Carnival Matters: A Multiscalar Approach to the Rotterdam Summer Carnival

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Abstract

The Rotterdam Summer Carnival (RSC) is an annual celebration in which many people participate. Students from the former Dutch Antilles started organizing the RSC in the 1980s. People with many cultural backgrounds started participating, causing the RSC to transform into a superdiverse celebration. In 2023, the RSC was inscribed onto UNESCO's international Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Underneath the RSC's development and recent heritagization is a complex story that extends beyond Rotterdam and the Netherlands. The thesis presents an ethnographic analysis that uses a multiscalar perspective (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018) to illustrate how the RSC's is entangled with institutions, histories, and people. Stakeholders' conflicting ideas and interests become visible in the discourses surrounding tensions and heritagization which I analyze.

The thesis finds that the RSC's development resulted in an expansion of the networks in which it is entangled. This expansion makes it difficult to keep the 'community' together. The Foundation navigates this issue by maintaining a pragmatic approach that focuses on keeping people together. Moreover, the RSC's superdiverse character does not mean difference is erased. Groups and individuals maintain and present a connection with their nationality and culture. Finally, the thesis concludes that the RSC's heritagization provided valuable recognition to the 'community' but also resulted in the reproduction of essentialist ideas in which nationality and culture are conflated.

Keywords:

Culturalization of citizenship, heritage, multiscalar, Rotterdam Summer Carnival, superdiversity

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Introduction

Dutch society is becoming ever more plural. The movement of people and their ideas and practices results in interactions and creolizations, and consequently the (re)creation of heritage (Allen 2021). This affects discussions on the defining and safeguarding of cultural heritage. Various institutional bodies, including the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (KIEN), recognize the need to diversify their inventory to do justice to the presence of superdiversity[1] in cities like Rotterdam. This also formed part of the motivation for the Netherlands to submit the Rotterdam Summer Carnival (RSC) for UNESCO inscription as a celebration that involves many cultural groups and may increase social cohesion. Heritagizing superdiversity in theory amounts to the realization of the multicultural dream, an affirmation of equality across cultural differentiations.

Yet, heritagization entails boundary drawing. Especially in a superdiverse context, this creates tensions. For example, the UNESCO conception of a 'community' that must initiate the inscription. Linking community to superdiversity led Albert van der Zeijden (2017, 35) to suggest the following: "super-diversity means that communities have evolved into floating and volatile networks, loosely formed and loosely connected." There are no clear boundaries since many stakeholders engage with the RSC to different ends. Giving space to a superdiverse celebration happens against the background of control, of maintaining an orderly situation. Attempts to frame, structure, and organize a controlled version of the RSC are opposed to the idea of carnival as a time for transgressions and a reversal of social hierarchies. This balancing between control, pragmatism, and letting loose is analyzed through the close analysis of what I call tensions at the RSC.

This thesis, then, seeks to illuminate these tensions ensued by heritagizing the RSC, which is an instance of superdiversity par excellence. These are discussed alongside tensions that existed prior to initial heritagization efforts. By engaging with ethnographic research, the

[1] Superdiversity is also frequently written with a hyphen, i.e. super-diversity. Steven Vertovec (2023, 50-1) writes that superdiversity, without the hyphen, reinforces the concept's multidimensionality. The multidimensionality is central in the thesis which is why I use superdiversity instead of super-diversity. In citations that use super-diversity, the author's choice is maintained.

analysis goes beyond the RSC's public presentation. What started as an Antillean carnival in the 1980s has since transformed into a carnival involving individuals with ties to many countries and regions. In the RSC's development and heritagization process, the multicultural riddle as articulated by Gerd Baumann (1999) becomes visible. Baumann's riddle conceptualizes a triangle linking ethnicity, nation, and religion, with culture in the middle. Individuals belong to multiple 'communities,' resulting in a pattern of cross-cutting cleavages. Multiple affiliations then result in a complex relation to 'culture' which can be operationalized by people in both an essentialist and processual discourse. Superdiversity refers to a state in which these affiliations are entangled to such an extent that individuals' claims to sameness and difference keep shifting. Heritagizing superdiversity in practice becomes difficult as it must navigate essentialist and processual understandings of culture without reproducing essentialized understandings of individuals as Others. At the same time, those engaged with the RSC frequently hold a pragmatic attitude. There is a gap between the frame and the imposed measures, and those that partake in the RSC in the role of spectator, participant, volunteer, or any other combination or variation of this.

The analysis offered in this thesis combines a literature review with ethnographic research at the RSC. I helped out during the RSC as a volunteer. During this time, I learned more about the intricacies of hosting a large-scale superdiverse public carnival in the Netherlands and became acquainted with volunteers, some of whom I interviewed for this thesis. This experiential and conversational data is used to provide a multidimensional understanding of the tensions that arose during the RSC's development. This is especially important because of the RSC's entanglements that extend beyond the local and national. These entanglements are addressed by approaching the RSC as situated within the multiscalar, an approach developed by Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller (2018) to draw attention to the multiple ways in which research contexts are connected to networks of relations beyond the direct context. Combining all the materials gathered, I point out what has been added, changed, and lost as the Antillean carnival transformed into Dutch Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) since 2016.

Contextualizing the RSC and goals of the thesis

The RSC refers to a set of events related to the celebration of the carnival in Rotterdam. The specific events depend on the year. The most consistently present elements are the Royalty Election and the street parade. The Royalty Election is an event during which participants

compete to become the specific year's RSC Queen and King. The winning Royalty will be at the front of the street parade. The street parade is the RSC's biggest and most visible event. During this, the center of Rotterdam is filled with spectators as a colorful stream of people takes over the streets. With thousands of participants in beautiful costumes, brass bands, disc jockeys, and many more visitors, the carnival amounts to a break from daily life in the city. During the street parade, there is also the *mercado*, a market that sells food and items from across the world.

The RSC is promoted as an event that makes cultural diversity and social cohesion visible (Zomercarnaval Rotterdam, n.d.). Originally known as the Antillean Carnival, the carnival's roots trace back to the 1980s when a group of students from the Antilles started their organizing efforts. People migrated from the former Netherlands Antilles to the European Netherlands where they sought to organize carnival parades as well. The move across the Atlantic resulted in various changes to the celebrations. Over the years, groups with diverse cultural and national backgrounds started participating which resulted in the renaming of the Antillean Carnival to the Summer Carnival. The celebration became explicitly multicultural and later superdiverse. In 2016, it was inscribed in the Dutch ICH Inventory marking the first step of the heritagization process. Then in December 2023, the RSC was inscribed onto the UNESCO Representative List (RL) of ICH. The fortieth edition was celebrated in 2024.

The RSC's trajectory thus appears to be one of cooperation and recognition; the carnival commenced, and the carnival gained popularity with other cultural groups who were also welcome to participate, followed by further growth. The ICH inscription, then, is said to offer recognition of the ability of new heritage practices to take place amid superdiversity. Although cooperation and recognition are important aspects, too much focus on these obscures the existence of tensions in the carnival's development. Behind the curated images of the RSC are contestations about agency, utopian ideals of going beyond multiculturalism and becoming a melting pot of cultures, divisions within Dutch society and the presence of structural discrimination, and financial considerations. The heritagization marks a next step. Being marked as heritage entails a valuation of the festivity as having to be maintained for the future. Despite this, changes in the social landscape mean that the RSC is still not safeguarded, as I illustrate in Chapter 4 on Tensions and Chapter 5 on UNESCO. Moreover, scholars have raised questions regarding the paradoxes that arise heritagizing a superdiverse

element[2] (Van der Zeijden 2017; Wessendorf 2022). Underneath the heritagization is a complex story of colorful parades, colonial pasts, and postcolonial migrations coming together in what now constitutes the RSC.

This thesis thus addresses the link between diversity and heritage and the effects of heritagization processes. This is linked to debates on the "culturalization of citizenship" (Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016) and the "politics of belonging (Geschiere 2011). A critical engagement with heritage and heritagization is important because the operationalization of heritage affects the conceptualization of the self and 'Other' on individual, community, national, and global levels (Smith 2013, 393). The RSC's transnational character requires careful consideration of the carnival's many meanings. Although the Antillean origins are frequently mentioned, few accounts consider carefully what carnival looks like and the meanings it carries on the various islands within the Dutch Kingdom. The importance of studying the Caribbean islands' cultural heritage is increasingly being recognized.[3] Chapter 2 is therefore dedicated to the development of carnivals in Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Sint Maarten[4], Saba, and Sint Eustatius – all six islands that were former Dutch colonies. I use the acronym SSSABC to refer to the islands together. Like the RSC, the islands' carnivals are shaped through transnational entanglements. After analyzing the RSC's development, the explorative accounts are contrasted to the RSC to address how the move across the Atlantic affects the carnival (Chapter 3).

In the process, then, this thesis looks behind the RSC's façade to analyze how the RSC's development is embedded in and entangled with larger societal transformations, linked to unresolved conversations on coloniality, racism, and discrimination while also being a venue for engaging with a future in which there is space for shared joy and cooperation.

Methodology, Methods, and Data

The methods and concepts we use shape the research outcomes of the phenomena we intend to analyze (Engler and Stausberg 2022, 4). Methods are selective and can be recombined in

[2] I use the term 'element' as this is also the term used within the UNESCO discourse for ICH that is nominated for inscription on the Representative List.
[3] This recognition is reflected in the publications of dedicated volumes such as *Caribbean Cultural Heritage and the Nation*, edited by Alex van Stipriaan, Luc Alofs, and Francio Guadeloupe (2023) and *Antilliaans Erfgoed*, edited by Gert Oostindie and Alex van Stipriaan (2021).
[4] Different names are used to denote the island including Sint Maarten, Saint Maarten, St. Martin, and Saint Martin. In the thesis, I mostly use Sint Maarten because the focus is on the relation between the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Dutch Kingdom. As such, the term is to refer primarily to the Dutch half rather than the island as a whole or the French half.

innovative ways to work as counter-hegemonic strategies (Engler and Stausberg 2022, 6). This recognition of the central importance of methods and concepts was among the reasons why I intended this project to not only be committed to the research questions previously raised but also to be an example of engaged scholarship[5]. This epistemological position, in which I wanted to try and contribute to the RSC itself to work on the co-creation of knowledge, shaped my use of methods and data collection. The RSC in its current form can be considered an example of a collective celebration in a superdiverse city. Engaging with ethnographic research in a superdiverse context brings along specific challenges that require me to constantly self-reflect, deconstruct, and realize personal tendencies to essentialize in an effort to make sense of the phenomenon I am researching (Wessendorf 2022). In the following, I describe in more depth the characteristics of the research setup and ethical issues that came up along the way, as well as the reasoning for combining ethnographic research with desk research.

I chose the following methods based on my understanding of the context, the research questions I sought to answer, as well as the available resources, including both time and the availability of the conversation partners. To analyze the tensions involved in the heritagization of the RSC, as well as the tensions in the prior establishment and management of the parades, it is necessary to go beyond desk research. This approach allowed me to talk to those who care deeply about the carnival or who continue to engage, despite frequently disagreeing with decisions made or changes implemented, and in this way become familiar with the many meanings that the RSC holds for people.

This presence of many meanings brings me to a central issue in this thesis: the need to problematize the notion of ‘community’ and a dichotomous conceptualization of insider versus outsider. The UNESCO ICHC speaks of a community, of cultural bearers and practitioners. However, there is not one community in the RSC. It is equally unclear who would be an insider or an outsider. The idea of a homogeneous and identifiable community is contested as it does not address underlying power structures or different engagements of

[5] With engaged scholarship, I am referring to a broad epistemological stream that some may qualify as Community Engaged Research (CER) (Strand et al. 2003) or Participatory Action Research (Vollebergh and Van Stapele 2023). This type of research challenges the hierarchies of the researcher/researched in which the researcher places observations on the researcher. Instead, the researcher works with the people involved in the place they are trying to research. I use the term Engaged Research instead of CER because I am frequently problematizing the term community in this research. This approach results in research that is closer to the people with whom it engages. In an anthropological research project, this approach creates new challenges. For example, when conversational partners’ views differ or when what they say contradicts my observations during the fieldwork. I indicate when such tensions occurred.

'members' (Mosurska and Ford 2020, 347). In the RSC's case, the endless number of roles and different levels of engagement can suffice as an illustration of the boundary-drawing issue. The parades feature the presence of, among others, participants, musicians, audiences, volunteers, and jury members. Some engage with the carnival once, others every few years or for decades. There are also people who are culturally linked to the carnival but only show up on the street parade day.

Considering this fluidity of roles while acknowledging the essential presence of fleeting members, it is not possible to define criteria or an engagement level that would qualify an individual as being part of 'the community.' Defining the 'community' in terms of cultural backgrounds or ethnicities also does not work as the RSC is transnational at its heart and the *Stichting Zomercarnaval* (Summer Carnival Foundation, hereafter referred to as Foundation) explicitly seeks to go beyond narrow conceptions of cultural ownership. Moreover, the superdiverse character amounts to an acquired characteristic. The combination of fluidity and attempts to draw up boundaries complicated the process of defining the research's scope and having a 'selection' of participants. I try to work with this conceptual issue by consciously engaging with people who relate to the RSC in different ways. This means that the conversations or positions presented in the thesis are not representative of the community, the audience, or any 'bounded' or essentialized group for that matter. By discussing my observations and the conversations in relation to issues in the RSC's development and recent heritagization, I illustrate the complicated story that surrounds the RSC.

What differed from other anthropological research projects is that even if no clear characteristics are present for qualifying as an insider, at the project's start I felt like I still qualified as an outsider. I did not have any connection with the carnival. I did not attend the RSC before, I did not actively know anyone who attended the festivities frequently, nor does my cultural background include anything carnival-related nor do I speak Papiamento, a language spoken by many at the volunteer briefings. My engagement was sparked by a researcher who told me that the RSC was nominated for UNESCO's Representative List. This position and the at times politicized nature of the context make it ever more important to ensure principles of reciprocity (Maiter et al. 2008, 307-308) and ensure that this research was done through working with people and learning from them. Throughout my engagement, this connection grew, and I became part of the 'in-between' – I would no longer identify as an outsider, although I am not an insider either.

Considering these parameters of the superdiverse research context involving many people while wanting to do Engaged Research, I opted for an ethnographic research set-up because “ethnographic methods are particularly adept to study these complex social realities, as they are sensitive to individual experiences of difference, complex identifications and the importance of specific social contexts and situations in how people relate to each other” (Wessendorf 2022, 153). However, a focus on the local would fail to address the RSC’s transnational character, its entanglements in larger networks, and the effects that the heritage inscription has. I conceptualize the RSC as a set of nodes around which relations with stakeholders can be identified. Especially in Chapter 4, which is entirely based on ethnographic research, I focus on these nodes as sites of tensions where negotiations take place. This required me to combine ethnographic research with desk research, including web pages and studying municipal decisions related to the RSC.

The research’s fieldwork component was divided into two periods. The first period was from July 2023 until September 2023. The second period was from March 2024 until July 2024. In the first period, I attended the Royalty Election and the volunteer briefing before helping as a volunteer and researcher during the lighting and street parades. In the second period, I attended three volunteer briefings before again helping as a volunteer and researcher during the street parade. I also visited the Kunsthal’s (2024 – Rotterdam) exhibition *40 years of Summer Carnival*. I engaged with participant observation, taking notes on the atmosphere, conversations, and the issues raised. Considering that not all attendees of the meetings were aware of my position as a researcher and volunteer and were therefore unable to give informed consent, I refrain from making references from my fieldnotes that might trace back to these individuals. I do use the insights I gained from these meetings as part of the carnival’s description and for formulating questions that I discussed later during interviews.

Through my role as a volunteer, I connected with fellow volunteers during the briefings. Being a volunteer helped me to have more fruitful interviews with the interlocutors because I was at least partially aware of the issues they experienced. This reduced the distance between us. In the second research period, I reached out to these contacts again. I also connected with a Carnival King contestant.

I conducted interviews with five interlocutors involved with the RSC: Rosalie, Isabelle, Cedric, Giles, and Laurence. I have pseudonymized the names of all interlocutors. I

will shortly introduce them. Isabelle, Cedric, and Rosalie are volunteers at the RSC. Giles coordinated the volunteers for years and contributed to the RSC's inscription on the Dutch ICH Inventory and the ICH RL. Laurence is a student from Aruba who moved to the Netherlands for his studies. He is part of a carnival group, participated in the Royalty Election, and became the 2024 King. I also interviewed Matthew, the vice-president of the Sint Maarten Carnival Development Foundation. Before the interview, I informed them about my research, the scope, and the sort of questions that I would like to discuss. I reminded them that they could stop participation at any time. Oral consent was asked at the start of the recording. I worked with semi-structured interviews, meaning that I prepared topics and questions but reserved space for the conversation to develop organically (Luhrmann 2022, 348-50). This approach gave more agency to the interlocutors as they could point in directions that they found important, interesting, or wanted to share. The fieldwork and most interviews were done in Dutch, except for the interview with Matthew during which we spoke English. I translated the Dutch interview excerpts into English. When possible, interviews were done in person, except for an online interview with Laurence and Matthew.

I recorded these conversations using my personal smartphone and afterward transferred them to the protected Utrecht University server. The file on my phone was then deleted. I transcribed the interviews using Amberscript, a transcription software that is approved for use by Utrecht University, thus ensuring the data remains secure. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed in order to be able to use these for the analysis and to answer the research questions.

This set-up was created while continuously reflecting on ethical guidelines for doing anthropological fieldwork research (De Koning, Meyer, Moors, and Pels 2019). A limitation of the used methodology is that I did not manage to arrange interviews with other stakeholders in the multiscalar such as the municipality or the police. Doing research on superdiverse contexts, especially when it involves a popular cultural event, means the scope quickly becomes too large for a singular researcher to manage (Wessendorf 2022, 156-7). This limitation will have to be complemented by future research.

Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 1, I elaborate on the theoretical framework. The thesis is dedicated to how people with different cultural backgrounds engage with the RSC and heritagization practices. To this end, I illustrate what has been written about superdiversity, place-making in cities, and how

this links to immaterial cultural heritage. The final section discusses key analyses related to carnivals. Much attention has been and continues to be devoted to each of these subject areas. The goal is not to provide a comprehensive overview but to create a framework based on existing literature that helps to address the research questions.

In Chapter 2, I look at carnivals on the SSSABC islands. The RSC is understood to have Antillean origins, but this is frequently where the attention to the RSC's roots ends. The chapter asks: what function does carnival have on the different islands? To what extent do the developments reflect the historical conditions and continued workings of the colonial relationship with the Netherlands?

The third chapter returns to the European Netherlands. It starts by looking at the RSC's founding. The consequent growth expands the scales and networks, affecting the Foundation's agency in making decisions that concern the RSC. After, I compare the RSC to the SSSABC carnivals to assess how the transatlantic move affected the RSC.

This forms the basis for the fourth chapter which addresses how the contemporary RSC takes place. Chapter 4 is based entirely on ethnographic research and consequently is the longest chapter. First, I will describe the street parade's performance in relation to the meanings that the RSC holds for people. After, I will analyze name changes, the implementation of safety measures, and a dancing controversy. All of these are shaped through entanglements made visible by using the multiscalar approach. In the analysis of these tensions, I illustrate how these entanglements limit the agency of the 'community.' I also illustrate how ideas about what constitutes safety, carnival, and superdiversity shape decision-making.

Chapter 5 looks at the heritagization process from the initial inscription on the Dutch ICH Inventory to the RL and beyond. I find that less attention than may be expected is given to the international inscription. What can be noticed is the gap between the RSC's careful organization and the actual Street Parade that follows in 2024. This points toward the fundamental tension between the institutional framing and the fluid, dynamic, and resisting character of the carnival parade.

In the conclusions, I draw the chapters' findings together to illustrate the paradoxes present in the RSC's development. The multiscalar approach elucidates how the RSC's development results in the expansion of scales, leading both to the RSC's stabilization and increased complexity. As the RSC developed, it became a superdiverse celebration, but this

did not result in the erasure of nationality or culture, or the melting of diversity into a homogeneous entity. This can be noticed, for example, as many people invoke their nationality or culture using flags. It also proved important for people to carefully navigate intercultural communication. The conceptual issues that I noticed as a researcher (as explained in Chapter 1) were not always made explicit. Instead, the Foundation's and community members' pragmatic approach proved important for resolving these paradoxes.

1. Theoretical framework

This chapter illustrates how the thesis is linked to discussions on the heritagizing of superdiversity. This is especially important because of the interdisciplinary approach, which means I draw on a broad range of literature and bring this together in the RSC's analysis. It introduces key debates surrounding superdiversity, heritage, and carnival studies and elaborates on the choice for the multiscalar approach to the RSC.

1.1 Superdiversity in Rotterdam

The Summer Carnival is closely tied to the city of Rotterdam, a city that has been frequently described as a postcolonial superdiverse city (for example, Guadeloupe, van de Laar, and van der Linden 2020). Historically known as a port city, Rotterdam has been a key site for the movement of goods and people (Captain 2020, 394). The arrival of people outside of the Netherlands to the Netherlands is not a new phenomenon and is analyzed, for example, in the book by Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen (2018) which takes a historical approach to five centuries of migration in the Netherlands. Notable in the 20th century was the increased arrival of young people from former Dutch colonies to the Netherlands to reside there for their studies and sometimes longer. The travel vectors became increasingly transnational and circular (Captain 2020, 402-3). This section provides a short overview of how Rotterdam's increased superdiversity developed while problematizing the term superdiversity and highlighting the tensions it creates for place-making in the city.

Following the Second World War, there were multiple periods with an increased number of migrants who settled in Rotterdam. These periods were shaped by mechanisms surrounding push and pull factors that have consequently been criticized and problematized. The point here is not to discuss this literature but to look at the resulting outcome. Today, the demographic composition of Rotterdam is incredibly mixed. Statistics on the composition depend on the report one reads; Rotterdam may be home to around 170 or even 206 different nationalities (IDEM 2019, 1; Gemeente Rotterdam 2022, 11). Slightly over half of the citizens have a migration background[6] (Gemeente Rotterdam 2022, 11) and one out of eight has enslaved ancestors (Van Stipriaan 2020). These statistics are indicative of continued

[6] The Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS, n.d.) defines a person with a migration background as someone who has at least one parent who is born in a foreign country.

globalization and migration, resulting in ‘superdiverse’ contexts in a metropolis like Rotterdam.

At the same time, these statistics have various shortcomings. They essentialize demographic differences and reduce citizens to certain identities that they may not ascribe to themselves, while methodologies for compiling them are not transparent. Other than that, they contribute to the construction of ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’ categories and hint at a sort of homogeneous *Dutchness* in which there are ‘the native Dutch’ and ‘all the others.’ Consequently, they reinforce a certain essentializing tendency, creating binary dichotomies between an ‘us’ and a ‘them,’ a tendency that is commonly seen in public debates as well (Guadeloupe, van de Laar, and van der Linden 2020). These questions of how to use quantified social data, the potential uses, and the limitations continue to be subject to debate.[7]

The term superdiversity was introduced by Steven Vertovec (2023) as a descriptive concept for places in which commonly used notions of migrants or post-migrants fail to provide much insight into the results of migration-induced diversification. It serves to acknowledge that individuals relate to identity categories, both individual and shared, in complex ways. It builds on the idea of intersectionality, which demonstrates how within marginalized groups, some people may experience additional layers of oppression or marginalization because of other marginalized identities to which they adhere (Vertovec 2023, 54). The concept of intersectionality frequently still rests on categories of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, and risks oversimplifying how privilege and marginalization occur. Despite this rigidity, like the statistics, I would still argue the descriptive aspect of intersectionality can be useful for demonstrating in which direction to face, as long as it does not seek to provide an understanding of this complexity in a comprehensive way.

Superdiversity understood as related to intersectionality in this way differs from related concepts that presuppose a degree of managing social differences from a top-down perspective, such as multiculturalism, interculturalism, and diversity. Multiculturalism, for example, views individuals as having multiple identities but thinks of them in terms of difference. They are frequently still understood to be part of a particular ethnic or religious group (Guadeloupe 2015, 22). Superdiversity, then, provides an alternative. It acknowledges individuals and the various diversities within them without resorting to notions of difference

[7] Discussions about the potential and limits of quantifying markers of difference such as race, ethnicity, and religion are taking place, for example, at the symposium at Utrecht University (2024) on Measuring Racial Diversity in the University.

(Guadeloupe 2015). Combining the work of François Jullien and David Chidester, Birgit Meyer (2018) proposes to study religious plurality in contemporary European cities as a frontier zone in which intercultural relations develop. Multiplicity and relationality, which come together in spaces like the RSC, precede categorizations based on difference and control. A focus on the frontier zone draws attention to messy multiplicities and incongruities between an intended and actual order (Meyer 2018, 72). In the RSC's case, continuing this perspective entails a move from an essentializing and categorizing theoretical framework to a framework that might resemble a rhizomatic approach. Within the rhizome, individuals still draw on their multiplicity of identities and are granted more space for self-definition, thereby allowing space for bottom-up perspectives.

Although superdiversity as a descriptive and normative concept can be useful, it becomes more difficult to create policy interventions that address marginalization in superdiverse contexts. Many institutional bodies mention the need to address diversity and make organizations more representative. Among them is KIEN (2022) where diversity is presented as a core theme in their plan for 2021-2024. It is difficult to assess, however, what an 'outcome' of implementing diversity and increased representation looks like.

This difficulty can be understood by looking at what Baumann (1999) termed the multicultural riddle. Baumann analyzes how two main issues arise when identifying obstacles or directions toward the realization of shared equality for all. First, each 'platform' defines different allies and adversaries, as well as insiders and outsiders in their resistance against discrimination or forced assimilation.[8] Second, in practice, there is no superlogic of equality. Human rights instruments promise equality but are insufficient for countering discrimination in practice. Instruments at the national level do not necessarily fare much better. It suffices to look at the widespread presence of structural discrimination and racism in the Netherlands and other countries (Mulder and Bol 2020). Consequently, realizing equality for all in an imagined multicultural context where people identify into neat categories that do *not* overlap would already be difficult as each conceptualizes equality differently. This does not become easier in a superdiverse context as people's affiliations are entangled and individual claims to sameness and difference continuously shift. Superdiversity refers to a state in which these affiliations are entangled to such an extent that individuals' claims to sameness and difference

[8] For an example of how complex these relations can become, I recommend the short article by Francio Guadeloupe (2013). He analyzes the diverse black consciousness among Antillean youngsters and how they navigate the interconnections of class, ethnicity, and racism on the islands in relation to religious conceptions and the colonial past.

keep shifting. When a ‘community’ initiates the heritagization process, this results in having to comply with existing frameworks that are not necessarily built around a critical conception of ‘culture’ as relational, fluid, and dynamic. The result is that doing justice to diversity and representation can be a difficult task.

One of the outcomes concerns new forms of Othering and the repositioning of group boundaries (Vertovec 2023, 69). Othering here is linked to social processes; discourses, ideas, actions, identities, and so forth are used in the construction of boundaries around groups which leads to the creation of an imagined ‘Us’ and ‘Them.’ The process of Othering is closely linked to the politics of belonging. When focusing on the Dutch context, the politics of belonging seek to reaffirm a notion of exclusive Dutchness through a culturalized understanding of citizenship (Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016). The culturalization of citizenship takes stock of the increased centrality given to culture and morality in the shaping of citizenship. Having legally acquired citizenship does not suffice; people must also culturally belong. Those perceived as newcomers must put in effort to show their belonging to the nation (Van Es 2019, 142). This culturalization is founded on a protectionist and essentialist understanding of culture as homogeneous and anchored in a certain place (Mepschen and Duyvendak 2012). Othering refers to a process in which one’s belonging to a place is questioned by casting them as being outside of the norm and not (fully) integrated. The process involves the drawing of a symbolic boundary around the dominant majority of ‘native’ Dutch (Van Es 2019, 144). One question is, then, how the RSC’s explicitly transnational ties and heterogeneous presence as a superdiverse phenomenon are in tension with propensities in the Dutch social landscape to essentialize and question people’s belonging. Another issue is how the heritagization through which the RSC is added to the UNESCO ICH inventory as an example of *Dutch* ICH might result in tensions with an essentialist understanding of Dutch culture.

Combining the insights provided by the multicultural riddle in combination with the culturalization of citizenship and politics of belonging in a superdiverse context is necessary because the resulting forms of in- and exclusion are intimately linked. People’s identifications and affiliations with a conceptualization of culture are dynamic rather than homogeneous and bounded. This thesis contributes to these debates by asking how in the RSC’s case the notion of superdiversity plays a role and how it links to the colonial past of the Netherlands and the SSSABC islands. It also looks at migration-induced diversification and how this affects carnivals on the SSSABC islands.

1.2 Multiscalar claims to the city

Superdiversity and the politics of belonging take place both on the national and on more local levels. The continued diversification of demographics affects how people relate to the 'nation' and the 'city.' As the city diversifies, this raises questions about modes of living together in urban contexts. The becoming of a superdiverse city points toward changes in urban politics. The question is then, how do people in superdiverse cities engage with place-making?

As dynamic entities, cities are part of many different structures such as regional, (trans)national, and global processes. The impact of migration on shaping cultural heritage is frequently neglected although it is gaining more attention as a research theme (Allen 2021). Recent scholarship has addressed how migrants[9], postmigrants, and second-generation individuals are involved in urban landscapes while maintaining transnational ties (see, for example, Van Es 2022; Dellios and Henrich 2021). This awareness is also reflected in policy-making instruments such as the publication of *The Culture*, a report created by the Dutch UNESCO commission that describes cultural work by people with a migration background in the Netherlands and the obstacles they face. Other academic publications focus on the everyday life practices of migrants to analyze how these practices challenge the urban space and alter existing relations (see, for example, Kärrholm, Jensen, Foroughanfarc, and Söderberg 2022).

A key work that draws attention to this is the book by Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018) on migrants and multiscalar city-making. In the thesis, I work with their conceptualization of the multiscalar which they initially developed as a methodological approach to comparative urban research. Central to the multiscalar is a move beyond fixed notions of levels of analysis, such as the macro, meso, and micro, and fixed hierarchies of territorial units, such as the neighborhood, the city, and the nation-state (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2023, 44). Instead, it focuses on relationality. The multiscalar concept acknowledges "urban space and state space as intricately entangled, mutually co-constituting, and

[9] The language used to describe people's mobility across and within national borders is deeply political and is linked to conversations about the previously discussed culturalization of citizenship. Each choice seeks to describe a certain aspect of mobility but fails to rid itself of conceptions of difference embedded within itself. Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018, 5) opt for using the terms "migrant" and "non-migrant" not to continue categorization or the assumptions of difference but to highlight how migrant newcomers stand within social systems.

conflictually co-evolving formations of scale-differentiated sociospatial relations under modern capitalism" (Brenner 2019, 7).

Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2023, 44) argue that to understand urban dynamics, one must "approach cities as a form of interconnected social relations, institutions, and units of governance." I work with this conceptualization in a slightly altered form. Instead of approaching the city of Rotterdam, I approach a specific set of manifestations within the urban setting: the RSC. It is fruitful to apply the multiscalar to the RSC to grasp how it is constituted beyond the local and beyond any community. The multiscalar illustrates the complex processes through which the RSC is able to take place. Specifically, it draws attention to the fact that engaging with practice in the public space means navigating the diverse interests of multiple actors (Van der Zeijden 2017, 33). A focus on heritagization should not obscure the presence of social, political, and economic interests and considerations. The multiscalar approach functions as a counterweight to this and illustrates how the RSC is far from a given and is intimately linked to its historical development across the Atlantic and across city and country borders. A leading question in the thesis concerns the effect that dynamic relationships have on the agency of carnival practitioners.

1.3 Heritage and heritagization

Over time the RSC became increasingly settled in Rotterdam and developed into a yearly tradition. It reached the point of being added to the Dutch ICH Inventory in 2016 and was inscribed to the international UNESCO Representative List (RL) in 2023. This section synthesizes literature related to three main questions. The first is about the meaning of heritage and how conceptualizations of heritage function in superdiverse contexts. The second is concerned with the UNESCO ICH convention and the issues that surround the implementation of it. The third brings this together by looking at how the RSC's heritagization affects the RSC and the 'community.'

Heritage and heritagization refer to the process and outcomes of people's engagement with a stream of things from which a selection is made that constitutes an important resource for individual and collective identity (Van de Port and Meyer 2018, 1). Heritage frequently used to be invoked to reinforce the idea of a national culture (Zubrzycki 2018). Heritage has strong symbolic power and engages peoples' emotions. The contemporary visibility of people's mobility and migration across and within national borders results in the further disruption of the idea of heritage as a natural outcome and makes the negotiations and efforts

placed into the canonization more visible (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007, 2). Especially in countries like the Netherlands, “heritage can function as a stage for the negotiation of shifting identities” (Dellios and Henrich 2021, 3). When people within a delineated community, whether on a regional or national level, feel like this is not representative of them, the question may arise about whose heritage this is and what memories it represents. The presence of superdiversity fundamentally disrupts the notion of a homogeneous nation or city. Moreover, heritage formation is distinct from conversations about the culturalization of politics and citizenship in the sense that it constitutes a “self-conscious attempt of heritage makers to canonize culture” (Van de Port and Meyer 2018, 1). The question then is, how does a superdiverse context shape conversations about heritage? And what are the motivations and considerations of those engaged with ‘superdiverse’ heritage to engage in the heritagization of the practice or element?

The existing heritage conventions at the UNESCO level are the product of decades-long debate and diplomacy. Richard Kurin (2004, 68) remarks that by the mid-1990s, international awareness grew about continued modernization and globalization, and many feared that this would disrupt the maintenance of local cultural traditions and practices. Following the success of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage program in bringing public attention to traditions and increasing local and national governments’ efforts to safeguard the practices, advocates started their work on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (ICHC). The document was to provide recognition of cultural heritage, especially in the Global South to counterbalance the predominance of examples from the Global North included on the World Heritage list (Kurin 2004, 69). The ICHC was accepted in 2003 and came into effect in 2006 after 30 member states had ratified the convention. The Netherlands ratified the convention in 2012.

The ICHC stipulates the creation of three lists documenting ICH: the Urgent Safeguarding List, the RL, and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The focus here is on the RL which is the inventory on which the RSC has been inscribed. Each state that ratifies the convention must establish a body tasked with the creation of a national inventory of ICH. In the Netherlands, this is the KIEN. The community surrounding the heritage element can propose their element for inscription, ensuring a bottom-up approach to the creation of the inventory.

The ICHC's implementation, however, was not a straightforward process. This can be seen, for example, in the special issue called "UNESCO on the Ground" published in the *Journal of Folklore Research*. The issue's central question is how the ICH's implementation is perceived, experienced, and negotiated by people involved with or affected by the initiatives (Foster 2015). The myriads of often paradoxical effects of heritagization are addressed through a selection of case studies. Inspired by these and related articles, I will highlight some issues that are directly relevant in relation to the RSC.

The first issue concerns the qualifier intangible as opposed to tangible heritage which creates an arbitrary boundary that is not easily navigated (Rudolff 2010). Most, if not all, ICH elements have a variety of material and consequently tangible components that are integral parts of the element. The use of the qualifier living heritage, as an attempt to underscore the engagement of humans with the tradition, does not resolve the issue because a lack of clarity remains. Laurajane Smith (2013, 391) argues against the separation of heritage into intangible cultural heritage and material heritage which undermines the fundamental conception of heritage as "a process of remembering and forgetting." Smith (2013, 391) continues, "what we may call heritage places, sites, artifacts or even world heritage lists, are part of the range of cultural tools that are used to negotiate the meaning of the past for the present. This negotiation is inevitably done in the context of the cultural and political needs of the present."

This negotiation aspect of heritagization brings me to the term 'community.' The term, complemented by 'bearers and practitioners of the element,' presupposes a clear affiliation with the tradition. Who qualifies as the 'community' is an important question because the ICHC requires a bottom-up approach to heritagization. This means that 'community' members must initiate and give consent for the element's inscription. In the RSC's case, the creation of a definition of the 'community' is complicated by the presence of a superdiverse 'group' of people engaging in many different roles. Arno van der Hoeven (2019, 235) refers to De Lange and de Waal's proposal to replace the term 'community' with 'networked publics' which underscores the dynamic character of urban social life. In this conceptualization, people come together around a shared 'matter of concern,' in this case the RSC. Although this could potentially provide a partial solution, it will likely still result in boundary drawing. The questions then arise: how is the community conceptualized at the RSC and how are possible disagreements about heritage inscription addressed? And what does the consent of the 'community' entail in a superdiverse context?

Another issue concerns the inscription's effect on the tradition. The inscription requires the careful creation of a Nomination File by answering questions about, among others, the bearers and practitioners of the element, its contemporary social functions and cultural meanings, the effects that inscription would have on the visibility of ICH in general, and efforts that are taken to safeguard the element. It remains, however, unclear how inscription on the RL affects the heritage element. I address this in Chapter 5 by comparing the RSC in the years before and after the UNESCO inscription.

For an element to be added to the RL, it first has to be on the national inventory, the community must have expressed interest in international inscription, after which it must be nominated by the national government for international inscription. The DICHI consists of over 100 elements and is still expanding. The government's choice of which element to nominate matters for the nation's diplomacy and how it wants to present itself on the international level. This is important to mention as it illustrates how an element's heritagization is not only to ensure its continuation and visibility. Instead, a network of at times diverging interests surrounds the element. This reaffirms the importance of taking a multiscalar approach: to consider only the community and the element would result in a failure to observe the network that surrounds it. The choice to heritagize a superdiverse element like the RSC creates not only conceptual challenges surrounding the notions of community and its transnational character but is also a conscious decision made to promote the Netherlands in a certain light. The thesis contributes to the existing conversations on heritagization by using a multiscalar approach to illustrate how paradoxes in the heritagization of the superdiverse RSC are addressed.

1.4 Carnival

The previous sections raised questions about contemporary discussions related to superdiversity, place-making in the city, and heritage. In the case of a carnival as heritage, it is also vital to assess what a carnival is. Much has been written about festivals and the carnivalesque. Following Irene Stengs (2012, 9), I maintain the perspective that celebrations and rituals are entangled with broader social discussions. This section illustrates what has

been written about transnational and Caribbean-style[10] carnivals while linking this to fundamental carnival theorizations. I start from a more abstract conceptualization of carnival as a social space where usual life is suspended, before synthesizing what is often meant by carnival in a European setting. Then, I link this to writings about Caribbean-style carnivals.

Catherine Bell (2009 [1997], 120) considers carnival celebrations as a type of ritual that emphasizes "the public display of religiocultural sentiments." She writes they are particularly ritualistic in their tendency to "draw together many social groups that are normally kept separate and create specific times and places where social differences are either laid aside or reversed for a more embracing experience of community" (Bell 2009 [1997], 126). At its core, carnival forms a break from daily life. Victor Turner (1969, 96) refers to this as liminality: the public withdraws from the social actions that are considered conventional. Turner's work can be considered a turning point in the field of ritual studies as it focused on festivals' roles in the construction and maintenance of social dynamics and social order (Testa 2014, 50). Whether through dress, dance, or other material and bodily entry points, the carnival invokes the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque, as initially conceptualized by Michael Bakhtin (1984 [1965]), underscores carnivals' tendency to inverse that which is considered the standard during usual life. There is a suspension or even reversal of social orders and hierarchy, instead transforming a place into one where transgressions may take place (Gold and Gold 2021, 51). The tensions analyzed in Chapter 4 demonstrate attempts by stakeholders such as the municipality and the Foundation to structure the RSC into a relatively neat and contained celebration. This is at odds with carnival as a popular celebration that inverts social life and is transgressive. More attention is given to this balancing act in Chapter 4.

Bakhtin's work led some to study the potential that carnival has for affecting social life beyond the carnival (Testa 2014, 51). Two main views on this potential exist. In the first, carnival can provide an entry for creating social change. These scholars maintain that carnival should be read as freeing the masses, of transgressions or as a form of social protest (Frost 2016, 572). In the second reading the celebration is seen as a tool of elites or governments to strengthen the existing hierarchy as a deviation of the daily hierarchies also clarifies and

[10] I use the term 'Caribbean-style' as a way of clearly distinguishing it from European carnival. There is not a singular aesthetic or set of practices that visibly marks a carnival as Caribbean-style. Differences may include musical genres and the type of dress that contribute to the creation of a certain atmosphere. The difference is more likely found in the historical trajectories through which the carnivals developed, which in the case of Caribbean-style carnivals is tied up with, among other factors, the colonial past, migration, and creolization.

strengthens what regular daily life looks like (Gold and Gold 2021, 53). Some space for transgression is granted after which the public is expected to return to day-to-day life without having affected its organization (Bell 2009, 126). Based on my experiences with the carnival as well as literature on the multiscalar, I would argue in line with Britt Swartjes (2024, 13) to conceptualize the carnival as a space of tension. This understanding forms an alternative to choosing between the carnival as either an elite-governed celebration or a place for bottom-up social change. In this space, multiple actors engage in shaping the carnival and its outcomes, which result in both inclusion and exclusion. I will address this question during the research by engaging with the existing literature and linking this to ethnographic material from the Summer Carnival.

In Europe, the carnival is frequently hosted as part of the Catholic calendar. In this context, carnival marks the pre-Lent period, starting from 11-11-11, or 11 a.m. on November 11th until Ash Wednesday. The people are allowed to transgress before retreating into Lent, a 40-day period of modesty before Easter. Although the date is often maintained, there is not a fixed shape for carnival celebrations. Practices depend on the local context and can range from mask-wearing and parades to orange fights[11]. Carnival traditions often include customary rules that govern the appointment of carnival figures such as the Queen (Bell 2009 [2007], 126). Claims to carnival's origins are contested. There is evidence that carnival originates from Egyptian pagan festivals instead of Christianity or Europe (Liverpool 1998, 26). The developments over time are characterized by the movement of people and ideas across borders of nation-states and continents and the mixing of traditions and practices. As such, I find more analytical value in François Jullien's (2021 [2016], 55) conception of origin which he describes as an "evolving, unfixed thing," which allows for "emergence-tracing" without claiming and fixing an essence.

The development of carnival traditions in the Caribbean, Latin America, and regions of the United States such as New Orleans, are tied to the colonial past. Colonizers continued celebrations in the new context while colonized people and enslaved people sometimes engaged. The result has been the development of a wide variety of carnival traditions with place-specific manifestations that carry multiple meanings. The view of carnival as a site of protest is becoming more common (Stevens 1995). In many places, at least some links with the Catholic church remain as the carnival is still held as a pre-Lent tradition. The practices

[11] The Orange Fight refers to the *Battaglia delle Arance*, an event in Ivrea, Italy, during which a battle between the elite and the workers is played out by throwing oranges at each other.

demonstrate some religious elements that may be Catholic. Some practices are shaped through religious syncretism (Riggio 2020). The movement of people, ideas, and practices resulted in an amalgam of new traditions that continue to transform (Allen 2021). Following decades of decolonization and the increased movement of people from the Caribbean and Latin America to European countries, an immense growth of Caribbean-style carnivals can be witnessed with major celebrations held not only in Rotterdam, but also in London, Berlin, and Paris. This can be seen as a double translation, resulting in another change in meaning. It is noticeable how in the re-translation from the Caribbean to Europe, the religious dimension of the carnival often becomes less explicit. One question then is, is this religious dimension in Caribbean-style carnivals in Europe really absent? And what are possible explanations for this perceived absence?

2. History of carnival in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

As mentioned previously, the RSC is understood to have Antillean origins. After all, the event was initiated by people from Aruba and Curaçao and was called the Antillean carnival. Moreover, Rose Mary Allen and Gregory Richardson (2021, 149) find that carnival constitutes one of the most important parts of Antillean cultural heritage. To understand how the RSC took root, was shaped by transnational practices, and found a place in the ICH discourse, it is necessary to analyze what place carnivals have in the SSSABC islands. The chapter addresses the carnivals while relating this to the relationship between the islands and the European Netherlands. It discusses how the islands' economic and political conditions shaped the carnivals' development into a popular celebration that receives broad support from the population. It is compared to the RSC by considering if (super)diversity plays a role in the celebration and what alliances and tensions are present in relation to the Catholic church and/or other religions on the islands. Although this aspect is not often discussed, the RSC cannot be seen as separate from the Dutch colonial past which includes the colonization of the SSSABC islands. This chapter also serves as a way of partially countering a Eurocentric approach. The focus of the thesis is on the carnival in Rotterdam, which is in Europe, but to reduce this carnival to a festive expression of diversity in the Netherlands would hold little analytical value.

The focus on the separate islands, instead of the islands as one imagined unity, is a relevant endeavor as the development of carnival on each island is rather different. Each carnival developed through migration and creolization. They are also influenced by economic and political factors. The ways in which these develop and the type of meanings that the carnival holds are specific to each island.

The existence of analyses that discuss carnivals on the different islands and synthesize this with the RSC is rare. [12] The chapter deconstructs the idea of carnival's essential *Antilleanness* and demonstrates how each carnival is shaped by diversity, nation-branding, or island-branding concerns while being developed in its contingent context. Although there is some literature on Aruban and Curaçaoan carnival and related practices, literature on the

[12] Exceptions include Tak (1997) and Allen and Richardson (2021).

other islands is scant or even non-existent. I have sought to counter this lacuna with information on the web and interviews, most notably with Matthew, the vice-president of the Sint Maarten Carnival Development Foundation.

This relevance is reinforced by the fact that the trajectories are very different from the development of other Caribbean-style carnivals, most importantly the Trinidadian carnival. In Trinidad, the carnival functioned as a site of protest. Alex van Stipriaan (2016, 35) summarizes the development as follows: the carnival, rooted in Catholic Europe, was exported to the Americas as part of the colonial culture. Once there, it was appropriated by enslaved people who took the carnival space to express themselves and resist their oppression. In the present day, Trinidad's carnival continues to follow the Catholic calendar and is held before Ash Wednesday. Outside of that, it is difficult to pinpoint the presence of religion due to Trinidad's complex intertwining of politics, race, religion, and class (Riggio 2020). This does not mean that religion is absent. One example is the wearing of a masque known as Congo or Shango which refers to individuals wearing a shaplé or rosary around their neck while "recit[ing] 'African' prayers with fervor, satirizing local religious practices" (Crowley 1956, 198). Milla Cozart Riggio (2020) analyzes the merging of praying and playing at the carnival by looking at the recently reappeared performances of stickfighting and whipcracking warrior rituals. The practices link Trinidadians to their roots on the African continent and in India. Practices known as "kalinda, gatka, and jab jab" constitute "ritual performances of the sacred, portals through which to achieve 'transcendence'" (Riggio 2020, 227). This demonstrates the creative negotiation of the carnival space through which religious sentiments and practices continue to be present.

After the Emancipation of enslaved people, "throughout the Caribbean, carnival has become a celebration of Latin-American, Caribbean, and African identity" (Razak 1998, 49). Consequently, some maintain that the RSC developed out of a festivity originating from the Caribbean area in a period where enslaved people creolized a European festivity (see, for example, Guadeloupe, van de Laar, and van der Linden 2020, 459). The Dutch government, however, officially abolished slavery in 1863. Contemporary carnival parades in Aruba and Curaçao date back only to, respectively, 1954 and 1970, although the analysis shows that these dates are subject to contestation. On Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, Saba, and Bonaire, carnival celebrations started in the 1960s and 70s. This reading of carnival as a space in which enslaved people resisted their oppression does not automatically fit in the Dutch Caribbean islands, or at least requires additional historical context. At the same time, the

Trinidadian carnival shaped the SSSABC carnivals to different extents through transnational mechanisms, as the individual island analyses will demonstrate.

This chapter commences with a note on language and the recent relationship between the islands and the European Netherlands. The colonial dynamic is highlighted. Then, the link between oil and carnival is analyzed in Aruba and Curaçao. After, carnivals' groundings on the other islands are discussed. The aim is to counter the conception of carnival as uncontested in the SSSABC island by illustrating how these are shaped in different ways through multiscalar relations that are linked to migration, creolization, and religious and political dimensions.

2.1 Governmental structures and language

How we talk about places shapes how we view them. This becomes clear especially when places and people are marginalized by the state. The contemporary relationship between the Netherlands and the SSSABC islands is uneasy and not defined by equality.[13] Allen, Alofs, de Geus, and Smeulders (2021, 257) describe the current cultural heritage landscape of Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, and the transatlantic community in the European Netherlands as the cultural scar tissue of the colonial past, a metaphor that I would say also extends to the SSS islands. Injustices are at least in part a consequence of being part of the colonial structure in the past. This structure continues to influence how the SSSABC islands are named and governed.

The recent history is as follows. After the Second World War, the SSSABC islands were joined as one autonomous country known as the *Nederlandse Antillen*, the Dutch Antilles. The Dutch Antilles remained part of the Dutch Kingdom. This was an unhappy alliance; the islands are rather dissimilar in size and power and show social, linguistic, and cultural differences (West-Durán 2003, 141). They are also geographically far apart. Whereas Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao (the ABC islands) are close to the Venezuelan coast, Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten (the SSS islands) are part of the Windward Islands which are closer to Puerto Rico and the British Virgen Islands. Tensions grew as Arubans felt too much centrality was given to Curaçao. By 1986, Aruba separated from the Dutch Antilles and gained the status of autonomous country within the Dutch Kingdom. The Netherlands

[13] Some examples of how the islands navigate this relationship are analyzed in the volume Equaliberty in the Dutch Caribbean: Ways of Being Non/Sovereign, edited by Yvon van der Peijl and Francio Guadeloupe (2022). Meanwhile, social provisions are inadequate, and poverty continues to be widespread in Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius (see, for example, Tuzgöl-Broekhoven et al. 2020).

Antilles continued as the unison of five countries. In 2010, the country was dissolved. Sint Maarten and Curaçao became autonomous countries within the Dutch Kingdom. Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius became three public bodies, a special[14] form of municipality within the Netherlands.

The colonial dynamic in the naming of the islands left me with a practical issue: the RSC started as an Antillean celebration, so is it still possible to refer to the six islands as Antillean, or is there another straightforward way of naming them? To answer this, I looked at governmental reports about the area and asked interlocutors about their views on terminology. One government report specifies that they refer to the (former) Netherlands Antilles as the Dutch Caribbean (CBS 2022). The three countries (Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten) are often named individually. Another term that is used is the "Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands" which would not be used by interlocutors as it feels artificial and is simply too long. Laurence mentioned that the term Antillean makes him think of Curaçao even though Curaçao was separated from the Netherlands Antilles following the 2010 dissolution.[15] Cedric deconstructs the use of the term Caribbean and Antilles to illustrate how certain terms do not encompass that which they intend to name. He is critical of the term "Caribbean Netherlands" (*Caribisch Nederland*) because the rules that apply in the European Netherlands do not apply to the islands. He understands the used terminology as part of a language game to indicate that a country still has a certain colonial possession far away from home.[16] The examples illustrate the complexity of the question of naming and relating to the past, present, and future of the places and people; no clear singular option appears.

Still, I noticed that during the volunteer briefings, references would be made to people as Antilleans in relation to which generic ideas were shared[17]. In individual conversations, Antilleans would also be used. For pragmatic reasons, I therefore use the term to describe the imagined group while specifying the island when a description is specific to the island. When referring to the geographical islands together, I use the term SSSABC islands which refrains from putting a certain state-relationship onto the islands. I place the SSS in front as these islands are less well-known and less literature is dedicated to them.

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[14] This is the term used in governmental documentation. In the words of Cedric (interview August 29, 2024, Rotterdam), the rules that apply here in the European Netherlands, do not apply there in the special municipalities. Differences include currency, European status, mobility, and so on.
[15] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[16] Interview with Cedric, April 29, 2024, Rotterdam.
[17] An example is 'we Antilleans do not like change,' *Wij Antillianen houden niet van verandering*.

Other than the issue of naming, there is a related issue of statistics. It is well known that there has been extensive migration between the SSSABC and the wider Caribbean (Oostindie 2016). This migration influences the development of Caribbean carnival traditions and practices. The RSC is shaped by the islands from which people come; there are many more Arubans (current population is 106 thousand) than Sabans (current population is around two thousand people). Consequently, the influence of the Aruban carnival is much stronger.

Yet, any study of the individual islands over time of people's movement runs into multiple difficulties. Firstly, because migration statistics for the Netherlands Antilles were stacked. This means there is no easy access to regional migration patterns between the islands. Similar difficulties arise when looking at migration patterns from, for example, Saba or Curaçao to the Netherlands. Secondly, because the islands' governmental status in relation to the European Netherlands changed. It is unclear if and how gained autonomy influences people's status as being a migrant or not. Methods such as oral history and contextual analyses then become primary avenues to understand the movement of people. For example, the economic difficulties and the closing of the oil refineries in the 1908s in Aruba and Curaçao resulted in increased unemployment and increased movement toward the Netherlands. The migration from the SSS islands increased around 2008 when unemployment grew because of the financial crisis. These patterns and differences are obscured by the way the data is organized.[18] It is important to mention this as it limits the possibilities for drawing connections between the carnivals and the islands and makes individual testimonies and historical developments more important as a way of still having a partial grasp of this mobility.

2.2 Oil and carnival: first celebrations in Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire

As mentioned above, the carnival constitutes an important element of the cultural heritage in Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. The traditions continue to evolve and change. This section illustrates how the carnival traditions that were also referred to as carnival traditions developed on the island. I illustrate how the initial trajectories differ and are shaped by the political and economic conditions on the island. They are also thoroughly related to (regional) migration and specific traditions developed through syncretism. The goal of the analysis that

[18] The issue of statistics and data continues to be subject to discussion (see, for example, Grommé 2022).

follows is not to give a comprehensive account of the carnival on the islands. Instead, it serves to destabilize the idea of carnival as uncontested in the islands. On the contrary, the carnivals are best understood as related to multiscalar networks as well in which concerns of nation-building and nation-branding are driving forces in the development. The leading question then is: how did the carnivals develop? And what are the political and religious dimensions?

Aruba

When describing the start of the Aruban carnival, the origin date usually provided is 1954. Before this, carnival celebrations were mostly an elite affair and were held in a private sphere. These private celebrations have been held since the start of the 20th century (Alofs 2008; Razak 2007). These festivities featured the presence of carnival clubs, among which the Tivoli club that would continue to play an important role in Aruban carnival. The more popular celebrations of carnival developed after the arrival of immigrants, especially those from Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1940s.

The arrival of immigrants is tied to the oil industry's development. After oil was discovered close to Aruba, the American Lago refinery settled on the island. The Lago settled in 1924, opened an oil port in 1927, and a refinery in 1933 in San Nicolas (Tak 1997, 75). When the Lago opened, the native Arubans initially did not have the industrial skills to work here and most did not speak English well either (Razak 1998, 25). Thousands of foreign laborers were recruited, mostly from islands in the Caribbean where English was spoken. The workers mostly settled in San Nicolas. This illustrates how top-down policies resulted in the diversification of the island population. "Between 1938 and 1945, the service demands of the refinery attracted Chinese, Levantines, East Indians, Surinamese, and Ashkenazim Jews from Eastern Europe" (Razak 1998, 25) which illustrates the mobility beyond the Caribbean region which contributes to demographic diversification. The refinery's establishment altered the island's composition in terms of environment and population and thereby created the parameters within which creolized cultural expressions developed.

In the Christmas of 1944, Trinidadians held a small parade in San Nicolas, which received some criticism from native Arubans (Razak 2007, 143). Then in 1945, the Tivoli Club brought its private celebration onto the streets of Oranjestad. In 1947, some Trinidadians received permission to host another public parade and in 1949, the Tivoli Club held another public parade. What this shows is the interaction between an established carnival

body managed mostly by elites, the Tivoli Club, and Trinidadians who sought to keep their traditions up while physically being, at least temporarily, away from their place of origin. These efforts merged and by 1951, carnival parades, parties, and queen elections were held all over the island. By 1954, native Arubans and English groups united by establishing the Central Carnival Committee tasked with the organization of an island-wide carnival. The carnival period is determined by the Catholic calendar in which the carnival lasts until Ash Wednesday which marks the start of the Lent period (Richardson 2020, 124).

The Central Carnival Committee organized Aruba's first public carnival, including a queen election. As would become a tradition, the queen election's result was subject to dispute. The dispute resulted in the creation of two carnival parades, one in Oranjestad and one in San Nicolas. The existence of these two parades next to each other resulted in the development of specific cultural forms, such as the use of steel band and brass band music. Steel bands are linked to the oil industry as music is made by playing on empty oil containers. Brass band instruments are lighter and allow for more melody. *Asambeho* developed, which is a type of brass band that combines the use of brass instruments with drums, creating energetic and upbeat music. By using 1954 as the official starting year, the message is reinforced of carnival as uniting the island and creating space for synergies between art forms.

Then, during the 1950s and 1960s, the oil industry became increasingly automated, resulting in a group of surplus workers. Many English speakers, who were mostly settled in San Nicolas, were repatriated to islands in the region. The carnival's further development initially became the responsibility of the native Arubans. The Arubans' appropriation of the carnival resulted in some conflict with the British West Indian community on the island as some of them thought the carnival was stolen by the Arubans. Another accusation regards the organizers' capabilities as "they do not have the Carnival in their blood" (Razak 2007, 137). Arubans disagree and posit that as a generation grew up with the carnival, it is now in their blood. This points toward the conflicting ideas about ownership of a creolized version of the carnival. Although initiated by Trinidadians, Arubans were committed to joining in the festivities and people with other national and cultural backgrounds joined in the festivities too.

After the Lago closed in the 1980s, the tourist industry gained prominence in the economic sector. The carnival functioned as an important tool for nation-branding. The carnival's development is reflected in the restructuring of the organizational side and the

emergence of new competitions. The economic importance of widespread participation in the carnival is recognized early on. This can be seen, for example, in a newspaper advertisement from 1974 in which the Aruban Chamber of Commerce and Industry asks traders and industry workers to give their employees a free day during the carnival (Amigoe di Curacao 1974).

Laurence says that it is now common for people to sell their carnival costumes to hotels after the parades end. The costumes are then used for performances hosted specifically for tourists.[19] The carnival's development demonstrates changes in meanings as the focus goes from uniting diverse cultural groups to increased focus on tourism. In Laurence's experience, diversity is not much discussed in Aruba.[20] The acknowledgment of carnival as part of Aruban heritage does not include any references to local slavery and its legacies (Van Stipriaan, Alofs, and Guadeloupe 2023, 19). During the largest two parades in San Nicolas and Oranjestad, there is an increased focus on luxurious and expensive dress; Laurence explains that some costumes may cost 4000 euros.[21] Not everyone can afford this, resulting in differences in participation between working class and middle-class people on the island.

Aruban carnival lasts multiple weeks. It consists of parades as well as a group of principal actors. The main parades include the San Nicolas and Oranjestad Gran Parade, the Torch Parade[22], the Jouvay[23], and the lighting parade. The main actors are King Momo, his Queen, her Prince, and his fool, known as the Pancho. King Momo is a material figure that is shown at the head of the parade. [24] Razak (1998, 59) writes that he is modeled after the Spanish *Rey Momo*. Momo figures as a symbol for sins: he is imbued with negative energies and holds a book that is meant to be his testament defining his wishes for the future. His burning marks the end of the carnival festivities and takes place the midnight before Ash Wednesday. Some people collect some of his ashes afterward because they believe they hold power (Evenhuis 2015). King Momo is also part of the carnival on the other SSSABC islands.

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[19] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[20] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[21] Interview with Laurence, April 24, 2024, online.
[22] The Torch Parade, also known as *fakkel optocht*, marks the opening of the carnival festivities.
[23] Jouvay comes from the French *j'ouvert* or *jour ouvert*, literally translated as the opening of the day. The parade does its name justice and starts around three in the morning and ends by nine. The celebration comes from Trinidad and was introduced by Trinidadian workers living in San Nicolas where the parade continues to be held.
[24] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.

The Queen is chosen during the elections. She is central throughout the carnival season and is responsible for representing Aruba both at home and abroad (Razak 1998, 59). The elections take the form of a pageant, during which participants must demonstrate their skills to win the Queen Election. The Prince is similar to the Carnival Prince elected in the south of the European Netherlands (Razak 1998, 60). The Pancho originates from the Fool or trickster present in European carnivals (Razak 1998, 61). The Prince and the Pancho are elected as a pair. They must demonstrate their skills by competing in a comedy routine during which they are assessed on their ability to tell jokes and their wit.

Curaçao

The current carnival in Curaçao is said to have commenced in 1970. Carnival celebrations according to some sources, however, may have taken place since 1872. The sources do not mention the Catholic Church. This time jump in the perception of carnival as being 'established' must be understood against the background of larger societal changes. These changes include the establishment of oil refineries, as also seen in Aruba. They differ, however, when looking at the social and racial management of Shell. Inequalities remained, regional migration continued, and workers were underpaid. These were among the factors that culminated in the 1969 *Trinta di Mei*, a social uprising that sought societal change. Only after did the carnival enjoy more widespread participation. The increased participation and the canonization of 1970 as the starting date point toward the changing meanings associated with carnival.

The National Archives of Curaçao (n.d.) and related web pages provide similar representations of the carnival. The starting point is a reference to an ordinance from 1872 given by the Dutch Government that "created the possibility to organize and regulate Carnival parades in public places." The next point mentioned is a reference to a newspaper from 1901, which states that some Venezuelan citizens held carnival celebrations in an elite private club. Parades continued to be organized in the decades that followed (West-Durán 2003, 150).

These celebrations must be understood against the background of Shell establishing an oil refinery in the 1920s. Similar to Lago on Aruba, Shell sought to hire workers from islands in the region. Part of the motivation was that Shell perceived Curaçaoans to be 'undisciplined' and lacking the technical expertise needed to work on the refinery (Tak 1997, 74). The industrialization and hiring policy resulted in a rapid growth of the population. Shell

intended to control its workers and feared upheaval (Tak 1997, 74). To this end, it developed policies to place workers in homes in defined areas based on their nationality and the languages they spoke. Their freedom of movement was limited, and the separation prevented integration. There is some mention of small-scale celebrations, for example among people of the British West Indies who celebrated carnival around their secluded housing. The top-down attempt at carefully managing the population is in stark contrast with the carnivalesque that inverts hierarchies and social life. Carnaval parades mostly remained an elite affair in which the working classes did not want to participate. In 1950, businesspeople hosted a public parade to make the island more attractive for tourists. Some people from the British West Indies participated but it did not result in the growth of more popular participation.

Allen and Richardson (2021) mention two main perspectives for the difficulty in popularizing the festivity. The secretary of the carnival's foundation wrote in a 1961 newspaper article that the intentions had not been realized because of the passive character of the Curaçaoan population, especially the businesspeople; they would watch but few were willing to participate and were too occupied with business concerns (Allen and Richardson 2021, 162). Benjamin Wefer, instead, gives the elite character as a reason for the failure to popularize the celebration, and according to him, the parade maintained the hierarchy between the elite and the working class (Allen and Richardson 2021, 163). Together with Elias Bronswinkel, he sought to popularize the carnival which he had also experienced in Aruba, Trinidad, and Brazil.

The realization of the wish among the Curaçaoan people to make carnival a public festivity that did not have an elitist character was initially resisted because street celebrations were prohibited (Heloise and Moedt 2011, 20). In 1961, Benjamin 'Shon Benchi' Wefer took the initiative to invite groups and organize the permit. The permit request was rejected but the parade took place nonetheless as the rejection had only taken place orally (Allen and Richardson 2021, 163). This was followed by the creation of a carnival foundation by Wefer and Elias Bronswinkel. In the following decade, Wefer and Bronswinkel managed to popularize the carnival and new elements such as the queen elections and the Prince and the Pancho. Carnival celebrations continued during the first decade with steel band music and from 1971 onward with Tumba music (Heloise and Moedt 2011, 23-27). Immigrants from the British West Indies also participated in the carnivals, but their influence was less noticeable compared to their influence on Aruban carnival. Efforts were made to have a locally grounded carnival. This was done, for example, by requiring that costumes were made on the

island and were not bought abroad (Allen and Richardson 2021, 166). Another example was during the award ceremonies, where it was stipulated that the commercial parties were not asked to contribute because the carnival was a celebration of people of color and then one should not turn to white people for support (Allen and Richardson 2021, 166).

As mentioned before, there was an uprising on May 30, 1969, known as *Trinta di Mei*. This uprising started as a labor strike against discriminatory practices at the oil company following stagnation in the negotiations for a new labor agreement. This developed into a violent manifestation that uncovered anger over inequalities in Curaçao which continued to be structured according to colonial logics. An analysis of the uprising proper is beyond the scope of the thesis. Still, it is important to mention this as the uprising sought societal change and amounted to a prefiguring of political alternatives. Only after did carnival become widespread (Alferink 2012, 110). The working class would not participate in a carefully managed carnival celebration introduced by elites. The uprising marked the start of a new era in which carnival could be appropriated by the working class on their own terms.

Following 1969, identity politics became increasingly visible as cultural and national identities were negotiated. These negotiations were related to questions of in and exclusion on the island, who was *Yu di Korsou*, a child of Curaçao, as well as "whose shared heritage and values should count as the national ones" (Allen 2022, 76). Authorities and institutions used arts and popular culture, including carnival, as ways of advancing their identity politics. The 1971 Carnival committee referred to carnival as a symbol of national unity, visible also in their slogan: *Carnaval pa un y tur y pa uni tur*, "Carnival for each and every one and to unite all" (Allen 2022, 76). The people took ownership of the street and temporarily also the state. In this way, carnival amounted to a symbol of freedom for the population at large (Tak 1997, 82).

The carnival consequently developed into a grounded version of the carnival. Grounded here refers to the use of elements specific to Curaçao, including a preference for Tumba music over the English-Caribbean Calypso (Isenia 2022, 188). By claiming carnival's starting date as 1970 or 1971, there is an explicit separation from the elitist versions of the carnival and a reaffirmation of the carnival as a popular celebration that belongs to the people of Curaçao. This does not resolve discussions about who qualifies as belonging to the island, but it demonstrates how carnival in the 1970s became a tool for nation-building.

By now, carnival festivities include a parade, a Tumba contest, a Queen election, and the burning of King Momo that take place according to similar logics in Aruba. Differences can be observed in the use of dress, Laurence explains that Curaçaoan costumes usually have more fabric.[25] It is unclear if the use of different costume-making styles relates to different understandings of carnival meanings.

Bonaire

The development of carnival on Bonaire is closely tied to economic factors including migration to work in the oil industry and the tourist industry. The main festivities include parades for both adults and children, a Tumba competition, a Prince and Pancho competition, and the burning of King Momo. The festivities are tied to the Catholic religious holidays (Info Bonaire, n.d.).

Following the settlement of the oil refineries in Aruba and Curaçao, many Bonairians, especially men, moved there for work. First, in the refineries and shipping companies, and later they also worked in government jobs. The emigration caused the island's population to decline from 6400 in 1920 to 5800 in 1950 (Oostindie and van Stipriaan 2021, 4-5). Elites on Bonaire held private carnivals since the late 1950s. A desire to popularize and commercialize the festivities started to be realized in the 1960s (Allen and Richardson 2021, 173). Toward the late 1960s, many Bonairians returned from Aruba and Curaçao due to the shrinking economy. Meanwhile, the carnival increased in size. Unemployment was high and tourism was considered the most promising sector to develop, which is likely tied to the choice to use carnival for tourist branding (Allen and Richardson 2021, 173).

The Aruban carnival foundation supported Bonaire in developing the local carnival. A foundation tasked with the organization was created in 1975: the Bonairian Carnival Foundation (SBC). Tumba was also the most popular musical form and the first Festival di Tumba was held in 1975 (Allen and Richardson 2021, 176). Allen and Richardson (2021, 176) note that there was an increasing focus on the independent organization of the carnival; in the beginning years, jury members would come in from Curaçao to assess the Tumba contest, which later was perceived as implying that there were no capable judges on Bonaire. Another site of tension concerned the date; on various occasions, it was proposed to organize the carnival at another time than the carnival in Aruba and Curaçao, partially motivated by

[25] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.

concerns about tourist arrivals (Allen and Richardson 2021, 177). This demonstrates a decoupling from religion; an openness to prioritize economic opportunities over the maintenance of the tradition according to the Catholic calendar. This decoupling has been discussed since the 1960s but has not been realized. The tourist industry developed, and the island's population grew significantly.

During the carnival celebrations, local politics are also discussed. Allen and Richardson (2021, 177-8) provide multiple examples such as the references to inflation and unemployment during the 1979 Prince and Pancho elections, in songs and pamphlets, and in floats that commented on the island's status following the 2010 constitutional change.[26] It is important to note the existence of continued divisions on the island, particularly between the two main cities: Rincon and Kralendijk (locally known as Playa). For years, each city hosted carnival parades, reflecting at least a partially felt separation. The carnival is also not mentioned in the Bonairian ICH inventory (Intangible Cultural Heritage Bonaire, n.d.). The examples suggest the carnival may be less deeply infused with cultural meanings when compared to Aruba and Curaçao, although it is necessary to remain cautious of such suggestions because of the scant attention that the Bonairian carnival has received. Festivities like Simadan, dedicated to the harvest, and San Juan and San Pedro are considered more central culturally. The importance of carnival and tourism for the economy continues which is reaffirmed in the news of the 2015 deal in which Bonaire negotiated a deal with the Carnival Cruise Lines (Van Bets, Lamers, and Tatenhove 2017, 785). At the same time, the tourist industry's continued development leads to immigration, which many Bonairians perceive as putting pressure on the island's ability to maintain its heritage (De Geus et al. 2021, 193). More research is needed into these paradoxes of commercialization and the loss of authenticity, the processes of the carnival's development, the tensions between competing views in society, and how migration and diversity on the island play a role.

2.3 Tourism, migration, and carnival? (First) celebrations on Sint Maarten, Saba, Sint Eustatius

Sint Maarten

[26] Images of carnival floats with political messages are sometimes posted in newspaper articles. An example is an image from February 2024 which comments on the Dutch political cabinet formation (Reporter BES 2024). Due to copyright, the image cannot be included here.

St. Martin is a binational island. The north is the French Saint Martin, the south is the Dutch Sint Maarten. In the 1960s, the island was home to around inhabitants (Carmona Baez 2022, 123). Recent demographics find that the island population reaches up to nearly 80 thousand, with 46 thousand belonging to the Dutch half and 33 thousand to the French. Saint Martin is part of the European Union; Sint Maarten is not. The island's inland border is crossed daily by islanders. There are movements for uniting the French and Dutch parts into one independent St. Martin. The island's complicated history and rather artificial separation are crucial for understanding the carnival's role as a tool for nation-building.

Sint Maarten carnival history goes back into the Netherlands Antilles period. Matthew explains that the European Netherlands sent financial resources to the island to organize festivities for the queen's birthday.[27] In 1969, a festival was organized around the Dutch Queen's birthday on April 30. Around this time, the French side had already celebrated a few carnivals. This sort of Caribbean carnival was then hosted in the space that was initially afforded by the hosting of the Queen's birthday.

Until now, the carnival continues to be hosted mostly in April, sometimes extending into May. The carnival is organized in and around the carnival village, a dedicated space for the carnival. The carnival lasts multiple weeks, making it longer than other carnivals hosted in the region. The reasoning is related to tourism. Matthew explains that the end of February and the beginning of March mark the end of the tourist high season. Hosting a three-week-long carnival in April was then an opportunity to extend the high season and raise profit for the island. There are no explicit connections with the Catholic church. Matthew mentions the church has been against the carnival for some time because since around 2000, the parade started to get too lewd. Moreover, the celebrations start in the middle of Lent, which makes matters worse. The foundation tries to avoid conflict by considering the dates of Easter and makes sure to let the carnival start after.[28] Matthew underscores the important role of carnival as a way of creating symbols to which the people of Sint Maarten can unite. He says it is difficult to find someone on the island who is more than a second-generation Sint Maartener.[29] The 2011 census found that seventy percent of the population was born abroad in an estimated 118 different birth countries (Carmona Baez 2022, 123). This also affects politics: an estimated thirty-five percent of the population has the right to vote (Carmona

[27] Interview with Matthew, June 13, 2024, online.
[28] Interview with Matthew, June 13, 2024, online.
[29] Interview with Matthew, June 13, 2024, online.

Baez 2022, 124). Regional migration has shaped the island to such an extent that there is no majority or minority that can lay claim to the island as native. Superdiversity is one in which there is no previous cultural archive from which can be drawn. Carnival thus gains an additional layer of meaning as a popular celebration in which all can partake, creating symbols for a shared future.

Still, the organization continues to wrestle with cultural specificity and globalization in the carnival. Matthew remarks that until a few years ago, the carnival became a bit too lewd.[30] They introduced a new requirement, which is that every carnival group must have a section of at least 15 individuals in the front with culturally specific dress. This introduction appeared to be a success in countering the globalized tendency to transform into a more generalized Caribbean-style carnival. Matthew also explains that they tried a Prince and the Pancho but this "came from the ABC islands. And so, after a while, it just faded away. And we don't we don't really need him." The symbol that remained is King Momo.

Saba and Sint Eustatius

Like the carnival on Sint Maarten, the carnivals on Saba and Sint Eustatius take place after the Lent season. Matthew explained that this is because of cooperation between the islands. The islands agreed to hold carnivals at separate times to ensure tourists and locals would not have to choose between attending one over the other. The Sint Maarten carnival continues to take place in April and May while the Saba and Sint Eustatius celebrate carnival toward the end of July. All three islands have a carnival village.

Sint Eustatius' carnival has been organized since 1964. An online blog post suggests the founder was Christine Elizabeth Flanders who gained experience with Aruban carnival and then used this to develop a carnival that promoted the local culture (Johnson 2016). This again reaffirms the importance of exchange between the islands.

Saban carnival was organized officially since 1975 (Antilliaans Dagblad 2015). Yet, carnivals and parades may have taken place before this. I suggest this based on a bottom-up initiative. Considering the very limited research dedicated to Saba, bottom-up initiatives to history provide insights that may not have been recorded. An example of such an initiative is the Facebook page "Of Saban Descent (Saba, Netherlands Antilles)." On this page, pictures are posted, and followers can comment on what they know about the place, people, and story

[30] Interview with Matthew, June 13, 2024, online.

that lay behind the image. The photo's (2.3.1) description says this shows Carnival on Saba in 1936. Another photo (2.3.2) shows "A Saba Parade" from 1955. Will Johnson, a local historian, explains in the comments that the photo shows an "old-style carnival" that took place when the Dutch Queen Juliana visited the island. It is possible that these are disconnected from the current carnival celebrations. Still, it is relevant to mention these as they disrupt a claim to a singular origin point. More importantly, it provides an example of alternative digital humanities that allows a bottom-up approach to learning about the local history and carnival development.

Photo (2.3.1): "Carnaval on Saba 1936." Of Saban Descent (Saba, Netherlands Antilles), May 17, 2012. https://www.facebook.com/share/XUbXV5ezYPV4c4cT/.

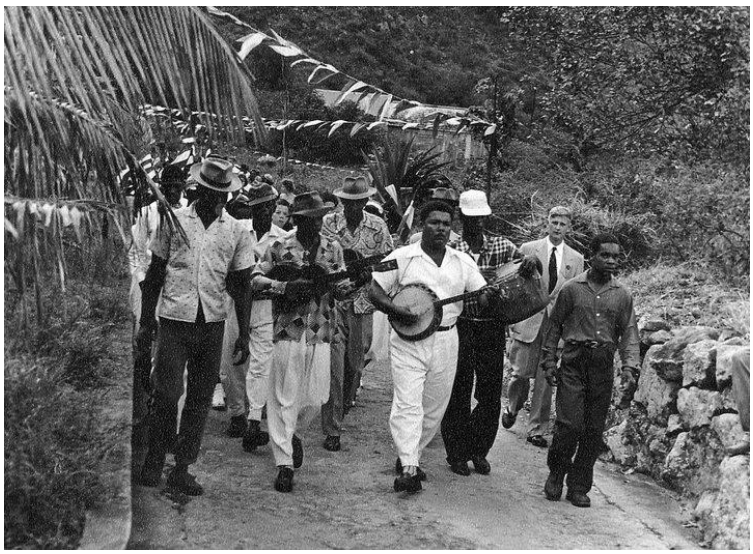

Photo (2.3.2): "A Saba Parade – 1955." Of Saban Descent (Saba, Netherlands Antilles), August 10, 2010. https://www.facebook.com/share/8gTri8YaejeEsbPB/.

Although the burning of King Momo initially signified the carnival season's end and the start of Ash Wednesday, Saba, Sint Maarten, and Sint Eustatius also include this ritual. This illustrates the pragmatic creation of the carnival festivities as these are disconnected from the Catholic calendar.

Conclusion

The descriptions are not comprehensive histories. Instead, they show how carnivals developed through exchange between and beyond the islands. The carnivals are intimately linked with migration and creolization and extend beyond the islands through their transnational character. There is an emphasis on cooperation between the islands and the region. Practices such as the burning of King Momo are copied and developed into an event that befits the local carnival context. This is done in a pragmatic fashion. The choice of a clear starting point, a year, is an example of canonization. The development, however, is a process and not an event. In this way, the descriptions reaffirm the importance of Jullien's (2021 [2016]) proposal to see origin as evolving and unfixed, which is opposed to efforts to create, structure, and frame a narrative of the carnival as having a clear, singular origin point. The carnival is mobilized in politics and discussions about who participates and in what role. This illustrates the continuation of a politics of belonging on the islands.

3. History of Summer Carnival in the Netherlands

Whereas the previous chapter looked at the carnivals celebrated on the SSSABC islands, this chapter zooms in on the emerging carnival tradition in the Netherlands. Both on the islands and in the Netherlands, carnivals are shaped by the migration of people and their ideas and practices. Consequently, the carnivals must be understood as deeply transnational; they cannot be understood as separate from migration and creolization. This influence on and by migration continues, as can be noted by the participation of carnival groups of different nationalities.

This chapter addresses in what ways carnivals linked to the Caribbean organized in the Netherlands are different from carnivals on the SSSABC islands. It also asks how the growth of the RSC alters the balances within the multiscalar, affecting who can make what decisions.

The first section looks at the initiation and the way the start has been canonized into a certain version of the development. It zooms in on the tension of participating, the politics of visibility, and the way those linked to the Caribbean navigated hosting a carnival in the Dutch context. The manifestation of the carnival in the Netherlands differs in important ways from the carnival in the Caribbean. The timeframe is much shorter, and events change frequently because of reorganizations that alter the balances in the multiscalar. The second section addresses how the carnival grows into something that cannot easily be removed from Rotterdam anymore and the necessity of commercialization. A paradox arises: the growth results in more publicity, and more visibility of the public presentation of different cultures, but it also results in an expansion of the multiscalar and decreased independence. Nodes become more layered and complex.

While the RSC initially was regarded as ‘something by migrants,’ it has partially changed throughout the decades into ‘something in Rotterdam.’ The key question for this chapter is then: how we can see focal points of the multiscalar shift as the RSC gains a different position in Dutch society? How does this reflect the changing position of these ‘new’ citizens? The focus is on the development from the 1980s until 2015. The most recent years and the ICH inscription will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

3.1 Starting something in the 1980s

The first RSC street parade in Rotterdam was held in 1984 (photo 3.1.1) at the initiative of a group of Antillean students, mostly from Curaçao and Aruba (Allen and Richardson 2021, 179). The parade was an instant success[31]. The year 1984 is also mentioned in most reports, including the ICH nomination file. That does not mean, however, that similar or related carnival parades were not held before. This points toward the importance of a certain canonization which was also seen in Aruba and Curaçao. The starting year will be used for marking 10- or 20-year anniversaries, for example, which reifies an idea of a clear starting point. This canonization also provides curators with the possibility of highlighting a certain version of a festivity's development without showing the negotiations taking place.

Photo (3.1.1): Rob C. Croes. 1984. "Antillean Summer Carnival in Rotterdam; Antillean female dancers in the streets." Collection Anefo. http://hdl.handle.net/10648/ad3bcc56-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84/.

In the RSC's case, taking 1984 as the starting point renders previous and other efforts by people from the Netherlands Antilles to participate in local carnivals or organize specific Caribbean carnivals in multiple cities less visible. Allen and Richardson (2021, 179) write that there is anecdotal evidence of cultural and carnival-like celebrations hosted by Antilleans in the 1960s (also mentioned by Alferink 2012, 110). The celebrations in the 1960s are also relevant to the previous chapter as they reaffirm a familiarity with carnival celebrations

[31] Estimates of the number of spectators vary strongly. Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (2021, 87) refers to a local newspaper article from 1984 that gives an estimate of 300 thousand visitors, while the exhibition on the RSC at the Kunsthal (2024) mentions an estimate of 31 thousand visitors.

before Curaçao's official start after 1969. Another example comes from 1977 when the Antillean group *Sentro Antiyano Yamanota* based in Weert, a small Dutch city, won the first prize in the local carnival (Aod Preense Club, n.d.).

The Antillean parade more closely connected to the RSC was held in Utrecht in the summer of 1982. The organizers intended to promote Antillean integration in the Netherlands by presenting their culture and consequently improve mutual acceptance (Alferink 2012, 110). This effort was done against the background of political discourses that sought to curtail Antillean migration to the Netherlands (Samson 2019). The carnival engaged with a conscious portrayal of their culture, thereby engaging with a politics of visibility. The portrayal included the dress, the music, as well as the carrying of the Netherlands Antillean flag.[32] The city of Utrecht was chosen for its central location, making it possible for Antilleans across the Netherlands to attend. The 1982 parade was well received (Alferink 2012, 110). Images in the Utrecht Archive suggest Antillean parades were held in Utrecht at least five times between 1982 and 1991.[33]

Yet, the commonly shared narrative posits that the Antillean carnival started in Utrecht in 1982, was organized again in 1983 and then moved to Rotterdam in 1984 where it became the RSC. This official narrative does not pay attention to the movement between cities. Moreover, the reasons for the move to Rotterdam are not entirely clear. The move is likely the cause of multiple factors. The transfer, depending on the source, may have been the consequence of the municipality not renewing the permit (Spapens and Stads 2005, 137) or the consequence of a conflict about the election of the carnival queen (Tak 1997; Alferink 2012). This lack of clarity is important to highlight because in contemporary writings, the RSC is closely tied to the city of Rotterdam. After the 1984 carnival, the carnival was hosted in Utrecht in 1985 (photo 3.1.2; Het Nieuwe Stadsblad 1985), and Antillean carnival parades were hosted in Dordrecht, Eindhoven, and Amsterdam as well (Allen and Richardson 2021, 179). This goes to show that the establishment was a process of trial and error as organizers navigated the networks and scales to find a suitable place for hosting the parades. This reflects their commitment to the organizing of a parade in the Netherlands. It also shows that

[32] Due to copyright, the image cannot be included here. There is an image (401734) from the 1982 parade made by A.M. Stramrood showing participants waving the Netherlands Antilles flag with 6 stars. The image can be accessed through the database of Het Utrechts Archief (n.d.).
[33] Due to copyright, the image cannot be included here. Through Het Utrechts Archief (n.d.), images are available from 1982 (401734), 1983 (401737), 1985 (401740), and 1987 (401738 and 401733). The image from the 1991 (401731) is not available online due to privacy reasons.

there is not one conception of the carnival; organizers had different ideas about what had to be done, resulting in conflict.

Photo (3.1.2): Sjakkelien Vollebregt. 1985. "Caribbean Carnaval, Utrecht." Collection Anefo. http://hdl.handle.net/10648/ad4907f4-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84/.

The move from the Netherlands Antilles to the Netherlands affected the carnival festivities in other ways. Firstly, the audience would be different as most European Dutch were unfamiliar with the festivities. This lack of familiarity and new conditions of stakeholders, such as the municipalities and sponsors, meant a need to reassess which festivities could take root here and which would not be able to land. The move from the islands thus alters the shape of the tradition. Secondly, the connection with the Catholic calendar was further weakened as the carnival was held in Summer.

During my engagements with the volunteers, one person was frequently credited as the founder of the carnival, Marlon Brown.[34] Quito Nicolaas (2016, 160) writes that Brown's dad was of Caribbean descent and came to Aruba as the oil refinery settled there. Brown took the initiative to host the carnival in Utrecht (Nicolaas 2016, 160) and later became one of the founders of *Stichting Antiliaans Zomercarnaval Committee* (AZCC) that organized the

[34] Three other founders are also credited although they are mentioned less frequently: Maggie Marshall, Rita Duinkerk, and Wilbert Djaoen (Guadeloupe, van de Laar, and van der Linden 2021, 238)

Rotterdam carnival (Alferink 2012, 111). Francio Guadeloupe and Gert Oostindie (2023, 269) describe him as "the embodiment of a creole cosmopolitanism". Born in Aruba, Brown lived and traveled across the Caribbean, the US, and the Netherlands. In starting the carnival, Brown sought to underscore unity and commonalities between cultures. Moreover, Brown "encouraged gay men and lesbians to lead the carnival parade, walking out front" (Guadeloupe, van de Laar, van der Linden 2021, 235). While this emphasis on unity has remained, I have not noticed the queer dimension during the fieldwork.

In 1984, the AZCC gained support from the Rotterdam municipality (Alferink 2012, 111). The municipality had just released a policy paper pointing toward the necessity of improving the integration of minorities (Spapens and Stads 2005, 137). A multicultural carnival could offer just that. This is important because it demonstrates that the carnival was not only meaningful to participants but also served the municipality's interests. This reaffirms the importance of approaching the carnival as situated in the multiscalar, meaning that a set of nodes can be observed around and through which stakeholders have interests.

In the beginning, these nodes were less extensive but over the years that followed, the number of people involved in some capacity grew steadily. Then in 1988, the organization became the responsibility of the *Stichting Zomercarnaval Rotterdam* (Rotterdam Summer Carnival Foundation). The carnival lost the qualifier of 'Antillean.' This may have been a consequence of Aruba separating from the Netherlands Antilles and becoming an autonomous country in 1986 (Alferink 2012, 111). It may also have been a way of encouraging multicultural groups to participate, in which the municipality may have had a say (Alferink 2012, 111). In response to questions about the changes, Giles explained that "the whole Summer Carnival event is essentially a plate with many ingredients on it, which they call the melting pot, from which beautiful things sprout."[35] Giles uses the melting pot metaphor as a positive description. The melting pot has been viewed positively for its ability to convey an extended notion of citizenship, thereby being inclusive of ethnicities and values that may diverge from the previous dominant majority (Berray 2019, 143). At the same time, it has been criticized for appearing to represent a conception of integration as homogenization, consequently obscuring how individuals, part of both dominant and minority groups, retain relations to different places and cultures (Berray 2019, 144). The change in the name and the link to the idea of the melting pot demonstrate how the carnival is part of the multiscalar;

[35] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.

political ideas and changes in the Netherlands Antilles and the municipality's hopes for what the carnival could offer, result in pressure to transform.

3.2 Carnival gains momentum; sponsoring secured, 1 million visitors reached

After 1995, the Rotterdam Summer Carnival Foundation was renamed the *Stichting Zomercarnaval Nederland* (Netherlands Summer Carnival Foundation, SZCN). This change was paired with a cooperation with Ducos Productions, a Dutch company specializing in productions. The change was a consequence of the previous board realizing the event was too large of a burden to organize for the committee, consisting solely of volunteers (Alferink 2012, 112). The new cooperation partner was to alleviate some of the burden. The participants were not enthusiastic about the change, and they feared "the carnival would lose its unique Antillean flavour" (Alferink 2012, 112). A compromise was reached by dividing the responsibilities. The Foundation was tasked with maintaining the quality of the carnival and the relationships with the participants, while Ducos would contribute in terms of administrative support and financial back-up.

The cooperation meant that some elements were lost as the costs could not be covered, among which the Tumba contest which mainly attracted Antilleans. Ducos' goal was to expand the size of the carnival to ensure that its existence and financial support could be secured. Meanwhile, the Foundation worked on the relationships with the carnival groups to make sure they continued participating and that quality would remain high. Their efforts were rewarded with the Prince Claus Award in 2001. Despite the apparent success of the cooperation, financial insecurities continued, thereby threatening the carnival's continuation. Financial insecurities were caused by sponsors withdrawing funding or the municipality reducing the subsidy. Other issues concerned logistics, for example, a lack of a dedicated space where floats could be assembled. The visitor numbers increased which complicated the crowd management and the maintenance of safety. A peak was reached around 2005 when the number of spectators was estimated at a million.

A paradox appears: although the increased size and visibility were intended to secure the carnival's existence, it also meant the carnival became more dependent on more stakeholders, thus increasing the risk of its discontinuation. This is reflected in the increased restrictions imposed on the organization by the municipality. This development can be

understood in relation to the multiscalar, where promoting interests in one place can have adverse effects on other topic areas in at times unpredictable ways.

In 2013, the RSC Foundation and the Dunya Foundation were merged and renamed Rotterdam Unlimited. The Dunya Foundation used to organize the Dunya festival which took place in Rotterdam from 1977 until the merger. This festival featured music on three different stages, dedicated to African, Latin-American, and European/Asian music, as well as a poetry section, a children's playground, and a market with products from across the world (Van der Horst 2010, 5). It is unclear how Dunya is still involved with Rotterdam Unlimited; except for on the website of Rotterdam Unlimited and in the tax declarations, the name is not mentioned anywhere. The key activities organized under the name of Rotterdam Unlimited are the RSC's activities including the Royalty Election, Lighting Parade, and the street parade. Increasingly, the name *Rotterdam Unlimited Zomercarnaval* is used, for example on the t-shirts worn by the volunteers during the street parade, which points toward the focus on the RSC.

3.3 Similarities and differences between carnival on the islands and in Rotterdam

It is often said that the move from the SSSABC islands to the Netherlands required those involved as participants and the Foundation to become more organized than the carnival in the Caribbean. Paul Spapens and Jan Stads (2005, 141; author's translation), for example, write that "the let-go rules of carnival in the home countries had to be forced into strict Dutch rules." The descriptions of the SSSABC carnivals demonstrate how in every case, complex negotiations were necessary to organize the carnival celebrations. The carnival's organization is understood to reflect meanings and ideas about the island and its position in the multiscalar.

Although the negotiations take place on different terms, it is noticeable that carnival in all contexts has meanings that extend beyond the festivities. The sketches illustrate that the institutional parties are actively involved. Carnival can be promoted for nation- or city-branding or -building purposes, for tourist and economic purposes, or a combination of these. It is important to mention this as it illustrates how the starting conditions in the context shape the consequent development. It is also interesting to see how the various islands navigate island-specific expressions of carnival costumes and traditions while also being shaped by migration and mobility which causes the exchange of ideas and practices beyond the

individual islands. The Sint Maarten's carnival and the RSC serve to increase social cohesion in the superdiverse context while encouraging participating groups to showcase their culture, invoking a politics of visibility. One result is that this reinforces a more essentialist conception of culture as tied to nationality. It is unclear if the other carnivals also intend to have this function of strengthening social cohesion.

Another difference can be observed in the festivities that take place and the relation to the Catholic religious calendar. In Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire, the set of festivities are relatively similar and take place in the period from January until Ash Wednesday. On Sint Maarten, carnival takes place around April and May, while on Saba and Sint Eustatius carnival is organized toward the end of July. The festivities are also different. Sint Maarten hosts Calypso and Roadmarch competitions, many music nights, and multiple parades. On the SSS islands, the burning of King Momo also marks the end of the carnival season. In the RSC, the carnival season is shorter and includes fewer activities. Tumba and Calypso competitions are no longer hosted but efforts are made to continue the Battle of the Drums, a competition between brass bands. The event being held in Summer further weakens the connection to Catholicism.

Notable silences concern the role of the colonial past in the shaping of the carnival on the SSSABC and the RSC. Although carnival traditions were exported from Europe to the Caribbean and Latin America, this dimension is rarely discussed on the SSSABC islands in relation to the carnival. The RSC's origins are conceptualized as linked to migration and cultural diversity without mentioning the meanings that the carnival holds for those who migrated or the reasons for migrating.

4. Tensions at the Summer Carnival

The heritagization of the RSC is only possible after the event gained an increasingly steady footing in the Rotterdam context. This process of becoming an annual event series is not without hiccups, as the previous chapter demonstrated. Yet even after having been inscribed to the UNESCO ICH list and celebrating its 40th edition in 2024, the carnival's continuation, the so-called safeguarding for the future, is not guaranteed. This chapter will show how the RSC still must navigate networks that change over time. The development and growth require negotiations between stakeholders. Negotiations by extension also include compromises between different, and at times opposing, views and interests. This chapter asks how those negotiations are affected by the transformation of the festival into this phenomenon that categorizes itself as presenting superdiversity. It answers this question by looking controversies that I encountered during the fieldwork surrounding the 2023 and 2024 editions. I specifically focus on how the 'community' may have to give away some of its decision-making power because of its increased size and diversification of associated meanings. This is illustrated through an impression of the performance of the RSC street parade that shows the many roles that are held by people, and the meanings that may be associated with them. These roles and meanings frequently reconfigure, further destabilizing an imagined boundary.

RSC is a site around which a network can be observed. Different stakeholders, including the Foundation, carnival groups, musicians, sponsors, the Rotterdam municipality, and the police, must reach agreements to ensure the carnival can take place. Conversations and negotiations are extensive. After these are held, they must be communicated with the larger groups. After all, the implementation and realization of these agreements require the cooperation of those involved in a more executive position, including, among others, the volunteers, the dancers, and the audience. Divergent views within groups contribute to further destabilization. The tensions discussed in this chapter are moments during which mandates and interests of stakeholders and meanings of carnival become clearer, as well as continued discomfort surrounding superdiversity.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to examine how a superdiverse celebration takes place, how the meanings of the practice extend beyond the day events, how place-making in the city is obstructed by concerns about the risk of the event, and how opinions clash about the nature of the festivity as a family festivity, a term invoked by, among others, the

Foundation. With each concern, some claim to ownership is made. This demonstrates the importance of approaching the RSC as situated in the multiscalar. The transnational nature of the carnival means it is situated in the 'global' rather than the city itself. I argue that this makes any attempt to define boundaries problematic and risks agitating those whose cooperation is needed most to continue the Summer Carnival. I also argue that the RSC cannot be analyzed separately from the larger national context, as the increasingly right-wing politics and the culturalization of citizenship are adding new dimensions and new meanings to the carnival.

4.1 Performing carnival in Rotterdam; how do they do this?

The RSC attracts many visitors and as such, the organization requires careful management. The focus here is on the performance of the street parade. The street parade is the most visible, most public, and most attended of the RSC's events. It is also the part that has been subject to frequent contestation in the media.

The easiest way to illustrate the street parade's organization on the day itself is to zoom in on a part of the parade. Imagine a street. On the sidewalks, visitors watch as the parade passes by (photo 4.1.1). On the street are the participants consisting of dressed-up dancers, musicians, brass band players (photo 4.1.2), and disc jockeys. Between the participants and the visitors, there are volunteers, and recently also parade leaders, to ensure the parade's smooth procession. Along some segments of the route, there is a fence separating the flow from the audience.

Photo (4.1.1): Examples of street organization. The photo is taken from the front of the parade and shows the fences separating the parade and the audience. (Photo by the author)

Photo (4.1.2): Brass band group in the parade. JeHu68. 2009. "Zomercarnaval Rotterdam 2009." https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zomercarnaval_Rotterdam_2009_(3757103195).jpg/.

If we zoom out, the general route becomes visible. The preset route through Rotterdam city center is around 7.5 kilometers long. The street parade starts at 13.00[36] in the afternoon and must finish by 18.00 sharp. Plein 1940 marks both the start and end point. Depending on the year, between 350 thousand to nearly a million spectators can be seen in the audience, as well as up to 40 carnival groups in the flow of people, with over 2000 participants and 500 musicians. The groups are separated by trucks that function as the disc jockey's stage. Toward the end of the route, the parade passes by the municipality building on the Coolsingel. In front, there is a stage for an invited audience. In 2023, the jury members were seated here while in the 2024 parade, they were giving scores at some point along the route. The jury members hand out prizes to the groups based on their performance in September after the RSC's edition.

This is a rather static description of the carnival parade and as Giles emphasized, the RSC street parade must be understood as an iceberg.[37] There is an extensive organization and an array of meanings that are not directly visible. He warns of misunderstandings or simplified conceptions of this iceberg, as an iceberg can always split into more pieces. This metaphor points toward the risks of responding to incidents, as is discussed in the sections

[36] In 2024, the parade started at 12.00. The parade included more groups compared to the previous years and this extra hour would help to ensure the parade finished in time.
[37] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.

after this description. I will look more closely at some main roles and their associated meanings. The roles are not rigid categories as many combine them or engage with them differently.

Spectators

The street parade is free to be attended by all. Spectators choose their place along the route and move as they would like. Many dance along, take pictures, and some also recognize and greet participants. During and after the parade, they can head to the mercado, a food market. In the words of Rosalie, "the mercado is great, there you can find food from across the Caribbean. So, then I'll have a *bara*, and a *pastechi*, and a patty from the Jamaican people there. That is a one-day holiday without having to board a train or an airplane."[38] The parade and the surrounding events invoke the idea of a holiday as it marks a clear separation from daily life in Rotterdam. For some people, the RSC marks only one stop as part of a larger carnival-themed summer tour as they move across Europe to attend multiple carnivals and soca and dancehall festivals (Guadeloupe and Oostindie 2023, 269). Hilje van der Horst (2010, 12) describes the spectators' engagement as one founded on consumption of market products such as food but also on "consumption [as] an activity involving the entire body." They refer to the smells, colors, music, and the way this recombines into a specific atmosphere that can be consumed. The participants provide a performance that can be consumed by the spectators. Yet participants also engage in consumption as they navigate the consumptive environment of the festival on their own terms.

Participants

For many participants, the preparation begins multiple weeks or up to a year ahead of the parade. For dancers, the carnival is a way of training their bodies. Some join dance classes or engage in general training to be prepared to dance for hours. They also have to organize their costumes and outfits. Some participants wear more casual outfits like shorts and T-shirts. Other costumes may require more preparation. The most elaborate costumes consist of a headpiece and a body or shoulder piece. A headpiece is placed on someone's head and then points upward. A body piece or shoulder piece will be placed on the spot between an individual's shoulder and neck, around the place where the straps of a backpack would be. These larger pieces consist of a skeleton that is decorated with fabric, feathers, glitters, or

[38] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.

gemstones to invoke elegance and beauty (see photo 4.1.3, 4.1.4, and 4.1.5 for some examples). According to Cedric, there are no specific cultural meanings to the use of these materials or shapes. He explains that he views it as a way for someone wanting to dress up as beautifully as a peacock.[39] It is useful to link this to van der Horst's notions of the consumer and the consumed as it demonstrates the fluidity of these roles. Laurence explains how he likes the attention and rhythm of the performance. There is something special about this, "I get this whole new sort of energy that takes over my body."[40] Participants enjoy the engagement, enjoy giving this performance, and derive pleasure from it.

Photo (4.1.3): Some participants in a carnival group. FaceMePLS. 2012. "Zomercarnaval 2012." https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zomercarnaval_2012_(7667572200).jpg/.

[39] Interview with Cedric, August 29, 2023, Rotterdam.
[40] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.

Photo (4.1.4): Some participants in a carnival group. FaceMePLS. 2013. "Zomercarnaval 2013." https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zomercarnaval_2013_(9059425484).jpg/.

Photo (4.1.5): Costume by Fabritio Mossel (2022), "The King of the Red Blue Yellow Macau (Ara)," on display at Kunsthal (2024). (Screenshot of video made by author)

Each carnival group elaborates a self-chosen theme through their costume and performance. Depending on the group's affiliation and cultural background, their costumes may be more inspired by, for example, Trinidadian, Aruban, or Curaçaoan carnival dress. Differences include the use fabric, the use of glitter or small glittery stones, and the structure of the headpiece and body or shoulder piece. In Laurence's case of, the theme is *Pilots of the Caribbean*. Their take on this theme is one that stresses the movement between multiple islands in the Caribbean. In his act for the Royalty Election, Laurence and his fellow dancers portrayed a story of him visiting multiple places where carnival is celebrated. His outfit resembles an airplane, a compass, and the flag of Aruba. After being crowned the 2024 King, he led the street parade together with the elected Queen. This example illustrates the extensive preparation that goes into the carnival. The costume is developed as part of a storytelling performance that links the performers to their roots and the places they are from. The preparations are done in secret and Laurence stressed repeatedly that I should not tell anyone about the designs. This secrecy surrounding carnival groups' preparation is common. During a volunteer briefing, I spoke with a volunteer who made costumes. Out of curiosity, I asked what part she was working on, to which she replied that this was a secret.

The carnival also means labor for other people. Not only dancers and participants are involved with the costume preparation, but also seamstresses and carnival group coordinators. Some carnival groups designate specific seamstresses where participants must go to have their costumes developed. Outside of costumes, groups also sometimes must prepare their carnival float or sign, and each group is responsible for contacting disc jockeys or bands to provide music for their group. Other than that, there are the truck drivers that work during the parade and the hotel owners who provide places to stay for the many tourists.

Volunteers

The volunteers are the main group I was involved with as I participated as a volunteer during the street parade in 2023 and 2024. Their key task is to do crowd management during the day. Upholding the flow during the parade and preventing interruptions is important for safety and timekeeping. Rosalie stressed the volunteers' responsibility of preventing the formation of gaps in the parade.[41] Gaps here refer to empty space or increased distance between participating groups. If gaps end up being created, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the flow. Spectators might feel invited to enter the road and join in and dance along.

[41] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.

Asking them to make space or step aside is often a futile effort. A crowd of fifty people will usually not listen to a polite request to make space for the groups. A formed gap or a group slowing down also prevents all groups after that one from being able to continue, causing delays that must be avoided in order to maintain harmony with the police and the municipality and ensure that the permit is renewed.

There are exchanges between the spectators and the participants that make the creation of the gaps quite likely. Spectators often want to move closer to be able to see as much as possible, some want to engage with the dancers, or children want pictures with the beautifully dressed participants. During a briefing it was suggested that in the parts where there is a fence, many spectators simply climb over it, thereby undermining the fence's function. The flow's participants also want this interaction, as mentioned before, in relation to the notions of the consumer and the consumed. During the same briefing, the motivation of the brass bands was stressed as they train throughout the year and like to give a show during the parade.[42] Taken together, the RSC street parade shows the power that is inherent in numbers. Carnival as a transgressive celebration must take place within the ordered lines defined by the network's key stakeholders. That does not mean this order is always maintained. The people, especially participants and spectators, can only be instructed to a certain extent. As the day progresses, many people are increasingly intoxicated and dance and behave as they please.

Navigating the masses

The disregard of the fence and the fluidity of defined roles such as spectator or volunteer was also visible during the 2024 street parade. During the parade, I walked at the front while pushing a colorful cart together with Sam (photo 4.1.6). Many spectators would rush toward us to quickly take a picture with the sign while we continued walking as instructed. About a half hour in, I noticed a man in an elegant blue costume with a walking cane in front of us. He was loved by the spectators and kept being cheered while many asked to take a picture with him, a request that he happily accepted. This was in contrast to the rather dull introduction that Sam and I gave while pushing this cart that turned out to be heavier and more fragile than expected.[43]

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[42] In recent years, this has resulted in friction. During the briefings, references were made to a brass band that ignored the instructions they were given, resulting in a 30-minute delay.

[43] We had to walk at a slow pace (about 2.5 to 3 kilometers per hour) while pushing this cart. Along the way, two of the six wheels broke, making the labor required ever more intense.

1 Photo (4.1.6): The decorated cart that formed the start of the parade. Rijnmond. 2024. "Zomercarnaval 2024." July 27, 2024. https://www.rijnmond.nl/tv/aflevering/zomercarnaval-2024/1853170_20240727130000. (Screenshot made by author)

Neither Sam nor I knew who this person was. We agreed that we could not decide if he was famous or pretending to be. A bit later, I asked one of the more experienced volunteers if he knew who this man was. He said no but that he found him quite annoying. What the story is behind this man is and how he was affiliated to the parade remains unclear. This illustrates the transgressive power inherent to the carnival. No matter how carefully organized, people have agency in expressing themselves and walking along. They can even become the *de facto* temporary head of the parade. Maybe he could have been asked to leave by the police officer who walked next to us if I mentioned it, but this option was clearly off the table. Although not all volunteers were equally fond of him (myself included), he did not do harm, the audience loved his presence, and we let it be.

At times, I found the power that is in these masses quite an overwhelming experience. At another point, I had to walk alongside trucks while making sure they had enough room to turn. This required me to ask people to step back and create space for their own safety. As the afternoon progressed, people became more drunk[44], which led to opinions, and comments from the audience to which I often did not have an adequate response. Rosalie, a fellow volunteer, is much better at navigating the crowds. When I asked her if she still joins in the

[44] While in 2023, people were allowed one low-percentage alcoholic drink, a full restriction on the consumption of alcohol was imposed in 2024. This regulation was not upheld; participants mentioned having had enough alcohol and I also saw people pouring drinks from glass bottles in paper bags that were present in the cars that drove in the parade.

dancing, she replied that she will not go all out "because as a volunteer you are still in function." She explained the power of dancing in doing the crowd management, "But it also helps to dance, for example when ... spectators start walking between the parade, lay on the ground, or hold on to the trucks. Then you can try to say, you must get off or this is not allowed."[45] Instead, she takes someone's hand, takes them with her, dances with them, and in this way guides them back to the side of the road.

Bringing people together

The Foundation views the street parade as bringing people together, "'tasting' from each other's culture leads to more understanding and respect for the other and in society" (Zomercarnaval Rotterdam, n.d.). People travel from across the country to attend. Some even travel further, such as carnival groups from France and Curaçao or visitors from abroad. Cedric explains that "it is and will always remain a certain meeting point ... some people you'll see every time. I always end up seeing cousins from Enschede, people from Groningen, I always see some people from Noord-Holland, I see my sisters."[46] While reflecting on the celebration, he explains he enjoys the parade as it reminds him of his youth in Aruba. He continues, "it then evokes certain feelings that you think of 'ok, it won't be any more like the way it was, but the way it is now is also ok.'" Likewise, the volunteer briefings are not only for discussing the parade's organization but also provide an opportunity for people to (re)connect and be involved with this larger event together.

Whether this intention and this meaning are realized is subject to debate and is linked to the questions of superdiverse cities and social cohesion. An example is the analysis by Arne Saeys (2021) who analyzed the effects of "urban multicultural festivals" on the emancipation of immigrants and minorities. One benchmark they used to look into this was through analyzing if the festivals encouraged encounters across ethnic boundaries. They assessed this by using the framework of bonding, the strengthening of bonds within a group of people, and bridging, the expanding of connections to create between-group connections (Saeys 2021, 636). They asked visitors about the people they came to visit with and observed if the visitors stayed with the people they already knew or sought new connections. Most people stayed with the people they already knew, leading Saeys (2021, 637) to write that

[45] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.
[46] Interview with Cedric, August 29, 2023, Rotterdam.

"while the festival brings diverse groups together, our fieldwork shows that the mere presence of others does not necessarily imply meaningful interethnic contact."

This conclusion fails to acknowledge the meaning that the presence of others can already have. Firstly, the presence of those who look or appear different from one's own 'group' is already meaningful as it reaffirms the superdiversity that lies at the core of the current RSC. Secondly, because individual experiences from a shared event can also create connections beyond the event itself. I noticed this in the conversation with Laurence. I mentioned that during the 2023 Royalty Election in *De Doelen*, I saw someone in the audience cheering using a pan and a wooden ladle. To which he replied, "that was Stephanie!"[47] He added that this is a typical Aruban way of cheering people on during a Queen election. This demonstrates how the sharing of even small experiences from one's relative perspective can instill connections beyond the present in unexpected ways far after this occurs. Connections in large public events may be fleeting, yet that does not necessarily make them less meaningful. Saeys' focus on the visitors' experiences on the day itself fails to address how meaning may extend beyond the instant interactions one has.

4.2 Carnival's histories, carnival's meanings?

The description offered above was focused on the performance of the RSC street parade in 2023 and the meanings this and related celebrations can carry for loosely bounded groups. This section is dedicated to the question of how meanings and perceptions of meanings have changed as the RSC developed. The focus is on three key examples of changes that altered the carnival's meanings. The first example is in relation to a certain event, the Tumba contest, the second concerns the multiple name changes (as explained in Chapter 3), and the third is dedicated to the expansion of the Queen election to the Royalty election. The changes reflect economic and political considerations and demonstrate the intentional use of certain terms to privilege a version or interpretation of the RSC's meaning and history.

The first aspect of changed meanings is through the change in the celebrations held. Tumba and Calypso competitions were held until 1997. The competitions attracted mostly Antilleans who were familiar with the musical traditions.[48] Cooperation with Ducos Productions resulted in a more businesslike approach (Alferink 2012, 113). Although highly

[47] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[48] Calypso and Tumba contests are important cultural events in Aruba and Curaçao (see, for example, Richardson 2020; West-Durán 2003, 150).

popular among Antilleans, the competitions ceased to be organized as the costs could not be covered. The result was that the meaning of the Tumba contest was disconnected from the RSC.

The second example is related to the four names that the RSC has had. The Antillean carnival became Zomercarnaval Rotterdam, then Zomercarnaval Nederland, and then Rotterdam Unlimited (RU). The changes are related to institutional restructurings including (closer) cooperation with the Rotterdam municipality and Ducos' productions. Giles explained that the first three name changes function to capture the festivities and the widespread participation, which goes beyond defined cities.[49] He says this is also important for being able to approach sponsors. The changes in names alter the definition of the 'community'; where first Antilleans were the central group, this has been changed. Now they have become the initiators. The reconceptualization of the 'community' resulted in the broadening of participation. The increased recognition and integration of the Summer Carnival into Dutch society comes at the cost of having a dedicated public Antillean celebration.

Despite the fourth name, Rotterdam Unlimited (RU), having been introduced in 2013, it is not often mentioned, and it is unclear if it constitutes a proper renaming. Laurence, for example, was not familiar with RU.[50] Cedric did know the name and organization but was not sure how exactly the RU's introduction affected the RSC's organization.[51] The name was not used during the volunteer briefings. Moreover, RU is not mentioned in the Dutch ICH inventory nor on the nomination form that was presented during the international UNESCO meeting in December 2023. Here, the term Rotterdam Summer Carnival continues to be used.

Rotterdam Unlimited is used in public advertisements to promote the event. The RU website is the place where most information regarding the various events is available. The name is also used in the description of the temporary exhibition on the RSC at the *Kunsthal* in Rotterdam dedicated to the forty years of Zomercarnaval, which stipulates that the exhibition is made in cooperation with Rotterdam Unlimited Zomercarnaval. The individual events are still called by their name, such as the Summer Carnival street parade, lighting

[49] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.
[50] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[51] Interview with Cedric, August 29, 2023, Rotterdam.

parade, or mercado. What this shows is that institutional restructurings do not necessarily result in a widespread adoption of the new branding.

A third key change is the renaming of the Queen election to the Royalty Election. The motivation was to meet the social wish for greater gender equality. The preparations to elect both a queen and a king commenced in 2020. The first Royalty Election was hosted in 2022 and it became an instant success. This is an extra special change as on the SSSABC islands there is no king election (OPEN Rotterdam 2022). Laurence, for example, had been involved with the preparation of the carnival queens in Aruba for years.[52] After moving to the Netherlands for his studies, he took the opportunity to participate in the competition as well. The change demonstrates how the RSC's development is shaped by social changes. The emphasis on gender equality appears to be separate from the advocating of a queer presence. As mentioned previously, one of the founders encouraged queer people to be visible in the parade but it is unclear if this is still practiced. Moreover, the nomination file drafted for UNESCO inscription mentions the increased participation of transgenders in the Street Parade to promote acceptance. I did not see this during the parade either.

4.3 Safety: who leads the parade? How to respond to incidents?

Safety is a key topic at the RSC. The RSC is a big event, sometimes even regarded as the biggest one-day festival in the Netherlands (Van Stipriaan 2016, 35). It is vital that the safety of those present can be guaranteed. This requires careful cooperation between the Foundation, Rotterdam Unlimited, and the municipality. Cooperation that at times results in difficult conversations. This difficulty may be intensified because it is deemed a superdiverse festival. The role that diversity plays in the organization of festivals has been studied by Britt Swartjes (2024, 105) who found that even though organizers themselves may "conceptualize it differently, diversity is equated to conflict and danger and safety measures are therefore perceived as a necessity." Swartjes (2024, 15) also writes that "festivals that are perceived to attract 'diverse' audience groups are often asked to implement additional safety measures."

At the same time, increased safety measures are also applied to other event spaces in Rotterdam. Especially in light of the incidents in Rotterdam in 2023; the city is one in which criminality happens. The year featured multiple explosions of divergent dimensions as well as

[52] Interview with Laurence, April 24, 2024, online.

shootings. There appear two main dimensions; is a practice of Othering, a process through which a dominant group not involved with the RSC constructs the festival as hosted by a stigmatized Other, a factor in the creation of safety measures? Or is the general social landscape becoming more tense and less secure, requiring additional safety measures at large-scale events? During the volunteer briefings I attended, the conversation carefully navigated these two main dimensions. It is important to address this because the premises on which those policy decisions rest in part reflect how the RSC functions within society; is it still being othered or has it become established (enough)? This points toward the notion of equality in the multicultural riddle (Baumann 1999). The premises are never fully clear. This makes the perception of the meanings of the policy even more important. This importance is reinforced as volunteers do not feel (fully) heard while in the media right-wing parties, like *Leefbaar Rotterdam*, have called for a termination of the RSC (Frankenhuis 2023). During informal chats with volunteers during the briefings, this fear of the RSC's future was frequently discussed. The following paragraphs use examples of the implementation of certain safety measures which reflect these sentiments.

Moreover, there is not one site or problem that safety measures target. Safety is multidimensional. Safety measures are subject to negotiation between representatives and stakeholders in the multiscalar. Each has certain ideas about what should happen and what they find important. Measures are installed to ensure proper crowd management as well as the control of the volume to mitigate hearing damage among attendees. Rosalie mentioned that the restrictions have increased throughout the years of their engagement.[53] Limiting factors in the restrictions' implementation include resource capacities such as money and people available to support the event. There are many examples of recent policy changes and new cooperations related to the theme of safety, among which the placing of fences along the route[54] and a new cooperation with Defense in which students training to be part of the military would join the volunteers as volunteers[55]. The focus in this chapter is on two recent policy topics. Firstly, the municipal requirement of hiring (external) parade leaders, and secondly, the responses to two shooting incidents during the 2023 edition of the RSC.

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[53] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.
[54] Volunteers asked for the placing of fences, but financial considerations meant these were not put in place. It was announced during the 2024 volunteer briefing that this year, there would be fences.
[55] During the 2023 street parade and editions before, there were too few volunteers available. It was announced during the volunteer briefing that after the 2023 parade, people from Defense reached out to the Foundation to offer their support. The proposal of the cooperation was received with skepticism, and it remained to be seen how the cooperation would go during the 2024 parade.

Leading the parade

In the first section of this chapter, I provided a short description of the volunteers' role in doing crowd management during the street parade. Among the volunteers, there are further subdivisions of tasks. The volunteers are either *begeleiders* (supervisors) or *sectie leiders* (section leaders). Each carnival group has one or two supervisors walking alongside them. The supervisor is supported by the section leader, a person who keeps an overview of a section of the parade with multiple carnival groups, brass bands, or trucks. The section leader is a volunteer who has been involved with the carnival for multiple years and has the experience to ensure the parade runs smoothly. The division of who walks where is announced during the volunteer briefing. There are not enough volunteers to cover the entire route. As such, after the first carnival groups finish, the accompanying supervisors and section leader are expected to walk back and support the rest where needed.

During the final briefing prior to the 2023 street parade, the board announced that this year there would also be three paid *parade leiders* (parade leaders). This new task was a municipal demand. During the meeting, references were made to 'developments' in the previous year that resulted in this new condition. Rosalie thought the developments may be a reference to a delay in the parade, meaning the parade did not finish in time.[56] The parade leaders were to ensure that the parade in its entirety functioned according to the planning. One board member would be the head parade leader. They would be supported by three external persons who would be a parade leader for the day.

This announcement resulted in significant irritation among the volunteers attending the meeting. The board reiterated that the permit depended on fulfilling this requirement. The volunteers had multiple critical questions. Firstly, what was this parade leader going to do and how was it different from what the volunteers together had been doing before? Secondly, who are these parade leaders and why are they absent during the final briefing? In relation to this, a volunteer asked why the hiring procedure had not sought to hire among the *harde kern*, the core of people engaged with the parade for years. This question did not receive a clear response. A third concern addressed the parade leaders' qualifications. They had no experience with the street parade or the people, so how were they going to lead it? The board mentioned that these three people had a background in event management, for example during the Amsterdam Pride. This claim to the parade leaders' experience was not received

[56] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.

well and attendees stressed a fundamental difference in the terrain: the pride takes place on canals and not on the street. In the different answers, the board's main response was by invoking the bureaucratic nature of the multiscalar: compliance with the municipality's demand was necessary to ensure the street parade's continuation. They emphasized that a board member would also be a parade leader and that we as the volunteers and the board were to make the best of the situation.

The tension did not dissolve at this point. What followed were questions raised in both Papiamento and Dutch. A volunteer raised a question in Papiamento in response to which a board member insisted on speaking Dutch. When discussing the situation afterward, Cedric explains that this person spoke Papiamento as he was unable to explain his thoughts as clearly in Dutch. He views the board member's unwillingness to speak Papiamento and the response as the result of him having assimilated to the Netherlands and the Dutch language. He is critical of this and understands it in relation to thinking from a singular or double perspective. The board member lived both in the SSSABC islands and in the Netherlands, yet here failed to reconcile the reality that if people speak in their own language, they might be meaning something differently. According to Cedric, the board member's refusal to accommodate the volunteer's question in Papiamento is discriminating.

To bring back a calmer atmosphere, another board member stood up and said *witte rook*, white smoke. She continued by saying a sentence in Papiamento which she repeated in Dutch: *Wij zijn de eigenaar van de straat*, we are the owner of the street. A similar phrase was said by Aruban lower classes in the 20th century, "the road is mine" (Guadeloupe, van de Laar, and van der Linden 2021, 230-1). She was able to restore the peace precisely because of her ability and willingness to engage with 'doublethinking,' ensuring both Papiamento and Dutch speakers felt part of the conversation and of the larger goal. With the specific phrase, she appeared to return to the essence of the RSC street parade which is the few hours in which the carnival parade takes over the streets. Even if constraints are placed on the RSC, the most important part is that the carnival continues.

One of the interlocutors, Giles, was not present during the volunteer briefing but has been deeply involved with the volunteers for years, during which he organized the cooperation with the volunteers and section leaders. He is regarded very positively among the volunteers. Giles expressed strong dismay when asked about his opinion about the inclusion

of external parade leaders. He explained that “one does not just become a parade leader instantly.” He continued,

> You can say they will decide how things will be done, but that does not work for one bit. They have no experience with how the event is set up, and you are also ignoring the volunteers and section leaders. You are putting a three-headed snake on the organization, but they do not know the people, how the carnival works, and then it is: we [the external parade leaders] are going to make it better?[57]

He followed this by sharing an accusation made that still hurts him, which is that “we never started on time and never finished on time.”[58] I asked if it was the municipality who said that, to which he responded that he did not know but that he did hear it. The comment undermines his careful organizational work while respecting the European Dutch contextual standards.

The discussions and individual comments demonstrate how hurtful the imposed policy was. The policy was perceived as being grounded on the idea that non-Antillean and non-carnival related parade leaders were necessary to hold a street parade that starts and finishes on time. The municipal requirement undermines the ability of the ‘community’ to organize the street parade on their terms with their extensive experience. No reference to the multiscalar and the municipality’s interest in the RSC’s continuation is made. Instead, a hierarchical relation is imagined in which the ‘community’ must give away part of their agency to be able to continue the parade. An ability to navigate the language and associated cultural understandings proved vital to maintaining a feeling of solidarity among the volunteers.

During the volunteer briefing in preparation for the 2024 street parade, a new announcement was made. A board member emphasized that she was aware of the wishes of the volunteers and that the board listened to them. As such, two out of three parade leaders’ positions would now be filled by people part of the volunteer group. The third was a parade leader from the previous year who had been best at navigating the parade. The relief was visible and audible; volunteers applauded and one person behind me said “now I have faith in it again.” This demonstrates that the continued negotiations taking place within the multiscalar can also be successful for the volunteers. Although at times it appears as if they

[57] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.
[58] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.

have a limited voice due to the presence of institutional actors, their perspectives on what can be done better can in fact be implemented.

Shooting incidents

Except for more internal discussions about parade leaders, there are also more publicly visible safety discussions. Two shootings took place during the 2023 street parade. This was not the first edition in which violence occurred; there have been other incidents such as stabbings and fighting quarrels in the years before. Following this, fears grew regarding how to move on. A shop owner expressed that the big incidents may reach the public news but there are safety fears the entire day (Rijnmond 2023). Historian Han van der Horst (2023) expressed in an opinion piece that a structural inability of the municipality to adequately address safety should not result in a discontinuation of the RSC. This would only amount to the municipality releasing its anger on all citizens in Rotterdam. How did the 2023 shooting incidents affect the measures imposed for the following year?

This safety element involves the cooperation between the Foundation, Rotterdam Unlimited, the police, and the municipality. The mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb (2023), wrote a letter to the municipal council in December 2023 with an evaluation of the incidents. The letter starts by providing a positive evaluation of the cooperation between the various safety partners during the parade. It continues with the observation that the parade goes smoothly but that the atmosphere changes after the families leave and the public changes. One obstacle toward ensuring safety is the open character of the event; the lack of a demarcated entry point and the large stream of visitors complicates the enforcement of entry controls and checks for forbidden items such as weapons and hard liquor. The resulting atmosphere in the evening is experienced as grim, making employees less willing to work and entrepreneurs report the need to hire additional safety personnel. The mayor decided therefore that the evening programs must be changed. They are to take place in a controlled location with one entry point to allow for a better grip on the event. This requires an alternative organization of the Lighting Parade and the Battle of the Drums.

The decision resulted in written questions from J. M. Nunnely, a D66 politician. One of the questions she asks is if “there are clear and concrete indications that the shooting incidents from last year are correlated to the (visitors of) the Summer Carnival” (Wigmans and Aboutaleb 2024; author’s translation). The response is “the police notes that there are incidents that occur on the day of Rotterdam Unlimited on the route and/or event terrain”

(Wigmans and Aboutaleb 2024; author's translation). This question and the associated answer illustrate how the municipality navigates the multiscalar by invoking the police's observation. The question is phrased in a critical way that aims to separate the shooting incidents from the Summer Carnival. The municipality responds by repeating the fact that the event and the incidents occurred at a time and place that overlapped, without pointing in a direction of causality. The use of the name Summer Carnival suggests a closer connection with the festivities, this is still the name through which most people are familiar with the RSC, while Rotterdam Unlimited has a connotation of a more distant approach. This demonstrates how the prioritizing of one name over the other shifts the connotation of the statement.

Aboutaleb's letter was also brought up during the volunteer briefing. A board member announced that the evening programs could not take place this year, but that they were working on finding an alternative way of hosting them within the parameters given by the municipality. He said this notice was extra bitter considering the recent UNESCO inscription[59] and the 40-year anniversary. The sentiments aired by volunteers and the board members were similar to the written correspondence between Nunnely and the municipality but were discussed in more detail. Consequently, the ideas and perceptions of the policy meanings were more easily observable. The volunteers were disappointed by the municipality's decision although many understood the reality of increased safety issues in Rotterdam. One person expressed the idea that one person, who is not even part of the RSC but just happens to be there, ends up ruining it for everyone. Without adding a clear value judgment to this idea, it was clear that the frustration was more widely shared. Another question was why the restrictions were imposed now. Incidents have been taking place for longer. Some responded by saying that there is a different wind blowing in the municipality compared to ten years ago. This points toward the RSC as being influenced by political trends in Dutch society which can alter the room available for the celebration. What appeared to help the general opinion on the policy changes was to link the decision to other events that faced additional safety measures. An example is the use of QR codes and pre-registration for the May 4th commemoration.[60] Another person mentioned that Rotterdam Ahoy, an event venue, was also facing additional measures. The attention paid to the larger changes within society draws attention away from the idea of the RSC being targeted with safety measures.

[59] The effects of the UNESCO inscription on the hosting of the celebration are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
[60] May 4th marks the Dutch Remembrance Day for the Holocaust and the Second World War. During the 2024 Remembrance Day, additional measures were installed.

What does this show, why does it matter?

The question of parade leaders and event restrictions are among the themes in which discussions around ensuring safety at the parade can be observed. The discussions underscore the presence of negotiations between different places in the multiscalar that are shaped by changes in the Dutch political landscape.

The way in which the compliance with the municipal demand for parade leaders was realized resulted in reactions that showed the perception of the policy as being found on the reproduction of discriminating stereotypes. The successful change in the year that followed helped to mitigate the experience from the last year and partially restore trust in the end result. I say partially because many challenges continue to exist with the street parade's continuation and the multitude of RSC events, evidenced by the demands placed on the evening programs.

The analysis does not clearly support or reject Swartjes' (2024) finding that superdiversity results in the perception of requiring extra safety measures. I have not been able to speak with policymakers, so I am not able to assess if superdiversity was a factor in the measures imposed. What the examples do show, is the importance of people's perception of the ideas that inform policy decisions. The discourses demonstrate careful navigation of these perceptions to avoid a perception of the RSC as being targeted for additional safety measures. More transparency and increased interaction between people who relate to the event's organization might help to counter this but the realization of this would be difficult. The size of the event and the complex workings within the multiscalar make full transparency impossible.

4.4 Bubbling: transgression or expression?

A bodily tension arose during the 2023 edition of the RSC. The Foundation's (Stichting Zomercarnaval Nederland 2023, 10; author's translation) rules and regulations for the parade included a section on "common decency" which said the following about dancing

> How to dance: Dancing can be very provocative and/or vulgar. Especially in pairs, when certain sexual movements are imitated in the street. This is not allowed. It is also not allowed to dance bubbling. This is characterized by the Organization as a provocative vulgar dance. Summer Carnival is a family celebration, and the Organization attaches great importance to maintaining this.

What followed was a national controversy. Television hosts invited bubbling and dance experts to give their opinions, newspapers wrote reflective articles, and carnival group dancers became more committed to dancing in restricted ways.

In the different responses, a certain discomfort of superdiversity becomes visible; who is allowed to decide what the carnival looks like when it is a public and popular festivity? But more than that, carnival as a conceptual phenomenon is often understood to be transgressive and to refer to a period when people engage in excessive behaviors. This section, then, looks at dancing as a bodily practice that is an essential part of the carnival. The mass of people and dancers brings about a special energy that can bring people into a sort of trance.[61] I contrast multiple media pieces with varying stances regarding bubbling with interlocutors' ideas. I look at this development in chronological order. That is, the initial publication of the regulations for the 2023 street parade. This is followed by the public outcry during and after the RSC. Then, I look at how the controversy resulted in a very different approach during the year that followed.

Four main sentiments can be detected. I introduce these sentiments before analyzing how they surface at various points in the discourses surrounding the bubbling developments. Some people may reflect a mixture of sentiments. The first was a type of support for the restriction. People understood the reasoning and agreed that there are limits to how one can use one's body in the public sphere. There was also quiet acceptance, in which a person does not necessarily agree but finds that rules are meant to be followed. The support or quiet acceptance was not as visible in Dutch media but came up during conversations with interlocutors and informal chats with other volunteers.

The second sentiment was linked to a notion of prudish Dutchness and a certain patronizing attitude.[62] In this sentiment, people conceptualize the restriction as caused by unfamiliarity of 'the Dutch' with the display of nudity and certain movements. This unfamiliarity is then understood to lead to discomfort which 'the Dutch' seek to resolve by restricting it.

The third sentiment labeled the restriction as colonial and racist.[63] This sentiment links the Summer Carnival to Black emancipation and points toward instances in colonial

[61] Interview with Isabelle and Giles, August 30, 2023, Rotterdam.
[62] See, for example, Van Turnhout (2023).
[63] See, for example, Drinkwaard (2023).

periods when white colonizers prohibited enslaved people from engaging with music and dance on their own terms.[64]

The fourth response highlighted the centrality of definitions.[65] Rather than 'bubbling,' the Foundation would try to limit 'daggering.' Bubbling is part of the immaterial cultural heritage network (KIEN, n.d. a) and does not involve any sexual movements. Instead, it refers to a subculture that grew out of hip-hop and breakdance and developed in Curaçao, Surinam, and Amsterdam. Dress plays an important role: bubbling fashion tends to include wide sweaters and pants, tracksuits, and as such, is much more covered than some of the RSC's outfits. The movements are more flowy and include *isolations*, a technique in which dancers move one part of the body while the rest remains still, a difficult practice through which dancers demonstrate great skill and discipline. Daggering would more accurately describe the type of movements that the organization sought to restrict. In this expression, the Foundation is deemed as not being properly informed about dancing styles and traditions.

Initial restriction

In the days before the RSC's 2023 street parade, an updated version of the foundation's regulations was published on the website which was quoted at length at the start of this section. The statement raised many questions. In practical terms, it is unclear who would be assessing what sort of movements were allowed and who would be checking this. During a conversation with my section leader, she emphasized that we would not be 'policing' dances, that 'is not our task.' There were also more light-hearted conversations, in which a volunteer explained to me the difference in dances. She explained that 'we Antilleans dance on our body,' while other cultures like Trinidad dance more in relation to the other. I cannot say I fully understood the difference. Visually it looked like she approved of dancing in a vertical position and that the controversial part was when she pushed her hips backward and her chest forward, creating more of an exerted body posture.

My confusion about what was intended to be restricted was shared more widely. If one reads the regulation carefully, it starts with restricting a certain atmosphere of indecent dancing; dancing has the potential to be 'vulgar' and/or 'provocative.' The word 'also' in the sentence that follows seems to suggest bubbling as an addition to this restriction. In a

[64] In the case of the SSSABC islands, the most well-known example refers to the restrictions of Tambú on Curaçao. The repression of Tambú by the church has been analyzed by René Rosalia (1997). Tambú is a way of life, a cleansing ritual at the time of the New Year to ward off evil.
[65] See, for example, NOS Nieuws (2023b).

different reading of the regulation, bubbling functions as a stand-in for indecent dancing, an example or broad qualifier to illustrate what constitutes the movements that are to be restricted. The regulation was perceived as the latter as people started talking about the 'bubbling ban.' The focus is therefore on the discourse surrounding bubbling instead of the broader restriction.

The Dutch public broadcaster NOS wrote that the bubbling referred to "a style of dance in which two or more people rub, among other things, their lower bodies against each other" (NOS Nieuws 2023a; author's translation). Some, like Laurence, understand bubbling as *billen shaken*, shaking one's bottom, which he distinguishes from dancing in carnival in the quick-feet changing pattern that is typical to the Caribbean carnival rhythm. Or, as mentioned before, bubbling may refer to the dance style as described in the ICH Inventory.

During and after the street parade

The controversy only developed during the days before the street parade. Rosalie, for example, mentioned that she only found out about the regulation on the morning of the parade.[66] During the parade, some people responded to the restrictions by dancing in a slightly more provocative manner as a way of resisting the prohibition. Although I did not see the signs myself, on social media, images circulated of participants holding protest signs with slogans like "ga je kaolo moeder verbieden te 'bubblen'" (go forbid your damn mother to 'bubble') and "my ancestors are not vulgar" (OPEN Rotterdam 2023). The texts demonstrate a strong disapproval of the attempted regulation. The reference to ancestors demonstrates a feeling of connection to dancing and music that goes beyond the present.

When discussing the topic with Cedric, he explained that bubbling has been going on for years. Throughout the years, children have been attending the festivities and only now it has been deemed *aanstootgevend*, causing offense because it is deemed improper. He laments that the Netherlands continues to be a Calvinist country that will restrict something when it crosses what they consider their boundary. Calvinist here is invoked in a culturalized sense in which the Dutch continue to be prude and try to be modest. He thinks they should not create such rules to change the character of the festivity and underscores the counterreaction the restriction created; clips of people bubbling were present all over the internet.[67] This

[66] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.
[67] Interview with Cedric, August 29, 2023, Rotterdam.

sentiment is in contradiction with the fact that the restriction was imposed by the Foundation which consists mostly of people with roots in the Caribbean.

The restriction was also discussed on the municipal level. J. Bokhove and J. M. Nunnely raised written questions asking if the Summer Carnival is still for all (Gemeente Rotterdam 2023). They are critical of the restriction: alleged 'vulgarity' is subjective and often not intentional. They reaffirm that through the prohibition of specific dances, and related cultural expressions, the freedom to express yourself (culturally) is strongly reduced. In the responses to the questions raised by the politicians, the municipality takes a clear distance. They write that the street parade's organization and associated regulations are in the hands of the Foundation (Gemeente Rotterdam 2023). The municipality, nor the organization Rotterdam Unlimited, Bureau Vermaeck, or Rotterdam Festivals, play any role in this. The municipality continues that they do not have any judgements on the regulations, unless there is a concern about public safety. The response shows how the municipality takes a distance from the controversy by invoking the sharing of responsibilities.

Re-shaping the bubbling conversation

The controversy caused changes beyond the 2023 edition. The Dutch Public Broadcaster posted an article that included a short reflection by the Foundation's former chairperson (Bhageloe 2024). He explains he was shocked by the angry responses while he only sought to limit lewdness on the street. He adds that he may be too old to understand what young people like (Bhageloe 2024). The response demonstrates a partial support of the restriction, he was after all involved with the regulations, while linking this to his age. This response thus avoids any mention of the multicultural riddle's elements (ethnicity, nationality, or religion). His position now is shifted toward the fourth sentiment which is linked to definitions as he continues that he now thinks that he misinterpreted bubbling and that it was erroneously included in the regulations (Bhageloe 2024). A statement by the Foundation's new chairperson mentions that during the previous summer, an outdated article in the regulations sparked understandable animosity. In cooperation with an antidiscrimination bureau, the regulations were revised. The revised section on dance (Stichting Zomercarnaval Nederland 2024, 9; author's translation) is under the heading "inclusive and safe participation" and reads as follows:

> Dance: The Organization recognizes dance as an important form of cultural expression and understands that dance expresses cultural transmission in numerous

> ways. The Organization encourages participants to ensure the inclusive nature of the Summer Carnival in doing so. Consider the age of participants and visitors, different backgrounds of participants and visitors, and safety perceptions of participants and visitors. Address your own group members when it is not in line with the safe and inclusive nature of the Summer Carnival.

The new version stipulates the importance of dance for cultural expression. Normative conceptions of what sort of dancing is allowed have been removed. Instead, the call is one for individual groups to reflect and make assessments of what is acceptable. There is still a stipulation of core values of the RSC: safety and inclusiveness. Aspects that are recommended for groups to consider are the diversity of age and backgrounds of participants and visitors. There is thus a focus from a top-down restriction toward a bottom-up approach in which participants have more agency in deciding how they move.

A second change was the conscious engagement with bubbling. One of the RSC's evening programs featured the 'Bubbling 2.0 Dance Battle' organized by BubblingTV. The Battle was hosted indoors at a concert venue in Rotterdam. A second example was in the public display of bubbling placed on the Kruisplein, a central square close to the Rotterdam train station. The displays provided information and pictures related to the RSC. One display was titled "Bubbling: Cultural Hybrid and Identity Expression" (photo 4.4.1; author's translation). The description did not mention the previous year's controversy but highlighted bubbling as a subculture that developed in the 80s in the Dutch Afro-Caribbean community and transformed into a cultural phenomenon. The last sentence shows the explicit re-appropriation; "In the Summer Carnival, where diverse cultural expressions and heritage are celebrated, bubbling is an important component" (author's translation). Any spiritual or religious meanings that bubbling or dancing may have for people are not mentioned. The lifting of the previous year's restrictions is framed entirely in terms of cultural heritage, creolization, and identity.

Photo (4.4.1): The display at the Kruisplein in Rotterdam with information about Bubbling. (Photo by author)

That does not mean everyone regards 'bubbling' (or perhaps I should use daggering in this example) in a positive light. During the 2024 street parade, I walked at the parade's front. Behind me was the first car with a section in the back for the disc jockeys. The disc jockeys were playing music for the float behind them with this year's carnival queen, king, and the summer princess[68]. At some point, we had to stop walking; the gaps between the groups behind us became too large so we had to give them some time to catch up. During this break, some people who were not volunteers or part of the carnival group started dancing along with a woman who stood next to the parade's first car. Among these were a few people who danced while grinding their hips against each other. Some spectators laughed and cheered encouragingly while the dancers' moves became bigger. One of them, a woman presumably over 50 who appeared to be friends with the group, pulled out her phone and started filming the dancers. Meanwhile, two volunteers who walked close to me shook their heads disapprovingly, the other volunteers did not show signs that they saw the dancing. The ones who disapproved did not make negative verbal comments nor attempted to intervene. This

[68] The Summer Prince or Princess is chosen through a selection organized by De Havenloods, a Rotterdam-based newspaper.

shows the possibility of reconciling different views on what the carnival is supposed to be; as long as basic agreements are maintained, respecting other people's expression/transgression (the qualifier would depend on the person asked) is very well possible.

4.5 Converging the tensions

The chapter has illustrated how the carnival's growth and commercialization have resulted in an expansion of the networks in which the RSC takes place. This limits the founders' agency in shaping the RSC, as illustrated in the sections on change in meanings and tensions. The multiscalar perspective spotlights how ideas about the right way of organizing the RSC are at times opposed. The opposition in views is frequently resolved by accepting that as the RSC is a popular celebration, there are limits to how it can be shaped. I also illustrated the added benefit of the ethnographic approach for being able to analyze tensions surrounding the implementation of safety which was less publicized than the bubbling controversy.

5. Yes or no to UNESCO?

The previous chapters addressed how the RSC gained a relatively steady footing in Rotterdam despite the tensions that continue to be there. This chapter is dedicated to the question of what it means for the RSC to be heritagized. Attention is given to the practical aspects of the nomination and the perception of the multiple effects it has, both positive and negative. In the process, I illustrate how inscribing the RSC affects stakeholders and nodes of the multiscalar.

The chapter is structured according to four of the five phases I identified in the heritagization process of the RSC. The first, which I refer to here as phase 0, refers to ICHC coming into effect in 2006. The Netherlands ratified the convention in 2012. The ratification requires the member state to fulfill certain tasks. Among these is the requirement for the state to establish an organization tasked with the creation of a national ICH Inventory. This organization became the KIEN. The KIEN works both on the inventory and on research that looks into the position of ICH in the Netherlands. Although the ICHC's ratification was a necessary step for the RSC's inscription to become a topic of discussion, the motivations for the ratification are beyond the scope of the thesis and are not discussed in this chapter.

I start with phase 1, which refers to the initiative taken by Dyonna Benett and others to initiate the inscription of the RSC to the Dutch ICH Inventory. Phase 2 refers to discussions by various institutions on the steering of the inventory in a certain direction. Phase 3 marks the RSC's nomination for inscription to the Representative List. Phase 4 follows after the inscription on the Representative List has been realized. These phases are not clearly demarcated or necessarily chronological but function as a way of tracing multiple developments in recent years. Each phase will be reflected upon in the following paragraphs and illustrates the tensions in the heritagization of a superdiverse festival like the RSC and how the heritagization is linked to the multiscalar.

5.1 Inscription to the Dutch ICH Inventory

Not all ICH elements in the Netherlands are inscribed in the ICH Inventory or the Network. KIEN underscores that this is also not necessary for something to be ICH. Inscription to the ICH Inventory is experienced as helping to enhance the visibility of people and their heritage and safeguard it for the future (Boers and Wissenburg 2018, 11).

The procedure that must be followed to become part of the ICH Inventory is described on the KIEN (n.d. b) website. An element must first become part of the ICH Network before it can be inscribed onto the ICH Inventory. Only practitioners or people involved with the ICH (hereafter 'community') can start the inscription to the Network. They fill in a form and afterward, the KIEN ensures the element fulfills the Network's admission criteria.

If the 'community' is interested in the element being added to the Inventory, they can indicate this to KIEN. Based on the motivations for inscription, KIEN selects communities to participate in a course dedicated to the creation of a Safeguarding Plan. The Safeguarding Plan and Nomination Form created by the 'community' are submitted afterward to the Review Committee which gives a recommendation to the KIEN about inscription. They may also indicate a need for additional information, after which the Review Committee will review the application again. The KIEN Board then decides on the inscription. If the element is inscribed, there is an evaluation round every three years in which the Safeguarding Plan must be updated.

In various news articles about the inclusion of the RSC on the Dutch ICH Inventory, heritage professional Dyonna Benett is named as one of the people who took the initiative. Benett was born in the Netherlands with Curaçaoan and Dominican roots. She grew up with the RSC, first as a spectator and then as a participant. She participated in the 2015 Queen Election before becoming a jury member during the 2024 Royalty Election. Benett was also actively involved in the curation of the documents for the nomination. She and others remarked on their motivations for working on the inscription.

Firstly, there is the symbolic importance of increasing representation and providing recognition. In an interview with Isabel Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (2021, 86-7), she mentions the Dutch ICH Inventory was "very white Dutch" and asks, "why are we (immigrants) not on it? We have been excluded for so many years! We are also Dutch. Being in this list is a mechanism to give more value to the event." This reaffirms how the ICH's listing mechanism is linked with the politics of belonging and the culturalization of citizenship. The inscription is partially initiated in response to the absence of a perceived group. The desire to increase representation results in the framing of the RSC as celebrated by a specific group and by extension amounts to a drawing of a preliminary boundary.

The recognition that the inscription provides strengthens the claim of superdiverse citizens to their belonging. Rosalie explained that the RSC's recognition as heritage

functioned as recognition for the years of hard work put into the RSC's organization but also by extension the work that has been done for the Netherlands. Rosalie continued, "culturally seen, Holland is the cheese country, and the summer carnival… there may be a certain distance between this. Because the carnival is something that comes from South America, from the Caribbean. And this [the inscription] makes that this comes very close to each other, that it is accepted. I think that that is very important. Always having had to fight for the recognition, for the place. And now, acceptance: my cultural heritage is recognized in the Netherlands."[69] This sentiment is echoed by Benett who explains that "the tropical carnival is brought here by migrants and might not be typically Dutch, but by now has become deeply rooted" (Keunen 2020, author's translation). Another person involved with the RSC remarks that the RSC creates a new culture that shows other ways of communicating and of being and belonging in Rotterdam and the Netherlands (Cavalcanti de Albuquerque 2021, 87).

Benett's remark on the inscription as providing value may also apply on a more strategic level, as Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (2021, 88) writes "The hope, for most carnival participants, is that this institutional achievement can help Zomercarnaval resolve one of its oldest issues: its financial sustainability." The inscription itself, however, does not provide any financial support. The hope could be that the inscription provides an additional incentive for sponsors, but this is not mentioned anywhere.

Another motivation is to communicate to people with superdiverse backgrounds that the Zomercarnaval is more than an event as it is also something that their parents and the people before them brought along and developed in the Netherlands. This points toward an important aspect of the heritage, the idea of passing something on to future generations while maintaining the origins of the ideas. For the UNESCO inscription, it is necessary to include letters of consent from bearers and practitioners. Dyonna Benett's (2020) letter explains how she sees the deeper aspects of the carnival:

> "Carnival has a deeper significance, a multi-layeredness that is not widely understood. It is about tradition and roots. It is a way of life. A tradition of emancipation. This is culture and intangible heritage shaped, handed down and entrusted by ancestors to their descendants. It is felt with every fibre of our being, and spread, acclaimed and celebrated all over the world. So the influence of carnival isn't purely artistic: it also has a profound measure of spirituality, togetherness and strength. The Summer

[69] Interview with Rosalie, September 1, 2023, The Hague.

> Carnival participants are embodying a tradition brought by their ancestors from the Caribbean and other tropical regions."

The perspectives demonstrate a positive view of the inscription. Critical views are hard to find online. That does not mean everyone is equally invested in the inscription. Cedric expresses concern about whether the inscription constitutes a profit model for someone outside of the carnival. He was not involved with the inscription process and only learned about it after it was inscribed.[70] He does consider the RSC heritage, but he views it as *his* heritage, not Dutch heritage.[71] When I asked Laurence if the heritage inscription was discussed with his carnival group, he explained that he was not sure and that this was mostly an affair of the Foundation. These perspectives demonstrate that heritage inscription can be important for multiple people but that these views and perspectives are not necessarily shared.

5.2 Increasing the Inventory's Representativeness

At the request of the minister of Education, Culture, and Science, the Council for Culture wrote a letter dated 2014 detailing advice for the international nomination of ICH. The Council remarks that the national inventory at the time did not give a broad overview of ICH and the carrying 'communities' in the Netherlands (Daalmeijer and Bartelse 2014, 6). In elements that were missing or underrepresented, the Council mentioned high-profile and well-known phenomena, contemporary or urban heritage communities, and examples of (postcolonial) migrants (Daalmeijer and Bartelse 2014, 7). In the initial letter, the minister mentions that the nomination, more so than with nominations for World Heritage, reflects certain characteristics with which the state will be profiled, making it important to consider the stories and images that are linked to the ICH element (Bussemaker 2013, 5).

The letter may appear unsurprising; states want to carefully engage with international conventions and diplomacy to maintain a good image. It is important to add this, however, because the ICH Convention's promotion of bottom-up heritage community-based participation may distract from the fact that states engage consciously with the elements that they propose for international recognition. It can be challenging to find cases in which politicians make their interests in the heritagization as explicit as in the letter above. Moreover, the reference to examples of (postcolonial) migrants demonstrates a change in

[70] Interview with Cedric, August 29, 2023, Rotterdam.
[71] Interview with Cedric, April 29, 2024, Rotterdam.

heritage discourse away from the idea of heritage as representing a homogeneous and bounded nation toward one in which the nation as heterogeneous is recognized.

5.3 Nominating the RSC for the Representative List

In a letter by the Council for Culture from 2019 addressed to minister van Engelshoven, the Council writes that they received notion of 39 elements of which the 'community' expressed interest in international nomination to KIEN, which is a requirement for nomination to continue (Van Hees and van der Waarden 2019, 5). Among these was the RSC. The Council selected seven ICH elements that they recommended for nomination. The first element recommended is the Corso culture which ended up being inscribed in 2021. The second is the RSC which is presented as a broadly supported heritage element that fosters social cohesion. The Council (Van Hees and van der Waarden 2019, 8) adds that the contemporary RSC is a celebration of superdiversity. At the end of the letter, the Council writes that in their view the inclusion of multiple elements with Caribbean origins is an important milestone (Van Hees and van der Waarden 2019, 16).

The perception of the RSC as being a superdiverse celebration is central to Ingrid van Engelshoven's (2019) decision to nominate the RSC for inscription to the Representative List on the international level. The UNESCO nomination form was drafted by representatives from the 'community' in cooperation with the KIEN's director. The Form also states that group leaders and members were asked to give feedback. The Letters of Consent "testify to their diversity in terms of gender, age, ethnic background and type of involvement in the Summer Carnival" (Nomination File 2023, 11). At the same time, most interlocutors I spoke with were not involved with the process. This is not a criticism but rather a question regarding the meaning of consent and how this is to be ensured in a large-scale event.

In response to the question of how inscription would encourage dialogue, a part of the answer was as follows: "Internationally, the Summer Carnival fosters sensitivity towards forms of intangible cultural heritage associated with migration and decolonization at a time of greater focus on decolonizing dominant 'white' heritage narratives" (Nomination File 2023, 6). This formulation points toward how the RSC extends beyond the events and functions in its exemplary role in this decolonization. Another reference to the colonial past is made in response to the question "What social functions and cultural meanings does the element have for its community nowadays?" The question highlights a focus on the present and not on the RSC's development. This framing is to a certain extent in contrast to the common

understanding of heritage as selecting from the past for the present and future. The response does include a reference to the carnival's past: "Carnival is an important festival in the Dutch Caribbean, and is part of the islanders' identity. This tradition was exported to the Netherlands, where it was originally mainly associated with the Caribbean community. … In the Caribbean, carnival is the creative and artistic expression of dispossessed people and celebrates the end of slavery" (Nomination File 2023, 4). These two examples demonstrate the navigation of the colonial past and the carnival's role as a symbol of resisting and overcoming this. The form leaves out any mention of the Dutch role in the enslavement of people in the Caribbean.

Before the nominations are discussed and voted on at the UNESCO ICH meeting, a recommendation is drafted by the Evaluation Body (EB 2023). The EB's language use demonstrates the difficulty of talking about superdiversity without essentializing it. Some examples of how it navigates talking about people with diverse cultural backgrounds are provided. 'Superdiversity' is not used. Instead, the EB (2023, 5) writes that "bearers and practitioners differ greatly with regards to their geographical backgrounds, age and gender," which invokes the idea of a more objective and less politicized way of describing diversity. Still, it appears to reproduce ideas of bounded groups that must be bridged as the EB (2023, 6) writes the RSC "promotes social cohesion and mutual tolerance between the various population groups in the highly multicultural city of Rotterdam."

The EB (2023, 6) is positive about the Dutch nomination which is reflected in the commendation for the nomination of "an element that promotes social cohesion and respect among different communities, including migrants." Here again, the effect that nomination has on the construction of the Dutch diplomatic image is visible. The RSC's inscription "would show that, as result of migration, intangible cultural heritage can lead to shared expressions and experiences in new locations in the world, while demonstrating the power of artistic innovation and creativity. At the national level, inscription would show that people take their traditions with them when they migrate to other countries or regions, giving intangible cultural heritage in the Netherlands a broader, more inclusive value and significance" (EB 2023, 6). Over-commercialization and over-crowdedness are mentioned as possible adverse effects of heritagization.

The RSC was the first of 45 elements that were discussed for inscription on the Representative List at the meeting held in Botswana in December 2023. The meeting's

recording is available online (UNESCO 2023). The meeting's procedure was quite short. After a short introduction to the element provided by the EB, the EB's draft decision was shown on the screen. The chairperson then announced he saw no requests for the floor and asked, "can we adopt the decision?" After, he declared the decision adopted. The audience clapped and the chairperson said, "congratulations Netherlands." What followed was a video showing some elements of the RSC, after which a delegate and a 'community' representative spoke to the committee on behalf of the Netherlands. The inscription was not further discussed at the plenary session of the meeting. As a result, the inscription almost appears more ceremonial.

5.4 Effects of international inscription on the RSC

The inscription of the RSC to the RL received only superficial media attention. Most mention that the RSC was inscribed because of the cultural diversity displayed[72] and how it draws on various carnival traditions[73]. This is in stark contrast to the widespread presence of articles on safety and bubbling at the RSC. As the RSC celebrates the 40th edition in Rotterdam while also having just been inscribed as heritage, multiple of its events are canceled. The inscription was mentioned during the volunteer briefing but only in relation to the cancellation. The question then is, how is the inscription present in discourses and how does it affect the RSC?

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the violent incidents that took place during the RSC's 2023 edition led the mayor to impose safety demands that the organization could not be realized, resulting in the evening programs' cancellation.[74] In response, a local D66 politician raised written questions to the municipal council (Gemeente Rotterdam 2023). The first question was if the municipality's decision took into account that the RSC parade is on the UNESCO ICH list. The response was affirmative; the municipality considered the acquired status of the street parade and adds that this element usually proceeds well and has not been a subject to discussion about additional safety measures. On May 30th, 2024, a motion was passed by initiated by the same politician in cooperation with Bij1 and PvdA in which they ask the college "to keep fulfilling its facilitating role, so that Rotterdam as a city can be proud of this immaterial heritage, as described by and inscribed on the UNESCO list" and to "support the Foundation with making a plan to organize the celebration in safe conditions"

[72] See, for example, Groenendijk (2023).
[73] See, for example, Van de Water (2024).
[74] A few weeks before the RSC, it was announced that an indoor event called the Battle of the Drums would return to replace the evening program.

(Gemeenteraad Rotterdam 2024; author's translation). The questions raised and the motion illustrate how the international inscription is used by politicians to strengthen their claim that the RSC must continue to be organized. The idea of the RSC promoting a certain image of Rotterdam is invoked.

Although the politicians note that the parade element was inscribed, this diverges from the submitted Nomination File (2023). This file lists the RSC as compromising of multiple set elements; the Queen election (now Royalty election), the Warming-up[75], the Mercado, and the Street Parade[76]. The perception of the street parade specifically having been heritagized is shared more broadly. Laurence[77], for example, mentioned that someone on Facebook left a comment that "they can cancel everything except the street parade, because it is already a heritage of Rotterdam." Despite the inscription, some volunteers still expressed fears about the discontinuation of the RSC and whether the street parade will be able to take place in the same way in the future. The discourse surrounding the heritagization and the consequent cancellation of multiple activities is important in three main ways. Firstly, it demonstrates that the idea of only the RSC's biggest event having been heritagized is likely more widespread. Secondly, because it demonstrates how some people perceive heritagization as making it more difficult for an event to be interrupted. Thirdly, it raises the question of how UNESCO tracks the safeguarding and continuation of ICH elements on the RL and what possible criteria could result in an element's removal.[78]

Other than these references, there were only a few responses or mentions of the inscription. One example was the trucks that participated in the street parade. A part of the truck is covered with banners that mention, for example, the RSC's sponsors, the carnival group's name, or a printed version of the UNESCO ICH label (photo 5.4.1a, b). Other than that, the label was printed on an informational display that explained RSC's inscription on the UNESCO RL (photo 5.4.2). This display was placed on the Kruisplein like the display that mentioned bubbling (Chapter 4). During the parade itself, I did not see any influence of the inscription. What can be noticed, however, is the gap between the RSC's careful organization

[75] The Warming-Up is a brass band competition that takes place the evening before the street parade.
[76] Although the Lighting Parade is mentioned as one of the events on the KIEN (n.d. c) website, it is not included in the list of set events provided on the Nomination File.
[77] Interview with Laurence, May 16, 2024, Tilburg.
[78] One example of an ICH element that was removed from the RL is the Aalst Carnival. The reason for the removal was a controversy surrounding a carnival group's presentation in the 2019 parade. The group showed stereotyped and derogatory caricatures depicting the Jewish community. For an analysis, see Van Damme and Jacobs (2022).

and the actual street parade that followed in 2024. This can be seen in the examples I provided earlier on the dance moves and the man in the blue suit who walked in front. This points toward the fundamental tension between the institutional framing and carnival's fluid, dynamic, and resisting character.

Photo (5.4.1a, b): Examples of decorations on the trucks that are part of the street parade. On photo 5.4.1a, there is a cover with the UNESCO ICH label. (Photo by the author)

Photo (5.4.2): The display at the Kruisplein in Rotterdam which provided visitors with information about the inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of ICH. (Photo by author)

As part of the nomination form, safeguarding measures must be described that consider the risks of the inscription resulting in increased visibility and public attention.

Academic literature frequently mentions the link between ICH being used for economic profit and attracting tourists, thereby directing attention to the effects of international inscription on the multiscalar in which an ICH element is situated. Beatriz Santamarina (2023), for example, refers to the paradox between the international inscription's promised safeguarding and the exposure to commodification that inscription brings about. Santamarina (2023, 14) remarks that their case study's close link to the tourist industries demonstrates how "individual countries' interests are reinforced by the UNESCO." In the conclusions, the author repeats that "the management of the collective patrimony should be separated from political profit" as this leads to "the populist use of the ICH meanings and the promotion in the local press of the ICH as a great economic panacea."

In the RSC's case, I did not notice such a strong influence on the network following the RL inscription. The examples found during the fieldwork do illustrate the adoption of the UNESCO brand. However, I did not notice an increased commodification as a result of the international listing. This might be because, contrary to Santamarina's case study based in Spain, the RSC's commercialization and commodification started years prior to the conversation about heritagization. The sporadic references and lack of more in-depth discussions surrounding the UNESCO inscription suggests that its symbolic importance does not necessarily result in visible changes. An exception is the mention in the municipality's Culture Plan in which the allocation of cultural subsidies is announced. Here, the RL inscription is said to reflect the RSC's importance (Adviescommissie Cultuurplan 2024, 556). The RSC inscription may have played a factor in the subsidy allocation.[79] The plan adds that through the RSC's set-up, it becomes a celebration of the entire Caribbean diaspora (Adviescommissie Cultuurplan 2024, 556), thereby reproducing an essentialized conception of the 'community.' It remains to be seen if the inscription will play a larger role in the coming years.

[79] The subsidy allocated is less than the subsidy requested by the RSC. However, only around 20 out of the 140 requests for subsidy receive the full amount of subsidy that they requested so it is not uncommon (Adviescommissie Cultuurplan 2024, 20-4).

Conclusions and theoretical implications

The thesis analyzed how the RSC developed from an Antillean celebration into the RSC which was inscribed to the Dutch ICH Inventory and the UNESCO ICH Representative List. The thesis' premise is that there are unresolved tensions in the RSC that are linked to its superdiverse character and the wider Dutch context. These tensions become visible when using a multiscalar approach to the RSC's development, its performance, and the heritagization process (as explained in Chapter 1).

These tensions are addressed in a pragmatic fashion by representatives of the 'community' and the Foundation's board members. By pragmatic I mean that conflicting interests surrounding tensions are resolved by focusing on what is necessary to ensure the RSC's continuity and avoid conflict. In the case of the heritagization process, the priority is on receiving the heritage status rather than creating and promoting a more holistic curated image that gives attention to the contradictions that arise in a large-scale transnational superdiverse carnival. This pragmatism can be seen in discussions at briefings, public statements in media articles, and the Nomination File. The result is that an institutionalized and essentialized interpretation of the RSC is reproduced as an orderly and contained celebration.

The RSC's canonized version does not mention how it is embedded in transnational networks. Moreover, the orderly aspect is in tension with the transgressive potential that is within carnivals (Bakhtin 1984 [1965]). By combining the fieldwork with in-depth interviews with interlocutors and analyzing carefully curated documents and online articles dedicated to the RSC, I was able to go beyond the RSC's public presentation. The conclusions will revisit the most important findings of the previous chapters.

In Chapter 2, I provided sketches that looked at carnival celebrations on the SSSABC islands. The RSC is presented in the Nomination File as having been initiated by Curaçaoan and Aruban students as the Antillean carnival before becoming a superdiverse celebration. It functioned as a form of public presentation as well as a way for people who may share an Antillean cultural background to meet and stay in touch. In this narrative, Antilleans brought the carnival to the Netherlands. The carnival celebrations' roots on the SSSABC islands and their specific traditions are rarely discussed, let alone in relation to the colonial past. To understand how the move from the islands to the Netherlands affected the carnival

celebrations, I asked how the carnivals developed on the SSSABC islands. The findings demonstrate the presence of different cultural logics and political conditions that shaped the SSSABC carnivals and their associated meanings. Some patterns, such as the importance of migration, were common among the islands. Island-specific conditions such as the establishment of the oil industry and increased tourism meant the individual islands' analyses helped to deconstruct the idea of the existence of a singular essential Antillean character that is present in the SSSABC carnivals and the RSC.

The culturalization of the Catholic celebration of carnival means that very little attention is given to the religious dimensions at the SSSABC islands. In Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, carnival is hosted according to the Catholic calendar. The burning of King Momo demarcates the carnival's season ending and the start of the Lent period. His symbolic meanings and the power that his ashes may hold reflect a relation that extends beyond the immanent present. Cedric mentioned that in Aruba, each parade is blessed by the Catholic church. The picture is quite different on Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten. No oil industry settled on the islands and consequently, the starting conditions of the carnival were different. The carnivals were initiated by people who attended carnivals abroad and were developed through cooperation with islands in the vicinity. Further culturalization took place as the celebrations were held in the weeks of April, May, July, and August, increasing the distance between these and Catholic carnivals. As of now, nothing has been written about the links between carnival, religion, and politics on Sint Maarten, Saba, and Sint Eustatius.

The absence of (academic) writings on Catholicism's and other religions' role or absence in developing the carnivals may be a consequence of the relatively recent increase in attention to the cultural dimensions and heritage on the islands. Some work has been done on, for example, the Catholic repression of Tambú on Curaçao (Rosalia 1997) and the role of Catholic orders in providing education in Papiamento or Dutch (Pereira and Alofs 2023, 139-41), but not on the interrelation between religion and the carnival. Especially considering the continued high rates of Catholic religiosity in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, I do not think it is likely that the link between religion and carnival on the islands is absent. Instead, as cultural expressions are entangled in complex ways with society, it takes time-consuming and careful work to observe how this developed. It would be interesting for future research to see how the translation of a religious celebration into a culturalized and creolized expression took place on the islands and how this affects religious meanings. This would also help to better understand the perceived absence of religion at the RSC. While some remark that the RSC

holds spiritual meanings as it connects them to their ancestors, I have not seen any comment on the relation between Catholicism and the RSC.

In Chapter 3, I traced the development of the Antillean carnival into the RSC throughout the decades and compared the RSC to the SSSABC carnivals. The importance of canonization in reproducing a singular narrative is noticed. The result is that carnivals organized prior to the RSC are disconnected from the RSC development narrative. It reifies the connection between Rotterdam and the carnival. The symbolic importance of taking a certain year as the starting point was also visible on the islands. The clearest example is Curaçao. The use of 1970 or 1971 as the starting year holds symbolic importance as it directs attention to the carnival after the 1969 social uprising.

Other than the canonization aspect, there is the issue of the networks' diversifications. The RSC's development required cooperation with external parties such as the municipality to receive the permit. The cooperation with Ducos Productions in the 1990s resulted in a division of tasks. Ducos sought to strengthen the RSC's place through commercialization and the realization of sponsorships. This resulted in a paradox. The commercialization was intended to secure future stability so that the RSC could no longer be dismissed. However, it also made the RSC's realization more complex. As the multiscalar focus illustrates, the expansion of the scales results in increased entanglements. These entanglements result in dependencies on stakeholders, thereby reducing the Foundation's agency in directing the RSC's development. It also makes the realization of stakeholders' interests more important. If they terminate the cooperation, this could undermine the RSC's continuity.

The multiscalar approach is used in Chapter 4 to analyze concrete examples of changes and tensions at the RSC. The description of the performance of the Street Parade highlights how individuals engage with the RSC in a variety of ways, demonstrating that the RSC does not have a singular meaning. The section on the name changes illustrates how the choice for a name is linked to changes in the RSC's meaning and the interests of stakeholders in the multiscalar. The institutional adoption of a name does not result in a complete change in how people refer to the RSC. Once multiple names coexist, the choice for one over the other results in the promotion of certain aspects of the RSC. This is exemplified by the written exchange between a politician and the mayor at the Rotterdam municipality. The RSC stays closer to the 'community' while RU is more closely associated with the organizational complexity of the RSC.

The section on safety measures starts with Swartjes' (2024) finding that diversity at festivals is perceived as warranting additional safety measures. The question, then, is how safety measures are proposed and implemented when considering the RSC's superdiverse character. Two starting points were taken: the introduction of parade leaders and the response to the shooting incidents in 2023. Both resulted in complex discussions during the volunteer briefing that illustrated frustration with the complex networks and the presence of superdiversity. The municipal requirement for parade leaders resulted in conflict during the 2023 volunteer briefing. The requirement undermined the volunteers' ability to organize the parade. A stakeholder connected with the RSC through the entangled networks imposed a requirement. Many volunteers considered the requirement nonsensible, but they could not reject it because of the dependencies through the network. As a result, this caused visible frustration. The conversation demonstrated how board members must show cultural sensitivity to navigate different perceptions and understandings expressed in Papiamento and Dutch. During the 2024 volunteer briefing, it was announced that two experienced volunteers were asked to be parade leaders. This resulted in relief among the volunteers. In response to the shooting incidents, the municipality decided the evening program would have to be organized differently. The conditions that the programs be held in a closed environment with a single entrance were difficult to realize. During the 2024 volunteer briefing, the safety measures' necessity was linked by volunteers and board members to increased unsafety in Dutch society. Consequently, the measures were not perceived as unreasonable or as targeting the RSC. The result is that despite causing disappointment among the people present, the briefing did not result in conflict.

The section on bubbling analyzed the discussion that followed restrictions on how to dance. This discussion became widely publicized. The question then is, who decides what is allowed at a superdiverse carnival? Many opinions on the restriction were shared in media articles, public statements, and conversations with interlocutors. The rules were not enforced during the 2023 parade and images on social media illustrated how people continued to dance in restricted ways. This points toward the difficulty in streamlining the RSC: carnival is a transgressive and expressive celebration where many people come together. Despite the many meetings and efforts to create an orderly version of the event, people have agency in deciding how to move. While initially defending the restriction, the board took a more apologist position in 2024. The bubbling conversation was further reclaimed by organizing a bubbling

competition. The transition describes the difficulty in hosting and regulating a superdiverse popular celebration without creating divisions.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed the heritagization process. The RSC's heritagization, first through inscription on the Dutch ICH Inventory and later the ICH's Representative List, demonstrated the desire from various parties to increase the representativeness of these lists, the wish from people with diverse backgrounds to be represented and the recognized, and the trade-offs that are made in the realization of this. The RSC as a superdiverse celebration is difficult to heritagize because the ICH frameworks were developed to support the safeguarding of locally grounded ICH. In the process of trying to fit a transnational element into this, essentialist understandings are reproduced in which culture is tied to nationality. Globalization and people's mobility complicate a linear conception of individuals' relations to a nationality and cultural background. The selective engagement with national or cultural identifications demonstrates how individuals draw on these in a creative manner. The dynamic identification with backgrounds of all sorts is a central element of being in a superdiverse context. Yet, its superdiversity is frequently justified by invoking the nationalities of the people involved and the presence of migrants. This justification essentializes aspects of people's fluid identities.

I have not seen any discussion about the potentially exclusive effects of the defining of the community. This may point towards a pragmatic attitude of the board members in which the recognition provided by the heritagization is considered more important than problematizing the bounded definitions. It does raise the question of what consent entails in a large-scale superdiverse celebration. It is also interesting to link this issue of defining a community to the wider perception of the RSC in which people regard the RSC as not originally being a typically Dutch phenomenon but as having become one. This points toward a transformation in the understanding of what can qualify as such, thereby broadening the conception of Dutchness.

The effects of inscription on the Representative List are not (yet) entirely visible but some preliminary comments are in order. The first concerns potential misconceptions of what heritage inscription entails. Some hope that the heritagization may increase the carnival's financial stability. While the inscription does not carry any financial support, the hope may be on indirect mechanisms. By this, I mean that the RSC's inscription gives it additional recognition which could provide an extra incentive for a stakeholder connected to the RSC

through the network to offer financial support. This can be seen in the allocation of municipal funding for the cultural sector in which the inscription is named as proof of the RSC's importance (Adviescommissie Cultuurplan 2024, 556). A second point of unclarity concerns the boundaries of the element nominated. The RSC consists of multiple events and the Nomination File named multiple of these. However, in the municipal documents, it was said that only the Street Parade was heritagized and not the canceled evening programs. This lack of consensus on what is heritagized could create future problems about what must be safeguarded.

When bringing these findings together, it is clear that the RSC is riddled with paradoxes and disagreements. The focus on specific tensions at the RSC, such as the implementation of safety measures and ideas about how to dance, proved fruitful because the tense character makes the relations with, and interests of, multiple stakeholders visible. In doing so, I illustrated how aspirations of realizing an inclusive superdiverse celebration run into complex discussions as ideas about the right way of realizing these diverge. The expansion of the scales and networks, as observed through the multiscalar framework, increases the complexity of the RSC. It makes it difficult to keep people together as disagreements will inevitably grow. The RSC's superdiverse character does not result in the erasure of difference but rather leads people to emphasize their national or cultural identity, as evidenced by the use of national flags. Despite the conflicts and disagreements, the RSC continues to take place. I believe this is best understood by seeing the RSC as a site of joy and co-creation. The rather rigid preparation that takes place is loosened on the day of the street parade itself. It is after all a popular celebration. It brings people together and bridges differences, even if this is only temporary. In doing so, the RSC provides a temporary break from daily life that is cherished by many.

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