

Preface

This ethnographic work has been written as a master thesis within the M.A. programme in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University from which I graduated cum laude in 2014. It has been supervised by Dr. Rivke Jaffe, associate professor at the Centre for Urban Studies and the Department of Human Geography, Planning and International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam and by Dr. Jan Jansen, lecturer at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. I feel particularly indebted to Dr. Rivke Jaffe for coaching and inspiring me. Through her expertise and guidance I have been able to develop myself as a researcher and as a person. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Jan Jansen, who has continued to advise me during the publication process of this book.

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Introduction

Ever since a friend handed me a copy of a kizomba CD in 2006, I have been enjoying this Angolan music's rhythms. As a dancer, I did not only want to enjoy listening to the music, I also wanted to be able to dance to it. Unfortunately, there was no one teaching kizomba in the Netherlands at that time, or at least not that I was aware of. After doing some online research in 2006, I learned that kizomba was becoming very popular in London, England and it was already popular throughout Portugal. In our globalized era, I figured it would only be a matter of time before kizomba would find its way to the Netherlands, especially considering the progressive nature of the Dutch Latin scene, where dancers, DJs and other actors are generally very open to new musical styles and cultural change. Dedicated to jump on board as soon as kizomba would materialize in the Netherlands, I have been tracking its flows ever since, and noticed a sudden but steady growth in the Netherlands in 2011. Since then, kizomba has mushroomed in the Netherlands, using the existing Latin scene as its infrastructure. Being familiar with several Latin scenes in various urban settings worldwide, I was astounded by the speed with which the Dutch kizomba scene was developing. Given my interest in the anthropology of globalization, music and dance, I decided to focus my M.A. fieldwork on kizomba. Besides exploring the global flows responsible for kizomba's reterritorialization, I specifically aimed to examine the kizomba scene, and how people, especially white Dutch people, within the scene relate to cultural change.

Difference and the Netherlands

The Netherlands as a fieldwork site proved interesting geographically, politically and academically. Geographically, the Netherlands is a small country with a network of densely populated cities located close to one another. This interconnectedness of Dutch cities, especially the ones located around the Randstad, the Western urbanized part of the country, allow different urban styles to quickly evolve and influence one another,

enabling the swift progression of urban music or dance scenes. Regarding such spatial considerations, conducting field research in the Netherlands allowed me to take a broader approach in mapping the kizomba scene in the Netherlands at a particular moment in time, as opposed to delineating the scene of one city which would have been problematic and undesirable because a scene is typically comprised of a network of interconnected spaces and places. An explanation of the scene and how I have delineated the field will be explained in chapter three. Furthermore, the timing was good because the scene already had acquired a comparatively large infrastructure but was not so large as to be incomprehensible or too great to grasp.

Besides geographical considerations, the paradoxical state of contemporary Dutch politics regarding “Dutchness” and otherness intrigued me. On the one hand, the Netherlands typically presents itself as a modern, inclusive and egalitarian society where all kinds of people formally enjoy equal rights. However, gendered, ethnic and racial exclusions are part of everyday life (Essed & Trienekens 2008, Vasta 2007, Yanow & van der Haar 2010). While the Netherlands is said to be in a “culture of avoidance” where there is a commitment to the idea that “race does not exist” (Essed & Trienekens 2008:55, Verkuyten 1995, Botman et al 2001), there is at the same time a moral panic regarding anything that diverges from a White autochtoon Dutch norm (Vasta 2007). The discussion around Zwarte Piet, the blackface “Black Pete” figure that recurs every year around the Dutch winter holiday of Sinterklaas, is an important example of the Dutch unease surrounding ethnic and racial topics. In addition to ethnic and racial inequalities, gendered disparities are also part of everyday life. For example, the European Commission’s statistics and indicators on ‘Gender in Research and Innovation’ concluded that from the 21 EU countries participating, the Netherlands ranked 4th lowest on gender equality (European Commission 2012).

Therefore, I was interested in examining these ambiguities and forms of (structured) exclusionary processes in a scene where, on the surface, different people seemingly coexist happily together. I wanted to explore how Dutch people would relate to both themselves as well as to others in a scene that is comprised out of people of Dutch, Dutch-Caribbean, Angolan and Cape Verdean descent. I wondered, would the culture of avoidance apply to the Dutch kizomba scene? As the field is a mixture of a variety of people, I also wanted to explore the boundaries relating to gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, and how they were socially and intersectionally produced. Finally, I wanted to scrutinize the underlying ideologies that inform these boundaries and difference-making processes, as I believe that ideologies are one of the main -hidden-

agents in the reproduction of structured, institutionalized and everyday differences.

Structured exclusions evidently produce difference. But what about the hidden structures, the ideologies, that navigate our behaviour and our interaction with others? What about the ideologies that inform our daily bodily movements, those micro-aggressions towards others that reproduce difference? What about the ideologies behind gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality that are prevalent in the Netherlands and how do they re/produce difference? These questions fascinated me because of the adherence to the belief that in the Netherlands there are no static (gender) roles that prescribe (male and female) behaviour, while in reality, men and women's behaviour is circumscribed by set parameters of gendered rules as became very obvious within my field research. The same can be argued for race, whiteness and blackness and the set of performative rules that accompany one's skin colour. For instance, do the same "rules" apply to black and white men and women? Whose sexuality is considered to be in/appropriate, threatening or appealing and who gets to decide? How are these ideas narrated, marketed, embodied, or performed? I sought to address these questions in the Dutch kizomba scene.

Societal and Academic Relevance

This thesis tried to go beyond understanding the Dutch kizomba scene by and of itself. Its broader intent was to explore the more micro-performative aspects of the scene: the balancing act between freedoms and restrictions that shape, guide, and inform peoples behaviour, and in turn, produce difference. This is relevant in a time characterized by confusion and heated debate concerning who is Dutch and who is not. Tying into existing literature regarding the paradoxical state of contemporary Dutch society regarding gender, race, nationality and ethnicity, I attempt to uncover the performative mechanisms through which difference is reproduced within a part of Dutch society. I argue that the schismatic and bipolarizing actions of Dutch institutions and the state actually create the opposite of what the Netherlands prides itself to be: a non-egalitarian society that promotes and emphasizes difference.

Academically, this thesis seeks to make two interventions in contemporary academic literature. The first intervention relates to recent research on mobility and its often made connection with nationality and race. Looking beyond obvious, evident boundaries where freedom and restrictions are made and remade, such as national boundaries (e.g. Cunningham & Heyman 2004), I have researched mobility by taking the body as point of departure instead (Cresswell 2006, Desmond 1993). By

analyzing the balancing act between bodily freedoms and restrictions, by examining for instance who is (and who is not) allowed to move how, to what extent, under which conditions, where, when and why, I aimed to explore underlying ideologies regarding race, nationality, sexuality and gendered dispositions that are present within Dutch contemporary society.

The second intervention relates to existing literature on performance and performativity, which are most often analyzed through the conceptual lens of gender, sexuality and the body (Butler 1993, 2004, Desmond 1993, Nagel 2003). I attempted to extend this perspective by examining the relation of performance and performativity to concepts of ethnonationality and ethnoraciality, as performance within the Dutch kizomba scene was often made authentic through notions of race and nationality. For instance, I examined how nationality and race are performed not only through performances but also through marketing and promotion. Who can legitimately claim Angolan-ness, for instance, or how are blackness and whiteness performed and performative?

Research Question

The abovementioned considerations have led to the following research question:

Within the Dutch kizomba scene, how is ethnonational, ethnoracial, ethnosexual and gendered difference performed, narrated and embodied?

Structure of Thesis

The next chapter introduces the theoretical framework. The analytical concepts of difference, mobility and performance/performativity are presented, and a description of how these concepts are employed is given. Chapter three explains the research methods used and reflects upon its advantages and disadvantages. It also describes how I have delineated the field, using a combination of scholars who have conducted research on “scenes”. Subsequently, following an illustration of the ambiguous contemporary state of Dutch society regarding Dutchness and otherness, I will briefly depict kizomba’s African roots and its reterritorialization in the Netherlands. I will demonstrate that kizomba reterritorialized through a Dutch-Caribbean network, and as such, the content, form and meaning of kizomba changed. After delineating these macro-movements, chapter five and six expose the micro-movements and micro-politics prevalent in the scene. Chapter five is a partially auto-ethnographic description of how “kizomba appropriate” gender and sexual roles are learned in the dance studio. It demonstrates that the dance studio is a site where gendered,

ethnosexual, ethnoracial and ethnonational difference is (generally unconsciously) produced through commodification of the female booty, exoticization of the female self through an internalized male gaze, and through racial inversion, wherein romanticized notions of black bodies supposedly facilitate white Dutch to reconnect to the inner-self, the body and even to an alleged pre-modern era. Chapter six provides a partially auto-ethnographic account of the production of difference in the kizomba nightclub by focusing on instances where the body is policed. The first part of this chapter examines how gender and sexuality are policed in the club, whereas the second part exemplifies how sexual and racial boundaries are actively yet unconsciously being re/made through body politics. The final chapter presents the conclusions made in this thesis.