this a lot and thought, no, you need to do this differently, when you’re talking about these issues that are pretty sensitive for everybody. Then you have to talk about facts, OK? This happened and these are the consequences. That’s it. You can’t deny that” (Faceculture 2011).

While with the criticism in ‘Slaven gedrag’ Fresku places himself outside the group and challenges the group to change, with ‘Vrijheid’ he tries to redeem himself and present the other side of the story. The focus in ‘Vrijheid’ lies more on the way Curaçaoans have been represented and on their loss of identity. In this song he constructs himself as part of the group.

These two songs represent the search for a solution to Otherness. Fresku moves between on the one hand a need to belong to the West and escape the negative connotations linked to being perceived as Other and on the other hand a need to embrace Otherness through a positive and empowering discourse on black Curaçaoan identity. While ‘Slave Behavior’ and ‘Freedom’ presuppose a mental slavery and a need to break from this mental slavery, they also represent Fresku’s own journey as he constructs a discourse of Curaçaoan identity and a search for belonging to both an Afro-Curaçaoan
collective and Dutch society. Fresku embodies the sense of alienation of the Caribbean being which I discussed in the first chapter. My analysis of Fresku’s case shows a flexible attitude towards Curaçaoan identity within his music as a way to escape Otherness (Benítez Rojo 1989). While he constructs a mainly Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse, Fresku simultaneously engages with a double Diaspora; both African and transnational Curaçaoan. He searches in his work for a way to empower himself and other Curaçaoans while constructing a place for himself within both Curaçaoan and Dutch society. At the same time his quest for agency takes place within a racialized regime of representation framework in which Fresku constructs Curaçaoans as Other (Hall et al. 1996, 1997).

Both establishing a sense of belonging to the Afro-Curaçaoan group and empowering this group through alternately denouncing and revaluing of the Afro-Curaçaoan prove to be key within Fresku’s negotiation of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity. The sense of disjointedness and double consciousness (Du Bois 1903, Gilroy 1993) caused by Curaçaoan colonial past and transnationalism results in a movement between perspectives which also allow Fresku to negotiate Afro-Curaçaoan identity in his own flexible manner. Although Fresku partly taps into the same discourse as the Curaçaoan policy document Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental, Fresku’s embeddedness in the Dutch social context adds an extra dimension to the consequences of Dutch colonialism and the slave trade. His position in Dutch society gives immediacy to the story, since he perceives his group as being in a lower position in Dutch society. Fresku’s Afro-Curaçaoan identity is thus constructed in direct
relation to Curaçaoan transnationalism and a white power that constructs and influences prevalent discourses on collective identities. The emancipation of the mind and change of behavior of Afro-Curaçaoans that Fresku argues for, is also needed to change their and his current position in Dutch society. Curaçaoans must change and develop personally to attain social mobility. With the mental emancipation of Curaçaoans, Fresku himself would also attain social mobility. Both ‘Slaven gedrag’ and ‘Vrijheid’ are media through which Fresku negotiates discourses on being Curaçaoan in the Netherlands. Using music as a medium to present his own view on Curaçaoans, intermingled with his personal experiences and struggles, he tries to solve both his personal issues and the social group issues as he perceives them.

Fresku simultaneously deals with belonging between two social contexts by alternately addressing two groups: Curaçaoans and the European Dutch, alternately trying to change the discourse and using this same discourse to urge them to change themselves. His project reveals an inner dilemma in which he utilizes part of the racialized regime of representation to formulate a way to escape Otherness. Fresku’s work can thus be understood as part of the quest of the Caribbean being to reconcile with his Otherness.

While the Afro-centric discourse on Curaçaoan identity is aimed at the revaluation of blackness another discourse, that of the creolized Curaçaoan identity, aims to reconcile the Curaçaoan with his postcolonial condition in a different way. In the following case study I focus on a flexible, musical negotiation of this second discourse.
Case 2: Ola Caribense

I am watching the video ‘Ola Caribense’ (Caribbean Wave) – also the name of the musical group performing – on YouTube. The uploader, journalist and TV producer Tico Vos, is a Curaçaoan celebrity in his own right. He owns the online TV station ‘Nosteve’ (Our TV) on which he reports on cultural activities concerning Curaçaoans in the Netherlands. Many of his videos are available both on the Nosteve site and on YouTube. His compilation of this particular performance by the Ola Caribense group shows a cellist sitting in a stately room performing a solo rendition of ‘E Mariposa’ (The Butterfly), a song by Curaçaoan composers Joseph Sickman Corsen and Jacobo Palm. The cellist sways to the music, eyes closed. Obviously enraptured by her own play, she then opens her eyes, smiles at the audience and nods in satisfaction. A violinist, an Asian girl, stands in the background, listening to the music. The scene changes and more musicians join in. They are playing ‘Abo so’ (Only You), a waltz considered one of the classics of Antillean traditional music. The camera shows a tableau portraying European, Latin American and Caribbean as well as African musical influences: a cello player, a violinist, a flutist, a percussionist playing the raspu, which is later exchanged for maracas, a pianist, a cuatro player and a bass player. Used mostly in popular Curaçaoan and Caribbean music, the raspu is a percussion instrument which makes a rather harsh rasping sound. This handsomely dressed raspu player plays his instrument with remarkable subtlety and care, as befits the setting and the music.
The room in which they are performing is elegant, decorated with works of art, and the performance itself is graceful and sedate. The eyes of the flutist, violinist and pianist are fixed on sheet music. This too is unusual for performances involving Curaçaoan popular traditional music. The songs may be familiar to any Curaçaoan, but the performance is far from common. Not only does the musical performance have an elite quality to it, so does the audience visible in the background. All present are smartly dressed. A close-up of the audience, most of whom are white or light-skinned, shows a former minister of Curaçao in the Netherlands standing next to two girls, one of whom he hugs, while all savor the musical performance and ambience. Some other well-known Curaçaoans are also present, for example a member of a family known for their excellent musicians and composers of Curaçaoan classical music. After a while the scene in the ‘Ola Caribense’ YouTube video changes again. The camera now shows the ensemble and audience in the midst of a fast and uplifting piece. Although Ola Caribense is indeed performing another traditional piece, the piece itself, or rather its origins give me pause. I recognize the notes of ‘El diablo suelto’, a famous Venezuelan joropo. The Ola Caribense concept consists of an organization and a group of (amateur) musicians working in the Netherlands under the leadership of Curaçaoan founder and pianist Adillée Praag. The ensemble performs what they themselves define as traditional Antillean or Curaçaoan music. In interview on RNW (Radio Netherlands Worldwide) for their Antillean listeners, Praag was asked what classical or typical Caribbean music is. In her answer she explained that they play danceable music such as dansa, mazurka, waltz, tumba,
danson, pasillo. Then she added that they also play real classical music or so-called kamermuziek (Den Spòtlait 2010). 58

On the Ola Caribense website, www.olacaribense.nl, they state that they perform “traditional party and so-called kamermuziek from her (Praag’s) native island in a different way.” The video indeed shows how the Ola Caribense performance of specifically traditional party music takes on a very different form from more common, popular renditions of those pieces. The musical choices all underscore a certain elite feel to their performance: the inclusion of a Venezuelan piece, instruments, the use of sheet music by the musicians, the location and the pairing of ‘party music’ with European-style chamber music.

The Discourse of a Musical Curaçaoan Identity

The Ola Caribense foundation, which is linked to the ensemble, has the express goal of promoting Caribbean music in general and traditional music from the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao) in particular. In interviews Praag has repeatedly expressed her desire to keep the music of her birth island (Curaçao) alive. The preservation of this type of music as Curaçaoan heritage is key for Ola Caribense (Den Spòtlait 2010). In the previously mentioned RNW interview one of the journalists asked Praag if Antilleans should teach their children to appreciate this kind of music. She answered in the affirmative. She also declared that she had passed the love for this music on to her own son, adding that schools on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao should also

58 Chamber music.
teach children to appreciate ‘Antillean’ music. “Teach them all the kinds of types of music we have,” she said. “Introduce the children to our music and teach them so they will be very proud of it” (Den Spòtlait 2010).

From these quotes one can grasp the importance that Praag and, as a consequence, Ola Caribense, places on music as a defining element within her view on Curaçaoan identity. Praag’s answer frames Antillean music as a part of Curaçaoan culture and Curaçaoan identity which must be preserved and passed along to future generations.

She constructs a discourse similar to the one presented by Römer (1977), which I discussed in Chapter 3. In this discourse Antillean music is essential to a Curaçaoan identity. Music as an important part of Curaçaoan cultural heritage turns it into a medium to achieve a sense of belonging to the Curaçaoan group. It becomes something ‘we’ can be proud of. Music is thus not just a carrier of Curaçaoan characteristics. As I will argue below, through the Ola Caribense discourse music becomes in itself a highly flexible symbol of Curaçaoan cultural heritage and of Curaçaoan group identity, signifying both tradition and change.

**Negotiating a Flexible, Creolized and Cosmopolitan Curaçaoan Identity**

The discourse of traditional Curaçaoan music constructed by Ola Caribense is quite similar to the Curaçaoan creolized, cosmopolitan discourse that I discussed in Chapter 3, in that both view Curaçaoan identity as marked by influences from different cultures and by a
process of creolization. Cultures, languages and ethnicities are perceived as different from one another, each adding to the discourse of a ‘new’ creolized Curaçaoan identity. Similar to the concept of a creole national identity often used in the Caribbean and Latin America as a myth of origin (Thomas 2004). This discourse of Curaçaoan culture as a culture that originated through contact between cultures and developed into something uniquely Curaçaoan, results in an implied claim to cosmopolitanism.

In the Ola Caribense performance we saw that despite the emphasis on their genre being traditional Curaçaoan – sometimes referred to as Caribbean – they also performed a Venezuelan *joropo* (‘El diablo suelto’). This confirms Römer’s (1977) view of Antillean music as both related to and influenced by a number of genres and countries. In fact, Praag also argues that Venezuela and Curaçao were very much in contact in the past, which had an influence on Curaçaoan musical development (Den Spòtlait 2010). She remarks that people often think that the waltz ‘Juliana’, for example, which is very well-known on Curaçao, was composed by a Curaçaoan. This piece was, however, composed by Lionel Belasco who was born elsewhere in the Caribbean and later moved to Venezuela.

‘El diablo suelto’ is another Venezuelan piece that is well-known on Curaçao, albeit somewhat less than ‘Juliana’. By incorporating Venezuelan compositions into the traditional Curaçaoan repertoire, Ola Caribense gives life to Praag’s representation of Curaçaoan history’s interaction with Venezuela. The performance of ‘El diablo suelto’ suggests a link to Venezuela, a larger country with a better-known, well-established waltz tradition, but also to a view of
Curaçaoan identity as both creolized and cosmopolitan. It specifically refers to a discourse of a cosmopolitan Curaçaoan past.\textsuperscript{59} Although the process through which this creolized identity is constructed includes flexibility, there still exists an understanding of a single creolized history that brings Curaçaoans together and results in a coherent creole culture which ultimately unites Curaçaoans. This implies an underlying essentialist view on the idea of a creolized Curaçaoan identity. As I will argue here, the Ola Caribense creolized, cosmopolitan discourse incorporates the notion of ‘traditional’ Curaçaoan music as well as an underlying notion of an authentic, static Curaçaoan identity and culture.

On the one hand, Ola Caribense’s discourse on Curaçaoan identity refers thus to different musical genres from various cultures, it builds upon a premise of contact between cultures and on the process of creolization. In this sense it proposes an open discussion on the nature of cultural difference. It does not look for clear-cut answers to the question, “Who are we?”, but rather aims at bypassing the dichotomy between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.\textsuperscript{60} It also includes the idea of an implicit cosmopolitanism. It is, in other words, extremely flexible.

On the other hand, Ola Caribense’s discourse also envisions Curaçaoan culture as inherently multicultural and creolized with a

\textsuperscript{59} This claim to cosmopolitanism is important in both the creolized and the Afro-Curaçaoan discourses of identity. While the Afro-centric Curaçaoan identity refers to a perceived authentic black culture, a discourse of a common African ancestry and to cultural expressions originating from the African diaspora (such as hip hop culture and rap music), the creolized refers to the incorporation of a wider number of cultures, languages and ethnicities.

\textsuperscript{60} Eugenia Siapera refers to such discourses as pertaining to an alternative regime of representation and juxtaposes them to essentialist regimes of representation (Siapera 2010).
specific myth of origin. In a sense this second perspective envisions Curaçaoan identity in an essentialist manner which contains a notion of an authentic and less flexible Curaçaoan identity similar to the Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse. From this perspective, there is such a thing as traditional, authentic Curaçaoan music which is representative of Curaçaoan identity.

As I mentioned before, Praag sees the introduction of change as one of the ways to preserve traditional Curaçaoan music. She tries to realize this preservation by purposefully inviting young musicians to join the group, allowing for adaptations to the music and including musicians of different origins in the group, with the goal of introducing Antillean music to as many non-Antilleans as possible.

The incorporation of outside influences may seem incongruent with their discourse of this genre as traditional and as a symbol for a specific Curaçaoan group identity. However, both Ola Caribense’s discourse of Curaçaoan identity and their discourse of Curaçaoan traditional music are powered by the discourse of a creolized, cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity, that already allows for flexibility. Ola Caribense’s resulting transnational construction of a Curaçaoan identity goes a step further and is imbued with a sense of cosmopolitanism which does not just allow for, but in fact requires the inclusion of flexibility and change.

While belonging, tradition and authenticity are emphasized, change and flexibility are also presented as key aspects of this discourse. Change is even equated to survival.

The composition of the ensemble underscores this view, as the group consists of people of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Praag
confirms that this was a conscious choice. Their flute player is Dutch, the violinist is Japanese and the percussionist Surinamese. Praag argues that people from different backgrounds look at the music differently and add something to it. “I always say to people: do you want the music to be played as Curaçaoans do or do you want it to grow and survive?” 61

In her view, the incorporation of foreign elements into Curaçaoan traditional music changes and enriches this music. This again implies an underlying notion of an authentic, essentialist Curaçaoan musical culture and identity. It suggests that people play their music in a way true to their heritage.

Praag envisions the inclusion of newer influences, introduced by way of musicians of non-Curaçaoan cultural backgrounds, as really “changing” traditional Curaçaoan music. The choice she proposes between the music being “played as Curaçaoans do” or its change, “growth” and survival implies the loss of a certain authenticity of the music when played by non-Curaçaoans. It also suggests that outside influences will let the music grow, that is, develop positively. Staying purely Curaçaoan, however, with no outside influences, is presented as “not growing” and ultimately “dying off.” Thus the Ola Caribense experience, influenced by both the Dutch and Curaçaoan social settings, may claim their representation of Curaçaoanness as both authentic and valuable to the group in general.

In the third chapter, I showed how the discourse of Curaçaoan creolization functioned as a way to escape colonial discourses in which Curaçaoan Otherness is constructed and perceived in a negative

61 Part of a telephone interview I conducted with Praag in 2011.
manner. This Otherness is manifested through race and thus underscored by Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity. To escape from the negative connotation of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity, the discourse of a multicultural Curaçaoan identity incorporates Afro-Curaçaoan history and identity, while focusing on creolization as a determining characteristic of Curaçaoan identity. In other words, the emphasis lies on creolization. The Afro-Curaçaoan identity is still denied a significant role in this creolized discourse of Curaçaoan identity.

In Ola Caribense’s movement between on the one hand, a flexible negotiation of Curaçaoan identity and on the other hand, the need to establish themselves as a traditional and authentic part of the Diaspora, exposes a sense of double consciousness. It also points towards a search for a solution to its representation as Other. Moving between these two perspectives of a changeable identity and an essentialist, authentic identity, Ola Caribense exhibits a flexible attitude towards identity construction. This flexible attitude allows Ola Caribense to engage with the double Diaspora. Instead of the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture, Ola Caribense’s discourse proposes the embracing of the creolization process. This process is taken to continue, providing Ola Caribense with both a way to belong between the Netherlands and Curaçao and a way to escape the negative connotations of being Other.

While the Ola Caribense creolized cosmopolitan discourse carries an implicit connotation of an authentic essential Curaçaoan identity which is partly static, it also proposes flexibility and change as ways to negotiate belonging and search for a solution to Otherness. Their
performances are in this sense empowering as they function as a way to influence the way Curaçaoan-ness is represented.

**Negotiating Authenticity and Social Class**

The discourse on Curaçaoan identity constructed by Ola Caribense allows for an openness to change and calls for flexibility, it also includes the concept of authenticity that I discussed above. This issue of authenticity is directly linked to the idea of social class and, more indirectly, to the concept of ‘race’ and to representations of Curaçaoan identity which are framed by a racialized regime of representation. In the case of Ola Caribense the idea of being authentically Curaçaoan is connected to their ability to perform not only higher-, but also middle– and lower-class music. Again, historically, ‘lower class’ has been related to African heritage within Curaçaoan society (De Jong: 2006; Hoetink 1958).

In an interview I conducted with Praag, she indicated that Ola Caribense uses the term traditional Curaçaoan to refer to the music they perform because they want to include the tumba, a popular Afro-Curaçaoan genre, and not only waltzes and such –which are more linked to the elite.62 I have, however, noted that their performances tend to be a specific elite rendition of this traditional or popular music with an emphasis on chamber music. According to Praag, this type of music is better suited to a calm environment where the emotional charge invested in the music by the musician can better be appreciated. She emphasized that she is also capable of playing a

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62 I conducted a telephone interview with Praag in 2011.
merengue and has in fact played in noisier circumstances. She just prefers this calmer type of music.

Her insistence suggests a need to assert that she still is the ‘real deal’, a true Curaçaoan, despite the fact that her group chooses to play chamber music, which in her own words borders on classical music. The need to establish a link between their work and ‘true Curaçaoanness’, that is, traditionally more popular music and Afro-Curaçaoan genres, shows a desire to be validated and considered part of the Curaçaoan group. It is an indirect engagement with an Afro-Curaçaoan heritage. The negotiation within Ola Caribense’s performances thus relates to the representation of Curaçaoans as Other and to the valorization of Afro-Curaçaoan heritage.

This was confirmed when, in my interview with Praag, the issues of class and breaking through stereotypes and preconceived ideas also arose. Praag explained to me that when she says that Ola Caribense plays traditional Curaçaoan music, people expect them to come in playing a danceable piece. The perception of Caribbean music is thus framed by notions of corporeality, parties, superficial cheer as well as ‘lower’ culture. Praag said she wants to break with the expectations that people have, proving that there is also such a thing as classical Curaçaoan music done in a professional manner. The skill level of her musicians is, she told me, quite high. Many of them are professionals with degrees of higher education, or students. She stressed the European roots of this type of music.

Ola Caribense’s attempt to assert Curaçaoan culture as connected to a generally more highly valued white European culture reveals acknowledgement of the racialized regime of representation in the
contexts in which they find themselves. Nonetheless, while trying to change the way Curaçaoans are represented, Ola Caribense also works within the same racialized framework. They express a double consciousness that leads them to notions of class which are linked to Afro-Curaçaoan music, as I discussed above.

In the Ola Caribense creolized cosmopolitan discourse, they formulate an identification with different social groups. Popular music, signifying a connection to middle and lower social classes, is performed next to chamber music, which is connected to higher classes. The identification of the group with a specific cosmopolitan Curaçaoanness adds to its prestige. Through their performances they formulate an attachment to both elements as part of being Curaçaoan. They express a broad concept of Curaçaoanness in which affiliations with all of these different social groups play a part, such as being part of the elite, having European connections, connections with the ‘authentic’ —often Afro-Curaçaoan— popular or lower and middle class, being cosmopolitan, being part of the Caribbean or Latin America. This all adds to a musical performance imagined as simultaneously traditional and new. By introducing their own performed views on being Curaçaoan and on Curaçaoan heritage, they carve out a place for Ola Caribense and its founder —who are based outside the homeland— within the Curaçaoan group as well as the Dutch multicultural discourse. Through their performance, they show that they belong. Yet, it must be stressed that, however subtly, the creolized discourse still denies some of the importance of the Afro-Curaçaoan element, portraying it as only one of the many influences throughout history. The negotiation of social class is interlinked with
the search for authenticity and the need to belong both to the West and to the Curaçaoan community it refers to. Ola Caribense’s discursive construction is thus an engagement with the double Diaspora. On the one hand it addresses the Curaçaoan transnational in-between position, on the other hand it engages with the question of African heritage and postcolonial issues of Otherness. In contrast to the Afro-Curaçaoan discourse, the Ola Caribense creolized/cosmopolitan discourse addresses postcolonial double consciousness in a roundabout manner; by flexible constructing and redefining issues such as tradition, authenticity and social class.

Ola Caribense’s construction of a creolized identity including their multicultural and cosmopolitan views, while still maintaining a sense of authenticity, reveals an implicit engagement with the position of Curaçaoans within the postcolonial world and a search to escape their Otherness. It reveals a need to defend their authenticity and belonging to the Curaçaoan community and emphasize the validity of their specific discourse of creolized and cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity. Simultaneously, their formulation of a creolized and cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity works flexibly in the sense that it alternately rejects and subverts the discourse of Curaçaoans as the Other.

I discussed the historical link between the expression of belonging to Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity and being perceived as belonging to a lower social class within Curaçaoan society. Otherness, or belonging in the margins, is represented through the racialized regime of representation as linked to blackness and to a lower status. By negotiating their identity between blackness and whiteness Ola Caribense performs the same move I described within the Curaçaoan
discursive construction of a creolized identity on the island. They attempt to both be ‘authentic’ and evade the negative connotations linked to blackness and Otherness. In this sense this creolized discourse also engages with their place within, or at least in relation to, an African Diaspora. Furthermore, as I discussed through this case, Ola Caribense also engages with the Curaçaoan transnational Diaspora in their preoccupation with authenticity as a way to show belonging. Through their flexibility in constructing their own version of Curaçaoan identity they exhibit the empowerment of the group and promote social mobility of Curaçaoans within Dutch society. In the final case, the Afro-Curaçaoan and creolized discourses are brought together within the performance of one artist: Izaline Calister.

**Case 3: Calister’s Performance**

On October 9th 2010, the eve of the birth of Curaçao as a country within the Dutch Kingdom, Curaçaoan performer Izaline Calister – who resides in the Netherlands – published the video-clip ‘Mensaje’ (Message) on YouTube. In this video clip she negotiates a Curaçaoan identity in images, sound and text. Calister is the perfect example of a performer whose work engages with both the African Diaspora and the modern Curaçaoan Diaspora in a transnational setting. She appeals to the listener’s sense of nationalism and refers, amongst other things, to her previous work and to herself, making her

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63 The timing of her message adds to its meaning: Calister’s clip is uploaded at a pivotal moment for the Curaçaoan community: on October the 10th 2010, the day after Calister’s video clip was launched online, the Caribbean island of Curaçao formally ceased to be part of the Dutch Antilles as the Antilles, as a formal, political structure consisting of five islands, was disbanded.
own past as a performer and her feelings with regard to being a member of the Curaçaoan collective relevant to her message. Calister’s performance of a discourse on Curaçaoan identity thus transcends the actual performance in the video clip and involves a distinct personal aspect. It moves between on– and off-stage performance and includes not only the social and historical context, but also herself, the messenger, in the formulation of her collective Curaçaoan identity discourse. Before focusing on the ‘Mensage’ video clip, I will briefly discuss Calister’s performances in general.

As an artist successful both in the Netherlands and on Curaçao, within both the Curaçaoan and Dutch communities, and even internationally, Calister’s performances illuminate the process of negotiating Curaçaoan identity and belonging in a transnational context. In her performances, Calister constructs a perfect union from a wide variety of diverse cultural elements. In her music she frequently uses traditional Curaçaoan genres such as the popular Afro-Curaçaoan genres: tambú -traditionally linked to a black lower class- as well as tumba and seú. She also incorporates creolized genres such as the Curaçaoan waltz, linked to a white Dutch or Jewish higher class. By mixing these genres she is not only able to showcase the diversity of Curaçaoan music, but also to revalue the popular tambú. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this specific genre is linked to the Afro-Curaçaoan history of repression, and despite the government’s focus on Afro-Curaçaoan cultural revaluation, tambú is often still seen as a lower form of culture. By switching between the tambú and the Curaçaoan waltz, Calister works to support the revaluation of the
tambú as well as the popularization of the waltz, presenting them both as part of her view on Curaçaoan culture.

Next to traditional Curaçaoan music, she also performs Curaçaoan popular music and a variety of hybrid rhythms that incorporate jazz and various Latin genres, often presented in a new format in which the influence of Curaçaoan traditional music and musical instruments can be recognized. Instruments such as the *kachu* and *tambú* (cow horn and drums), originally used by Curaçaoan slaves, are used in her music in innovative ways, showing not only their value but also their versatility. The revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan elements is complemented by her use of jazz. By using jazz, she taps into a positive image of jazz music as both valuable and black, and into the image of the black subject in general as a musically creative being. This links the Afro-Curaçaoan to a broader, positively valued black group. In the same way she links Curaçaoan identity to Latin-American culture by mixing Latin and Curaçaoan influences. Typically, the lyrics to her music are in Papiamentu, an important symbol of Curaçaoan creolization. She thus puts forward an image of Curaçaoan music as flexible, eclectic and cosmopolitan, while giving special attention to a revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan heritage.

Calister displays a sense of flexibility, showing both differences and similarities as she switches between Afro-influenced Curaçaoan, European, jazz, and Latin genres, all within a creolized Curaçaoan identity. During stage performances her body is also used flexibly. She plays with different images, using, subverting and deconstructing them. By performing barefoot, for example, she adds a sensual, sentient character to the performance and to making music, playing
with the image of the black body’s closeness to music and to the earth. Often dressed in either an African-style wrap dress that is not necessarily linked to Curaçaoan traditional dress or flowing garments, she plays with images of African, Caribbean and Latin American dress. Her ‘exotic’ appearance is emphasized by the use of ethnic accessories such as wooden bracelets or flowers in her hair. Her movements on stage also engage strongly with the audience; she often emphasizes her dress and her unprocessed hair by pulling on the hem of the dress or moving her head back and forth quickly, letting her hair stand out. Through her performance she positions the black body in all its mythic imagery and gives it a sense of pride linked both to being of African descent and being creolized.

Performing a Message

A look at Calister’s ‘Mensage’ video clip, prompted by the birth of Curaçao as a new country in 2010, shows a monologue in which Calister openly constructs a creolized discourse of Curaçaoan identity. In the clip Calister stands on a hill with a view overlooking the Curaçaoan capital, Willemstad, while holding her baby daughter Victoria. She simultaneously introduces her daughter to Curaçao, and expresses her views on Curaçaoans and Curaçaoan culture. ‘Mensage’ shows the poetic, compelling image of Calister and her baby in the midst of greenery, interacting and taking in the surroundings. These powerfully symbolic images, expressing the bond between mother and
child, human and environment, nature and city, alternate with shots of the city center, Curaçaoan nature, people and the national flag.\textsuperscript{64} The timing of Calister’s message combined with the fact that back then Curaçao was in the midst of debates on national identity and on revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture, lead to an understanding of Calister’s message as a possible commentary on these issues. This is corroborated if we look at the textual content of ‘Mensage’ where Calister delivers a monologue directed both towards her baby and Curaçaoan society. Within her monologue, Calister constructs a history of Curaçaoan people and describes a path Curaçaoans are to follow for the betterment of the community as a whole.

In ‘Mensage’ Calister not only refers to a broader Curaçaoan or Dutch political, social and historical context, but interestingly enough, she also implicitly includes her own artistic past and personal context. To better understand the video clip ‘Mensage’ as a message, we need to take into account Calister’s own trajectory as an artist and specifically her earlier song and video clip, ‘Mi Pais’ (My Country), that is embedded within ‘Mensage’. Although in ‘Mensage’ Calister does not sing the actual lyrics to the song ‘Mi Pais’, the use of the track to ‘Mi Pais’ in itself sends a powerful message. ‘Mi Pais’ originally appeared the year before ‘Mensage’ on Calister’s 2009 CD ‘Speransa’ (Hope) and became a hit on the island. The lyrics to ‘Mi Pais’ express Calister’s love and concern for her country and exude a strong sense

\textsuperscript{64} The image of mother and child in particular seems to refer to the issue of 'being Curaçaoan' as this is one of the key themes in Calister's message. In the local language; Papiamentu, the Curaçaoan is referred to as a 'Child of Curaçao' (Yu di Kòrsou) or Child of the Country/Earth (Yu di tera). As discussed in Chapter 3, this is a recurring image within constructions of collective Curaçaoan identity.
of nationalism. The song is also linked to Curaçaoan national identity through its own video clip. The original video clip for ‘Mi Pais’ was subsidized by the main organization on the island dedicated to the promotion of Curaçaoan tourism, the Curaçao Tourist Board (CTB). The CTB is a non-governmental organization that has been involved in the active development of a positive and recognizable image of the island and its culture through international promotional campaigns, including the production and distribution of promotional tourist short films. Their subsidy of the original ‘Mi Pais’ clip implies a link between Curaçaoan collective identity and the images featured in the clip of Calister strolling through the historical parts of Willemstad, on a Curaçaoan beach, and the like, while singing the ‘Mi Pais’ song. Knowledge of the context surrounding ‘Mi Pais’, combined with an analysis of the lyrics themselves, allows us to understand ‘Mi Pais’ as a song marked by a Curaçaoan nationalist discourse. The combination of patriotic rhetoric in the song text, the accompanying images in the ‘Mi Pais’ clip and the backing of the CTB, show ‘Mi Pais’ to be imbued with a strong sense of ethnocentrism. This adds to our understanding of the nationalistic undertones of ‘Mensaje’.

In Calister’s more recent video clip, ‘Mensaje’, which was, as I mentioned earlier, presented on the eve of Curaçao’s birth as an independent country within the Kingdom, the instrumental track to this earlier song, ‘Mi Pais’, plays softly in the background. Unvoiced, the nationalist and personal lyrics of ‘Mi Pais’ are present in ‘Mensaje’ as a subtext, embedded through the recognizable beat of the accompanying track. For the Curaçaoan listener, who has, most likely, been repeatedly exposed to the popular original track of ‘Mi
Pais’, this song is bound to elicit the memory of its –at that moment unsung– lyrics:

| “Mi pais ta un lugá chikitu Ku un historia riku [...] Ta mi isla i e ta interesante Ku bista impaktante I partinan dañá.” | “My country is a very small place With a rich history [...] It’s my island and it is interesting With stunning views... And damaged parts too” (Izalinecalister.com). |

The embedding of ‘Mi Pais’ within ‘Mensage’ not only elicits the specific representation of Curaçao constructed in this song, but also serves as a carrier of the nationalist subtext and as a reminder of Calister’s role as a celebrated Curaçaoan performer, as well as of her love for her country.65 If the viewer is able to contextualize the ‘Mensage’ video by engaging knowledge of Calister’s role in the representation of ‘Curaçaoan culture’, she can better understand the extent of Calister’s message in the 2010 ‘Mensage’ video clip. The image of Calister herself as the messenger is therefore key in this clip: by superimposing her textual message on the implicitly nationalist ‘Mi Pais’ music, she builds her epistemic authority to more convincingly deliver her message. Calister both constructs a Curaçaoan identity by reiterating the aspects of being Curaçaoan that she values –this process is also characterized by a negotiation between performer and audience– and negotiates to establish her belonging to

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65 The Curaçaoan government declared 2009 to be the 'Year of Culture' on the island and asked Calister to compose and perform a theme song to represent and celebrate Curaçaoan culture (Izalinecalister.com).
the group. One way in which she does this is by emphasizing her own Curaçaoanness through her lyrics:

| “Mi pais ta un isla hopi dushi kaminda mi lombrishi pa semper ta derá.” | “My island is a lovely place, where my umbilical cord forever lies” (Izalinecalister.com). |

This particularly intimate image of a visceral connection to the island is often used by Curaçaoans. It refers to an old custom and carries the meaning of a powerful bond with the island: Curaçaoans as children of the island remain forever connected to their island/mother through the image of the umbilical cord.

By reaffirming at the end of her verse that she will forever be linked to the island, Calister claims her position within the collective and emphasizes her loyalty, despite the critical aspect of her previous description of Curaçao, “with damaged parts too.” Here, the artist herself becomes part of the negotiation of a Curaçaoan identity discourse. Through her performance of a collective Curaçaoan identity discourse, she also constructs her individual subjectivity and places herself as a transnational Curaçaoan in relation to the group. Implicitly, she negotiates the answer to questions such as: Do I belong to the group? (Am I Curaçaoan?) What does the group look like? (What does it mean to be a Curaçaoan?).

The construction of a Curaçaoan collective identity discourse involves a negotiation between the individual and the collective in which the subject’s agency also plays an important role. As I discussed through Calister’s ‘Mensage’, Calister’s personal context may add to our
understanding of her performance of a specific Curaçaoan discourse. In this chapter I used this approach, including not only the structural social and political context, but also the roles of the performer as vital to understanding the negotiation of discourses of Curaçaoan identity.

**Performing an Afro-Creolized Curaçaoan Discourse**

Calister not only positions herself as part of the transnational Curaçaoan community, she also addresses the Afro-Curaçaoan Diaspora and the issue of double consciousness through her performance. In ‘Mensaje’ she first constructs a discourse of a creolized Curaçaoan identity based on the myth of multicultural origins. However, this creolized discourse also integrates and emphasizes the Afro-Curaçaoan discourse. Similar to the way Calister moves between the images of a Caribbean creolized identity and an Afro-centric identity within her performances in general, in this specific monologue she also draws attention to the slavery past and to Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity. In her message she declares to her baby daughter:

"Victoria, wak rònt di bo, esaki t’e pais nobo Kòrsou
[...]
Mi t’ei siñabo di indjannan, di portugesnan, spañonan, hulandesnan.
Di tur e hendenan ku di un of otro manera a bin buska nan felisidat i “Victoria, look around, this is the new country of Curaçao
[...]
I am going to teach you about the native Americans, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch
About all the people that in one way or another came to find their
fortuna aki, den brasa di mama Kòrsou.
Mi t’ei kontabo historianan tristu iduru di tempu di katibu.
[...] Nos isla ku ta tantu interesante,
Speshalmente pasobra tin asina tantu influensha ku a haña un suela riku pa nan floresé riba dje.
Nos por disfrutá di lo mehor ku mundu tin di ofresé
Nos ta ku’ê kambi’ê na nos smak, I hasi’ê di nos.
Si nos realisá esei i haña un bon manera pa utilisá esei na nos benefisio,
No tin límite pa loke nos por realisá den e mundi aki.”

happiness and fortune in the arms of Mother Curaçao
I’m going to tell you sad and difficult stories of slavery times
[...] Our island that is so interesting,
Especially because it has so many influences that found a rich ground to blossom
We can enjoy the best that the world has to offer
We take it and change it to our taste and make it ours
If we realize this and find a good way to use this to our advantage,
There is no limit to what we can achieve in this world”
(TeleCuracao Multimedia 2010b).

The overall description of Curaçaoan society and culture Calister presents in her monologue paints a broad picture of Curaçao as a diverse, creolized place, where people of all races and cultures “in one way or another came to find their happiness and fortune in the arms of Mother Curaçao.”

Rather than directly emphasizing Afro-Curaçaoanness and a problematic postcolonial situation, she proposes quite an idealized account of Curaçaoan reality in which Curaçaoans are portrayed as siblings. People from different origins, races and cultures are all valued as Yu di Kòrsou (Child of Curaçao), that is, as children to the
loving Mother Curaçao. In view of the denomination *yu’i Kòrsou* (child of Curaçao), the image of mother and child used by Calister in the video seems especially powerful.

Following this description of Curaçao and Curaçaoans, Calister goes on to position her daughter within this diverse and creolized reality as another daughter of Curaçao. “A people that cover the whole spectrum of rainbow colors. That’s what’s great about Curaçao, you know? You yourself are a perfect fit between all these colors,” she says, referring to her daughter’s biracial and bicultural heritage – her daughter’s father being white, European Dutch – and her position between Curaçaoan and Dutch social contexts. In this scene issues of race and parent-child relationships are interrelated with the construction of a collective Curaçaoan identity.

The theme of parent-child relationship figures in both Fresku’s- and Calister’s case. In their artistic expressions, the relationship to Curaçao and The Netherlands is reflected through the images of either child, like in Fresku’s case, or parent, like in Izaline’s case above. In both cases these parent-child relationships carry the underlying understanding of race as an important topic underpinning Curaçaoan collective identity.

In the case of Calister she presents Curaçao first and foremost as multicultural: Curaçao as mother to many races. As I discussed earlier, in Fresku’s representations Curaçao stands primarily for an African slavery past, representing thus black suffering while the image of the Netherlands holds the European roots/whiteness and colonial

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66 In Calister’s case there is also an interplay between the images of Calister herself as a mother, and simultaneously as a child to Mother Curaçao and of Curaçao as mother to both Calister and Victoria.
dominion. There does not seem to be much room for ambivalence in this equation. In this discourse Curaçao is not the benevolent mother as constructed by Calister. Rather, it is the country of the father and is represented as a place of poverty and struggle as shown in the quote below. The male figures, which are mostly used here to describe Curaçao, are represented as unloving or linked to a life of crime:

“Domino spelende ouwe mannen met gouden tanden beleven elke dag hetzelfde terwijl Curaçao verandert. Goeie jongens die met stoute hangen rond oude panden. Sloven zichzelf uit voor mannen die niet houden van ze. Worden opgeruid van waarom ben je zo'n bange. En slikken bolletjes om te vliegen naar koude landen om die doekoe gauw te vangen” (Hooliganrap 2011).

“Men playing dominos with gold teeth stay the same, day in day out, while Curaçao changes. Good boys hanging out with bad ones around old buildings, doing their best for men who don’t love them. They are taunted: ‘Why are you such a scaredy-cat?’ Swallowing drug pellets to fly to cold countries to earn that money fast.”

The harmonious message and idyllic formulation found in Calister’s performance stands thus in stark contrast to the one found in the case of Fresku. In his case the image of both parents is fraught with ambivalence. The Dutch mother and Curacaöan father are potent dual figures symbolizing a struggle between acceptance and rejection. Conversely, in Calister’s case, the image of the mother in particular is centralized as a positive binding element to construct and cement collective identity.
Within the Curaçaoan community the link between Mother Curaçao and her children is emphasized by an often used reference to the physical bond between child and mother through the umbilical cord. Calister also uses this image in a song I discussed earlier:

| “Mi pais ta un isla hopi dushi kaminda mi lombrishi pa semper ta derá.” | “My island is a lovely place. where my umbilical cord forever lies” (Izalinecalister.com). |

Here, Curaçao as a mother is represented as benign, loving and accepting. Within Calister’s image of Curaçao/ mother, race is present but does not cause exclusion. Rather, it can simultaneously refer to a Afro-Diaspora and multiculturalism, displaying an idea of moldeability connected to the mother figure. Interestingly, the notion of unbreakable bond through the umbilical cord also carries with it a kind of reciprocity. It is not only the mother who is loving and accepting, the child is always indebted and tied to this mother through a carnal bond.

Looking at this video it becomes evident that Calister tries to add to the perception of the Curaçaoan collective identity by expressing her own version of a Curaçao history and of Curaçaoans. In her speech she constructs an image of Curaçao as she wishes it to be. Calister’s message is of special interest because it not only conveys how she wishes Curaçao to be, it also carries her implied view of current Curaçaoan society.
“Victoria, look around, this is the new country of Curaçao
An impressive, colorful island with happy, elegant, contrasting, creative people
A people that cover the whole spectrum of rainbow colors
That’s what’s great about Curaçao, you know?
You yourself are a perfect fit between all these colors
Thank god Curaçao has proved to be a mother with warm, generous arms
Full of compassion for her children who came searching for a better life with her
All that love her and work for her, without regard for color, social position or descent
Your mother is a proud part of this rich culture
I can’t wait to teach you the songs I grew up with
Already you do laugh when I sing ‘Ganga ganga fukuyaba’ for you
I call you tutuchi because since you were little you smiled when I sang ‘Albert’i shon rika tutuchi’ for you
Can you imagine when you are older and you yourself can sing ‘Chabelita’?
My dream is to see you open your Sweet Fifteen party with a well-danced waltz,
Like it’s supposed to be
But you have to be able to swing
I hope to see you grow and spend a great deal of your life in a country where I know you will feel at home because it’s your culture too. I hope that Curaçao will hug you as it did me and as it did your father who loved this small rock before he got to know it. Victoria, look around you: this is the new country of Curaçao. My country, your country, our country.

(TeleCuracao Multimedia 2010b)

The quote above shows that the construction of a creolized discourse within Calister’s message allows her to address a double Diaspora. She indirectly engages with postcolonial double consciousness by constructing a Curaçaoan space in which the negative connotations of Otherness are evaded through a focus on creolization as a common, inclusive origin. Calister’s specific discourse also allows for an emphasis on an Afro-centric discourse. In Calister’s envisioned Afro-creolized Curaçaoan space, tambú, representative of the black lower class, and the waltz, representative of both creolization and a European higher class, are given special attention. Within this space she still moves between a creolized identity and an Afro-centric Curaçaoan identity.
Although Calister mentions the Afro-Curaçaoan tambú in her account, she presents it as part of a larger heritage that also includes the Curaçaoan waltz. The overall image she presents is that of different cultural influences which are ‘made our own’. The artist emphasizes a mixture of cultures creating something new, as, in her message, she carves out a place for both Victoria and Victoria’s Dutch father as part of the Curaçaoan community. She does this by adding them to her discourse of the open, welcoming, Afro-creolized Curaçaoan identity. She specifically links her daughter to Curaçaoan folklore, singing traditional songs for children such as ‘Ganga fukuyaba’ and ‘Chabelita’ and dancing the Euro-Curaçaoan waltz and the Afro-Curaçaoan tambú.

Calister’s appeal is full of hope. It pertains to the construction of a Curaçaoan collective identity that includes and accepts Curaçaoans of all races on the island, but also allows Curaçaoan migrants in the Netherlands, like herself, to still be part of the transnational Curaçaoan community. In this sense, her discourse not only engages with postcolonial double consciousness, but also with belonging and being in-between due to transnationalism.

In the video the construction of this Curaçaoan identity discourse is also tackled through other, nonverbal means such as images and movement. Calister’s verbal and nonverbal expressions are used to act out certain patterns linked to notions of Curaçaoan culture and of being Curaçaoan. The image of Calister and her child is used as a tool to make the symbolic child-mother relationship between the Curaçaoan migrant and the island visible. This image of the Yu di Kòrsou made flesh specifically visualizes the migrant’s ‘rightful’
place in Curaçaoan society. The image of belonging is expanded to include the child of the migrant, who, as is the case with Calister’s daughter, may be biracial or born in the Netherlands. Thus she aims to create a place in which the migrant in the Netherlands may still be called *Yu di Kòrsou* (Child of the Island).

Calister’s message conveys the need to be included and for her and her family to be accepted into the collective and exposes a problematic aspect of transnationality; that of belonging to and dealing with two different social contexts with different sets of expectations. In this manner she also proposes an Afro-creolized solution for both the issue of a double consciousness within the community and the transnational reality of contemporary Curaçaoans.

**Proposing a Reconciliation with Otherness**

At first sight, Calister’s message in this clip appears to be a relatively apolitical construction of a quite idealistic multicultural Curaçaoan identity discourse. The issue of postcolonial relations and tensions between the Netherlands and Curaçao, and tense racial and class issues on the island itself as a consequence of the colonial past are not included outright in her construction of Curaçaoan identity.

Nonetheless, as I addressed in my thesis, the construction of a discourse on Curaçaoan collective identity is not an apolitical issue. As identity construction is the consequence of a negotiation with context, the idealistic Afro-creolized identity constructed by Calister still reflects and refers to discourses and perceptions of truth within both the Curaçaoan and Dutch context. Its focus on the need to
empower Curaçaoans and find a Curaçaoan true, hidden identity intimates the premise of a ‘lost’ Curaçaoan identity to be found and embraced by Curaçaoans and on a notion of an underlying discord within the community. Although ‘Mensage’ is presented to baby Victoria as an account of Curaçaoan reality, it is obvious from the phrasing that it simultaneously functions as the expression of Calister’s ideal Curaçao. It is an expression of Calister’s wishes for the new Curaçaoan nation. She expresses her hope that Curaçaoans “become aware of” their diverse and creolized nature and “find a good way to use this to our advantage.” The need for Curaçaoans to ‘become aware’ implies Curaçaoans are unaware of this creolized, diverse nature as a positive element. Being unaware of this has kept the community at a disadvantage.

Calister’s message thus points towards her awareness of discord with on the matter of race, diversity and collective identity within Curaçaoan society which has led to negative consequences within Curaçaoan society. In this sense Calister’s version of an Afro-creolized discourse of Curaçaoan identity also acknowledges the racialized regime of representation present within the Curaçaoan community and presents us with the issues of belonging and Otherness. Still, the main focus remains on an idealistic creolized vision of Curaçaoans. Calister’s discourse centers on what is perceived to be a strength of the Curaçaoan community within her message: a multicultural Curaçaoan origin, followed by a process of creolization. What remains implicit, but certainly present in the depiction of a diverse and creolized Curaçaoan identity in the video
clip ‘Mensage’, are the problematic aspects of current postcolonial racial and cultural relations, both within the Curaçaoan community and between Curaçao and the Netherlands.

The discord Calister alludes to does not just play a role in musical constructions of Curaçaoan identity. discussed the changes in the constitution of the Kingdom have triggered renewed efforts by the Curaçaoan government to create a well-defined, cohesive Curaçaoan national identity. The question of what this identity entails has been discussed extensively by politicians and other prominent Curaçaoans in the media; on the radio, in print and on television, but also online (Allen, 2010). This discussion is also held by the general public, especially through call-in radio and Facebook pages where prominent Curaçaoans have written manifestos on the issue, inviting the public to join the discussion.

The relationship between Curaçao and the Netherlands is one of the central points in these discussions. As I argued throughout this thesis, this relationship is marked by issues of Otherness (Said 1978; Benítez Rojo 1989), racialized regime of representation (Hall et al. 1996, 1997) and transnationalism. The process of Curaçaoan identity construction is thus weighed down by conflicting discursive constructions of colonial heritage as well as by the actual consequences of the colonial past, such as the political and social relationship with the ex-colonizer and issues such as transnationalism.

Calister’s Afro-creolized discourse addresses these issues of double consciousness, a racialized regime of representation and transnationalism in a roundabout manner. Her idealistic Afro-creolized discourse reveals the existence of contention and discord
within the community and of issues such as that of the inclusion or exclusion of transnational Curaçaoans, biracial Curaçaoans or different cultures and races.

By uncovering these issues and addressing them through her Afro-creolized solution Calister offers a way out of the discord she pinpoints within the community. Her proposed way out of double consciousness follows a flexible path of incorporating both the creolized and Afro-centric Curaçaoan identity discourses.

‘Mensage’ is exemplary of the role of cultural performance within the Curaçaoan community. It shows the way music, performance, symbols of national identity, collective identity, race and transnationalism are intermingled within the Curaçaoan public domain. The discourses within these performances reveal how people experience Curaçaoan reality and how they envision the ideal of this reality.

Calister’s vision prominently figures a discourse which indirectly incorporates the search for a revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan culture. Simultaneously it addresses the transnational in-between reality many Curaçaoans find themselves in. This means that this discourse is in fact a flexible way of moving between two Diaspora’s and empower Curaçaoans to harness what Calister paints as their strength: the joint experience of creolization and the Afro-Curaçaoan heritage.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the main research questions of this thesis from a micro perspective: How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate
collective Curaçaoan identities while being in-between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building and collective identity construction, and which role do musical performances play in this process? This means that I performed a close-up analysis of work by three transnational performers and musical groups: Fresku, Ola Caribense and Izaline Calister. I focused on how they negotiated a discourse of a Curaçaoan identity through their music and performances. Fresku and Izaline as individual artists and Ola Caribense as an ensemble belong to specific musical scenes with particular characteristics and all move between the two social contexts described in the earlier chapters.

When in Chapter 1, I introduced the idea of Curaçaoan engagement with a double Diaspora, I argued that the colonial past and transnationalism result in a feeling of disassociation. I posited that this also triggers the adoption of a flexible attitude towards the construction of Curaçaoan identity as a way to solve this sense of disassociation. Curaçaoans embrace and perform their feeling of disjointedness through musical performances, as a strategy to simultaneously ‘deal with’ double consciousness as a consequence of the colonial past (Du Bois 1903; Benítez Rojo 1989, Gilroy 1993) and with the current reality of transnationalism. This flexible identity entailed both the use of a discourse on a creolized Curaçaoan identity (Römer 1977, De Jong 2009) and on an Afro-centric Curaçaoan identity (FK 2001, De Jong 2012, Allen 2010).

In this chapter I used the three cases to add to the argument formulated in Chapter 1 that, as a consequence of the sense of disassociation caused by the postcolonial condition, Curaçaoans
express a flexible attitude towards identity discourses and the construction of Curaçaoan identity. My discourse analysis of three different kinds of musical performances shows different ways of moving between the two main discourses on Curaçaoan identity that I have identified in my dissertation.

I first explored Fresku’s discourse of Afro-Curaçaoan identity by comparing two of his works, ‘Slave Behavior’ and ‘Freedom’, in which he constructs a complex Afro-centric discourse on Curaçaoan identity. I moved between a formalistic textual analysis of Fresku’s work and the incorporation of information on his context and personal background. I used the postcolonial theoretical framework laid out in previous chapters to understand the performed identity within his work.

The discourse analysis led me to the following conclusions: the identity Fresku constructs within the works I analyzed is based on an essentialist, Afro-centric perspective. This perspective underscores the understanding of an Afro-Curaçaoan culture which expresses an (Pan-)African essence. Furthermore, Fresku constructs Curaçaoans as a group in crisis in need of empowerment. From this point of view, Afro-Curaçaoans have ‘lost’ their original African identity as a consequence of colonialism. Because of this loss they are not living up to their potential. The role of artists and performers is key in order to remind Afro-Curaçaoans of this identity and culture. Performers function as ‘truth tellers’ confronting, reminding and empowering the group. Fresku accepts and enacts his role as ‘truth teller’ through his music. He attempts to empower Curaçaoans by encouraging them to
remember their ‘roots’. He explicitly promotes the search for an authentic Afro-Curaçaoan identity.

Nonetheless, the way the premise of Curaçaoans as a people in crisis is constructed in Fresku’s work reveals that Fresku’s discourse on Curaçaoan identity is also framed by the racialized regime of representation. As such Fresku’s discourse also works within the parameters of double consciousness.

The search for an Afro-Curaçaoan identity Fresku proposes follows the pattern described by Benítez Rojo when it comes to the way the Caribbean subject deals with his Otherness and his sense of disassociation. This disassociation can be read in Fresku’s moving between his Caribbean and Dutch roots. He himself experiences double consciousness, on the one hand speaking of Curaçaoans and condemning their behavior, representing them through negative stereotypes. On the other hand, he aligns himself with them, denouncing the discourse he himself repeats when describing Curaçaoans in terms of crime and ignorance. Throughout this negotiation he attempts to construct a more positive Curaçaoan and, in doing so, to make peace with his Otherness and express a sense of belonging to the group.

The case of Ola Caribense also reveals the pursuit of reconciliation with the self as well as a need to express belonging to the group. Here, this is attempted by constructing a flexible discourse of a creolized Curaçaoan identity.

The way Ola Caribense constructs a Curaçaoan discourse is in sync with the construction of a creolized, cosmopolitan Curaçaoan identity. Creolization is extended to include a sense of belonging to a number
of other cultures, such as Venezuelan culture, as was evident from the performance of the ‘Diablo Suelto’. Through the incorporation of different cultures within the conception of a Curaçaoan identity and traditional Curaçaoan music, Ola Caribense constructs a flexible creolized discourse.

Notions of authenticity, which are related to class, are (re)defined and used flexibly to maintain belonging to the group and simultaneously evade possible negative connotations of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity within a Dutch context. By performing certain types of music such as the tumba and merengue the ensemble is able to secure their position within the Curaçaoan group, while flexibly incorporating and adapting other genres.

Although Ola Caribense and Fresku use different discourses to deal with their postcolonial condition of Otherness and sense of disassociation, both engage with a transnational and an African Diaspora. Fresku does this directly while Ola Caribense goes about it indirectly. Both also express a sense of belonging to a transnational Curaçaoan Diaspora while formulating a way to achieve more social mobility in the Netherlands. That is, they search for a way to evade the negative connotations of a racialized Otherness in the Netherlands. In the case of Izaline Calister I identified a more nuanced engagement with both the creolized and the Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourses. At first glance the discourse she constructs seems predominantly creolized. However, it also aims to vocalize an explicit engagement with the Afro-Curaçaoan Diaspora through images and by implicitly denouncing racial inequality within the Curaçaoan community. In her own way, she performs a revaluation of the Afro-Curaçaoan. At the
same time she paints an idyllic picture of a Curaçaoan community based on a myth of multicultural origins and a creolized history. This results in a flexible Afro-creolized discourse.

The three cases show an engagement with a double Diaspora. The construction of what is deemed Curaçaoan by the performers is driven on the one hand by the need to formulate their own position between the Netherlands and Curaçao. On the other hand, these performers search for reconciliation with their Otherness and by doing so address the notion of an Afro-Curaçaoan heritage and identity. This drive to address the double Diaspora can account for the flexible and complex formulations each of these artists negotiate.
Chapter 5
Concluding Chapter: Performing ‘Us’

In *A Song for Curaçao: Musical Performances of Double Diaspora* I have contended that nation-building debates on Curaçao, as well as social and political processes within Dutch society emphasizing migrant integration, resulted in the transnationally active Curaçaoan community finding itself confronted with conflicting expectations. It was the aim of this dissertation to explore how contemporary Curaçaoans responded to these expectations, broadly through everyday practices of fashioning collective identities and in particular through the lens of music. To best address this aim, I have sought to respond to the research question: *How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building, and what role do musical performances play in this process?* This question was further broken down into sub-questions that I address throughout the different chapters of this dissertation. These were: *How do transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building? How do transnational Curaçaoans construct discourses on Curaçaoan collective identities through musical performances?*

In what follows, as a way of concluding, I want to briefly summarize the main conclusions of each chapter. In Chapter 1, I outlined my
theoretical approach to these questions by exploring notions of transnationalism and double consciousness as two important phenomena that position Curaçaoans between Curaçao and the Netherlands. This entails a sense of dislocation that state, societal and academic debates often frame as problematic. I conclude by suggesting that transnational Curaçaoans develop a flexible attitude towards identity discourses, which they perform through music. This entails embracing experiences of dislocation, using it in a pragmatic manner to strategically move between different identity discourses, while simultaneously breaking them open, constantly changing and combining pieces of them.

In my subsequent analyses of musical negotiations of identity, I demonstrated the ways in which these collective identity discourses are shaped by the context of an everyday life influenced by colonial legacy and transnationalism. I approached the research questions in more empirical detail in Chapters 2 and 3, which explored Curaçaoan identity performances through a number of case studies in the context of the Dutch city of The Hague, and in the island context, respectively. I have focused on external political and social influences on the musically performed discourses, utilizing a social-constructivist approach towards identity construction centered on the concepts of discourse and representation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). I also expanded upon the conception of Otherness, drawing on Stuart Hall’s understanding of a racialized regime of representation (Hall 1997). The incorporation of this theoretical framework in the analyses of the cases in these two chapters allowed for a more thorough understanding of the way in which the social context interacts with
musically constructed identity discourses. By employing cultural studies and anthropological approaches, grounded in my case studies, I concluded that the performances I discussed reflect a complex entanglement of transnational bottom-up representational practices and top-down Curaçaoan and Dutch nation-building projects. This results in a field of tension in which competing identity discourses coexist. The interactivity within these performances allows both performers and audiences to construct counter discourses and deal with collective identity in a flexible manner. Within the two contexts, Curaçao and the Netherlands, Curaçaoans musically perform different discourses and counter-discourses. I identified two dominant Curaçaoan identity discourses: the Afro-Curaçaoan- and the creolized Curaçaoan identity.

In Chapter 4, I explored the way these two main discourses are flexibly used by a number of transnational Curaçaoan artists. I zoomed in on three performers who move between the Netherlands and Curaçao. This approach helped me to elucidate how personal contexts –that interact with broader social and political influences– can influence musical collective Curaçaoan identities and add to the flexible use of the different discourses within performances. Within their performances, the performers discussed in this chapter refer to local social spaces. In doing so, they construct an overlapping transnational social space that deals with both the Dutch and Curaçaoan contexts. I have shown how their performances are influenced by national social space dynamics such as the way black people are viewed in the Netherlands, as well as the discourses on national identity in the island’s public sphere. In this transnational
social field they engage with a double Diaspora and negotiate a collective Curaçaoan identity and reconciliation with their own double consciousness. The case studies discussed in this dissertation reveal that such continuous and flexible engagement is not always easy, but that it offers the promise of choice, agency and empowerment.

As a way of concluding, then, I want to propose that analyses of current Curaçaoan identity discourses should first, attend more closely to the pivotal role of musical performance in constructing a Curaçaoan community. Second, these analyses should take into account the simultaneous and interconnected engagements with a broader African Diaspora and the contemporary transnational Curaçaoan Diaspora. Reflecting upon the results of my study, three critical ideas emerge that I find to be of great importance for contemporary discussions around Curaçaoan identity construction in a postcolonial and globalized context. In the remainder of this conclusion I will iterate these points: first, flexibility with respect to the two dominant Curaçaoan identity discourses identified throughout the thesis; second, flexibility with regards to dealing with a double Diaspora and third, the possibility of agency through musical performances in transnational Curaçao. At the end of the chapter I provide suggestions for further research and the development of further cultural policy involving nation-building.
Findings: Postcolonial Multi-Positionality and Agency through Musical Performances

The Flexible Use of Two Discourses

My search to understand how transnational Curaçaoans negotiate collective Curaçaoan identities from a position that is in between Dutch and Curaçaoan projects of nation-building led me to firstly identify two dominant Curaçaoan discourses on identity: a creolized and an Afro-Curaçaoan discourse. Secondly, it led me to understand the formulation of Curaçaoanness as marked by a preoccupation with a double Diaspora. In my view, this double Diaspora preoccupation is informed by a singular goal: the search for a resolution of what it means to be postcolonial. I have contended that the two identity discourses I identify within the community are used to achieve this goal.

While the creolized, cosmopolitan discourse appears flexible, it is firmly grounded in an essentialist myth of origin of the Curaçaoan people and builds on a specific representation of Curaçao’s colonial past. In both Ola Caribense and Izaline Calister’s accounts, their implicit doubts about the possibility of belonging to both the Dutch and Curaçaoan society inform their specific representation of an ideal Curaçaoan society. This preoccupation with acceptance and authentication by the collective is a core issue in their performances that touches on issues of double consciousness, which make it difficult for the Caribbean subject to identify with representations of herself. In the case of Calister, she uses the discourse of inclusion and
creolization to try to construct her desired collective identity. In contrast, the second discourse identified in the study refers to a more static and cohesive Curaçaoan identity, framed as primarily Afro-Curaçaoan. The Afro-Curaçaoan identity discourse has been endorsed in the last decade by the Curaçaoan state in its attempts at nation-building. This discourse draws explicitly on Curaçao’s colonial past, in order to foster the perception of a fixed, Afro-Curaçaoan identity. It highlights the role of Curaçao’s African cultural heritage and argues for the need to revalue Afro-Curaçaoan culture and identity.

In this dissertation I viewed performed discourses as continuously linked to existing discourses in social and political reality. In the cases discussed in this dissertation, I showed how performers engage with Curaçaoan identity discourses in relation to an established racialized regime of representation. While they aim to find their own voice and step out of the ever-present role of the Other, they experience a sense of detachment due to the compounded alienation associated with the postcolonial condition. Performers draw on discourses of Afro-Curaçaoan or creolized Curaçaoan identity. Yet, their sense of disassociation makes them move between these two perspectives. The identity constructed by Curaçaoans alternately (and flexibly) grounds itself in, and distances itself from, the existing grid of representations. The extent to which the postcolonial disassociation or alienation features differs from case to case. In some cases, such Fresku’s performance of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity-in-crisis, such a postcolonial condition is more evident. In other cases, such as in the work of the ensemble Ola Caribense, a reconciliation with Otherness and transnationalism is less evident, as they are embedded within a
globalized, cosmopolitan discourse. The micro-level analyses of musical performances I carried out in Chapter 4 allowed more insights into these formulations. I argue that, in contrast to public discussions, the Curaçaoan performers I analyzed formulate the Curaçaoan sense of disassociation as not necessarily only problematic. Rather, they formulate it as a way to express a flexible attitude towards Curaçaoan identity: an attitude that enables them to embrace the reality of their postcolonial condition.

**Flexibly Addressing Two Diasporas**

Another key point in understanding the flexibility mentioned above is understanding the Curaçaoan preoccupation with what I have referred to as double Diaspora: the contemporary transnational community moving between the Netherlands and Curaçao and the issue of a double consciousness marked by ‘race’ and the African Diaspora. To highlight one example here, the case of Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign, discussed in Chapter 1, exemplifies the interrelatedness of Curaçao’s transnationalism and colonial legacies, offering a practical example of the difficulties associated with the integration of two diasporas. A point of contention amongst many Curaçaoans living on the island was that they felt they worked all year long towards a successful Carnival season, while Curaçaoans based in the Netherlands, such as Q-Sign, just ‘showed up’ on the island every now and then to reap what had been sowed by others. According to Wilsoe, these ‘outsiders’ were able to do so because of Curaçaoans’ entrenched under-appreciation of things originating on the island itself and their over-appreciation of Europe and European culture. Politicians such as
Wiels and Wilsoe pointed to Afro-Curaçaoans’ (post)colonial condition as resulting in what they saw as an inferiority complex. Another example of this frame of mind is the Curaçaoan policy document *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo pa Independensia Mental*, which I discussed in the Introduction and more extensively in Chapter 3. It refers to the same problematic idea of an Afro-Curaçaoan social and ‘mental’ crisis, seen as the source of social problems but also inspiring calls for the revaluation of Afro-Curaçaoan identity. Through discussion of the positioning of the Q-Sign musicians as members of a modern-day Curaçaoan Diaspora, the Wilsoe vs Q-Sign case highlights how transnationalism presents itself as a relevant issue on the island. The case simultaneously demonstrates the extent to which negotiations of Curaçao’s colonial legacy are embedded within discursive constructions of identity and belonging in a transnational setting.

Curaçaoans’ engagement with these overlapping diasporas expresses itself in a flexible understanding of a collective Curaçaoan identity. This flexibility, I argued, functions as follows: while referring to two main identity discourses, Curaçaoan subjects remain flexible in order to solve the internal discord and disassociation caused by double consciousness. This negotiation of two diasporas also allows them to find a way to belong in-between the Netherlands and Curaçao through a careful process of negotiation. Throughout the dissertation I underlined the fluid process of negotiation of identity by Curaçaoan transmigrants who incorporate personal histories within musical representations of Curaçaoanness.
My reading of the theoretical literature and my analyses of the case studies revealed the complex relations between transnationalism and the colonial past, which I propose to capture schematically as follows:

A) Transnationalism

- Leads to construction of transnational common zones e.g. transnational social fields (Schiller et al. 1992).
- Leads to a flexible conception of location and ‘home’; location becomes subject to negotiation.
- Results in a complex quest for belonging.

Characteristics:
- Activities are grounded in everyday life (e.g. re-naming and enacting ‘Curaçaoan customs’).
- These activities supersede or contradict nation-building projects (Ben Rafael et. al 2009).

B) Colonial legacy

- Leads to a sense of ‘double consciousness’; the subject’s ‘here’ becomes ‘there’ and she represents herself as the Other.
- Leads to a sense of dislocation (Schiller 2009; Emoff 2009).
- Results in a quest to solve Otherness through representation.

Characteristics:
- Representation is key.
- Caribbean subjects represent themselves as the Other as a consequence of the colonial past (Benítez Rojo 1989).
C) Postcolonial condition

A + B → Postcolonial condition → Compounded dislocation.

Point C) here describes my line of argumentation: transnationalism intensifies the sense of disjointedness present in B), imprinting Curaçaoans with a flexible way of viewing reality.

In their search for ‘solutions’ to the alienation associated with the postcolonial condition, Curaçaoans own and embrace the very condition of compounded dislocation. This flexible view has two main consequences. First, it leads to, and is reproduced by, an active engagement with the African Diaspora as well as the contemporary transnational Curaçaoan Diaspora. While the engagement with a colonial past and with the African Diaspora has resulted in the construction of identity discourses directly aimed at the reconciliation with Otherness (Benítez Rojo 1989), the engagement with the contemporary Curaçaoan community reflects an engagement with Otherness through a constant negotiation of ‘home’ and belonging (Vertovec 1999; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Second, this flexible view is considered problematic from the perspective of the state. As I mentioned above, there is need for a more positive view on flexible identity. Focusing on Curaçaoans’ ability to embrace the sense of dislocation and express it as a flexible attitude towards identity construction, I have shown through the cases of Calister and Fresku that Curaçaoan subjects’ in-between state can be a source of agency.
Performing Agency and Flexibility Through Music

The observations made during my research and my subsequent analyses of the case studies allow me to conclude that music and musical performances are important tools for collective identification within the Curaçaoan community. Music is interactive and can be (re)produced and adapted, but it can also easily be transported, performed or listened to on both sides of the ocean, which allows it to function as a tool for discursive constructions of identity in a transnational context. Most importantly, music is able to both emotionally and physically move the listener (DeNora 2000). It allows the audience to use, adapt and reproduce it, to the point of giving feedback to the performers during live performances. Its openness allows performers to integrate individual and personal experiences. Performances lie between an enactment and the actual formulation of reality through action; performed discourses are thus made real through acts of musical consumption.

As I discussed through the case of Tumbábo, interactivity underscores the performative aspect of music, which allows performances to move from individual or group artistic expressions to add to collective identity discourses. This interactivity, combined with the fact that there is more than one discourse at play within a given performance, underscores the issues of choice and agency. Curaçaoans are able to choose and in fact change the meaning of representations within performances. The flexibility offered by these performances ties into the idea of Curaçaoan identity as flexible I discussed in the previous section.

As Curaçaoans perform disjointedness through music, musical
performances help them to develop a flexible attitude towards identity discourses. The interactivity within the musical performances opens up possibilities for interpretation and for the inclusion of multiple influences and discourses on Curaçaoan identity. These discourses alternately compete with or supplement each other, and enable the formulation of counter-discourses within these same performances. In other words, music allows for flexibility and in that sense, functions perfectly in-sync with the Curaçaoan flexible understanding of what it is to be a ‘true Yu di Kòrsou’.

While performances can function to boost and promote collective identity, the same performances can also become sites for transcoding. In other words, while the governments in Curaçao and the Netherlands may use music as forms of collective identity-building, these performances can actually challenge the discourses of cohesive national identity and become sites where interactions between discourses of Curaçaoan collective identity take place.

A flexible take on Curaçaoan identity does not mean that individual Curaçaoans listening to music or attending musical performances necessarily distances themselves from a state-endorsed fixed collective identity. Rather, audiences and performers alike are able to pick and choose between identities and make multiple combinations and new versions of what it means to be Curaçaoan. Consequently, state-endorsed discourses on Curaçaoan identity are relegated to being merely one of the many discourses to be used, discarded or adapted. While state efforts to stabilize collective identities are met by the subject’s agency, it stands to reason that the construction of a flexible identity is equally bound by a different set of rules, somewhat limiting
choice and agency. Perhaps a flexible take on Curaçaoan identity and on the process of localizing oneself through musical performances may prove problematic to nation-building efforts that aim to create cohesion and clearly delineated national identities. Yet, I want to argue forcefully for a perspective on fluidity and flexibility as solutions to, or a form of reconciliation with, the Curaçaoan postcolonial condition. Music helps them deal with issues of belonging to a Curaçaoan collective, regardless of which side of the Atlantic their physical place of residence is. This dissertation, then, proposes that a flexible perspective on identity may be a relatively non-problematic way of negotiating the alienation associated with the postcolonial condition. A flexible identity is characterized by the acceptance of diversity and of change. It is about constantly making new connections and negotiating old ones.

**Epilogue: Future Academic Research and Policy Implications**

Finally, I want to extrapolate to explore what some of my findings could mean for the broader academic debates –both in terms of the main contribution and areas left underexplored– and the implications for policy. First, I make a few suggestions for what further research I see necessary within the fields I have engaged with in this dissertation, proposing the integration of theories from contemporary transnational studies and postcolonial studies in order to provide a new perspective on Caribbean identities. Transnationalism confronts modern societies with the realities of communities based in more than one country. In
doing so, it brings the historical context of these communities to our doorstep. I argue for a postcolonial approach to transnationalism and a transnational approach to postcolonialism. Such a historicized approach to transnationalism will benefit our understanding of the field, whilst the incorporation of modern transnational process within postcolonial studies sheds more light on ongoing social and political processes—especially in non-sovereign territories such as the Dutch Caribbean. Viewing these two issues in tandem will help us to better comprehend the flux of representations involved in the construction of globalized postcolonial identities. Such a combined view offers a way to better explore communities that are engaging with multiple diasporic formations through heritage politics and dealing with the consequences of globalization, migration and transnationalism.

Beyond this main theoretical argument, my findings suggest the need for further comparative research and the application of multidisciplinary methods. Multidisciplinary comparative research is necessary to more fully comprehend flexible global identity constructions such as the ones discussed in this dissertation. Such an approach will reflect the fluidity of modern-day globalized identity constructions. Although Curaçaoans construct recognizable identity discourses, such as the Afro-Curaçaoan identity and the creolized identity, the contents of these discourses, and the ways that they are strategically used and abandoned, reflect a flexible and pragmatic attitude towards identity discourses. To better research this phenomenon within a modern, globalized world, where boundaries are blurred, constantly deconstructed and temporarily rebuilt elsewhere,
researchers need to be able to make similarly fluid connections between geographical areas and between academic fields.

I have, throughout the dissertation, engaged with the link between top-down and bottom-up constructions of identity with an emphasis on popular culture. I propose that top-down use of music as a tool for nation-building can inadvertently open up a space for counter-discourses where a dialogue with a double Diaspora can take place. The flexibility and interactivity within musical performances allows music to function as a perfect site for the flexible attitude towards identity, as expressed by Curaçaoans for example. Further research on bottom-up constructions in relation to top-down discourse management would benefit from an approach that focuses on popular culture as a space where both these views come together. My findings suggest a need for further and more extensive research on Caribbean popular culture as a site where nation-building, grass-roots action and bottom-up experience of collective identity come together, inspiring new forms of agency and empowerment.

Another dimension that would enrich further research is that of gender and sexual relations. My inclusion of Izaline Calister suggests some of the ways in which gender plays a role in musical performances of Curaçaoanness. However, a further exploration of the implications of the dominance of male musicians in Curaçaoan musical spaces and many other contexts is needed, and a connection between the gendered dimensions of musical performance and of transnationalism. Throughout my research, but especially during my fieldwork I was struck by an ongoing referencing of families torn apart and reconfigured because of migration. Talking to respondents, I also
came across the recurring story of mothers who had followed their grown children to the Netherlands to ‘take care of them,’ leaving their husbands in Curaçao. While ‘taking care of the children,’ these women seemed to build a life of their own, one they did not seem able or willing to give up afterwards. Although their children were already grown and living separate lives, the women I encountered kept living and moving in-between the Netherlands and Curaçao, claiming their married status and simultaneously enjoying an ‘independent’ life. Some moments such as the ‘shouting out’ of absent children or mothers included in Chapter 1 reflect this practical reality. Interrogating such phenomena in more detail would add more depth to our understanding of current-day Caribbean identity politics and transnationalism. The scope of the topic at hand led me to make the conscious choice to limit this dissertation to a general search for a collective identity and the construction of community through music, focusing primarily on the two main discourses in which race/ethnicity/culture are more central than gender. However, the issue of reconfiguration of families and especially the image of the mother also present salient avenues for further analysis, as I briefly touch upon in Chapter 4.

While the main aims of this dissertation are academic rather than related to outlining effective policy solutions, in the spirit of impact, I want to offer a few ideas emergent from this research for how music can be used within cultural policy as a means for nation-building. A first point in this context is the insight that transnational belonging does not have to be opposed to nation building. Often, transnational activities happen outside of the scope of the state. By accepting and
integrating this phenomenon within current nation-building efforts, transnational activities may add to social cohesion. In practice, this could entail, for instance, programs set in a Dutch context in which migrants in the Netherlands could enact their connection with their country of origin within a set structure during a specific event or at certain occasions. Such events could include cooking classes where Curaçaoans cooked dishes ‘from home.’ Such a setting could then also incorporate a second curriculum, focusing on health in general and healthy cooking within migrant communities. In the past, Dutch municipalities have maintained bonds with other cities through ‘sister city’ programs. Such initiatives could serve to frame Curaçaoan transnational practices while creating goodwill and a notion of being included within the community. This type of initiative would also offer the opportunity for a defined presence of the Dutch state within such transnational acts, integrating top-down ideas on how Dutch identity should be construed within these settings. While these programs serve primarily as connections, they also underscore the differences between places and people. In other words, such an approach might help define ‘here’ and ‘there’ more adequately, which could add to a mutual understanding of migrants as part of the Dutch community.

Beyond this, my research points to the possibilities of making use of music as a tool for nation-building. In this dissertation I have discussed how music, used as a tool for nation-building, can simultaneously become a site for the performance of counter-discourses. This points to the necessity of a careful approach to the incorporation of music in cultural policy geared towards the
promotion of a specific collective identity. That being said, I would still tentatively propose an angle to cultural policy in which music from migrant cultures is integrated not merely as entertainment, but as an element to foster social cohesion. Such an angle would first and foremost entail viewing music as an important way of drawing in migrants (especially youngsters) and making them feel included. It would also develop an awareness of the symbolic meanings of music and its ability to evoke emotion. Such an incorporation of music within nation-building calls for state support for musical projects that invite people to work together, participate and learn how to connect their experiences with music from migrant cultures and its symbolic meanings. I envisage projects which consistently reach a large number of small to mid-size groups of people from different backgrounds over a longer period of time. These should be socially visible projects, with a clear profile, set as closely as possible to the daily lives of the people involved, e.g. in community centers and in popular public spaces. I want to emphasize that such musical projects should not be viewed as tools to mold people’s thinking, rather as a way of creating conditions and opportunities to develop a more cohesive society. This development of a more cohesive society is achieved by fostering interaction between citizens in a context that would encourage the construction of a sense of collectivity.

This dissertation has emphasized how the creativity of music can provide space for multiple interpretations and adaptations. As I have argued, transnational Curaçaoans construct a flexible subjectivity that can function as a way to reconcile a transnational situation in-between the Netherlands and Curaçao, and aid in the search for a Curaçaoan
collective identity in which African heritage is revalued. Such developments can be viewed as possible assets in the construction of citizens who are both locally engaged and cosmopolitan: multiple diasporas and flexible identities as realistic and positive assets within nation-building. I have analyzed top-down nation-building efforts and bottom-up cultural expressions as united into one song, not solely directed at the island of Curaçao. Instead, the sense of Curaçaoanness that emerges refers to a territory and to the colonial past, while simultaneously detaching itself from both. Through the creative and interactive power of music, the ‘Song for Curaçao’ I have laid out here both encompasses and surpasses narrowly delineated concepts of nation and identity.
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Radio Krioyo_VR0020 Dec 31, 2010 19.46

Radio Krioyo_VR0021 Dec 31, 2010 19.55

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Bos di Boneiru Radio_VN810098 February 1, 2011

Bos di Boneiru Radio_VN810099 February 1, 2011
**YouTube sources:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nM9Zsq9MIQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh-pbHunb2E>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilbCM4ZlRYw&feature=relmfu>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cJ2AxSRhXg>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHf6cVo0pyk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jevlC7QOILU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNPcxp2sMQQ>

<http://youtu.be/NuxISi25Pfw>


Appendix

List of respondents in-depth interviews

Axel Pikero (Dreams)
Ella Bernabela (Zoyoyo i su grupo)
Eugene ‘Baka’ Sambo (Grupo Power)
Erwin Prudencia (Musician and composer)
Gibi Doran (GIO)
Jenny Daal (member of community/ active in cultural scene)
Jenny Fundador (member of community/ active in cultural scene)
Lili Mingueli (Grupo Power)
Johnny Concepcion (musician/ bandleader/ active in cultural scene)
Moki Job (Entrepeneur, businessman and organizer of events)
Miro (Los Paranderos)
Mistica Stefania (Zoyoyo i su Grupo & MIO)
Orlando Clemencia (Teacher, public speaker and health activist, active in cultural scene)
Oz Anders (Member of community/ Hip hop artist)
Pincho Anita (Pincho i su grupo)
Ray Lauffer (Dreams)
Raymond Allee (Grupo Power)
Rendel Rosalia (Musician/ active in cultural scene)
Rudi (Grupo Power)
Rudsela ‘Tela’ Sambo (Tambú singer)
Stanley (Los Paranderos)
Toni (Grupo Power)
Tula (Singer Limania)
Zoyoyo (Zoyoyo i su Grupo)

Incomplete list of short, informal conversations

Maria Pinedo (Audience member Brievengat)
Audience member during concert Cache Royale
Adillee Praag (Ola Caribense)
‘Ana’ (Member of community/ Afro-activist and active in cultural scene)
Civil servant Gemeente Den Haag
Dieter Jacobs (Teacher)
Fawcette Otto (Member of the community)
Heart beat youngster (member of community/ hip hop artist)
Izaline Calister (Singer)
Jessica Damon
Judith Martha Anita
‘Julia’ (ex-contestant UKPK)
Singer of the group Cache Royale
Raquel (member of community/ transnationally active)
Romualdo Martha
Ruben Rosalia (Musician/ active in cultural scene)
Singer of group Los Paranderos
Questions short structured interviews

1. Ki tipo di mūzik bo gusta skucha?
2. Si mi bisabu 'mūzik di Kòrsou', ki tipo di mūzik bo ta pensa riba dje? (-Kua di nan bo gusta mas?)
3. Bo sa tende otro tipo di 'mūzik na papiamentu?
4. Na unda bo ta hāna mūzik di Kòrsou of na papiamentu tende?
5. Dikon bo ta skucha mūzik di Kòrsou? (-Ki e tin di speshal?)

Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (20)</th>
<th>Female (15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ritmo kombiná, R&amp;B, Hip Hop, salsa, bachata</td>
<td>1. Ritmo kombiná, Cache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ritmo kombiná, tambú, tumba, kòmbèk</td>
<td>2. Folklor, tambú, tumba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pa keda ku papiamentu. Bo idioma mes mester ta na prome lugá.</td>
<td>5. Nos a nanse einan. Un manera ku nan ta toka</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (30)</th>
<th>Female (35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tur kos, hasta klassiek</td>
<td>1. Folklor, merengue, mūzik gezellig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ritmo kombiná, tambú</td>
<td>2. Bon, multikultural, kaha di orgel, balia, mazurka, show di balia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mi ta skucha, Izaline, Tania, Giovanca</td>
<td>3. Ritmo kombiná</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bo ta bin dje pais zelf. Trots, dat is een Antilliaan. Mester di roлемodel, bai dilanti.</td>
<td>5. Paso e ta den mi. Korda riba kas</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Female (30)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Cache, Q-Sign</td>
<td>2. Tumba, Tambú, esnan modern e letra no tin inhoud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ritmo kombiná</td>
<td>3. No masha. Rudi plaate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Internet, fiesta</td>
<td>4. Internet, radio. Fiesta no!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ambiente ta mas dushi ku tur mūzik. Mas ambiente mas vrolijk.</td>
<td>5. Na mi idioma, bo ta sinti’ė mas miho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mi a bin Hulanda for di chikitu [...] pa mantene e lenga anto kontakto ku Kòrsou</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (48)</th>
<th>Female (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Soul, salsa, country</td>
<td>1. Ritmo kombiná</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Salsa, merengue</td>
<td>2. Tambú, Ritmo kombiná</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Salsa, kos kriyoy</td>
<td>3. Basic One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Male (53)</th>
<th>Female (59)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reflexion</td>
<td>1. Ranchera, salsa, pero Kristian so! Salsa kristian etc. Richard Sepeda, Giovanni Rios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wals, dansa, mazurka, Tumba</td>
<td>2. Wals, mazurka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Radio Hoyer 1</td>
<td>4. Misa, Kas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mi ta sintimi bon, mi a lanta ku reflekshon</td>
<td>5. E müzik ta trek mi. Mi gusta balia. Kansion di antes, kòrda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (40)</td>
<td>Female (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tumba, wals</td>
<td>2. Wals, mazurka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ku fakansi, mi'n por bisa</td>
<td>4. CD, misa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Antiano, bo ta lanta den e múzik</td>
<td>5. <em>Maakt niet uit</em>, antiano, merikano basta ta palabra di Dios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (40)</th>
<th>Female (55)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Merengue, salsa, funk</td>
<td>1. Varia, salsa, kos di misa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seu, tumba, merengue, salsa, montuna, kòmbèk</td>
<td>2. Tambú, seú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fiesta, na kas, evento</td>
<td>3. Varia, na radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fiesta</td>
<td>4. Televishon, radio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (47)</th>
<th>Female (40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Tumba, tambú, seú</td>
<td>2. Folkloriko, aguinaldo, tumba, merengue, múzik di antes, múzik modernu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CD di misa</td>
<td>3. Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. B’a lanta ku ne, e ta keda den bo mente.</td>
<td>5. Di Kòrsou mi ta. <em>Onder onsje</em>, bo gusta. Mi ta skucha tur tipo, pero ku famia, bo ta skucha múzik di Kòrsou, p'e ambiente,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Male (78) | |
|-----------||
| 1. Ranchera, tumba, soca, ballenato, kumbia, salsa | |
| 2. Son, guaracha, Yu’i Kòrsou ta | |
**creatif.** Tur kos nan por toka. Merengue, bachata. Nos mentalidat mester drecha.
3. Wals, ranchera
4. Kas so. Mi tin un kolekshon di CD
5. [E ta kuminsa papia mesora di bailamentu] Recordar es vivir.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (60)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Salsa, tumba, boleros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tumba, wals, ka’i orgel, dansa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. -</td>
<td>4. -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. [Muziek lucht op, brengt in goede stemming, reinigend voor geest]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Samenvatting van het proefschrift

In ‘A Song for Curaçao’ onderzoek ik verbanden tussen muziek, *belonging* en de constructie van culturele identiteiten door transnationale Curaçaoënaars. In de laatste decennia is zowel op Curaçao als in Nederland het debat over nationale identiteit en cultureel erfgoed flink opgelaaid. In het publieke debat over *nation-building* op het eiland benadrukten publieke figuren zoals ex-minister van cultuur Rosalia en wijlen politicus Helmin Wiels de link tussen het koloniale verleden en hedendaagse politieke, economische en sociale problemen op Curaçao. In niet mis te verstane woorden koppelden zij met name de onderdrukking van Afro-Curaçaoënaars aan een systematische onderwaardering van een Afro-Curaçaose identiteit en cultuur. Ook Afro-Curaçaoënaars zelf zouden een blank, Nederlands-Europees ideaal verkiezen boven de zwarte Afrikaanse *roots*. Om hier verandering in te brengen zou er een herwaardering van de Afro-Curaçaoënaar nodig zijn. Nederland moest niet meer centraal staan. Ondertussen, in het Europese deel van het Koninkrijk, is de integratie van migranten in de Nederlandse samenleving juist een belangrijk onderwerp in discussies over een gemeenschappelijke Nederlandse identiteit en Nederlands erfgoed.

Hedendaagse transnationale Curaçaoënaars bevinden zich als het ware ‘tussen’ de Nederlandse en de Curaçaose samenleving en moeten een omgang vinden met bovengenoemde verwachtingen vanuit beide samenlevingen. Transnationale Curaçaoënaars produceren in deze tussenruimte verschillende culturele producten, waaronder muziek en muzikale optredens. In dit proefschrift analyseer ik muzikale constructies van Curaçaose identiteiten door te kijken naar alledaagse
handelingen die bijdragen aan deze muzikale constructies en door in te zoomen op een aantal artiesten, hun muziek en optredens. De onderzoeksvragen luiden als volgt: Hoe onderhandelen transnationale Curaçaönaars over collectieve Curaçaose identiteiten terwijl ze tussen Nederlandse en Curaçaose projecten van nation-building en constructies van collectieve identiteiten in zitten? Welke rol spelen muzikale optredens in dit proces?

In ‘A Song for Curaçao’ stel ik dat de Curaçaose transnationale identiteitsconstructies van bijzonder belang zijn omdat ze een focus op een dubbele diaspora inhouden. De eerste diaspora verwijst naar de beleving van een Afro-diaspora die centraal staat in de door mij geobserveerde Curaçaose identiteitsdiscoursen. Een kernonderdeel van deze Afro-diaspora beleving is de zoektocht naar een gezamenlijke Afro-Curaçaose identiteit en een manier van omgang met het koloniale verleden. De tweede diaspora verwijst naar de Curaçaose transnationale gemeenschap ontstaan door een toename van Curaçaose migratie naar Nederland vanaf de jaren tachtig van de twintigste eeuw.

Het proefschrift bestaat uit vijf hoofdstukken waarvan de eerste drie een analyse zijn van de constructie van de Curaçaose identiteit op macro-niveau. In het eerste hoofdstuk schets ik mijn theoretische aanpak en richt ik mij op identiteit en locatie. Ik bespreek concepten zoals transnationalisme, percepties en constructies van plaats en postkoloniale identiteit. Aan de hand van de theorie en van mijn analyse van de casussen van Radio Krioyo en Wilsoe vs. Q-Sign stel ik dat het Curaçaose transnationalisme en het koloniale erfgoed samen gezien kunnen worden als een ‘probleematische’ Curaçaose postkoloniale situatie (condition) gekenmerkt door vervreemding van
het zelf. Ik beargumenteer dat Curaçaoënaars op een zeer flexibele manier omgaan met identiteit en locatie om *top-down nation-building* beleid te ontwikkelen en zich met meerdere culturen en plekken te kunnen identificeren. Mijn argumentatie wordt onderbouwd door het werk van denkers zoals Vertovec (1999); Schiller *et al.* (1992); Basch *et al.*; Faist (2010); Ben Rafael *et al.* (2009) and Benítez-Rojo (1989).

In hoofdstukken 2 en 3 onderzoek ik deze extreem flexibele houding tegenover collectieve Curaçaose identiteiten verder. Ik onderzoek twee contexten (de Nederlandse en de Curaçaose) waarin deze flexibiliteit zichtbaar is en laat zien dat de muzikale uitingen die er plaatsvinden niet los te zien zijn van ‘het dagelijkse’.


Voor de locatie Den Haag in hoofdstuk 2 richt ik mij op twee casussen: een optreden van de muzikale gezelschap Tumbábo, en een cultureel evenement in het stadhuis van den Haag.

Om beter inzicht te krijgen in de collectieve identiteiten die van belang waren op Curaçao ten tijde van het onderzoek, maak ik gebruik van een belangrijk document op het gebied cultureel beleid op het eiland in die periode: *Plan di Maneho: Rumbo Pa Independensha Mental*

In het laatste samenvattende en concluderende hoofdstuk reflecteer ik op het onderzoek en pleit ik voor de volgende strategische uitgangspunten voor verder onderzoek en cultureel beleid. Wat betreft verder academisch onderzoek is er een postkoloniale aanpak van transnationalisme en een transnationale aanpak van postkolonialisme
nodig. Een dergelijke aanpak biedt kansen op een duidelijker beeld van hedendaagse politieke en sociale processen die zich niet uitsluitend binnen nationale grenzen afspelen. Dit kan leiden tot beter inzicht in geglobaliseerde postkoloniale praktijken. Dit geldt in het bijzonder als het gaat over niet soevereine territoria waar de oude koloniale banden nog gedeeltelijk aanwezig zijn.

Mijn onderzoek wijst ook naar de noodzaak van meer vergelijkend en multidisciplinair onderzoek. Multidisciplinaire methodes weerspiegelen de fluïditeit van moderne geglobaliseerde constructies en het toepassen van deze methodes kan bijdragen aan een beter begrip van flexibele geglobaliseerde identiteiten.

Ik pleit ook voor verder onderzoek naar het samen komen van bottom-up constructies en top-down management van nationale discoursen in popular culture. Mijn bevindingen op Curaçao suggereren dat uit de combinaties van nation-building en grass-root initiatieven op het gebied van collectieve identiteit nieuwe vormen van agency en empowerment kunnen ontstaan. Caribische popular cultures bieden bijzondere mogelijkheden voor beter begrip van de relatie tussen identiteitsconstructies en empowerment.

Een ander belangrijk aspect dat in verder onderzoek naar transnationale Caribische identiteiten benadrukt zou moeten worden is de relatie met gender en sekse. Mijn analyse van het werk van Izaline Calister laat een aantal manieren zien waarop gender een rol speelt in de constructie van Curaçaose identiteit. Echter, er is meer onderzoek nodig naar implicaties en achtergronden van de oververtegenwoordiging van mannen in de Curaçaose muzikale wereld. Verder onderzoek naar mannelijke aanwezigheid in muziek en
in andere aspecten van de Curaçaose publieke ruimte en naar de relatie tussen gender, muziek en transnationalisme zou waardevolle inzichten kunnen verschaffen in de manier waarop gender en identiteit in geglobaliseerde gemeenschappen worden gevormd.

Met betrekking tot suggesties voor beleid merk ik het volgende op. Hoewel transnationalisme een blinde vlek zou kunnen zijn voor de staat, wil ik benadrukken dat het fenomeen transnationalisme niet per sé als conflictend moet worden gezien met *nation-building* en integratie. Op basis van dit onderzoek suggereer ik dat incorporatie van dit fenomeen de juist een logische route naar sociale cohesie is.

Mijn onderzoek wijst uit dat het beleidsmatig inzetten van muziek als middel voor identiteitsconstructie en *nation-building* veel mogelijkheden biedt. Muziek kan op een interactieve wijze emotie en actie oproepen. Er moet natuurlijk wel rekening worden gehouden met onverwachte symbolische betekenissen die aan muziek kunnen kleven. Hiernaast kan muziek ook door de muziekluisteraar worden gepersonaliseerd en gereproduceerd. Bij het gebruik van muziek om een specifieke identiteit uit te dragen is er dus veel ruimte voor de formulering van *counter-discourses*. Muziek zou, zij het met deze kanttekeningen, ingezet kunnen worden voor meer dan alleen entertainment. Bijvoorbeeld in projecten die mensen uitnodigen om samen te gaan werken in nieuwe verbanden kan muziek een middel zijn om sociale cohesie te bevorderen.

De observaties gedurende mijn onderzoek en mijn analyse van de casussen brengen me tot de conclusie dat muziek en muzikale optredens een belangrijke rol spelen binnen de Curaçaose gemeenschap als middelen voor de constructie van collectieve
identiteit. Muziek is interactief en kan (na)gemaakt of aangepast worden. Maar het kan ook makkelijk van de ene naar de andere plek verplaatst worden. Het kan uitgevoerd worden en beluisterd worden aan beide kanten van de oceaan. Hierdoor is het een ideaal middel om identiteit te construeren in een transnationale context. Muziek kan de luisteraar zowel fysiek als emotioneel in beweging brengen (DeNora 2000). Muziek is daarmee ook een manier om om te gaan met de problematische zelf-vervreemding van het Caribische subject die wordt aangeduid met het concept otherness. De zoektocht om een omgang te vinden met deze vervreemding draagt bij aan een flexibele houding wat betreft identiteit. De interactiviteit van muzikale optredens opent mogelijkheden voor interpretatie en de toevoeging (ook van de luisteraars) van meerdere discoursen met betrekking tot de Curaçaose identiteit. Deze discoursen sluiten elkaar vaak niet uit maar wisselen elkaar af en vullen elkaar aan. De casussen die ik in dit proefschrift behandel tonen een constante en flexibele omgang met de constructie van een collectieve Curaçaose identiteit. Dit alles is niet conflictloos, maar houdt wel een belofte van agency en empowerment in van zowel degenen die muziek produceren als degenen die het consumeren en als zodanig (re)produceren.
Curriculum Vitae

Guiselle Starink-Martha (Curaçao, 1978) migrated to the Netherlands in 1999. She obtained her MA in Latin American Studies from Leiden University in 2006. After working as a research assistant on projects involving the Caribbean at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) and for the Development Policy Review Network (DPRN), she started working as a Ph.D. Researcher at the Radboud University Nijmegen, pursuing her Ph.D. research between 2008 and 2012. In that period Starink-Martha gave various guest lectures and presented a number of papers at conferences on topics such as cosmopolitanism and current Caribbean societies. She co-coordinated and taught part of an undergraduate course on diversity in Europe and organized meetings within the academic community as well as public events.

In 2013 she took the initiative to organize an art exhibition and a series of events in order to both commemorate and celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Dutch abolition of slavery in the city center of the Hague. Her aim was to connect different social actors and academics in a public setting using cultural expressions such as literature, music and dance to rethink the way both white Dutch and the Afro-Dutch deal with race and the colonial past in the current multicultural setting.

In 2014 Starink-Martha was honored to receive a Silvia W. de Groot grant which allowed her to perform pilot research on Curaçao on new media and aesthetics in new formulations of an Afro-Curaçaoan identity. In November 2014 she started to work as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam, where she researches the construction of notions of nationness on the islands of Sint Maarten and Sint Eustatius. In her future research Guiselle Starink-Martha aims to broaden perspectives on the processes of nation-building, and the way in which the nation and collective identity are constructed through everyday life practices.