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RETHINKING CARNIVAL: THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECAY OF ALLEGORICAL CARS IN CABO VERDE'S *CARNAVAL SONCENT*

Master's Thesis

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Prologue

My first reference to Cabo Verde came in Chris Marker's 1983 film-essay *Sans Soleil* (Argos Films) where the narrator refers to Cabo Verdeans standing at a harbour as "the vertical people… patient as pebbles…" (Image 1). This image of a people in a perpetual state of *waiting* stayed with me, and years later, after seeing the Cabo-Verdean themed films of Pedro Costa (*Casa de Lava* 1994; *Colossal Youth* 2006), I could add to this image of *a waiting people* the harshness of their natural environment as well as the tensions inherent in coming to terms with a history, and origin, of displacement. This *image* I had formed is of course only a fragment of a much more complex, and a much less *patient* people. It is, however, my first impression of Cabo Verde and the initial impetus that led to this research project.

Image 1: Still from *Sans Soleil* by Chris Marker (1983)

From the above I became acutely aware that, before I started my research, the *image* I had of Cabo Verde and its people were wholly shaped and mediated by what I have seen and heard in films; a realization that took on additional significance when Antonia Tavares, playwright and head of the Mindelo Cultural Centre, explained to me that Cabo Verdeans construct their cultural identity in a very similar way, by "*taking frames from different films* to construct something new" (Discussion with author, March 9, 2022).

These words confirmed an affinity I had felt towards Cabo Verde since *Sans Soleil*; a personal connection to a place and a people that somehow reflected my own internal reality back to me. I will explain by means of a brief history of both Cabo Verde and myself.

Cabo Verde, as *a place with people* was 'constructed' (around 1462) by the Portuguese as part of the transatlantic slave trade. Before this, the islands were mostly uninhabited, apart from the occasional fishermen taking up temporary residence along the coast during fishing expeditions. The islands provided a convenient 'stop-over' along trade routes that connected Europe to Africa and the Americas (Hurley-Glowa 2021), thus bringing together people from several continents and creating the initial conditions for a *Creole* nation to emerge. Cabo Verde gained independence in 1975 and still today acts as a convenient stop-over and temporary meeting place along shipping routes, its transnational visitors bringing and leaving traces from an assortment of origins.

Cabo Verde thus came into being through *displacement*, and these volcanic islands, with desert-sand sweeping in from the African Sahara and with a tendency for prolonged droughts, became, quite contrary to its harsh natural conditions, the unnatural habitat of a people who now proudly call themselves Cabo Verdean. It is with this displacement that I found my affinity, in an inverse manner, as an *Afrikaner*—a 'white' African—neither European, nor fully African. Of course, my displacement took a different form: in one part, it originated in an individual who willfully left Germany for Indonesia but got stuck at the complexly inhabited southern tip of Africa (perhaps even stopping at Cabo Verde along the way).

This sounds very different from the Cabo Verdean version, but jumping forward from this first arrival and to my personal story: I was born into a segregated South Africa as part of the minority who held abusive power. The arrival-story above, I only learned later. My awareness of being different from the place I inhabited was thus accentuated along racial lines with various European roots highlighted as the origins of 'our' rightful power and domination over this part of Africa that my forebears claimed as their own—a typical colonial dynamic. I had hardly understood this dynamic when *Apartheid* ended in 1994 and I, as an eleven-year-old, was ideologically and conceptually uprooted from the place I had previously inhabited. I was still physically located in the same place, but a certain

sense of *belonging* had been replaced by a very acute awareness of *not-belonging*. The freedom and confidence that was so *wrongfully* bestowed on me by the *Afrikaner* label was now unceremoniously pulled away and I had to come to terms with the many other influences that constituted my being. During this time both Africa and Europe looked at the *Afrikaner* with abhorrence, as I did myself. It is in this way that I felt displaced—*vertically*. Reflecting then on the words from the film-essay *Sans Soleil*: it was, perhaps, the *verticality* of Cabo Verdeans that I was drawn to.

Displacement, whether horisontal, across geographic space, or vertical, as dislodging a conceptual or ideological understanding, is the catalyst for creolization as a cultural creative process because it creates the conditions in which new understandings and expressions of identity emerge. As Robert Baron and Ana Cara state: “When cultures come into contact, expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them yet constituting new and different entities” (2011b: 3).

Introduction

Carnaval Soncent is a festival held in the city of Mindelo on the island of São Vicente in Cabo Verde (Image 2). It was brought to the archipelago soon after it was established as a Portuguese colony around 1462. Over time, and as Cabo Verde gained independence in 1975, *Carnaval Soncent* was freed from its colonial origins and shaped into the *Creole* spectacle it is today. *Creole* is a designation given to societies formed during the European colonial era, where mass displacement brought people from different cultural backgrounds together, resulting in new groups and new expressive forms. More recently, as Robert Baron and Ana Cara points out, *Creole* and the notion of *creolization* are increasingly viewed as a universal process that takes place whenever cultures encounter each other (2011b: 3).

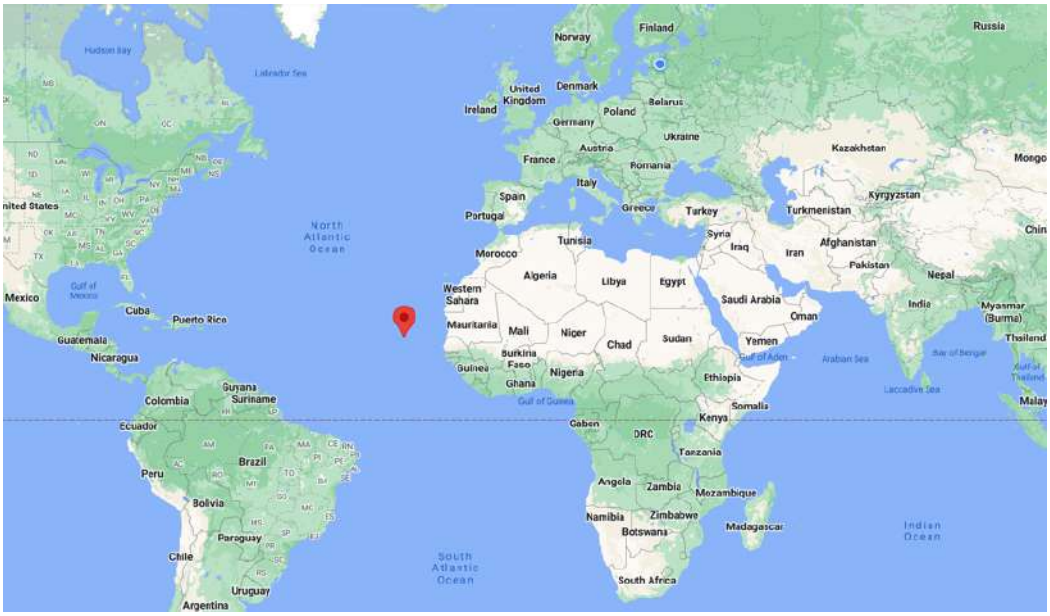

Image 2: Location of Cabo Verde

As with most *creolized* practices, *Carnaval Soncent* retains traces to its origins—the pre-lent *entrudo* celebrations from which it came—while also adopting a number of expressive elements from its colonial counterpart—Brazil—to create a cultural expression uniquely Cabo Verdean. *Carnaval Soncent* (unlike the *Rio Carnaval* in Brazil) takes place in a remote location (Image 2), approximately five-hundred kilometres from

the west coast of Africa, and only in recent years has come to the attention of a broader international audience. Even with this growing attention and a concerted effort by some of the organisers to make *Carnaval Soncent* more appealing on the international stage, it remains a communal expression of identity that seems to exist primarily for itself.

This Master's thesis takes a closer look at *Carnaval Soncent* and its expressive elements, paying particular attention to how its competitive dynamics affect the development of allegorical cars (Image 3) as vehicles for the expression and negotiation of communal identity.

Image 3: 'Cacao-Farming' Allegorical Car During the 2017 *Carnaval Soncent* Parade (Image courtesy of Joao Brito)

For Cabo Verdeans, allegorical cars—*carro alegórico* in Portuguese—is the preferred name for what would more commonly be known as parade floats. I had encountered images of allegorical cars from *Carnaval Soncent* online and this made me curious to know how these larger-than-life, and seemingly absurd, compositions come into being; and for what purpose?

With this in mind, I carried out two weeks of fieldwork in Cabo Verde in February and March of 2022. During this time I conducted a series of interviews, visited cultural institutions, and collected audio-visual materials in the cities of Praia and Mindelo. In

Mindelo, I met with, and interviewed, the directors of *Grupo Monte Sossego*—one of five (sometimes four) competitive *Carnaval* groups who partake in the formal competition of *Carnaval Soncent*. Competition is the primary organising mechanism of *Carnaval Soncent* and a somewhat polarizing element around which the expressive potential of the event is contested. The directors of *Grupo Monte Sossego* represent one side of this divide and, even though I had a number of discussions with Cabo Verdeans who favour a 'non-competitive' *Carnaval*, it is the insights and experiences shared by the group directors that provided the most consistent and in-depth data. Based on this I chose the 'Moby-Dick' and 'Cacao-Farming' allegorical cars—from *Grupo Monte Sossego's* 2017 *Carnaval* theme: *Route of the Emigrants*—as my research focus.

I did my fieldwork at the very beginning of my studies which meant that these early encounters with *Carnaval* participants and artefacts had a considerable influence in guiding my later theoretical engagements. I had entered the field with an interest in understanding the connection between the construction and decay processes of carnival artefacts, and through discussion with my interlocutors, and in encountering discarded artefacts in a salvage yard (Image 4), I had been able to more clearly identify my interest as rooted in the connection between the processes of materialization and de-materialization of allegorical cars, especially as it relates to how ideas are turned into artefacts that are destined to fall apart. In these early stages I was curious to explore the question: *what if carnival is everything but the carnival itself?*

Image 4: Decaying *Carnaval* Artefact in Monte Sossego's Salvage Yard

As I continued my research it confirmed that carnival-related studies in general, as with related popular media, emphasise the spectacle of carnival-day, while somewhat ignoring the processes surrounding it. Even when group and creative processes are directly considered, they tend to be positioned in service of the public display event—as a means to an end. Of *decay* as it relates to carnival, I could find nothing. This further influenced me to de-emphasise the display event in order to focus my attention on understanding the expressive potential of decaying carnival artefacts. I soon found that these processes cannot be isolated from one another and in order to investigate *decay* as a form of expression I would have to understand it as part of an interconnected series of performances which include construction and display processes. My key interlocutors, as with many community members in Mindelo, expressed a clear understanding of the value of the construction processes in bringing the community together. They didn't consider *decay* directly. However, due to the isolated location of Mindelo and a general lack of resources, there is an emphasis on re-using materials when constructing carnival artefacts. This provided a valuable emic perspective of how *decay*, as forms of re-use, relate to construction processes and allowed me to theoretically link the *end* of one carnival artefact with the potential beginning of another. The choice of allegorical cars as a specific research focus within the broader expressive dynamics of *Carnaval* came easily: I could find little to no research on them and their material and visual compositions not only attracted my inclination towards visual expression but also provided concrete examples of how carnival artefacts fall apart.

With the above in mind, I contextualize *Carnaval Soncent* within the broader field of public display events using the work of Jack Santino (2017), Dorothy Noyes (2003) and Roger Abrahams (1983; 2011). Santino suggests that public display events consist of a combination of ritualesque (instrumental) and carnivalesque (expressive) elements. In Noyes' view the combination of these elements are bound by display events as sanctioned performances (2003: 13) that shape group expression into, what Abrahams calls, "a stylized rendering" that is neither an alternative to, or a direct reflection of, reality (1983: 98). To guide my analysis of the allegorical cars in particular, I turned to *conceptual blending* (Fauconnier and Turner 2003)—a theoretical model I am familiar with from previous studies in the field of visual communication. Conceptual blending accounts for how different ideas, whether images, words, or sounds, are cognitively blended together to create novel forms of meaning. Conceptual blending's emphasis on how vital relations

such as *cause-effect*, *time*, *space*, and *identity* are conceptually compressed into meaning potential provided a means to closely consider the thematic compositions of the allegorical cars as they move from idea to physical material artefact. To extend my analysis to include both the communal processes of making and the inevitable processes of decay, I looked to James Skibo and Michael Schiffer's performance-based model of material culture (2008). This model, developed originally within archeological studies and later expanded to include material culture in general, considers the interplay of utilitarian, social, and symbolic functions to account for the various performances of an artefact along its behavioral chain—the different stages through which an artefact comes into being, is used, changes use, and ceases to be. Skibo and Schiffer's model provided a way to de-emphasize the display-event—carnival-day—itself, and consider the expressive potential of the allegorical cars as a trajectory between construction (composition) and decay (decomposition).

As I developed my theoretical understanding from the data I collected in Cabo Verde I also continued a number of subsequent online conversations and collected additional online materials to supplement my research. At the same time, I discovered the work of Carmo Daun e Lorena—the only researcher I could find who have done extensive research on *Carnaval Soncent*. My online conversations with Carmo clarified many of the broader social dynamics related to the competitive groups and helped me in locating Grupo Monte Sossego's approach as only one of many expressive strategies within *Carnaval Soncent*.

To guide my research and analysis, I asked the following questions:

1. Why make the effort to construct larger-than-life allegorical cars, in an isolated community that lacks resources, for the sake of a temporary expression?
2. What is the connection between the construction and decay processes of allegorical cars in *Carnaval Soncent*?
    a. How can this be explained in terms of an interplay between utilitarian, social, and symbolic functions?
    b. What does this reveal about the allegorical car as expressive device, beyond the display-event?
3. How does de-emphasizing the display-event guide a re-thinking of carnival as an expressive practice?

I develop my argument across the following five chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of *Carnaval Soncent* and its allegorical cars. Chapter 2 narrates my research process and how it shaped the trajectory of the argument I develop in this thesis. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the theoretical underpinning that guides my analysis. Chapter 4 considers the competitive dynamics of *Carnaval Soncent* to provide the context for Chapter 5, where I analyse the 'Moby-Dick' and 'Cacao-Farming' allegorical cars. In addition, I include the questions of my semi-structured interviews as well as an overview of *Carnaval Soncent* themes as appendices.

Chapter 1

Carnaval Soncent

This chapter provides an overview of *Carnaval Soncent* and its competitive structure in order to locate the allegorical cars within the broader expressive dynamics of the display event. This overview relies on my fieldwork data, in particular on the interviews I conducted with key members from the *Monte Sossego Carnaval* group. I discuss the details of my fieldwork data in the next chapter.

1.1 A Brief Introduction to the Origins of *Carnaval Soncent*

Carnaval is rooted in Cabo Verde's colonial past where it was first introduced in the 18th century as part of Portuguese *entrudo* celebrations (Daun e Lorena 2018; Dax 2023). *Entrudo* is the Portuguese word for *Shrovetide*, and, from its religious origins, refers to the pre-lent time of excess in preparation for fasting during *lent*. In Portuguese, the words 'entrudo' and 'carnaval' are both found in reference to celebrations that fit into or originated from the general category of pre-lent celebrations. It is worth noting that the word 'carnival', from *carne-levare*, popularly shortened to *carne-vale*, is believed to be a compound of the Latin words *carne*: meat/flesh, and *levare/vale*: to remove/farewell (Skeat 2013). This etymology hints at the practical purpose of carnival as a festival aimed at 'getting rid of' or 'using up' whatever is left before the abstinence of lent. The idea of 'removal of flesh' captures quite succinctly the notions of consuming, or depleting, all that is left before the time of fasting starts. This, along with the various ways in which 'removal' and 'flesh' are expressed through carnival performances of 'excess', sets up the basic 'inversion' (relative to lent) that came to be associated so closely with carnival as a general category (Bakhtin 1984; Santino 2017; Riggio 2004).

Milla Riggio, with reference to the Trinidad Carnival, challenges these notions and suggests that carnival should be redefined in terms of the community it affirms (2004: para1). Riggio's view is important as the Trinidad Carnival, as a creolized form, is more

comparable with *Carnaval Soncent* than the European forms from which it originates. However, the excesses and intensifications of carnival as a public display event should not be discarded as they provide the conceptual grounds from which to compare *Carnaval Soncent* to both its origins and counterparts, and provide a way to consider how the notions of 'removal', 'flesh', 'excess', and 'inversion' are retained, discarded, or transformed.

1.2 The Competitive Structure of *Carnaval Soncent*

Carnaval in Cabo Verde has, over time, detached itself from its religious and Portuguese roots (Daun e Lorena 2018; Dax 2023) to take various forms on a number of islands across the archipelago. *Carnaval Soncent*, specifically, is credited as the most impressive spectacle of the Cabo Verdean *Carnaval* expressions. This credit is due, in part, to the organisers' continual effort to expand the grandeur of *Carnaval Soncent* in order to attract an international audience. Central to this expansion is the adoption of a competitive structure which emphasises the construction of elaborate allegorical cars as thematic centre-pieces around which music and performances radiate. This, however, stands in contrast to the more informal and spontaneous *Carnaval* performances that are preferred on neighbouring islands (Antonio Tavares, Interview with author, March 9, 2022; Mary Fontes, Interview with author, March 2, 2022).

The competitive structure of *Carnaval Soncent* is largely borrowed from Brazilian *Carnaval*, and during interviews, the directors of *Grupo Monte Sossego*—the competitive *Carnaval* group on which my analysis in Chapter 5 is based—mentioned a degree of ambition towards reaching the scale and international recognition of the *Rio Carnaval* (Joao Brito and Valdir Brito, Interview with the author, March 8, 2022). The competitive structure consists of formal groups who compete for a number of prizes, including: Overall Winner, *Carnaval* Queen, *Carnaval* King, Best Music, and Best Allegorical Car. Table 1 shows the complete list of competitive components. These competitive components influence what is being produced and thus shape the overall expressive potential of *Carnaval Soncent*.

Prizes	***Carnaval* Components**
Overall Winner	Theme *Unique to each group* (Groups are ranked based on all components)
Queen (Rainha)	Costumes and Performances *Prizes for lead roles*
King (Rei)	
Flag Bearer (Porta-Bandeira)	
Master Room (Mestre-Sala)	
Queen of Drums (Rainha da Bateria)	
Best Allegorical Car (Carro Alegórico)	Two to three allegorical cars per group
Best Music (Melhor Música)	Original music is composed based on theme

Table 1: Competitive Components of *Carnaval Soncent*

1.3 Thematic and Community Emphasis

Carnaval is set in motion approximately three months before *Carnaval* day by each competitive group defining their theme for the coming year. Themes are defined by the group directors and range from popular television to Cabo Verdean history and beyond (Table 2 shows the winning *Carnaval* themes from 2023). Joao Brito tells me that his most significant and emotional *Carnaval* moment came when they developed the *Route of the Emigrants* theme in 2017, particularly the 'Moby-Dick' story, "because it really captivated a strong emotion from the people because it has to do with our history…everyone was shocked or wowed because it has a really emotional story" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

Carnaval Themes 2023			
Group:	*Monte Sossego*	*Cruzeiros do Norte*	*Flores do Mindelo*
Title: *(English Trans.)*	The People of the Islands (Still) Want a Different Poem for the People of the Islands	Three 'Côsa Sâb' in Life: Health, Money, and Love	Reborn in a Flight
Topic:	Reflection on a poem by Onésimo Silveira—Cabo Verdean poet and politician.	Reflection on the post-pandemic situation in Cabo Verde.	Reflection on how Cabo Verde, like the Phoenix, overcomes its burdens.
Awards:	Overall Winner	Second-Place	Third-Place

Table 2 *Carnaval* Themes from *Carnaval Soncent* 2023 (LIGOCSV)

The chosen themes are presented to the neighbourhood-based community from which the group originates. Valdir Brito, creative director of the *Monte Sossego* group explains that "*Carnaval* is a major responsibility" and that a series of events are organised to entice the community to take part (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). These events build excitement around the chosen theme and, more importantly, recruit members from the neighbourhood for the various activities required to realize the group's *Carnaval* vision (Image 5 shows a promotional image related to Monte Sossego's 2018 *Carnaval* theme: 'Grand Civilizations').

Image 5: *Grupo Monte Sossego* Announcing A Promotional Event
Related to their 2018 *Carnaval* Theme 'Grand Civilizations' on Social Media.

The *Monte Sossego* Group may reach between 1000 and 2000 members per year (Joao Brito and Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022; Couto 2013: 63), a significant number considering the approximately 70 000 inhabitants of Mindelo (Saint Vincent, 2016). The members of the group are spread across various preparation and performance activities such as constructing the larger-than-life allegorical cars, learning choreographed dances, composing and performing music, rehearsing various performances, and designing and making costumes and other *Carnaval* artefacts (Valdir Brito and Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022; Dax, 2023). All of these components come together to create the spectacle on *Carnaval* day; and all of these components require community members to come together around various creative activities to realize the thematic vision set into motion by the group directors. Valdir Brito explained that once the theme is decided, "the development takes place by parts": drawings are made to visualise all the components and these are presented to the

community (neighbourhood), then the persons who will be making the costumes, props, and other elements are sourced and roles are assigned; and "then all of that builds up to *Carnaval*" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

Significant is that even though the directors decide the theme, there is an awareness of, and responsibility to, the neighbourhood who is represented. Joao and Valdir spoke about "public taste" and having to take this into consideration to make sure that "people are pleased" with what they put together. "There's a magic emotion that comes with it, because the intention and the challenge to wow the public, it's a responsibility but also very emotional to one that is born here in Mindelo" (Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022). The sheer number of costumes and props required for competing in *Carnaval* unifies the neighbourhood not just in their visual presence but also in the related processes of making: the group works together, rehearses together, and performs together. "The sentiment is towards belonging", explains To Cruz (Interview with author, March 8, 2022), confirmed later, off camera, by Valdir: "It's about creating something bigger than yourself" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

1.4 Allegorical cars (*Carro Alegórico*)

The largest carnival artefacts are the allegorical cars. Mounted on truck trailers, these larger-than-life compositions display the most important thematic elements. Ruy Castro, with reference to the Rio Carnival, explains that the Brazilian elite, after independence, "began to take their inspiration from more cultivated carnivals, like those of Nice and Venice" (2004: 80). From here the "Carnival clubs, called 'great societies', arose, which paraded sumptuous allegorical floats pulled along by pairs of horses, imitating the coaches that took the royal family to gala ceremonies…" (Castro 2004: 80). In true carnival style, the coach and royalty was satirised through visual embellishments and costumed prostitutes, and so the 'removal of flesh' was extended to the 'removal of grandeur' through its over-expression. Other than Ruy Castro's more explicit reference, there is very little written about allegorical cars specifically. The *Nice* Carnival, perhaps more than others, still has a significant emphasis on allegorical cars, while parade floats

in many varied forms seem to be part of almost every carnival expression no matter its geographic location.

The precise route of influence that shaped the *Carnaval Soncent* allegorical cars would be difficult to determine but with the shared Portuguese colonial history, and the Rio Carnival often cited as general inspiration, it is reasonable to believe that at least some of the developments from Brazil made their way to Cabo Verde. The horse-drawn coach carrying royalty is a worthwhile image to consider when thinking of specific expressions of allegorical cars because, just like the 'removals' and 'excesses', it provides a conceptual baseline from which to consider how this basic allegorical construct has transformed, if at all. Image 6 shows an early (unknown date) and more recent (2019) allegorical car from *Grupo Monte Sossego* to illustrate changes in scale and style over time.

Image 6: Past and Present Comparison of *Grupo Monte Sossego's* Allegorical Cars (Images courtesy of Joao Brito)

1.4.1 Construction

Valdir Brito explained that "you kind of gravitate towards your role in *Carnaval*; it happens over time, from a young age" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). Some will become dancers or musicians, others will make costumes or work on constructing allegorical cars. There is no formal or official training for your *Carnaval* role; you learn as you go (Hermes Reis, Interview with author, March 9, 2022). In this way, new group members will work with more experienced crafts people to learn how to manipulate materials in the process of constructing the allegorical cars. The construction process requires those responsible to work closely with the group directors to realize the thematic compositions. Hermes Reis explains that the allegorical cars, as with most *Carnaval* artefacts, come into being through various formal and informal production techniques and is realized using a mix of raw (metal, wire, plaster) and recycled materials. Describing how he and his team collected thousands of plastic bottles to turn them into 'crystals', Hermes points out that constructing the allegorical cars require inventiveness and a willingness to work with the materials at hand (Hermes Reis, Interview with author, March 9, 2022). As the allegorical cars "rise in the *stilero*", as Valdir Brito puts it, one can see the many hours of communal effort materializing the theme into a physical presence.

1.4.2 Decay

I am told that the allegorical cars are left on the side of the road after the parade. This is partly to show them off and allow people closer inspection of the elements (and the effort), and it is partly because these structures are big and bulky, and also quite fragile. "Some of it falls apart as soon as we push it into the road", (Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022). Surprisingly it is revealed that the allegorical cars are picked apart by the public, mostly, it seems, for materials that are practical to use for something else, e.g. metal and wire-mesh. After a few days the allegorical cars are taken to a salvage yard where they remove the pieces that can be re-used for next year's *Carnaval*. "Some parts, like the bodies and heads, we know we will make characters again, so we can re-use these parts" and the trailer "has to be returned from where we borrowed it" (Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 9, 2022).

1.5 The *Carnaval*-day Spectacle

Carnaval, from the outside, is mostly seen as a party, as a quick online search will reveal: scantily dressed revellers parading through the streets; dancing and music; crowds in various states of reckless abandon. It is the parade that takes centre stage and in this way, the *carnaval* artefacts, including the allegorical cars, are easily categorised as objects in service of the spectacle alone. No doubt the display-event is an important aspect of carnival but it is not the whole picture. As Joao explains: "They [most people] think of *Carnaval* and think of a party...they don't see all the people who are really there from the beginning and how much effort they have put into it" (Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

This chapter provided an overview of *Carnaval Soncent* to highlight the role of the group directors in guiding the development of the allegorical cars within a broader competitive structure. I will now turn to my methods and materials, emphasizing my fieldwork in Cabo Verde, to more precisely explain the origins of the overview I provided above.

Chapter 2

Methods and Materials

This chapter traces how my understanding of *Carnaval Soncent* developed across my preparatory research and fieldwork phases. I start by explaining how my initial ideas were shaped by online encounters with carnival artefacts before providing an overview of the data I collected and the collection methods I used. I then turn to a reflection on key encounters during the data collection process to show how my fieldwork was instrumental in shaping my interpretation of *Carnaval Soncent* and its allegorical cars.

2.1 Overview of Research Phases

I started preparatory research in October 2021. At this time I was looking at festivals in Cabo Verde in general and it was only towards December 2021, after finding images of allegorical cars from the carnival in Mindelo, that I started to settle on my research focus. During the initial stages I had structured my research around the idea of creating a found-footage compilation film as part of my research output. This kind of film, also called collage, or archival cinema, is created by juxtaposing various existing (found) film sequences in order to construct new narratives (Danks 2005: 241). I soon discovered that, other than general information on Cabo Verde, it is not easy to find any particulars online. This, I supposed at the time as I do now, is because the information I was looking for is possibly only available in Portuguese or Cabo Verdean *Creole*. What I could find, however, was a considerable amount of information on Cabo Verde's political history, environmental conditions, and, mainly, tourist websites promoting the various festivals in Cabo Verde. During this time I also reached out to a number of cultural institutions and carnival groups in Mindelo but received no replies.

I made my way to Cabo Verde at the end of February 2022. During two weeks of fieldwork (28 February to 14 March 2022), I visited the cities of Praia and Mindelo, where I conducted a series of interviews, recorded video footage of carnival artefacts, and visited a number of cultural institutions. To counter the language barrier I arranged a research

assistant and translator, Miriam Monteiro Fortes, to guide me in Mindelo. The people I met during my visit to Cabo Verde and the conversations I had with them provided invaluable insight into the materials I gathered and equipped me with the means to critically engage with the additional materials I subsequently sourced online. What I had thought *Carnaval* was changed considerably because of these conversations and fundamentally shaped the argument I present in this thesis.

After my fieldwork, I have been in dialogue with Miriam Monteiro Fortes, Joao Brito, and Valdir Brito via a Facebook Messenger chat-group. This group was set up to share the images we discussed during the interviews as well as to answer follow-up questions. These conversations, although brief, have been instrumental in clarifying my ideas on the processes related to the allegorical cars and guided me to collecting additional content related to *Carnaval Soncent*. In addition, I liaised with Carmo Daun e Lorena, a researcher at CRIA – Centre for Research in Anthropology (NOVA University of Lisbon). Carmo is the only person I could find who has done extensive ethnographic research on *Carnaval Soncent*, and her PhD dissertation, along with our email and virtual discussions, provided considerable insight into the social and group dynamics of *Carnaval Soncent*.

2.2 Preparatory Research

2.2.1 A Proliferation of Names

To start, I was not aware of the name *Carnaval Soncent*. Something as basic as a name, as it turns out, was not so straightforward to pin down; fitting perhaps for a *creole* expression characterized by fluidity and multi-vocality (Baron and Cara 2011). Online I had found references to the *Creole* Festival, Carnival of Mindelo, Mindelo Carnival, Mindelo Festival, and São Vicente Carnival (but not *Carnaval Soncent*). Prior to conducting fieldwork I thus settled on the name 'Mindelo Carnival' as this was the popular choice on tourist websites promoting the carnival in Mindelo as part of island hopping packages in Cabo Verde. At the time it seemed like a fair choice.

During my fieldwork, however, the proliferation of names soon returned and I found that hardly anyone, locally, referred to the event as the Mindelo Carnival. The local preference, by far, was to simply call it *Carnaval*. I retained this usage throughout my writing, especially where there is no confusion regarding which carnival expression I am referring to. However, in general, for inclusivity and clarity, I prefer the use of the name *Carnaval Soncent*. This name refers, in Cabo Verdean *Creole*, to the island of *Soncent* (São Vicente) on which the carnival takes place. Because carnival groups come not only from Mindelo, but from different parts of *Soncent*, I felt that this name more accurately presents the specific carnival from both a *Creole* and an inclusive group-perspective. Further, I use the English spelling—carnival—to refer to the general display-event category, while using the Portuguese spelling—*carnaval*—to refer to specifically Cabo Verdean expressions of this event-type.

2.2.2 Initial Online Encounters

In one of my initial online searches, on a travel blog (Paulina 2022), under the caption 'Go Loud at Mindelo's Carnival', I encountered an image of a carnival artefact in a state of decay (Image 7). It struck me how such a big object, strangely life-like, was seemingly left on the side of the road to fall apart. I have looked at this image a number of times (as I credit it for being one of the primary catalysts for this research project) and I think it is the character's gesture—the one arm folded to protect the torso while the other is raised to cover the face—that gives it an all-too-human quality.

Image 7: Photo of *Carnaval* Artefact Found Online (Paulina 2022)

Around the same time, I had found numerous articles about Cabo Verde's devastating colonial past and its ongoing struggle with precarious natural conditions, so much so, that this object, this character in decay, came to embody the qualities of a discarded people trying to shield itself from continual exposure. This of course was my personal dramatization of a place I knew, at this point, only through text and images. I mention this because it speaks, at least to me, of folklore in a networked and juxtaposed digital form—*how often do we, at least initially, encounter a culture or a people only through online sources?*

If one is to conduct a general online search on *Cabo* Verde, one will most likely find, in roughly this order: mention of Cesária Évora, the famous barefoot singer of *Morna*—a folk music style rooted in songs of sadness and, at the time of writing, the only Cabo Verdean inscription on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage. You will also find the sunny beaches of *Sal*[1], popular with British tourists, and formed by sand being swept across the Atlantic from the Sahara desert (Image 8)—sand which provides beautiful beaches but also causes a lot of structural and natural decay. Further, you will find a history of slavery, and perhaps equally as disconcerting, a history, as recent as 1958, of a series of drought-related famines, linked to some extent to Cabo Verde being established on uninhabited, and partly uninhabitable, islands for the sake of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Image 8: Satellite Image of Dust-Storm from the Sahara Desert Sweeping over Cabo Verde (Source: earthobservatory.nasa.gov)

[1] One of the ten islands that make up the archipelago of Cabo Verde.

Taking this into account, this image of a decaying character, shielding itself from the conditions into which it was born, captures quite succinctly the way in which I made sense of Cabo Verde at the early stages of my research. Only later, when Joao and Valdir Brito explained the designs of their group's allegorical cars did I gain a more intimate and emic understanding of the actual significance of these early details.

2.2.3 Resemblances to Folk, Outsider, and Naïve Art

During my initial online research I found a number of images showing allegorical cars from the Mindelo Carnival (Image 9), and, at this point, the main research question I had in mind was: *why would people in such an isolated location bother to construct larger-than-life allegorical cars (and make elaborate costumes), essentially for their own entertainment…and then leave it to deteriorate?*

Image 9: Allegorical Car from *Carnaval Soncent* (aminimalisttraveler.com)

This question, prompted by the visual aesthetic qualities of the carnival artefacts I found online, was related to a longstanding personal interest in the general categories of folk, outsider, and naïve art. I have always been drawn to the kinds of art-making that are not aimed at a professional career within an established art-specific industry, but rather as idiosyncratic expressions, either for practical purposes, as with some folk art, or for the

sake of expression alone; free, to some extent, from industry pressure (Maclagan 2010; Wojcik 2016). It is difficult to define any of these categories of art to any satisfactory degree, as they are, rightly so, under ongoing contestation and revision. It is also far beyond the scope of this research project to do so. Nevertheless, the images of allegorical cars had visual overlaps with these 'outsider' domains of expression through a number of shared characteristics such as: using a kind of informality and simplicity in form as seen in naïve art, the application of quotidian craft practices at the heart of folk art, and a tendency for the absurd and the repetition of motifs, often found in outsider art (Rhodes 2022; Wojcik 2016).

I acknowledge the fairly broad associations I am making here, but these are important because they were instrumental in setting me on a trajectory to focus my research, and thus my fieldwork, on the visual aspects of *Carnaval Soncent's* allegorical cars.

2.3 Reflection on Entering the Field

2.3.1 Initial Challenges and Impressions

Getting to Cabo Verde, and especially Mindelo is not straightforward. When I read carnival enthusiast Mic Dax's words on his Mindelo Carnival website "the Mindelenses do the carnival first for them, then for others" (2023), I thought, perhaps it is because the *others* did not want to bother with making their way to Mindelo! I say this only partly as a joke because the isolated location of Mindelo on the island of São Vicente is one of the reasons I was drawn to *Carnaval Soncent* and its allegorical cars in the first place.

On arrival I still entertained the idea of creating a found-footage compilation film as part of my research output, but unfortunately neither the National Archives nor the Cultural Heritage Institute could supply me with archival footage of *Carnaval Soncent*. This, to some extent, was due to my inability to communicate in Portuguese and/or *Creole*. After the first two days in Cabo Verde I had very little to show other than some video footage I recorded in and around Praia.

Challenges aside, by some luck, I found that the owner of the room I was renting, Mary Fontes, a recently retired art teacher, did her master's thesis on the local *Tabanka*[2] festival of Cabo Verde. She kindly agreed to an interview during which she mentioned the differences between the carnival in Mindelo and its counterpart on the neighbouring island of São Nicolau. The Mindelo Carnival, she said, was more grand and spectacular, but "if you want to see the more traditional *carnaval*…see the *carnaval* on São Nicolau" (Interview with author, March 2, 2022). Later, in Mindelo, I found a similar sentiment, where Antonio Tavares and many others that frequented *Bombu Mininu* felt that the spontaneous aspects of *Carnaval* should be its emphasis as it is what makes it more authentic. The general feeling being that competition leads to over-regulation and may reduce the expressive potential of the event.

2.3.2 Visiting Mindelo

I eventually found my way to Mindelo on the island of São Vicente, and over the coming days I had to come to terms with two fundamental challenges: the first, carnival is part of life in Mindelo, so my excitement and eagerness was mostly met with a matter-of-fact response bordering on indifference, and second, I was on a tight schedule that was not shared or cared for by the local Mindelenses. There was, however, with some patience and some insistence, always an opinion to be shared and, once settled into conversation, a generosity with time. One of the first conversations I had was with Miriam Monteiro Fortes who revealed that she participated *Carnaval Soncent* a number of times as a child. She told me about the music, dancing, and rehearsals, and also how a group of teachers had, in recent times, gained a lot of attention for creating impressive *carnaval* costumes from recycled materials (Discussion with author, March 6, 2022). The teachers and their re-use approach was, along with the *mandingas*[3] (Image 10), one of the most consistently mentioned aspects of *Carnaval Soncent*, especially in informal conversation.

Miriam, like many Cabo Verdeans, went to study in the United States and had only recently returned. Some return and some don't. In another conversation, Antonio Tavares explained that families often come together to gather funds to send one or two children

[2] *Tabanka* is a religious festival, in the form of musical processions, related to feast days of Catholic Saints.
[3] *Mandingas* represent the African heritage of Cabo Verdeans during *Carnaval*.

to the United States or the Netherlands for graduate studies, the idea being that they will return to Cabo Verde with expertise and the ability to improve the lives of those around them. The sad reality, however, as he explained, is that most do not return, and this has caused a deficit in the number of young, especially professional, adults who can help to drive and develop the Cabo Verdean economy (Interview with author, March 9, 2022).

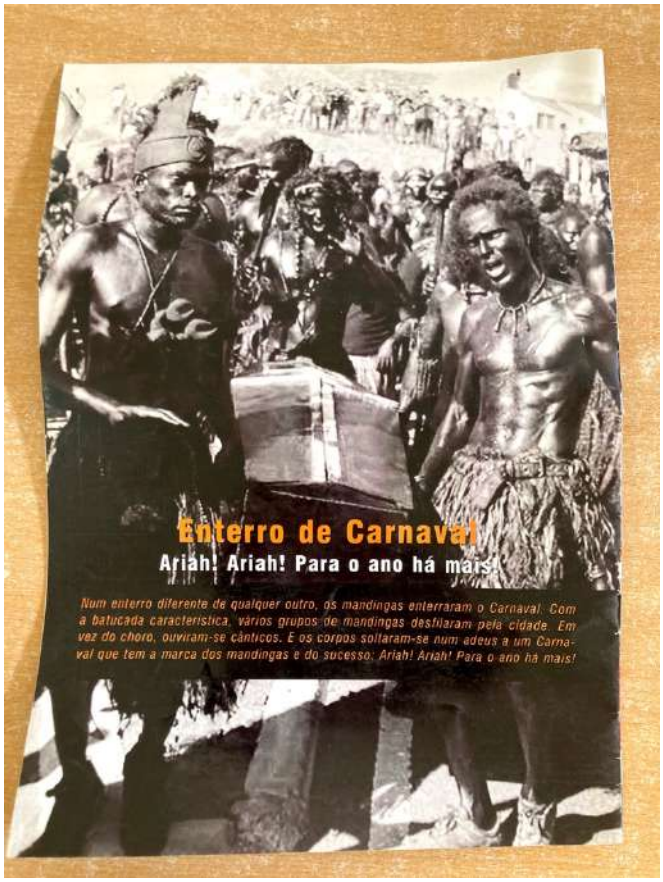

Image 10: Photo of *mandingas* in *Soncent* No 4 (April/May 2014)

I could not, and still cannot, help to see these departures as a continuation of a tendency that started during the slave-trade, where Africans were forcefully re-located to Cabo Verde; a re-location, or perhaps dis-location, that later continued with the movement of goods along shipping routes as well as mass departures to survive a series of devastating drought-famines. The current trend of re-location then is mostly rooted in the pursuit of education and expertise, a shift in departure, it seems, from the physical—the body—to the intellectual. I had noted this shift, to myself, as a potential area to explore and although my research did not proceed in this direction, it did establish a notion of shifts between material and immaterial displacements that later became a central part of my analysis of

the allegorical cars. For now, however, no matter the nature of these departures, it has resulted in a diaspora of approximately one-million Cabo Verdeans, with only about five-hundred-thousand citizens living in the country itself; a significant detail when considering *Carnaval Soncent* as a public negotiation and display of identity.

2.3.3 *Carnaval Cancelado*

When I planned my fieldwork in January of 2022, *Carnaval* was still going to take place and the *Carnaval* groups had already started preparations. In the weeks leading up to my trip, however, *Carnaval* was cancelled due to a continued covid risk. It had been cancelled the previous year as well, and the general online sentiment leaned heavily towards the impossibility of it being cancelled a second time. I had followed these developments closely. Once the announcement was made (Image 11), it seemed all online dialogue ceased to be.

Image 11: Cancellation Announcement on the *Carnaval de Mindelo* Facebook Page

I was disappointed because part of what I imagined, as the film I mentioned before, would be the juxtaposition of the motion of *Carnaval* day with the stasis of decaying carnival artefacts. Of course, seeing *Carnaval* in full force would be an experience in itself, but as

far as research interests, I had, since the beginning, been more interested in the decaying artefacts and what they could possibility reveal about *Carnaval Soncent* as a cultural expression. In a way, *Carnaval* devoid of its main event became a development peculiarly in accord with an ongoing curiosity: *what if carnival is everything but the event itself?*

I had realised that my fascination with the creative process before the event, and the decaying artefacts after the event, had led me to somewhat ignore the event, carnival-day, itself. I was, however, comfortable with this and I had consciously decided that I would continue to explore this de-emphasis of the display-spectacle in favour of highlighting the processes that surround it.

2.4 Overview of Data, Collection Methods, Key Interlocutors, and Key Sites

In this section I will clarify the data I collected and the methods I used before returning to a reflection on my fieldwork process.

I conducted fieldwork in the cities of Praia and Mindelo in Cabo Verde. Praia is the capital city of Cabo Verde, located on the island of Santiago. The *Arquivo Nacional de Cabo Verde* (National Archives of Cabo Verde) and the *Instituto do Património Cultural* (Cultural Heritage Institute) are located in Praia. Mindelo, located on the island of São Vicente is the home of *Carnaval Soncent* and the site where I collected most of my data (Image 9).

Image 12: Location of Mindelo on the Island of São Vicente in Cabo Verde's Archipelago

2.4.1 Interviews and Key Interlocutors

During my time in Cabo Verde I met and interviewed a number of key figures from the competitive carnival group *Grupo Monte Sossego*. These qualitative interviews (A – D in Table 1) provided the most detailed descriptions of *Carnaval Soncent* and its allegorical cars, and form the central part of the data I collected (see Appendix B for the interview questions).

Between myself and Miriam Monteiro Fortes we contacted a number of carnival groups, but it is only through one of Miriam's contacts that we finally made direct contact with Joao and Valdir Brito, the directors of *Grupo Monte Sossego*. Within the group's organizational hierarchy the carnival directors oversee the design of all competitive elements and work directly with the various group members to guide the production of specific performances and artefacts. The directors report to the group's president and vice presidents (LIGOCSV), a structure that seems to generally remain true for most competitive groups. In addition, Hermes Reis, veteran *Carnaval* craftsman, who I met during the interview with the group directors, agreed to an interview. This extensive discussion provided invaluable insight into the construction processes of carnival artefacts, especially as it relates to the recycling and re-use of materials.

I also had discussions and informal interviews with members of the Mindelo cultural community—active participants in cultural activities such artists, designers, performers—as well as carnival participants, and community members in general.

For the discussions with the key figures I used semi-structured interviews, while discussions with community members happened casually and mostly through chance encounters. All semi-structured interviews were filmed, and informal interviews, where possible, were recorded as audio. Day-to-day observations as well as chance encounters and discussions were summarized and compiled into field notes from which I composed, in part, my reflection below. Table 3 provides an overview of my key interlocutors, their roles, location, language, and the data collection methods I used.

	Interlocutor:	*Role:*	*Data Collection Method:*		*Languages:*	*Location:*
A	Joao Brito	Director *Grupo Monte Sossego*	Semi-Structured Group Interview *Audio-Video Recording*	Informal Interview *Audio-Video Recording*	Portuguese Creole English	Mindelo
B	Valdir Brito	Creative Director *Grupo Monte Sossego*				
C	To Cruz	Former *Carnaval* King *Grupo Monte Sossego* Music Producer				
D	Hermes Reis	Head Craftsman *Grupo Monte Sossego*	Semi-Structured Interview *Audio-Video Recording*			
E	Antonio Tavares	Creative Director *Cultural Centre of Mindelo* Playwright, Choreographer, Dancer Owner: *Bombu Mininu*	Informal Discussions	Informal Interview *Audio Recording*	English	
F	Miriam M. Fortes	Community Member Translator				
G	Márcio Medina	Community Member Local Tour and Design Professional				
H	Mary Fontes	Researcher of *Tabanca* festival Retired art teacher				Praia

Table 3: Overview of Key Interviews

The interviews with Joao Brito, Valdir Brito, To Cruz, and Hermes Reis (A – D in Table 1) were conducted using a mix of Portuguese, Cabo Verdean *Creole*, and English. Miriam Monteiro Fortes, a resident of Mindelo, translated my questions and the interlocutors' replies. Translation was done during the interviews, allowing discussion to take place across the three languages in use. After the interviews I compiled written transcripts in English. All interlocutors could, however, fairly comfortably express themselves in English, but their preference, especially with the group interview, was to communicate in *Creole*. Interviews and discussions where Miriam was not present were conducted in English.

2.4.2 Audio-Visual Data and Key Sites

I recorded video footage in and around Praia and Mindelo to capture the general atmosphere of these two cities. In Mindelo, I focused on recording footage of discarded and salvaged carnival artefacts in two locations: *Quintal das Artes* (Art Yard) and a

salvage yard in the neighbourhood of Monte Sossego. *Quintal das Artes* (Image 13) is an abandoned fish market where Hermes Reis and other Mindelo artists have set up work areas for their craft practices. This is also the site where I recorded all of the semi-structured interviews.

Image 13: *Quintal das Artes*

The second site, the salvage yard (Image 14), is Grupo Monte Sossego's *stilero*[4] where they construct the allegorical cars during carnival preparations and also where they keep parts of previous allegorical cars for re-use in future constructions. Following the group interview at *Quintal das Artes*, Joao Brito invited me to the salvage yard where we did a walk-through while he explained which salvaged parts belonged to which allegorical cars. Miriam Monteiro Fortes was present and translated the entire discussion as we talked. During this extended open interview, Joao revealed, in more detail, the inspiration and compositional logic of a number of allegorical cars. This conversation along with the images that Joao showed me (and later shared with me digitally) became the basis of my analysis in Chapter 5.

[4] *Stilero* refers to the designated area, or yard, where a specific carnival group constructs their allegorical cars.

Image 14: Salvage Yard in Monte Sossego

Additionally, I stumbled onto a small café called *Bombu Mininu* (Image 15). The owners, Miriam and Antonio Tavares, are well known in the Mindelo cultural community and Antonio—playwright, choreographer, and performer—is the Creative Director of the *Centro Cultural do Mindelo* (Mindelo Cultural Centre). Mary Fontes (H in Table 1), during one of our discussions in Praia, suggested I seek out Antonio during my visit to Mindelo.

Image 15: *Bombu Mininu* in Mindelo (Source: *Futuros Criativos*)

In *Bombu* I had numerous discussions with Miriam and Antonio as well as various other performers and carnival enthusiasts who frequented the café. I recorded (in audio) an extended open discussion with Antonio. This conversation, along with fragments from a number of group discussions in *Bombu*, provided an alternative view on *Carnaval Soncent*: one favoring spontaneity of expression over the competitive structure promoted by the group directors. Most open discussions in *Bombu*, however, were characterized by a number of individuals talking in a mix of Portuguese and *Creole*, and the fragments I could gather were based on the one or two sentences that, ever so often, were directed to me in English.

2.4.3 Cultural Institutions and Publications

In Praia I visited the *Arquivo Nacional de Cabo Verde* (National Archives of Cabo Verde), the *Instituto do Património Cultural* (Cultural Heritage Institute), and the *Museu Etnográfico da Praia* (Ethnographic Museum of Praia). Over two days I collected a number of publications from the National Archives (Image 16), while becoming aware of how my inability to communicate in Portuguese or *Creole* was limiting my access to, and understanding of, available materials. The publications I sourced were an in-flight magazine by the title of *Fragata* (from a now obsolete Cabo Verdean airline) and several editions from two different *Carnaval*-specific magazines respectively titled: *Soncent* and *Carnaval do Mindelo*. These publications contained very little English descriptions but did provide some initial context, mainly through images, of how *Carnaval Soncent* is represented from within Cabo Verde.

Image 16: Publications Sourced from the National Archives of Cabo Verde

During my visit to the Cultural Heritage Institute I was directed to the national broadcaster (*RTC: Radiotelevisão Caboverdiana*) in an attempt to source archival audio-visual materials of *Carnaval Soncent*. Although the broadcaster's cordial willingness resulted in no materials, it did put me on track to locate, on their website, archived footage of television coverage of the 2017 *Carnaval Soncent* parade. This footage helped me to contextualize the parade, and specifically the visual presence and order of the allegorical cars that Joao and Valdir Brito had explained in their interviews.

While visiting the *Centro Cultural do Mindelo* (Mindelo Cultural Centre) I found a locally printed publication 'A Journey Through the History of St. Vincent' (Almeida 2019) that traces the early development of the island. I also found an exhibition of photographs showing the construction of *Grupo Monte Sossego's* allegorical cars from the 2017 *Carnaval*. At this time I had not conducted the interviews yet and only in retrospect could I contextualize the images I saw in the exhibition. Table 2 provides and overview of the cultural institutions I visited and the data I collected there.

Institution:	*Location:*	*Data Collected:*
Arquivo Nacional de Cabo Verde (National Archives of Cabo Verde)	Praia	<u>Publications:</u> 'Fragata' (February 1998) 'Soncent' No. 2, 4, & 7 (April/May 2013; April/May2014; February 2015) 'Carnaval do Mindelo' Magazine (2014)
Instituto do Património Cultural (Cultural Heritage Institute)		<u>Contact with National Broadcaster:</u> *Radiotelevisão Caboverdiana (RTC)* (For sourcing archival footage)
Centro Cultural do Mindelo (Mindelo Cultural Centre)	Mindelo	<u>Publication:</u> 'A Journey Through the History of St. Vincent' (Germano Almeida 2019) <u>Exhibition</u>: Photographs of the Construction of Grupo Monte Sossego's Allegorical Car's from *Carnaval Soncent* 2017

Table 4: Overview of Cultural Institutions I Visited in Praia and Mindelo

2.5 Reflection on Encounters with Key Interlocutors and *Carnaval* Artefacts

2.5.1 Grupo Monte Sossego and Decaying Carnaval Artefacts

The first couple of days in Mindelo yielded very little other than brief conversations with local residents. I had expected, naively, to find carnival artefacts on the side of the road—everywhere. The disappointment of the cancelled event had made the city strangely void of *Carnaval*, at least this is how it seemed to me. Only by the fourth day, Miriam had arranged for me to meet three members of the Monte Sossego *Carnaval* group. I made my way to *Quintal das Artes*, and on entering the square I finally came face-to-face with what started this journey: decaying carnival artefacts. There in front of me, rising from the concrete, stood a creature-from-the-sea, her face falling apart, holding a staff decorated with old cans; in the background, a giant head looking up into the sun, exposed, deteriorating (Image 17).

Image 17: *Carnaval* Artefact at *Quintal das Artes*

I could finally capture the images I had in mind, and more importantly, I could observe, directly, the presence, weight, and texture of these larger-than-life objects. I noted their simultaneous firmness and fragility—qualities that seemed to extend from their construction (metal, wire, plaster) to their facial expressions. *Firmness*, as that which

stands strong, and *fragility*, as that which falls apart, has become a sort of theme for my research since then. The contrasting and somewhat contradicting co-existence of the *firm-fragile* has notable resonances with the notion of carnival as *controlled-chaos*.

Moments later I met Valdir Brito, To Cruz, and Joao Brito (Image 18). They had arrived there at the same time. Although I had planned to interview them individually, the situation suggested, quite fittingly, that we talk as a group. One of the craftsmen commented that it is a momentous occasion to have the three of them together like this as they are important and well-known figures in Mindelo. At the time I did not have much of a grasp on the role and structure of the competitive carnival groups, nor did I give the related socio-economic complexities much thought.

Image 18: Valdir Brito, To Cruz, and Joao Brito at *Quintal das Artes*

I will note here, as I do more extensively later, that my research is not focused on the socio-economic power dynamics of *Carnaval*. That being said, subsequent conversations, did elicit some negative sentiments towards the individuals in charge of the competitive groups, especially related to the spread and sharing of money. I cannot to any degree of certainty comment on this because I simply do not have the data to back any point of view in this regard. My emphasis thus, during these interviews (and extended to this thesis), was firmly placed on understanding how the carnival artefacts, especially the allegorical cars, come into and out of being.

Sitting down with Valdir, To, and Joao the interview started: "This is what *Carnaval* does…it's the transmission of information; the transmission of culture" (March 8, 2022). Between them they have many years of *Carnaval* experience—in various roles—and are currently at the helm of shaping what the *Monte Sossego* group produce. Currently, Joao oversees the general creative production, Valdir focuses on the visual concepts, and To is a former *Carnaval* King—a leading competitive role—and Cabo Verdean music producer who lives in the United States and who travels to Mindelo every year to be part of *Carnaval Soncent*.

Significant, I learned, is that the competitive groups are organised according to neighbourhoods, mainly in Mindelo, but also from other parts of São Vicente. This does not mean that the group is off limits for individuals outside of the neighbourhood, but rather that the group's origins and emphasis is rooted in a specific area—a dynamic that Carmo Daun e Lorena explains is both contested and changing (2018). Monte Sossego is the most populated neighbourhood in Mindelo and accounts for a large number of *Carnaval* participants (Couto 2013: 63). Significantly, the group, founded in 1983, carries the neighbourhood's name directly and has over the years amassed a considerable amount of top *Carnaval* accolades, including, more recently, overall winners in 2023, 2020, 2016, and 2014 (LIGOCSV).

2.5.2 Developing the Theme

The directors choose the group's *Carnaval* theme for the year and decide and direct the general creative direction. What I gathered from Joao and Valdir is that the development of the theme requires a lot of research. The research is aimed at unearthing interesting and novel historical, mythical, or popular details, and then composing those details into a scene for the allegorical car and costumes for the performers. In the case of the 'Moby-Dick' allegorical car, Joao says, "through the research we found that Cape Verdeans were the most sought after in the search and fetch of whales…and this took them to United States and that related to the Moby-Dick story which a lot of people know…even me I didn't know it was Cape Verdeans who were the sailsmen…" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). From this connection between Cabo Verde and a world narrative they composed the elements of the allegorical car. Later Joao explained another allegorical car

in a similar way: “So this one is representing a story that is very specific to the mythology of *Atlantis*, the lost city, they say that Cabo Verde is the location of *Atlantis*…” (Interview with author, March 9, 2022). Here, again, Cabo Verde is compositionally connected to a world-narrative; a conceptual approach that seemed to be favoured by the current designers of Grupo Monte Sossego.

2.5.3 Money and Responsibility

Carnaval groups spend a lot of money to realise their vision and although there is funding available for the competitive groups, Joao assured me that this does not cover all the costs involved. To make up the deficit additional funding initiatives are arranged. I got the sense that money is an uncomfortable topic and that understanding the way money moves in and around *Carnaval* is mostly a mystery, especially for an outsider (See Carmo 2018 for a more in-depth discussion). The group directors are both loved and loathed for this reason which, money matters aside, comes as no surprise when considering that the directors are a handful of individuals who decides how an entire neighbourhood is presented to their peers—one can only imagine the disagreements and critique. Joao commented on this, saying that we do not always agree on the direction and at times you feel like giving it all up, but then your realize it is for the group and you keep going (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). A large number of individuals participate in making the event happen and, as far as the competitive groups are concerned, it is the group directors that take responsibly for bringing individuals together and guiding them in producing a large-scale spectacle. In this sense the directors are a unifying agent that directs the collective force of the group members.

2.5.4 Material Transformations

Hermes Reis (Image 19), veteran *Carnaval* craftsman and self-proclaimed master of transforming recycled materials into anything imaginable, explains that a formal school is not necessary as those who have a natural interest will be pulled towards taking part and they will learn while working with more experienced craftspeople (Interview with author, March 9, 2022).

Image 19: Hermes Reis at *Quintal das Artes*

Carnaval, he says, is about being inventive with what you have at hand. He tells me that because of his long-standing reputation in making things for *Carnaval*, everyone on the island knows that he can create anything. This has resulted in people and businesses coming to him to make all kinds of things, providing a lot of work when he is not working on *Carnaval* (Interview with author, March 9, 2022). While talking to Hermes it became clear that it is not only ideas that are joined and juxtaposed to form the thematic compositions, the same goes for the use of materials. In order to construct the various components of the allegorical cars and costumes, Hermes and his team have to continually balance what is available—such as salvaged bits-and-pieces from a previous carnival—and what needs to be constructed anew. As an example, Hermes shows me a feather he made from recycled materials. He tells me that because of the strong Samba influence from Brazil, the costumes require a lot of feathers. Some will spend lots of money to buy feathers but mostly, he says, they make these feathers from paper and what is available (Interview with author, March 9, 2022).

It is evident that he prefers the recycled feathers over the 'real' feathers. *Carnaval* construction, in this sense, is not just about competing on the world-stage, in other words, achieving international standards, but more so about showing your ability to invent and create from what is available. I got the sense that this is the same reason why Hermes do not like the idea of a formal school for *Carnaval*—it's about working with what you have,

whether it is your innate abilities, materials, or ideas. Talking to Hermes, it seemed to me, that it is this transformative quality that is at the heart of *Carnaval* as cultural expression—it provides the conditions in which to transform; to amalgamate whatever is at hand. This amalgamation happens not in a single 'domain', e.g. not just ideas joined with ideas, but rather exists as transformations across different layers of expression.. I noted the ideas of 'effort', 'transformation', and 'amalgamation'.

2.5.5 Effort and Decay

I met Joao Brito in a salvage yard in Monte Sossego for a follow-up interview. Mixed in-between scrap metal and shipping containers are giant heads resting against a wall, a white horse—galloping nowhere—and numerous parts of characters and figures in different states of decay (Image 20).

Image 20: *Carnaval* Artefacts in the Monte Sossego Salvage Yard

In the middle of the salvage yard is an allegorical car still on its chassis: a witch, a baby behind a blue gate, and a big gesturing hand (Image 21). Joao tells me this is from a previous *Carnaval*. "This car is about mythology, a story about witches who eat babies". He points to various details explaining the significance of ropes, a particular oil, and aloe vera to repel witches. Pointing to the hand, he says: "people also used to make the symbol

with their fingers to symbolise that witches are unwanted in your presence" (Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 9, 2022).

Image 21: Detail from the 'Baby-Eating Witch' Allegorical Car

Joao adds that "it is like a myth but some people do really belief it", and then, showing me the gate he says "here you see the gate with the number 1888, that is the number that is on the cemetery here…this is basically almost the same gate that is used here in the cemetery, the gates where they bury people here in Mindelo" (Interview with author, March 9, 2022). The gate is so accurately re-created that its style and materials differ considerably from the rest of the allegorical car (Image 22). This localises the source of the witches and brings these mythical figures into direct contact with the lives and narratives of those in Mindelo; not unlike the 'Moby-Dick' and 'Atlantis' compositions mentioned before.

This image of the cemetery gate that stylistically seemed to *not belong* to the rest of the allegorical car while still being an essential part of this composition that interweaves the mythical, historical, and the 'actual', stayed with me long after Joao told me about it. I noted the *non-belonging* of the gate, but it was in fact the part that belonged the most, or at least had the shortest distance to travel to belong to Mindelo. It emphasised, for me, the distances that things travel to be part of—to belong—to this neighbourhood's

presentation of themselves, and how these distances may be measured according to how 'far' or 'close' things are in the sense of geographic, historical, and/or memory distances. It also highlighted the role of selection in shaping this presentation of communal identity, and how the various components, and thus various 'distances' are mixed together in order to bind, albeit momentarily, these various strands into a single expression.

Image 22: (Left) Gate Detail from 'Baby-Eating Witch' Allegorical Car. (Right) Mindelo Cemetery Gate

At the same time, it occurred to me, how often it was mentioned that it requires a lot of effort to construct the allegorical cars, and make the costumes, and rehearse the performances. As To Cruz and Joao Brito explains: "There is kind of a pain that comes with organising *Carnaval*, because you sacrifice your soul and all that you have into the making of *Carnaval*" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). I wondered if this *effort* is the element that pulls and holds it all together? The more I thought about it, the more it became apparent that as much as conceptualising the theme traverses various distances to bring ideas together, it is *communal effort* that composes the expression and bring it into concrete reality.

Returning to the salvage yard, Joao, visibly emotional, says: "Seeing the pieces thrown here to degration is kind of sad", he adds: "because not everything can be re-used anymore…" (Interview with author, March 9, 2022). Joao mentioned before that it would be nice to have a kind-of-museum to store and show *Carnaval* artefacts. Even in saying this, I can tell he is aware of how close-to-impossible that would be, especially

considering the size and fragility of these objects. *Carnaval* costumes do, on the odd occasion, make it to museums, but the allegorical cars are simply too big and too brittle.

From my observations above it seemed at the time, as it does now, that the decaying of artefacts are as much part of *Carnaval* as their construction. Allesandro Falassi, already in 1987, suggested that the primary function of a festival is to renew "the life stream of a community" (In Riggio 2004: 4). This is done by both surrendering and claiming aspects of culture. Here among the decaying artefacts, I found a very real example of what Falassi explains, but with the emphasis on surrendering—*renunciation*. In re-constructing and re-imagining a communal identity (a culture, in Falassi's words), it implies, to an extent, a falling apart, a decomposition of what was before. This is also reflected in Ghassan Hage's work, where he explains that decay and decomposition is part of the process of regeneration (2021: 5). *This [Carnaval] is not a museum*, I noted to myself (implying a very general and perhaps archaic notion of museum as something that preserves and protects the old); it is not about holding onto what was before, instead, in a characteristic *creole* way, it is about unearthing and enlivening various aspects of the community's life stream; a living thing not aimed at achieving permanent idealised forms, but rather a community that is free to continually re-imagine and regenerate themselves as much as the artefacts are free to decay and fall apart.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework: Performance, *Creolization*, and Material Culture

This chapter provides an overview of the main theoretical notions that informed my broader understanding of carnival and guided my analysis of *Carnaval Soncent's* allegorical cars.

I start by looking at how Roger Abrahams (1983; 2011), Dorothy Noyes (2003), and Jack Santino (2017) make sense of festivals as public display events. Here I highlight their emphasis on festivals as constructed group experiences that are rooted in a mix of ritualesque and carnivalesque elements. I then briefly consider Mikhail Bakhtin's early definition of carnival-as-inversion to contextualize how Richard Schechner (2003; 2013) and Milla Riggio (2003) redefine this notion to position carnival as a cultural activity that affirms a community. Abrahams, Schechner (in his more recent work) and Riggio focused their research on cultural expressions in *Creole* societies. This is of particular importance as Cabo Verde is a *Creole* society. To understand what is meant by the label *Creole*, especially as it relates to broader expressive practices, I focus on how Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara (2011) position *creolization* as a form of cultural creativity.

To link these more general understandings of carnival to the more specific processes that bring allegorical cars into and out of being, I focus on theoretical discussions that highlight the biography—agency along a life history—of material artefacts. This leads me to a discussion of the central theoretical model of my analysis, James Skibo and Michael Schiffer's behavioural approach to material culture (2008). Their model provides a precise way to consider the various performances that a material artefact requires and inspires along its various life stages.

I conclude by considering how Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's *conceptual blending* may compliment Skibo and Schiffer's performance-based model as an analytical framework from which to consider and describe the interconnectedness between the allegorical cars' construction and decay processes.

3.1 Folklore Studies and Festivals

Folklore, as a scholarly field, studies a broad range of expressive practices and forms (Abrahams 2011; Bendix and Hasan-Rokem 2012a). Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem mention *festivals* as a typical example of an expressive practice that is commonly associated with folklore and goes on to say that "folklore research unfolds as a multifaceted array of learning, best understood when many views, perspectives, and experiences are combined" (2012b: 1). I will trace here some of the general views related to festivals as an expressive form, paying particular attention to those perspectives that elucidate the purposes and functions of carnival as a specific expressive practice.

Broadly categorised, festivals are *public display events* (Abrahams 2011; Santino 2017). Within this category, Jack Santino points out that festival celebrations, especially of the carnival-type are often contrasted with ritual ceremonies even though they have many overlaps (2017: Introduction[5]). These contrasts position festivals as events that function as a means to step out of daily-life, as an enactment of social discontinuity that is characterised by various kinds of excesses, amplifications, and reversals, or as Dorothy Noyes states: "a space of licence and inversion in which criticism may take place, resentment may be vented, and alternatives may be imagined" (2003: 6). Rituals, on the other hand, are often assigned the function of re-enforcing and supporting the life process, as an act of establishing continuity and bringing, or holding, together the order of a group or society (Schechner 2004; Santino, 2017; Abrahams 2011; Turner 1995). Already early on, Roger Abrahams stated that this distinction is not sufficient for thinking about festival performances. Instead, he suggests that as a performance complex, festival performance "operates neither as an aesthetic alternative to life nor as a direct reflection of reality, but as a stylized rendering of some of the central expressive practices and moral concerns of the group" (1983: 98). Abrahams made his observations based on extensive fieldwork in Afro-Caribbean Creole communities, where he paralleled celebrations such as Christmas and Carnival to illustrate how they act, in accord, as indexes of the motives, ideals, and values of a community (Abrahams, 1983: 106). In his later work, he points out that festivals are play activities that "incorporate elements of the serious life, deploying attention-grabbing objects in the central place of gathering" (2005: Celebrations) as a

[5] I use this citation style to refer to sections of an online book where there are no page numbers available.

means for a group to reflect on their shared past, present, and future. The group, he says, often emphasises the overall experience of the event instead of specific aspects of the festivities, leading Abrahams to suggest that the broader category of events should be described and analysed in terms of 'experience' (2011: Events/Experiences).

Abrahams makes an important distinction between experience that arises directly from the flow of life, "with little or no preparation" (2011: Events/Experiences), and experience that is planned and prepared for. He says: "The greater the degree of self-conscious preparation and stylization, the more the experience may be shared, but also the higher the risk that the prepared quality of the event will be regarded as restricting rather than liberating" (2011:Events/Experiences). This statement holds a lot of value for this study of *Carnaval Soncent*, not only placing emphasis on the organisational restrictions that act on a shared experience that is perceived to be liberating, but also, and more importantly, placing emphasis on the preparation, in the form of communal effort, required to bring the event, and thus the shared experience, into being.

Dorothy Noyes, with reference to *The Patum,* a Catalonian festival she categorises as a folk drama of encounter and combat ending in some mode of reconciliation (2003: 6), also brings to the fore the ideas of shared experience and participation as a key factor of festivals as an expressive form. This provides a strong link to the notion of 'communal effort' which forms a central part of the argument I develop in the following chapters. Added to this, Noyes makes an important distinction between 'group' and 'community' by saying that the former emerges through regular interaction to reveal the latter. She states: "The display event model presumes a larger society of complex linkages within which boundaries are regularly drawn and redrawn. Performance, sanctioned and unsanctioned, becomes a key means of boundary construction and maintenance" (2003: 13). Noyes' view reflects some of the key dynamics of *Carnaval Soncent* as a competitively-structured display event where performances are 'sanctioned' by organisational forces that shape boundaries while also providing the means for groups to emerge through a number of directed interactions.

Santino, expanding on Abrahams, suggests that public display events utilise both ritualesque and carnivalesque behaviour. He positions ritualesque behaviour as instrumental and symbolic, with the aim of transforming, in a more permanent sense, a

group of people, where carnivalesque behaviour highlights the expressive and temporary aspects of the display event (Santino 2017: From Carnivalesque to Ritualesque). For Santino, it is not about the event being either ritual or carnival, but rather a combination of both. If we combine this with Abrahams' statement on preparation and stylization, we might say that the specific mix or dynamic of carnivalesque and ritualesque behaviour, of a specific public display event, informs its preparation and stylization. By extension, as Noyes suggests, this gives rise to the interactions through which the group emerge.

From a descriptive and analytical point of view, if we invert this idea, it suggests that we should then be able to identify, or locate, the unique mix of carnivalesque and ritualesque elements in the way the event is prepared as well as in the types of artefacts it requires and thus produces. Taken further, stylization, as Abrahams defines it, can then be said to occupy a space between direct representation and reinforcement of reality (the ritualesque) and its alternative (the carnivalesque). Stylization then becomes, in this sense, representative of an in-between reality—a festival specific reality—that is expressed in terms of a combination of the ritualesque and the carnivalesque. This *in-between* is prepared and planned for and is thus a constructed experience, created by a group that emerges from the interactions of mixing the carnivalesque with the ritualesque.

3.1.1 Ritual and 'Submitting Together'

The above clarifies multiple intertwined views on carnival and its contested relationship with ritual, so much so that it is necessary to look, at least in brief, at how ritual is defined. Ritual, and thus the ritualesque, is a rich and complex field of study with a number of influential thinkers that are all potentially valuable for the study of carnival. I focus here primarily on Victor Turner's (1995) view on the ritual process as his work has to some extent influenced the work of Richard Schechner.

Ritual, for Victor Turner, is intricately linked with the notion of the in-between, or the 'liminal' (1995: 94). Following Arnold Van Gennep (1960), he describes ritual progression as separation from the everyday flow of activities, through a threshold state, into a ritual world removed from everyday notions of time and space where the structures

of everyday life are both elaborated and challenged before re-entry into the everyday world takes place (1995: 94-96). Turner, quite significantly considering the discussion on carnival above, places emphasis on the socially subversive and ritually inversive acts that take place during the liminal state. Turner thus assigns to ritual the very characteristics that are typically assigned to carnival, suggesting again this intricate link between ritual and carnival as proposed by both Abrahams (1983; 2011) and Santino (2017). Turner studied a range of rituals performed by the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia, focusing particularly on *rites of passage*—a term rooted in Arnold Van Gennep's work. Based on extensive observations of these rituals he developed the idea of 'communitas': a homogeneous state where "equal individuals…submit together" (1995: 96) to unify as a group. Turner's communitas, a term borrowed from Martin Buber, reflects Emile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence: an experience, outside of individual routine, when a shared purpose unifies a group to re-generate society (Miller 2012: 1899-1907). In Turner's case, this collective effervescence is brought by the ritual process unfolding within a controlled environment. Turner places communitas, as "anti-structure" (Bell 2009: 40), in a dialectic relationship with 'structured' social order as a differentiated hierarchical system (Turner 1995; Bell 2009: 40). Communitas, for Turner, is however not void of structure or hierarchy, instead it is a state with rudimentary structure and thus a higher degree of homogeneity, and where, significantly, the individuals, now largely equalised, still submit "to the general authority of ritual elders" (1995: 96). Communitas according to Turner is the *recognition* of an "essential and generic human bond, and, reflecting Durkheim, without which there could be no society (1995: 97). Or, as Catherine Bells explains, an anti-structure that comes about through ritual that both "affirms social order while facilitating disordered inversions of that order" (2009: 40).

3.1.2 Bakhtin's Lingering Influence

Taking a step back, both Abrahams and Santino are responding to a base assumption that carnival is somehow ineffectively positioned in opposition to ritual. This base assumption is rooted in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1984; Renfrew 2015), who, based primarily on readings of carnival spectacles during the middle ages and renaissance, positioned carnival as an event where "life was suspended or turned upside-down";

something nonofficial that acted as a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order" (Bakhtin 1984: 10). It is from Bakhtin's influential writings that carnival became associated so strongly with reversals and excesses; as something that inverts and opposes official feasts where the emphasis falls on rank, hierarchies, and the display of merits. It must be noted, however, that Bakhtin did not create a separation between carnival and ritual, instead referring to carnival as a "ritual spectacle" (1984: 5). He did, however, establish a clear distinction between official and unofficial events, contrasting "folk festivities of the carnival type" with the "serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture" (1984: 4). It is from this influence (Riggio 2004: para.1) that carnival, over time, acquired such strong associations with that which is wholly frivolous, excessive, inverse, and absurd. Richard Schechner explains, in an aptly-titled chapter: *Carnival (theory) after Bakhtin*, that Bakhtin based his insights on carnival in context of a stratified and non-democratic society where "authority can be suspended or set aside temporarily" (Schechner in Riggio 2004: 3). He goes on to ask: "If people believe that they are collectively sovereign, then against whom is carnival staged? From what overall authority is carnival a relief?" (Schechner in Riggio 2004: 3). It is in answering this question, that Riggio, in the context of the Trinidad Carnival, suggests a redefinition of carnival based "on the values and sense of community that it affirms" (2004: para.1) instead of the social hierarchies it inverts or challenges.

Bakhtin, however, is worth revisiting as his ideas are much more nuanced than simply placing carnival as inversion and rebellion against a formal social order. He established many notions that hold true for contemporary studies of carnival and for *Carnaval Soncent* in particular. Bakhtin wrote: "Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (1984: 10), and, quite significant for this study, he added that carnival is "the experience opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretence at immutability, sought a dynamic expression: it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms" (1984: 11). Bakhtin's words have a remarkable resemblance to what Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara write about creolization as cultural creativity in process: "creole forms are never static" (2011: 4), instead they are "fluid in their adaptation…and open to multiple meanings" (2011: 3).

3.2 Creolization

Creolization refers to the blending of elements from different cultural communities to create new expressive forms. It emerged in *Creole* societies as a means to produce alternative expressions to hegemonically imposed "colonial powers and elite cultural forces" (Baron and Cara 2011b: 6; Rupert 2012: Introduction). *Creole* societies include, for instance, Trinidad in the Caribbean as well as Afro-Brazilian peoples in Brazil. Creolization, as an expressive form, is characterised by "reversals, carnivalization, improvisation, mimicry, obfuscation, double-talk, feigned submission, and many other maneuvers, tactics, and schemes designed to steal power away from "top-down" monolithic impositions" (Baron and Cara 2011b: 5). Rooted in a desire to creatively respond to various forms of repression, creolization "brings together the old and the new" (Baron and Cara 2011b: 5) to revise and transform the expressive potential of imposed structures into local variations that are representative, and controlled by, the suppressed. As a result of these processes of revision and transformation, creolization often sustains multiple divergent and, at time, contradicting, streams of simultaneous expression (Baron and Cara 2011b: 17).

It is within similar conditions that *Carnaval Soncent* emerged as a cultural expression, and perhaps more importantly, through which its expressive dynamic was, and is, continually shaped. As Abrahams states, with reference to creolization, "Carnival and similar *Creole* festivals in the New World are infused with historical memory, as 'serious play' that incorporates revelry along with the replaying of formative events and foundational stories" (In Baron and Cara 2011b: 17). Abrahams' statement highlights an important consideration when thinking of creolization as cultural creativity: it was formed in suppressive conditions and thus retains these suppressive historical memories. It, however, and this is what Riggio responds to above, has freed itself from suppression through various paths of independence, resulting in creole forms shaped by conditions different from the ones from within which they originated.

Creolization then, as I understand it, reaches back into history—into suppressive memories—as much as it takes what is new and available—whatever it may encounter—and blends this together into the now. Within this *reaching back* it *reaches forward*, to, as I will argue later, free itself from certain aspects of the past by allowing aspects of what

was before to be dissipated into the now. In this way, *Carnaval*, as a *Creole* expression, entangles in order to detangle, both the material and immaterial of the past and the present, to generate multi-vocal expressions of communal identity that is creatively adapted, or revised, from what is at hand.

3.2.1 Expressive Forms in Cabo Verde

In terms of expressive culture, Cabo Verde is mostly known for its various music and dance related forms that combine African, Portuguese, and Brazilian influences (Hurley-Glowa 2021: 71; Manuel 1988). As Susan Hurley-Glowa states: "Music and dance play key roles in Cabo Verdean culture as part of community life and they help to keep transglobal diaspora populations connected" (2021: 51). Because of the value assigned to these rich and varied musical traditions, most research related to expressive culture in Cabo Verde emphasises one or more of these forms. Of these, *Morna*, considered the national music of Cabo Verde, is the most notable.

In addition, all islands in the archipelago host a range of traditional festivals (Rodrigues n.d.: 30). The oldest continuous festival is *Tabanka*, a religious ritual that mixes Catholic and West African practices and beliefs (Rodrigues n.d.: 30). *Tabanka* appear in scholarly research more often than the other festivals. On *Carnaval* traditions in Cabo Verde, however, there seem to be very little research, especially in English. Even publications that consider carnival traditions in general, more often than not, do not refer to *Carnaval* traditions in Cabo Verde. The only research I could find that focuses specifically on *Carnaval Soncent* is Carmo Daun e Lorena's PhD dissertation: *Classe, Memória e Identidade Em Cabo Verde: Uma Etnografia Do Carnaval de São Vicente* (Class, Memory and Identity in Cape Verde: An Ethnography of the Carnival of São Vicente) (2018). Her work is based on extensive fieldwork in Mindelo and illustrates how the expressive practices of *Carnaval Soncent* reflect the social dynamics of the São Vicente community.

More specifically, on allegorical cars I could find no research which motivated me to keep this as my focus.

3.3 Material Culture

The allegorical car, being first and foremost a material artefact, guided my initial theoretical exploration in the direction of material culture. Material culture within folklore studies refers to the study of "everyday interaction with objects" (Löfgren 2012: 169) or as Henry Glassie states "uses objects to approach human thought and action" (1999: 44). As a broad area of study that, according to Christopher Tilley et al., is "among the most dynamic and wide-ranging areas of contemporary scholarship in the human sciences" (2006: 1), I focused my attention on those concepts of materiality that would help clarify how people act on and around the allegorical car, but also how it acts on and around people. This led me to Janet Hoskins' discussion on the agency and biography of objects (2006), in which she discusses how, through early influences from Arjun Appadurai, "things can be said to have social lives" (2006: 74). It is also from this article that I discovered Alfred Gell and Susanne Küchler's work on the *malanggan* from Papa New Guinea, which helped shape my understanding of how the communal making and display of objects can be viewed as visualised memories that are publicly transacted (2006: 77). Key to the discussion on how the *malanggan* function as social actors is the idea that they are valued because they detach memories (2006: 78). Hoskins' article was crucial in connecting my thoughts on how the processes of construction, display, and decay of the allegorical cars function as material and immaterial entanglements, and also provided me with an initial consideration of how the allegorical car can be viewed as a 'technology'.

It is from this object-as-technology interest that I found James Skibo and Michael Schiffer's behavioural approach to material culture (2008). Skibo and Schiffer was instrumental in developing behavioural archaeology: a theoretical approach, first published in 1975, aimed at expanding the scope of archaeological studies by more fully considering the relationship between material culture and human behaviour (Schiffer et al. 1975). Important is that Skibo and Schiffer position material culture as changing technologies that reveal the intangible processes that it facilitates. For them, technology consists of three overlapping dimensions: artefacts, processes, and knowledge (Skibo and Schiffer 2008; Schiffer 2010). From the perspective of the artefact, Skibo and Schiffer differentiate between utilitarian, social, and symbolic functions, as a means to identify how a specific artefact 'performs' across its behavioural chain (2008: 9). Although their model originated from archaeological studies, their emphasis on an object's behavioural

chain—or life history—stemmed from the same general development of locating the sociality of objects within their biography (Hoskins 2006). Based on this, Skibo and Schiffer's performance-based approach highlights the object itself—the material—as the starting point to develop an understanding of how the artefact gains symbolic meaning within a social context. They explain that "utilitarian choices are embedded in a social and symbolic system" (2008: 11) and that the technical choices related to an artefact's required behavioural capabilities facilitate social interactions: performances through which meaning is created and shared.

Carnaval, as a public display event, inspires a range of social, symbolic, and utilitarian interactions that span, what Santino (2017: From Carnivalesque to Ritualesque) calls, carnivalesque and ritualesque behaviours. Skibo and Schiffer's performance-based model compliments Santino's carnivalesque and ritualesque dynamics, extending these expressions to both the artefact and its processes of coming into and out of being. This provides an ideal framework from which to study the allegorical car, as carnival artefact, across its construction and decay processes.

3.3.1 Materiality and Re-Use

Skibo and Schiffer's model highlights the material qualities of the artefact as the starting for inquiries into both tangible and intangible processes. This reflects what Tim Ingold (2000; 2013), with reference to archaeological and anthropological studies on material culture, suggests, when he states that research has over-emphasized the form and meaning of artefacts, instead of their materiality. He calls for a 'softening' of the differentiation between the material and the meaning, and positions 'all things' as being in a perpetual state of *becoming* and *un-becoming* (2013: 222). This is a valuable point of view for locating the function of the allegorical car within its processes of material becoming and unbecoming, especially as the allegorical car is a temporary artefact that requires considerable effort to come into existence. Embedded in the allegorical car is thus an accentuated becoming and unbecoming that is rooted in construction methods that rely on communal craft processes and the use of recycled materials.

Considering this, a more concrete way to engage with the materiality of the artefact, in terms of becoming and unbecoming, is to look at the notions of *recycling* and *re-use*. Beth Preston defines 'recycling' as a type of 're-use' that use of existing materials to create new forms (2000: 36). To phrase this according to Skibo and Schiffer's model, the function of an artefact, when considered from a re-use perspective, takes on an additional performance characteristic: being 'recyclable'.

This notion of 'recyclability' is essential for considering the relationship between the construction—materials and processes—and decay of the allegorical cars. By highlighting the materials, and how they are transformed, one can potentially identify how the notion of 're-use' directs the process of making and thus becomes part of the expression and understanding of cultural identity.

Making relates to craft practices, the allegorical car coming into being through community-based craft processes. This calls for a consideration of craft studies, where Anna Kouhia points out that "being part of material culture, crafts are inescapably incorporated into wider social discourses" and have "the ability to bring people together around shared experiences" (2012: 26). This 'bringing together' creates a space where individual experiences are joined into expressions of collective value (Kouhia 2012: 26). Maarit Mäkelä & Riika Latva-Somppi point out that craft can be used as a reflective tool to construct narratives based on historical contexts (2011). This holds true for the allegorical cars, especially those that express moments of Cabo Verdean history. Taken together, if specific creative production processes, in this case related to the allegorical cars, have a strong presence of the notion of 're-use', it suggests that the nature of reflection and construction of narratives that are being produced have 're-use' embedded within them. In other words, 're-use' is not a factor outside of the narrative being constructed, instead it forms, potentially, an essential aspect of the wider social discourse of which the artefact is part.

3.3.2 Decomposition and Decay

Ghassan Hage (2021) explains that decay is both temporal and spatial as it is something that happens in a place and over time. He explains that when decay happens at an unusual rhythm, either too fast or too slow (out of time), or if it happens where it is not supposed to (out of place), then we become aware of it as a pathological expression (2021: 2) It is this pathological occurrence that creates negative associations relative to the processes of decay. If, however, as Hage suggests, we look at decay from a multiscalar perspective, we may start to notice that decay is not just a uniformly "downhill process of disintegration" (2021: 5). With this in mind, he further suggests we add the notion of 'scale' to the analytical dimensions of 'time' and 'space' in order to identify how particular expressions of decay may in fact be part of a larger regeneration process (2021: 6). By considering scale, one analytically shifts between micro and macro levels to identify how these changes in viewpoints affect the object of observation. This is a useful approach to locate the allegorical cars both within their micro processes of 'falling apart' after carnival-day as well as within the broader, macro, expression of *Carnaval Soncent* as a repeating event. Interestingly, Ghassan Hage makes a direct allusion to carnival and decay, reminding us that "Ash Wednesday…marks a day of ensuring that believers remember that they exist in decaying bodies, that they are 'of dust and to dust they will return'" (2021: 2).

By considering both the micro and macro expressions of decay, it becomes easier to identify how the allegorical cars are part of the regenerative function that Falassi (1987: 3, quoted in Riggio 2004: 4) ascribes to festivals in general. This consideration also shifts the analytical focus further along the allegorical cars' behavioural chain (Skibo and Schiffer 2003), allowing a more inclusive description of their expressive functions.

3.4 Conceptual blending

I turn now to the last, slightly anomalous, component of my theoretical considerations: Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's *conceptual blending* (2003). While explaining the 'Cacao-Farming' allegorical car (which I analyse in Chapter 5), Joao pointed to the ocean

squeezed between the drought and farming landscapes. This mass of water, visually compressed, captured, for me, more than any other single element, the expressive potential of the allegorical cars and immediately brought to mind Fauconnier and Turner's concepts of *conceptual compression* and *meaning potential*. I had been looking for a way to discuss the conceptual content of the allegorical car's composition relative to the processes that bring it into and out of being, and the more I considered Skibo and Schiffer's model, the more I found Fauconnier and Turner's concepts a useful addition.

Conceptual blending developed from Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (2003) and Gilles Fauconnier's mental spaces theory (1994) to account for how meaning emerges when combining different conceptual domains into a single meaning-construct. Conceptual blending identifies vital relations such as *space*, *time*, *change*, *cause-effect*, and *identity* as the key elements that are conceptually compressed, or blended, to express complex ideas at human scale (2003: 92). A blend is accounted for using an integration network which consists of diagrammatically visualizing input spaces, cross-space mappings, a generic space, and finally the blend itself. Input spaces are mental spaces that hold the conceptual structure of the ideas being integrated. Similar elements are mapped together using a generic space before the emergent meaning is accounted for, or projected to, the blended space (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). Important to note is that not all elements and relations from the input mental spaces are projected, giving rise to what Fauconnier and Turner call selective projection (2003: 72). Selective projection is related to how certain communication elements are highlighted, or selected, while others are de-emphasised based on the communication context and the background knowledge of those participating in the communicative act.

The blending process consists of three stages: composition, completion, and elaboration (2003: 42-44). Composition refers to elements from the input spaces being projected together in a blended space. Completion is the filling out of a conceptual pattern based on pre-existing related information in long-term memory. Elaboration is a mental simulation of scenarios related to the blended conceptual structure (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). The three stages of blending provide a way to consider how vital relations are compressed as a dynamic process of meaning-making, providing a framework from which to consider how meaning is constructed through interpretation.

3.4.1 'Charging' and 'Releasing' Meaning Potential

Conceptual blending provides a conceptual vocabulary to describe how intangible—cognitive—processes are both embedded in, and interpreted from, the material composition of the allegorical car. This provides a way to link the content analysis of the allegorical compositions with the processes that bring it into and out of being.

The notions of selection, compression, and composition are valuable in making the link between the intangibility of reflecting on a theme and the physical material construction of the allegorical car as "material anchor" (Oakley and Pascal 2017: 427) that holds the composition in place. This holding in place relates to what I call 'charging' the allegorical car with meaning potential and accounts for how ideas and communal effort materialise through activities of making. Further, conceptual blending's account of how meaning is elaborated based on both personal and shared background knowledge provides a way to consider how the 'charged' allegorical car releases its meaning along various overlapping meaning-making paths.

Chapter 4

Competitive Group Dynamics in *Carnaval Soncent*

To provide context for the analysis that follows in Chapter 5, I will briefly consider the competitive group dynamics in *Carnaval Soncent*. I use Richard Schechner's suggestion that "Carnival is financially, artistically, and conceptually supported from the bottom up and from the top down" (In Riggio 2004: 4), and that both these 'systems'—top-down and bottom-up—should be taken into consideration when considering the dynamics of a specific carnival.

He makes this suggestion as an addition to Allesandro Falassi's statement that "the primary and most general function of the festival [carnival] is to renounce and then to announce culture, to renew periodically the life stream of a community by creating new energy" (Falassi 1987: 3, quoted in Riggio 2004: 4). Schechner and Falassi's statements, taken together, suggests that the interaction of the top-down and bottom-up systems provide the 'energy' for carnival to de-construct and re-construct the culture in question.

This renewal, to complete Falassi's statement, requires "all the basic behavioral modalities of daily social life" (Falassi 1987: 3, quoted in Riggio 2004: 4) to be present in carnival. Carnival in this sense is not something separate or disconnected from daily social dynamics, instead it holds and reflects the same social layers as the everyday, while allowing for various symbolic expressions, modifications, and intensifications. Although the emphasis of my research is not on the socio-economic aspects of *Carnaval Soncent*, it is a useful dynamic to be aware of; as Schechner's statement suggests: the financial, artistic, and conceptual are interrelated (In Riggio: 4) and should thus form part of discussions on how carnival artefacts are materialized.

4.1 Formal Competition as the Dominant Top-Down Dynamic

For *Carnaval Soncent*, several formal groups, informal groups, and individual participants take to the streets of Mindelo on Shrove Tuesday. I will focus my discussion

on the formal competitive groups (Table 5) as the primary organising mechanism that reveal the dominant top-down dynamic of *Carnaval Soncent*. This is not to say that there are not multiple nested top-down and bottom-up dynamics, rather, it's a way to locate the competitive components, especially the allegorical cars, within the broader expression of *Carnaval*.

The formal groups are part of, and managed by, the official organising collective called *Liga Independente dos Grupos Oficiais do Carnaval de São Vicente* (LIGOCSV). This group was formed in 2018, by the key members from the already established competitive groups, to better organise and manage *Carnaval Soncent,* and to make the event more visible and appealing on the world-stage (LIGOCSV). What sets the formal groups apart from the rest is that they compete for several prizes, including best allegorical car.

Group:	***Founded:***
Estrela do Mar	1974
Flores do Mindelo	1978
Monte Sossego	1984
Cruzeiros do Norte	1984
Vindos do Oriente	-
Samba Tropical *(Formal but non-competitive)*	1988

Table 5: Formal / Competitive Groups of *Carnaval Soncent* (LIGOCSV)

Competition is thus the central top-down dynamic (Riggio 2004: 4) that provides the general and repeatable structure and dictates the overall shape of *Carnaval Soncent* as a public display event (Abrahams 1983; Santino 2017). In this way, the prizes, awarded by an anonymous panel of judges, determines which artefacts and performances will be developed by the groups.

Related to this top-down mechanism of competition is the financial support from the local municipality which, in 2020, was around 3 million escudos (27 000 euros) per competitive group. The average salary in Mindelo in 2022 was estimated at 280

euros/month. The funding provided thus equates to salaries for 96 people for one month. Considering that *Carnaval* takes approximately three months of active communal work to develop, it is clear to see why additional group-specific financing initiatives as well as personal investment is needed to realize a group's *Carnaval* vision. That being said, the winners of *Carnaval* are awarded prize money, so, to some extent, the various sources of finance could be seen as an investment.

4.2 Neighbourhood-Based Group Members as the Bottom-Up System

Moving from this top-down view to an in-group bottom-up perspective, the competitive groups represent specific neighborhoods, mainly in and around Mindelo, but also from other parts of São Vicente. Each group consists of between 1000 and 2000 members (Valdir Brito and Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022), with the majority of group members acting as dancers and performers, while the rest of the group is tasked with creating costumes, constructing a range of artefacts, or fulfilling various supporting roles.

Outside of the competitive groups, there are of course the added dynamics of the informal groups and the individual participants that make up the most significant bottom-up dynamic, but this is not within the scope of my research, so I will place as the central expressive tension, and for the sake of discussion, the organising committee (LIGOCSV), along with the group directors, as the main top-down actors and the neighborhood-based members of the formal groups as the actors representative of a micro bottom-up expression within this dominant top-down dynamic. I would like to add, that while referring to a top-down or bottom-up dynamic, neither of these should be seen as inherently better, or more 'right' than the other, it should thus not be interpreted as a value judgement, instead, it provides the basic organising dynamic from which to describe cultural expression and identity negotiations, in and around *Carnaval Soncent*.

It should further be noted that there is a choice in participating either as an individual (positioned outside of any group-type structure) or to form or be part of, an informal group, or to be part of one of the formal competitive groups. This is an important aspect to consider from both a descriptive and an analytical point of view because it questions

why an individual would choose to be part of a top-down system where their actions are dictated and/or guided by directors. Being part of the group of crafts people making an allegorical car thus relates to a specific choice within the overall nested top-down and bottom-up dynamics of *Carnaval Soncent* and defines a particular role of occupying one of the micro bottom-up positions within the dominant top-down dynamic of a competitive group.

4.3 Competition and Thematic Direction

The roles and activities of the members are structured around the competitive elements and more specifically guided by the group's chosen theme, e.g., in 2017 Grupo Monte Sossego chose the theme 'Route of the Emigrants' (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The themes are group-specific and different each year. This multi-themed dynamic provides a lot of expressive variety, especially considered across the history of *Carnaval* as an ongoing cultural expression. More significantly perhaps, is the large number of São Vicente locals that are engaged, through *Carnaval*, in thinking about, planning, and performing these self-descriptive and identity-affirming themes.

The theme thus provides the creative and conceptual direction for developing the competitive elements and should be seen as the primary top-down influence that shapes the overall trajectory of *Carnaval Soncent*. This top-down imposition of the theme is not without an awareness of the bottom-up responsibility it includes, as Valdir Brito, creative director of the Monte Sossego Group, states: "We take into consideration the tastes and preferences of the public… we want them to like it… *Carnaval*, it's a major responsibility" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). This suggests a reciprocal relationship where the group directors are aware of their responsibility to represent their neighbourhood in the best way possible, while the group members look to the top-down structure for direction, and to channel their communal effort.

The above provides a very basic insight into the basic top-down and bottom-up dynamics of *Carnaval Soncent*. Schechner, with reference to a top-down view, points out that carnival is a cultural product with great market value and is thus too "valuable to let run

free" (Riggio 2004: 5). It is from an awareness of this 'value' that top-down systems such as the LIGOC-SV emerge. LIGOC-SV, with its aim of making *Carnaval Soncent* more marketable as an international event, can be seen as imposing the 'world' onto *Carnaval,* it is thus primarily outward-facing as an expression aimed at attracting the attention of the rest of the world, and in the process creating a more marketable 'product' and generating a larger economic income/return. This, of course, points to a financial dimension which I will not address in my research, but it is good to be aware of this pressure even when talking about the construction and expression of cultural identity. The neighbourhood-based group members fulfill a more inward-facing function that could be ascribed to a type of self-reflexivity. As Mic Dax, a Mindelo resident and *Carnaval* enthusiast, states: "The people of Mindelo do *Carnaval* first for themselves, then for others" (Dax 2023). Because the group members are functioning within the top-down structure imposed on them, they work towards a shared outward-facing expression but this does not mean that there is no inward-facing value as the process of constructing *Carnaval* requires reflexive creative engagement in the form of community effort. In a similar inverse way, the group directors, even though they have a predominantly outward-facing emphasis are also working for, and are aware of, the neighbourhood who they represent. The way in which these two organising directions interact provides the potential for *Carnaval Soncent* to express.

We can note from the above that the competitive aspect is the main organising mechanism of *Carnaval Soncent*. This provides the overall shape of the event and dictate the activities needed to realize the event. The competition requires certain components to be in place and these components are united around a chosen theme. The components, guided by the theme, bring the group members together and provide the 'space' in which expression can take place. This expression is aimed both outward and increasingly more towards an international audience as well as inwards as a reflexive practice of Cabo Verdeans looking to themselves for shaping their own communal identity.

4.4 Creative Tensions

To summarise the above, in Schechner's words: "From the top-down perspective, carnival is celebratory but not rebellious" (In Riggio 2004: 10). The *Carnaval* authorities act as official instruments that "permits and encourages" controlled and guided expression, as a type of channeled play. In this view, the celebratory controlled play and the rebellious play are two modes of performance that need each other; they create an ongoing creative tension. Within the competitive groups there exists the tension between the group directors (who are also members of the official organising committee) and the neighbourhood members who, under guidance of the directors, create the *Carnaval* artefacts. This provide an in-group creative tension between those who take responsibility for expressing the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood that is being expressed. The competitive groups, with their organised approach, also exist in creative tension with the spontaneity of the informal groups and the individual revelers outside of the competitive structure. During *Carnaval* they all share the same time-space, and it is the incompatibilities of this sharing, that Schechner explains as the resulting tensions and ongoing negotiations that shapes *Carnaval* as cultural expression.

Chapter 5

Analysis

This chapter analyses the 'Whale Hunting' (*Pesca de Balela*) and 'Hired to Farm' (*Contratados P'Roças*) allegorical cars from Grupo Monte Sossego's 2017 'Route of the Emigrants' *Carnaval* theme. Using the notion of vital relation compression, from Fauconnier and Turner's conceptual blending (2003), I analyse the compositional logic that shapes the designs of these two allegorical cars. In combination, I use Skibo and Schiffer's performance-based model (2008) to identify the behavioural capabilities of the allegorical cars across their construction, display, and decay processes. This allows me to analytically locate the compositional logic within the interactions and activities that the allegorical cars inspire along their behavioural chains (Skibo and Schiffer 2008), and provides the basis from which to consider how communal effort 'charges' the allegorical composition with meaning potential that is 'released', along with re-usable materials, back into the community. Considering the trajectory from 'charging' to 'releasing' meaning potential, provides a way to describe how *Carnaval Soncent*, through its allegorical cars, combine ritualesque and carnivalesque elements (Santino 2017), and guides the consideration of how formal preparation informs stylization (Abrahams 2011) and ultimately shape the *Carnaval* experience. The analysis concludes by considering how the conceptual design and the processes that bring the cars in and out of being act as material and immaterial entanglements, and how the dynamics of these entanglements locate the expressive value of *Carnaval Soncent* beyond the display-spectacle itself.

It is important to note that this analysis is based on a specific competitive group's approach to a specific set of thematic compositions and illustrates a particular attitude towards expressing Cabo Verdean identity through *Carnaval* design. Other groups follow other approaches (Daun e Lorena 2018; personal communication). This approach should thus not be taken as representative of a general or ubiquitous approach to design and expression in *Carnaval*, but rather as an elaboration on one of *Carnaval Soncent's* many expressive dynamics.

5.1 Choice of Focus

Joao Brito stated that 'Route of the Emigrants' was "the best *Carnaval* theme ever" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). He explained that it was very emotional to the public and to the people who developed the theme because it showed the hardships and dangers that Cabo Verdeans endured in blindly trying to deliver themselves and their families from misery (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). Joao became visibly emotional when reminiscing about the development of the theme, especially when he explained that one of the most significant *Carnaval* moments, for him, was "seeing the 'Whale-Hunting' car rising in the *stilero*[6]" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). Due to this emotional significance—and the noteworthiness ascribed to the overall theme—Joao and Valdir elaborated considerably more on the development of the 'Whale Hunting' and 'Hired to Farm' allegorical cars, providing me with more precise information on which to base my analysis.

5.2 The Allegorical Cars from 'Route of the Emigrants'

In 2017, the directors of Grupo Monte Sossego chose the *Carnaval* theme: 'Route of the Emigrants'. They expressed this theme by creating three allegorical cars (Image 23), each depicting a different Cabo Verdean emigration narrative. In order of appearance during the parade, these cars were titled: 'Whale Hunting' (*Pesca de Balela*), 'Hired to Farm' (*Contratados P'Roças*), and 'Victorious Return' (*Vitorioso Regresso*). These are the official titles as they appeared on the coverage of the parade on Televisão de Cabo Verde ("Desfile Carnaval 2017 São Vicente: Grupo Monte Sossego"). Interestingly, however, in conversation with the designers, the allegorical cars are called by different names that reveal the essential thematic impetus of the designs. According to this more personalised naming convention, 'Emigration to America' or "The *Moby-Dick* car" are used to refer to the 'Whale Hunting' allegorical car, 'Emigration to Africa' or "The *Cacao-Farming* car" are used to refer to the 'Hired to Farm' allegorical car (Joao Brito and Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022). On the 'Victorious Return' allegorical car I have little to no information. None of the designers mentioned this car and I only became aware

[6] Stilero refers to the designated group-specific space, or yard, in which allegorical cars are constructed.

of it after my fieldwork when watching a recording of the 2017 *Carnaval Soncent* parade. I could venture a reason for this exclusion but instead I focus on the two cars that I feel confident to discuss.

Image 23: Allegorical Cars During Construction
Grupo Monte Sossego's 2017 'Route of the Emigrants' *Carnaval* Theme
(Left to Right: 'Whale Hunting', 'Hired to Farm', and 'Victorious Return')

As a general category, the term 'allegorical car' (*carro alegórico*) is in common use but no reference is made, even when asked directly, to the conscious consideration of making the designs specifically 'allegorical'. This does not mean the cars cannot be seen or interpreted as allegorical, it simply suggests that for Grupo Monte Sossego's designers, allegory is not a particular aim. This being said, when I refer to 'allegorical composition' below this is not a reference to the allegorical nature of the composition but rather to the composition, as a collection of thematic elements, of the allegorical car.

5.3 The Allegorical Cars as Emitters

The allegorical cars are the largest constructions in the parade. They act as the central showpieces that 'carry' both the theme and the main performers, making them the essential focal points, or as Abrahams puts it, "attention-grabbing objects in the central place of gathering" (2011: Celebrations), that visually 'emit'—discharge or release—thematic information. Looking from above the performers seem to radiate outwards from the allegorical cars (Image 24). The surrounding performances repeat thematic elements at street-level and function as micro performances that echo and elaborate on the theme (Image 25). This outward radiation is significant because it both visualises and reveals

the allegorical car as an *emitter*; an aspect that I will argue is crucial for understanding the expressive dynamics between the compositional design, construction, display, and decay processes of the allegorical cars. To explain the dynamics of this outward radiation I will focus on how meaning is compressed into the artefact during its materialisation, and how this process reveals the interplay of utilitarian, social, and symbolic functions (Skibo and Schiffer 2008) of the allegorical car as an expressive device.

Image 24: Performers Surrounding the 'Victorious Return' Allegorical Car
(From Grupo Monte Sossego's Twitter Page)

Image 25: Micro Performance (Detail at Street Level) Related to the 'Victorious Return' Allegorical Car

5.4 The Moby-Dick Allegorical Car

"The Moby-Dick whale story, a very popular tale, still told to children here"
(Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 9, 2022)

Showing me photos of the allegorical car on his tablet, Joao Brito makes an explicit reference to Herman Melville's 1851 novel *Moby-Dick, or The Whale* (2014 [1851]) as the inspiration for the design (Interview with author, March 8-9, 2022). He explains that Cabo Verdeans are renowned whale hunters and this caused them to be displaced to the Americas as part of whale hunting expeditions. While researching the theme, he explains, they came to the conclusion that the whale hunters in the famous novel were Cabo Verdeans and so the novel became the primary influence for developing the design of the car. Joao and Valdir's retelling of their development process focused on the general displacement narratives related to Cabo Verdeans leaving the country on whaling ships and it didn't occur to me at the time to ask about the specific scene they chose to depict. In revisiting the images Joao sent me (Image 26), I had imagined that this particular scene would be part of a key moment in the novel, but on reading the book I could not find this specific moment in any of the chapters.

Image 26: 'Whale-Hunting' Allegorical Car During Construction (Photo Courtesy of Joao Brito)

Interesting, however, is that Herman Melville, in Chapter 56, makes an allusion to an engraving based on a painting by a French artist named Garneray (Image 27). Chapter 56 is titled: 'Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales, and the True Pictures of Whaling Scenes'. Melville, via the narration of Ishmael, describes the scene as follows: "In the first engraving a noble Sperm Whale is depicted in full majesty of might, just risen beneath the boat from the profundities of the ocean, and bearing high in the air upon his back the terrific wreck of the stoven planks" (Melville 2014 [1851]). This description, as with the referenced images, holds a striking similarity with the design of the 'Whale-Hunting' allegorical car.

It is unclear to what extend the Monte Sossego designers familiarised themselves with the novel in its entirety, but it is reasonable to assume that during the process of doing research they encountered the painting or engraving mentioned above, especially considering their explicit mention of and continuous reference to the *Whale Hunting* allegorical car as the *'Moby-Dick'* car (Joao Brito and Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

Image 27: 'Peche du Cachalot' by Ambroise Louis Garneray (powermobydick.com & oldpringallery.com)
Left: Painting. Right: Engraving

A visual comparison between Garneray's scene and the allegorical car reveals many similarities: both depict a Sperm Whale, a ship being split apart above the whale, and smaller boats with spear-wielding whalers. But, when considering the Cabo Verdean emphasis of the composition, the differences are perhaps more significant: In Garneray's depiction, as with the overall conclusion of Moby-Dick, the whale is the prominent victor.

In Garneray's scene the whalers are thrown from the boats whereas in the allegorical car the whalers are depicted as strong and in control. Interestingly, the novel makes no mention of Cabo Verde, or Cabo Verdeans. It does however refer to the harpooner as "a dark complexioned chap" (Melville 2014 [1851]) and makes mention of a 'Portuguese sailor' on board one of the ships. Considering the general appearance of Cabo Verdeans and the time-period depicted in the novel—when Cabo Verde was still a Portuguese colony—both of these references could, without much contestation, be justified as referring to a Cabo Verdean whale hunter. Or at least, these references are as likely to refer to Cabo Verdeans as perhaps a number of other nationalities. Add to this a well-known local history of whalers from Cabo Verde (Vieira et al. 2020), and it is easy to see how this interpretation, and the resulting composition, could be justified, by the allegorical cars designers, in a relatively informed manner.

5.4.1 Formal Properties and Performance Characteristics

Skibo & Schiffer (2009) suggests that the first step in investigating the functions of an artefact is to look at its formal properties because they retain traces of manufacture and patterns of use, and reveal the technical choices made in order for the object to perform as required. Looking at the allegorical car, it is a large construction that is mounted on a trailer to make it mobile. It also depicts a number of visual forms that should be easily visible as the allegorical car moves through the street during the parade. The formal properties of size, mobility, and visibility result in specific technical choices, some of which relate to the composition of a scene that is simple enough to be easily-digestible in passing while also being complex enough to convey the essential thematic elements. The performance characteristic of visibility provides the allegorical car with the behavioural capability of conveying the theme. In order to achieve this, the designers must be selective and choose only those elements that they deem essential and necessary to communicate their message.

Taking a closer look at the elements chosen for the Whale Hunting allegorical car one can see that the whale is the most powerful destructive force in the composition: splitting the ship in two and providing the essential dramatic tension. In context of Cabo Verdean

emigration narratives, the ship is the element that belongs to the 'outside' force that displaced the Cabo Verdean whalers to America. The outside force is thus the one that is broken by the whale while the Cabo Verdean whalers are in boats bravely fighting back. There is a subtle suggestion here that the whalers are strong in the face of danger, and also that they, in their intact boats, survive the occasion, while the force that carried them away, is destroyed.

Skibo and Schiffer's model highlights the idea that utilitarian functions are embedded in social and symbolic systems (2008: 11). The choice of scene, and the way it is adapted to suit the theme, reveals the symbolic function of identity expression and informs the utilitarian function of a visual representation that carries this adapted expression, while, at the same time, prompting the social function of communally constructing the allegorical car to bring it into being.

5.4.2 A Note on Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Blending

According to Fauconnier and Turner's *conceptual blending* theory (2003), meaning emerges when, during communication, conceptual elements are selectively projected to *compose* a mental space from where they can be merged to form new meaning. This new meaning is a result of the selected components being *completed* with prior knowledge and then *elaborated* to create emergent meaning that was not explicitly contained in the original composition of elements (Fauconnier and Turner 2003; Oakley and Pascual 2017). The processes of composition, completion, and elaboration do not take place as a neat linear sequence, instead they overlap and, at times, run in parallel, to generate meaning. For the sake of analysis, however, I will refer to these processes as discrete steps. Also note that there are many nuanced complexities to *conceptual blending* that I do not address here, instead I use only those elements that are useful to the analysis of the allegorical cars, while trying to remain true to the general position of Fauconnier and Turner's concepts.

5.4.3 Selective Projection and the Allegorical Car as Material Anchor

The whale hunting scene shows what the designers chose to selectively project (Fauconnier and Turner 2003; Oakley and Pascual 2017) to their audience. This selective projection creates what Fauconnier and Turner fittingly calls the *composition* of a conceptual blend (2003; Oakley and Pascual 2017) and relates to the input provided during a communicative act. Note that the *composition* they refer to is conceptual and related to a temporary cognitive structure, or mental scene, that is used as we think, talk, or interact (Oakley and Pascual 2017: 423). Compositions compress a combination of *vital relations*[7], such as time, space, cause-effect, change, identity, and part-whole, into a mental scenario. The compression of vital relations creates the potential for meaning to emerge as the audience cognitively 'unpacks' the compressions through the processes of *completion* and *elaboration* (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). The physical composition of the allegorical car, its form and presence, acts as a *material anchor*: an object in the real world, present in the situation of communication, that is used as a stable reference for the completion and elaboration processes to conceptually blend the selected components and produce meaning (Oakley and Pascal 2017).

Focusing on the composition of vital relation compressions we can more precisely identify the meaning potential of the Whale Hunting allegorical car. First, the scene, as a totality, is a *part-whole* compression. The scene is part of a novel, but it is also part of Cabo Verdean whale-hunting history. Considering the overall theme of 'emigration routes', the *part-whole* compression can be extended to Cabo Verdean emigration history and reveals the essential *cause-effect* compression at the heart of the development of this allegorical car: whale hunting causing Cabo Verdeans to leave the country to the effect of having a diaspora that is double in number than local citizens. Further, by replacing the hunters with Cabo Verdeans, an *identity* compression is created that embeds Cabo Verdeans into the *part-whole* compressions mentioned above and, by extension, the ship becomes a *part-whole* compression that creates an *identity* compression with the colonial forces that set the displacement into motion.

[7] A more complete list of vital relations, as identified by Fauconnier and Turner (2003), includes the concepts: Time, Space, Cause-Effect, Change, Identity, Part-Whole, Representation, Category, Similarity/Difference (Analogy/Disanalogy), Intentionality, and Uniqueness.

The various compressions, their overlaps, and intricacies, can be considered in more detail, but that is not the purpose here. Rather, what I am illustrating is that multiple compressions co-exist in the composition of the allegorical car, and because the compositional elements may be completed and elaborated in a number of ways, the co-existence of the compressions is what provides the car with its potential to express: its meaning potential. Importantly, these compressions, which relate to Skibo and Schiffer's symbolic functions, are shaped by the requirements set by the performance characteristics of the allegorical cars.

5.5 The Cacao-Farming Allegorical Car

"This tells the cacao story, lots of people enjoyed it"
(Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 9, 2022)

I had encountered a small part of the Cacao-Farming allegorical car in the salvage yard, but now, scrolling through images, Joao is pointing out the various visual aspects of the design: "This is a bag of cacao…this is what it looks like when the peel is removed…this part with the water represents the treaty with the paper being the contract across the distance of ocean between us and Guinea Bissau…and here the drought and the animals, very skinny…and the man with his utensils" (Interview with author, March 9, 2022). The Cacao-Farming allegorical car (Image 26) has a more complex design. Where the Moby-Dick car shows a single integrated scene, the Cacao-Farming car combines a number of scenes into a single composition and illustrates quite clearly the combination of conceptual compressions that make up the expression of the theme. It was, in fact, seeing how the ocean is depicted as visually compressed between two land masses that first suggested to me to consider the notion of compressions at the heart of *Conceptual Blending* (Fauconnier and Turner 2003) as a possible theoretical position from which to analyse the allegorical cars. This image of an ocean, a large body of water, compressed between two events, captures quite succinctly, in my opinion, the overall cause and effect dynamic of the route of the emigrants theme, and set me on the path to look for similar visual-conceptual occurrences in other allegorical cars.

Image 28: ‘Cacao-Farming’ Allegorical Car During Construction (Photo Courtesy of Joao Brito)

5.5.1 Compositional Logic and Meaning Potential

Cabo Verde has suffered a number of drought-famines that resulted in thousands of deaths. The most severe and sustained periods of drought took place between 1940 and 1942, in 1947 and 1948, and from 1956 to 1958. The dire conditions during these times forced many Cabo Verdeans to emigrate, many accepting contract labor on the cocoa farms in São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea Bissau (Keese 2012: 49–50). These displacement narratives are the inspiration for the Cacao-Farming allegorical car. Joao and Valdir did not specify specific dates or specific drought-famines as reference for their specific design, rather they spoke in general of these conditions and their effect on the emigration of Cabo Verdeans to other parts of Africa (Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

Looking at the allegorical composition (orientation as in Image 26), on the right is a barren landscape with tree stumps, cooking pots, and the skull of an animal. On the left are two Cabo Verdean farmers, a man and a woman, sitting on a cacao harvesting bag. Around them is a cup with a man’s face formed in the coffee as well as a winnowing basket (not visible in the photo). In-between these two scenes is a narrow body of water covered by two rolled documents.

Following the same process as with the Moby-Dick car, we can more precisely identify the thematic composition by casting the components in terms of vital relation compressions.

The scene on the right shows a *time* compression, merging a number of historic drought-famine periods into a single visual landscape. Within this scene the skull and tree stumps act both as *part-whole* and *cause-effect* compressions: single elements that represent a larger number of the same while also showing the results of the drought conditions. Overall the scene on the right compresses all of these times and elements into the geographic *space* of Cabo Verde. On the left, the vital relation of *space* is compressed so that a number of farms that are dispersed over both São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea Bissau becomes a single cacao-farming scene. The various farming elements act as *part-whole* compressions to visualise cacao-farming in general, with the Cabo Verdean couple being the all-important *part-whole* and *identity* compressions that create the link, similar to the whale hunters, to Cabo Verdeans as a whole. Between these two scenes both *time* and *space* are visually compressed as a condensed body of water that reveal the essential *cause-effect* compression of drought-famines resulting in Cabo Verdeans being displaced to other parts of Africa.

As with the Moby-Dick car, the presence of a number of vital relation compressions entangle a number of related conceptual structures to shape the meaning potential of the allegorical car. Slightly different, is that the Cacao-Farming car shows these compressions as an assemblage, or as juxtapositions, and not as a single integrated scene, as with the Moby-Dick car. The compressions in both compositions, however, can be completed and elaborated in a number of ways and thus may result in a number of related but varied interpretations.

Having established, through these examples, the meaning potential of the allegorical cars as the presence of a number of co-existing vital relation compressions, I will now turn to the construction processes of these cars to locate the completion and elaboration processes within the interplay of utilitarian, social, and symbolic functions.

5.6 'Charging' the Allegorical Car with Meaning Potential

So far I have focused on the completed visual form of the allegorical car and how particular emigration narratives provide the content for vital relation compressions to be embedded into the composition. I now turn to the processes related to materialising the composition to extend the vital relation compressions to the group who constructs the allegorical car and to more precisely identify how the allegorical car is 'charged' with meaning potential. In this way, I use the idea of compressing meaning into a material composition as the analytical base from which to consider the act of compression as a process of 'charging' the allegorical car with meaning potential.

5.6.1 Activities and Interactions

The performance characteristics I mentioned before (size, mobility, visibility) imply the crucial and primary performance characteristic of *material existence*: for the car to tell its story it must be made visible by bringing it into existence. This prompts the activity of constructing the allegorical car which in turn gives rise to a series of interactions between the designers and the group responsible for making the car. It is this interplay of performance characteristics, the technical choices they inspire, and the related activities and interactions, that Skibo and Schiffer's performance-model highlights (2008). In this way, Skibo and Schiffer's performance-model is a way to describe the interactions through which a group emerges to reveal a community (Noyes 2003). Because these performance characteristics define the types of interactions that is required, it suggests that, to some extent, they also define the group that emerges because of them, and by extension what aspect of Cabo Verdean community they reveal. In other words, a 'craft-minded' group will emerge around an artefact that requires craft processes to bring it into being. In the same way, one might say that a 'dance-minded' group will emerge to produce the surrounding dance performances. This is in accord with what both Hermes Reis and Valdir Brito explained as individuals naturally gravitating towards certain *Carnaval* practices. Thinking of it from Noyes' *group* perspective adds considerable significance to why Hermes would not want a formal school for craft practices (which I consider in more detail below). I will focus here on the 'craft-groups' that emerge around

the construction of the allegorical cars, and how the associated processes of making embed the group in the artefact.

Skibo and Schiffer state that cultural meaning is found both in artefacts and the activities that produce them (2008: 12) and that the social, symbolic, and utilitarian functions of an object are defined by its performances in the activities all along its behavioral chain (2008). The construction phase of the allegorical car's behavioural chain emphasises the relationship between the designers and the group of neighbourhood-based individuals responsible for bringing the car into being. Put in terms of the performance-model, it shows how the utilitarian function of materialising the designers vision gives rise to the social function of bringing a group together in a symbolic act of negotiating and expressing identity through communal effort.

This describes, more precisely, the dynamics of what Roger Abrahams refers to as "serious play" (2011) that results in an experience that is planned and prepared for. The required performance capabilities, in this case, both restricting and defining how the expression of identity is stylised into a carnival and group specific rendering of an expression or moral concern (Abrahams 1983: 98). This suggests that the restrictions—the sanctioned performances that constructs and maintains boundaries (Noyes 2003)—that form part of the competitive formal group structure defines, to some extent, what kinds of expressions are possible. These restrictions (or allowances), over time, shapes an aesthetic rendering—a specific stylization—that becomes characteristic of a specific group. When considering the specific rendering, the *Moby-Dick* allegorical car in this case, it speaks of a temporary stylistic expression of group's identity—the *carnivalesque* (Santino 2017). However, when considering how the competitive structure shapes stylization over time—from carnival to carnival—it reveals the *ritualesque*: instrumental and symbolic behaviour that transforms a group in a more permanent sense (Santino 2017).

It is with this in mind that I now describe how the making of the allegorical car is a sanctioned performance that is instrumental in embedding a group into a guided stylization of identity.

5.6.2 Communal Effort and Making as 'Charging'

The designers present and explain the design of the allegorical car to the group who constructs it. This process, from a conceptual point of view, provides the background knowledge needed to more fully comprehend the meaning of the allegorical car, making the group the 'bearers' of a specific set of conceptual frames that allows them not only to more deeply reflect on the meaning they are constructing but also, importantly, creates the potential for a larger body of individuals to disseminate the particularities of the theme. The extent to which individuals reflect, internalise, or share this information would be difficult to determine, but what can be established is that the information is on a trajectory of expanding outwards—from designers, to participants, to audience—to include, and thus reach, more of the community.

At this stage in its behavioural chain, the allegorical car performs the function of bringing the group together around a specific theme, providing the conditions for them to interact with one another and engage in an activity of giving form to an expression of communal identity. In turn, the group, following the vision and direction of the designers, gives physical form to the artefact and embeds it with potential meaning. 'Charging' the allegorical car in this sense is not only about visualising the triggers for the vital relation compressions by composing them into a physical scene, but also about embedding the group, through their communal effort, into the car. Put another way, the allegorical car acts as a material anchor not only for the visual conceptual compressions but also for additional *part-whole*, *cause-effect*, and *identity* compressions that references the group who constructs it. These compressions embed the group into the composition and reflect Skibo and Schiffer's statement that the formal properties of the artefact retain traces of manufacture and patterns of use; and, by extension, of the people who did the manufacturing. Within this broader understanding, 'charging' the allegorical car with meaning potential refers to a process of composition where the conceptual content along with the group's *effort* is compressed into the material artefact. Communal effort in this sense produces the artefact while also becoming part of the artefact.

In summary: it is the combination of conceptual content (that refer to past emigration narratives) and the local group of Cabo Verdeans (who produces the artefact) that is compressed into the allegorical car and 'charges' it with meaning potential. At the same

time, the group becomes bearers of background knowledge related to the thematic content of the allegorical cars, creating an additional layer of potential knowledge distribution.

Both the meaning potential contained in the allegorical car and the potential for sharing background knowledge related to the thematic content can then be 'released' through activities and interactions at the next phase of the behavioural chain.

5.7 'Releasing' Meaning Potential: Multiple Simultaneous Overlapping Narratives

The previous section highlighted the multiple and multi-directional vital relation compressions that are 'charged' into the material existence of the allegorical car. The amalgamation of these compressions, now contained in the artefact, creates the potential for these compressions to be completed and elaborated in various ways. *Completion* refers to the cognitive process of 'filling in the gaps' through pattern recognition (Fauconnier and Turner 2003; Oakley and Pascual 2017). In this way, the visual elements of the allegorical car act as conceptual triggers that set in motion processes of conceptual completion based on background knowledge. Different individuals have different sets of background knowledge and this results in them filling in 'missing' information in different ways. The overall theme and the elements chosen to express the theme *constrain* the possible interpretations through what Fauconnier and Turner call optimality principles (2003: 434). Accordingly, *completion* will aim to *integrate* the elements that are presented in a composition before adding additional elements, thus restricting the possible unfolding of meaning.

This is especially true for material anchor blends (2003: 435) where a stable composition visually unifies the input elements. The potential interpretations may be varied but are still overlapping as they orbit the thematic compositional tension that holds them in place. There is no narrator or storyteller that provides a linear unfolding of events. Instead, to make sense of the allegorical car "you have to feed on the story parts by parts to understand what is going on because it's not very explicit" (Joao Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022). This is a significant difference from telling, reading, or watching a story unfold as a sequence of events. The allegorical car provides the elements for

whoever encounters it to tell the story to themselves—through their own individualised processes of completion. It is from this that I refer to the allegorical car as 'releasing' its meaning potential as multiple simultaneous overlapping narratives.

This reveals the intricate and essential link between the construction and display phases of the allegorical car's behavioural chain and shows how it performs and thus facilitates a range of performances as it comes into being. Importantly, the restrictions imposed through the sanctioned performance of constructing the allegorical car focuses the group's actions within stylistic boundaries and embeds their effort into the artefact. This highlights, at least to some degree, the merit of formal group organization in producing favourable conditions from which a sense of community may be affirmed through the focused co-creation of meaning potential.

5.7.1 Elaboration and Pre-Display-Event Expressive Dynamics

Up to now, for the sake of analysis, I have isolated the allegorical car from the performers on and around it, but, it is important to note that just as the group who constructs the car gains insider knowledge of the thematic elements, so do the thousand plus performers who, over roughly a three-month period, rehearse choreographic sequences related to the same thematic elements. Dressed in outfits that reference the composition of the allegorical car (Image 24 and 25), their performances echo and thus extend the theme and provide an additional expressive layer that guides the completion of the theme, and perhaps more importantly, suggests the possibility of a more penetrating thematic reach through multiple levels of *elaboration*.

Elaboration refers to the creation of imaginative simulations based on how compositions are completed (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). In other words, it is the cognitive process of dynamically expanding the completed conceptual blend, setting it in motion to reveal emergent conceptual structure that was not present in the original composition. Simply, the composition was a reduction that left gaps to be filled. These gaps are filled through the process of completion which results in it being elaborated to reveal emergent meaning. Elaboration in this sense is the 'released' meaning potential now taking on a life of its

own beyond the composition that set it into motion. Both the performers and the group who constructs the allegorical cars, are engaged in guided processes of completion which in turn results in both personal and community-based elaboration. They are told about the thematic elements and they participate in the active completion and elaboration of the conceptual composition through the activities of rehearsing, making, and ongoing conversations about the expression they are now a part of. They thus form an elaboration network through which the theme is actively considered and spread.

I highlight the above because the first thing Valdir Brito told me was "this is what *Carnaval* does, transmission of information, transmission of the culture" (Interview, March 8, 2022). In the moment I was thinking of *Carnaval* day itself as it is easy to get seduced by the grand spectacle of the parade, and undoubtedly it is an essential part of *Carnaval Soncent*. The day is marked by celebrations and seen as one big ongoing party where *grog*[8] seems in endless supply (Daun e Lorena 2018); as Joao confirmed: "Most people think of *Carnaval* and they think of the party" (Interview with author, March 8, 2022). But when thinking about the processes that bring *Carnaval* day into being, it begins to suggest that it is the months of preparation leading up to the spectacle that sees the most explicit engagement with the thematic elements. In conceptual blending terms, the construction and rehearsal processes provide a more focused effort of completion of the composition and provides a vast network of individuals who communally make sense of, or elaborate, the theme. Indeed the display event itself will also see completion and elaboration taking place as the crowds who gather to watch the parade make sense of the allegorical cars and talk about them afterwards, but the preparation, a roughly three-month period of active engagement as opposed to the three-hour parade, seems to hold a more significant place in understanding the value of *Carnaval Soncent* as an expression, and negotiation, of communal identity.

It holds more concrete value simply because it is a process of materialisation that sees a more explicit entanglement between the composition, completion, and elaboration processes, held together by the physical existence of a material anchor. On *Carnaval* day, as the allegorical car comes apart and de-materialises, so do the completion and elaboration processes become less tightly woven into one another resulting in a 'looser'

[8] Grog, a type of rum distilled from sugar cane, is the national alcoholic drink of Cabo Verde.

expression and thus a more diffuse understanding of the themes. This suggests that when the symbolic, utilitarian, and social functions are more tightly, and perhaps formally, integrated with one another, as is the case during the development of the theme, it results in more controlled completion and elaboration processes. As the allegorical car shifts to *Carnaval* day, it performs alongside other expressions and many distractors, here, the social function of *Carnaval* as display-event takes over and the various compositions and their associated completion and elaboration processes become entangled in a network of revellers, who, fuelled by grog and music and dancing, 'carry' their individualised stories into the next morning.

5.8 Decomposition and Decay

The moment the allegorical car is pushed out of the *stilero* it starts falling apart (Joao Brito and Valdir Brito, Interview with author, March 8, 2022). The size, materials, and construction techniques of the allegorical cars result in artefacts designed to last only for the duration of the parade, and it reveals what I mentioned above: the making of *Carnaval* holds more concrete value, the display event being simply a marker of the release of the expressive potential generated by the preparation processes, evident in the immediate onset of decay. Joao, Valdir and Hermes emphasised the development phase of *Carnaval*, making explicit reference to *Carnaval* essentially being over once the allegorical cars and performers step into the road. Of course, their interest is in the making of *Carnaval* and those who simply enjoy the parade as spectators might disagree, and rightfully so. Both of these phases work together, the one creating the conditions for the other. In the previous sections I have elaborated on how the conditions for display, as 'release', are created through communal effort, and I will now turn to how the 'falling apart' is another necessary condition for *Carnaval* as expressive device.

Ghassan Hage, with reference to C. Heike Schotten's reading of Nietzsche, makes the etymological connection between *decadence* and *decay*, suggesting that excessive indulgence exceeds its boundaries and convulses the entire organism (2021: 3). Thinking of how *Carnaval Soncent* is portrayed online: it is nothing but an expression of indulgence. The images of beautiful scantly-dressed people dancing into the night, parties around every corner, and a general sense of abandon, dominates carnival associations as

a general category. Not only does this reflect the very typical function of *Carnaval* as an expression of excess—the 'removal of flesh'—but for those who are opposed to *Carnaval's* convulsions, it is an expression of moral as much as physical decay. I encountered this view in Mindelo. There are many who quietly reject *Carnaval*, seeing it as something frivolous and backwards that lacks the maturity of a cultured society. However, returning to the allegorical car, it may suggest that decay should be interpreted as a healthy part of a living cultural organism and not as an expression of malfunction.

I will now briefly explore some of the allegorical car's performance characteristics related to its material instability, to indicate how, just as it requires composition, it also requires de-composition, to fulfill its expressive functions. I take my lead from Hage's statement that "we can see a rotting leaf on the ground and speak of decay. But from the macro perspective of the rainforest where the rotting leaf is located, it is part of the process of the forest's regeneration. Likewise, from the micro perspective of the rot itself, decomposition is an effervescence of multiplicity of forms of life" (2021: 6).

5.8.1 Re-Use, Transformation and Return

Hermes tells me that they often used recycled materials to construct the various *Carnaval* artefacts (Hermes Reis, Interview with author, March 9, 2022). While talking to him it becomes clear that this emphasis on re-use is only partly because of a lack of financial and material resources. The showing of ingenuity in transforming ordinary, and unwanted, materials into something meaningful seems equally, if not more, significant.

This reflects, through its material approach, the conceptual composition of the allegorical car, where fragments, or moments, of events and ideas are combined into a unified scene. I point this out because, just as the utilitarian function of constructing the allegorical car contain and reveal its social and symbolic functions, so does the transformation of re-used materials point to the significance of re-shaping materials and ideas in the making of *Carnaval*. This provides a perfect example of how creolization processes of cultural creativity are based on the emergence of expressive forms through improvised combinations (Baron and Cara 2011). The use of recycled materials embeds in the artefact a structural and material vulnerability: it will deteriorate and fall apart.

Joao and Valdir told me that the allegorical cars, after the parade, are left on the side of the road where they are picked apart; sometimes for memorabilia but mostly because some of the materials have re-use value. They do not seem bothered that the result of their immense effort is picked apart like this, in fact, they seem quite proud. They went on to explain that after some days they will return what is left of the allegorical cars to the salvage yard and store those structural pieces they can use for future allegorical cars (Interview with author, March 8, 2022).

This explanation suggests that 'falling apart' or 'decomposition' is a key behavioural capacity of this phase of the allegorical car's behavioural chain. Decomposition in this sense consists of two performance characteristics: *returning materials to the community* and *re-using materials for future constructions*. These performance characteristics are rooted in social and utilitarian functions, but their significance becomes most evident when considering their related symbolic functions: returning materials suggests giving back the results of the communal effort in material form. Put another way: the thematic content, 'released' through display, elaborates through and into the community, detangling the material cohesion of the allegorical car and thus also 'releasing' its materials to become useful again to the broader community.

Baron and Cara state that "Creole forms are never static" (2011: 4), and it is in this sense that decomposition should be considered as an essential function of the allegorical car as an expressive device that requires regeneration year after year. This not only reflects Falassi's suggestion that festival as a process of renunciation and annunciation (In Riggio 2004: 4), but also creates the conditions in which serious play (Abrahams in Baron and Cara 2011: 17) can continually find expression.

5.8.2 A Note on Letting Go

Looking at footage of the 2017 *Carnaval Soncent* parade, it struck me how absurd the juxtaposition of samba dancers performing on the 'Cacao-Farming' allegorical car actually is. The dancers, both in costume and movement, contrasts the thematic tone of the composition. This is a composition of 'hardship', yet, all over the drought-landscape

and around the longing Cabo Verdean farmers, are men and woman, with feathers abound, dancing, smiling, and celebrating (Image 29).

Image 29: 'Cacao-Farming' Allegorical Car During the Parade (Photo Courtesy of Joao Brito)

Hermes and others commented a number of times on how the influence of *Rio Carnaval* is contaminating *Carnaval Soncent*, and at first I had looked at this absurd scene with the same dismay. On one hand I had found, at least to some extent, the absurdity I set out to find. On the other, it felt wrong to spoil the allegorical composition with these elements that both visually and thematically do not belong together. I had justified it for myself by thinking of the many ways in which creolization is explained as juxtapositions, obfuscation, double-talk, and reversals (Baron and Cara 2011). Isn't this the root function of *Carnaval* after all? But then, on reading about the *malanggan* funerary carvings from Papa New Guinea (Hoskins 2006), a very different interpretation of this absurd juxtaposition occurred to me.

The *malanggan* are laboriously carved for a ceremony and then essentially discarded. As artefacts they are intricate displays of skill and craft, yet they are not locally valued as objects (Gell 1998:225 in Hoskins 2006:77). The *malanggan* according to Gell visualises social effectiveness as "a kind of body that accumulates…potential energy". Gell uses the direct reference to these artefacts functioning like 'charged batteries' in what Küchler,

calls containers which "mediates and transmits agency from one generation to the next…as a visualised memory which is publicly transacted" (Küchler 2002 in Hoskins 2006: 77). These descriptions, albeit referring to something very different from *Carnaval*, bear a striking resemblance to what I described about the allegorical cars above: objects, that through 'social activity', are 'charged' with 'potential', that 'visualises a memory' that is 'publicly transacted'. More significantly still is Küchler's explanation that the *malanggan* "are memory objects which work in the opposite way to our own museum displays"; they are valued for "detaching memories" and "undoing and displacing relations between people and things" (Küchler 2002: 190 in Hoskins 2006: 78).

If, for a moment, we ignore the vast differences and instead consider the many similarities between the *malanggan* and the allegorical cars described above, then it may be reasonable to introduce this 'detaching' function to *Carnaval Soncent*. *Carne-vale* is after all rooted in the 'removal of flesh'; the 'flesh' perhaps being the excesses of memory, and the samba dancers celebrating, not the harshness of past displacement narratives, but instead, the 'letting go', the 'removal', and the 'detachment' of these grim memories in order to express and construct a Cabo Verdean identity cognisant but free of what came before.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the functions of the allegorical cars, within Cabo Verde's *Carnaval Soncent*, by looking at how their processes of coming into and out of being relate to their thematic compositions, and, ultimately, to their negotiation and expression of communal identity. By looking beyond the display event, it brough the processes of construction and decay into focus. This, as prompted by conversations during my fieldwork, suggests that the processes surrounding the spectacle of carnival-day match, and at times exceed, the expressive value of the spectacle itself and should be more closely considered in both understanding and describing carnival as a category of cultural expression.

Using a combination of Skibo and Schiffer's (2008) performance-based model and Fauconnier and Turner's (2003) conceptual blending, I conclude that the communal effort of a group 'charges' the allegorical car with meaning potential. This 'charge' can be understood as a compression of both effort and thematic content into the material composition of the artefact. The 'charge', as meaning potential, is then 'released' into the broader community, on carnival-day, as multiple simultaneous overlapping narratives. This 'release' is signalled by the onset of material decay. In this way, decay, as a return of materials, also de-materializes the ideas contained in the thematic composition of the allegorical car. This de-materialization allows both the materials and ideas to be assimilated or reshaped; revitalising the community and setting the stage for the next construction process (materialization) to begin.

In this way, by following the allegorical car's construction, display, and decay processes, I established that the notion of *communal effort* is both a central consideration and key descriptor in analysing the expressive performances related to the allegorical car, as it locates the value of *Carnaval Soncent* in the focused effort of negotiating communal identity through the processes of materialising ideas. Added to this is the notion of *awareness of re-use* that connects the salvage and decay processes of the allegorical car with its making. This further establishes the material dynamics of the allegorical car as an expressive device and creates the foundation from which to consider and describe *Carnaval Soncent's* unique mix of carnivalesque and ritualesque elements (Santino

2017). This, in turn, allows a more precise consideration of how the formal competitive *Carnaval* dynamics create the conditions from which groups emerge. These groups "submit together" (Turner 1995:96) in order to focus their attention on constructing stylized expressions of communal identity. Stylization, as an expression that exists between direct reality and an aesthetic alternative to reality (Abrahams 1983), is a boundary-mechanism as it defines the potential of what can be expressed and how it can be expressed. In terms of the allegorical car, this boundary-mechanism is by nature temporary (carnivalesque) because it can only hold a limited amount of information and thus always elicits negotiation and contestation of what should be included and excluded. At the same time it is also instrumental (ritualesque) as it focuses a group's attention on the construction and consideration of specific sets of culturally-significant elements and thus filters the complexity of reality through a channel of focused and directed group activity.

Further, what I showed is that the construction processes of the allegorical cars are closely related to their processes of falling apart. By considering the interconnectedness of these processes it is possible to identify the potential expressive value of *decay* as it relates to the allegorical cars. From a micro perspective, the allegorical car returns its materials to regenerate the community in a material sense. This micro perspective also informs an understanding of the allegorical car's decay from a macro perspective: releasing, re-shaping, undoing, and even detaching memories. Although the micro decay emphasises the *tangible* return of materials, due to its embeddedness within symbolic functions along the allegorical car's behavioural chain, it is intertwined with an immaterial symbolic return. The same goes for the macro decay, where its *intangible*—symbolic—emphasis is entangled with the utilitarian functions that bring it into and out of being.

In summary, the allegorical car creates the conditions for a group to submit together to both the processes of materializing a 'constructed' collective memory and releasing that memory into the community where it can take on new 'liberated' forms.

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Resümee

Magistritöös „Karnevali ümbermõtestamine: allegooriliste autode ehitamine ja lagunemine Cabo Verde *Carnaval Soncent*'il" analüüsitakse Roheneemesaarte karnevalikultuuri, keskendudes São Vicente saarel Mindelo linnas vastlate aegu korraldatavale pidustusele. *Carnaval Soncent*'i traditsioon sai alguse portugallastest kolonisaatorite eestvedamisel üsna pea pärast saarte asustamist 1462. aasta paiku, kuid aja jooksul ja eriti pärast Cabo Verde iseseisvumist 1975. aastal on sellest kujunenud omalaadne kreoolne nähtus. Kreool tähistab siin uutmoodi ühiskondi, gruppe ja väljendusvorme, mis kujunesid koloniaalajastul inimeste massilise ja sunniviisilise ümberasustamise tulemusena ja tingimustes. Teoreetilise mõistena juhib see tähelepanu kontaktidele ja loovusele kultuurilistes protsessides ning kultuuri pidevale muutumisele.

Carnaval Soncent'i kui kreoolistunud traditsiooni üheks tunnuseks on allegoorilised autod (*carro alegórico*): treilerile püstitatud üleelusuurused kompositsioonid saareriigi ajaloo ja selle elanike jaoks olulistel teemadel. *Carnaval Soncent*'il osalevad teiste seas ka linnaosi või piirkondi esindavad rühmad, kelle ehitatud allegoorilised autod pidustustel mõõtu võtavad. Magistritöö keskmes ongi küsimus võistluslikkuse mõjust allegoorilistele autodele kui identiteeti väljendavale ja (taas)loovale väljendusvormile. Uurimuse aluseks on 28. veebruarist 14. märtsini 2022 Cabo Verdes ning enne ja pärast seda interneti vahendusel tehtud etnograafilised välitööd, mille raames viis autor läbi intervjuusid ja vabavormilisi vestlusi *Carnaval Soncent*'i korraldajate ja osalejatega, tegi osalusvaatlusi ning kogus audiovisuaalseid materjale Mindelos ja riigi pealinnas Praias. Võtmekaastöölisteks kujunesid Mindelos tegutseva *Grupo Monte Sossego* nimelise rühma juhid ja meistrid. Uurimuses analüüsitakse lähemalt *Grupo Monte Sossego* algatusel ehitatud kakaokasvatuse ja vaalaküttimise ainelisi allegoorilisi autosid, mis valmisid 2017. aasta karnevaliks teemal „Väljarändajate rajad".

Kuigi suurejooneliste allegooriliste autode ehitamiseks kulutatakse palju aega ning vaimseid ja ainelisi ressursse, eksponeeritakse neid vaid üks kord karnevalirongkäigus, pärast mida ehitised hüljatakse, et kogukonna liikmed võiksid nende küljest enda tarbeks materjale ja juppe võtta. Taaskasutuseks sobivad elemendid pannakse kõrvale, et neid edaspidi uute autode loomisel kasutada. Magistritöö uurimisküsimused lähtuvadki allegooriliste autode ehitamise ja lagunema jätmise vahelisest vastuolust ja seosest ning avardavad folkloristlikku karnevalide ja festivalide käsitlust, võttes karnevalirongkäigu

asemel fookusesse kultuuretendusele eelnevad ja järgnevad protsessid ja praktikad. Töös kombineeritakse esituse uurimisest lähtuvaid folkloristlikke karnevali ja festivali teooriaid (Roger D. Abrahams, Dorothy Noyes, Jack Santino) mudeliga, mille lõid arheoloogid James Skibo ja Michael Schiffer analüüsimaks esemete praktiliste, sotsiaalsete ja sümboolsete funktsioonide seoseid läbi artefaktide elukaare või käitumusliku ahela. Magistritöös näidatakse, kuidas rühma ühisel jõul ehitatud allegooriline auto on tihkelt laetud sümbolite ja tähenduste potentsiaaliga, mis karnevalipäeval valla päästetakse. Laengu vallandumisega algab nii erinevatest materjalidest loodud allegooriliste autode kui ka neisse kätketud ideede dematerialiseerumine, ümber vormimine ja endasse sulatamine, millest kogukond ammutab uut jõudu ja mis valmistab ette uut karnevalitsüklit.

Magistritöö koosneb viiest peatükist, millest esimene annab ülevaate *Carnaval Soncent*'i ülesehitusest ja korraldusest ning allegoorilisest autost kui sellele omasest väljendusvormist. Teine peatükk tutvustab välitööprotsessi ja -ainest ning kolmas uurimuse teoreetilisi lähtekohti. Neljas ja viies peatükk keskenduvad grupidünaamika ja allegooriliste autode analüüsile. Töö lisades on esitatud loend 2019 ja 2020 karnevali võidukatest teemadest ning ülevaade intervjuuküsimustest.

Appendix A: Winning Themes from *Carnaval Soncent* 2019 and 2020

This list is compiled from the parade guides available on the *Liga Independente dos Grupos Oficiais do Carnaval de São Vicente* (Independent League of Official Groups of the Carnival of São Vicente) website: https://ligoc.cv/

2020	*Group:*	*Theme:*
1	Monte Sossego	**Myths, Tales, and Legends** *Stories and superstitions related to Cabo Verde.*
2	Flores do Mindelo	**The Legend of a Mythical Civilization** *Emphasis on Egyptian mythology.*
3	Vindos do Oriente	**In Search of the Philosopher's Stone** *A cosmic voyage beyond history.*

2019	*Group:*	*Theme:*
1	Cruzeiros do Norte	**Lusophonia Without Barrier** *Reflection on connection between Angola, Timor, Macau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Portugal,and Brazil.*
2	Monte Sossego	**My *Carnaval* is a Novel** *The enchantment of television entertainment.*
3	Estrela do Mar	**Estrela do Mar** *Telling the story of the Carnaval group.*

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Category:	*Questions*
Purpose	1. What is the purpose of *Carnaval Soncent*? 2. What is the value of *Carnaval Soncent*? 3. What is your most significant *Carnaval* moment?
Structure	4. What are the different components of *Carnaval Soncent*? 5. Who determines these components? 6. What is your specific role in the group? 7. How did you attain this position?
Theme	8. Who chooses the theme? 9. How is the theme chosen? 10. Which were your favourite themes to develop? And why?
Construction	11. How do you go about creating the various components? 12. Who creates the various components? 13. What materials do you use?
Allegorical cars	14. What is the role of the allegorical cars? 15. Who creates them?
Decay	16. What do you do with the allegorical cars after the event?

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Rethinking Carnival: The Construction and Decay of Allegorical Cars in Cabo Verde's *Carnaval Soncent*

supervised by **Elo-Hanna Seljamaa**

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Lodewyk Barkhuizen
19/05/2023