




NEWSLETTER

#4 | 2015

Confronting Caribbean Challenges

Dear reader of the CCC Newsletter,

While the year is coming to an end, the 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges' (henceforth, CCC) team is eager to share this last update of 2015 with you. As you will learn from our fourth Newsletter, our researchers are working hard both to accomplish their scholarly goals and to share their findings. Jessica Roitman is making good progress in her job of revisiting the history of the Windwards islands, and in between manages to publish exciting articles on Caribbean Jewish history. Wouter Veenendaal, our second postdoc, is in the midst of a highly challenging survey on all of the six islands of the former Netherlands Antilles, and he is also publishing comparative work on governance issues in small-scale jurisdictions.

Ph.D. student Stacey Mac Donald has been busily preparing the conceptual framework for her research on nature and culture conservationism and is now getting ready for her fieldwork on in the Dutch Caribbean municipalities. Whereas Stacey has now been working in Leiden for a year, away from her native Curaçao, her fellow Ph.D. student, Sanne Rotmeijer, has moved in the opposite direction and is now conducting field work in Curaçao, working as an intern with the

Antilliaans Dagblad and *Èxtra* and engaging with exciting developments in the digital media world as well.

As for me, I should say that most of my working time was spent on other issues, including the publication of a [book](#) on the bloody decolonization war of Indonesia – a fiasco which, incidentally, helps to explain why the first stage of the decolonization of the Dutch Caribbean was cemented with the 1954 Statuut. We all know what came next: the independence of Suriname forty years ago, the Antillean refusal to follow the same path, and, five years ago, 10/10/10, the definitive disintegration of the Netherlands Antilles. I did play a modest advisory role in the past year in the evaluation of the new constitutional arrangements. Certainly there have been real accomplishments but, alas, also evident failures – there's still a lot of work to do to make the Kingdom really work for all!

Finally: don't forget to check [CCC on Facebook](#), as well as [KITLV on Instagram](#) – we have regular newsfeeds there!

Gert Oostindie



Update sub-projects

The four researchers give an update on their individual sub-projects.



Picture compilation of

- SPLIKA Gathering
- Survey results in!
- Winter snoga (Amsterdam) lecture
- Media matters on Curaçao

Update project: Jessica Vance Roitman



Jessica researches the social history of the Dutch Leeward (confusingly known as 'Bovenwinden' in Dutch) islands of St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her focus is on the intersection of migration, governance, and the formation of identities on these islands. The project will also tie into larger discussions about (intra) Caribbean migrations, hybridity, and the disjuncture between sovereignty and identities.

I miss the sun. It's gray, chilly, and rainy here in The Netherlands. This time of year I go to work in the dark and come home in the dark. The persistently gloomy weather has a knock-on effect on my motivation and energy. That's why I'm very much looking forward to my upcoming research trip to St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius in the middle of January 2016. I need not only some vitamin D, but also the passion and inspiration that comes from talking with the people of the Windward islands about their history. I'm constantly amazed by the knowledge and insights they have into the history of their islands and I'm also humbled by, and grateful for, their generosity in sharing this knowledge with me.

Speaking of sharing knowledge, I just found out that my paper on maritime marronage between 1834-1863 has been accepted for presentation at the upcoming Association of Caribbean Historians (ACH) [conference](#) in Havana, Cuba in June of 2016. This paper is an outgrowth of research I did last year while on the islands, some of which will also appear in the *Slavery & Abolition* article I mentioned in the last newsletter. I'll certainly keep readers of this newsletter updated about the presentation and try to make my research as accessible as possible.

Apropos of conferences, I presented a paper in late October at the "[Colonial History - Sephardic Perspectives](#)" conference at the University of Potsdam in Germany. My presentation was not directly relevant for the CCC project but readers who are interested in the history of St. Eustatius will be happy to know that Statia and its Jewish (colonial) heritage were incorporated in the discussion.

In other news, some of the research I've been doing recently on the early-to-mid nineteenth century history of the Windward islands will be included in a volume that Leiden University's [Damian Pargas](#) will be publishing as part of Brill Academic Publisher's new series called [Studies in Global Slavery](#). As always, I'll do my best to make sure that the findings will be available to the people of the Windward islands, even if they don't have access to an academic library. As Wouter mentions in his update, our co-authored piece on the origins of oligarchy in St. Maarten has been submitted to an academic journal and we look forward to hearing what our peers think of it.

For those of you all on the Windward islands, I hope to see you in January. For the rest of you all, all the best for a healthy, happy and safe holiday season.

Update Project: Wouter Veenendaal



In September, October, and November, on all six Dutch Caribbean islands local interviewers conducted interviews for our opinion survey. The completed interviews have now been sent back to the Netherlands, and data-entry assistants are entering these interviews into a software program that was specially designed for this survey. At the moment we are running the first statistical analyses of the data, and we hope to publish some preliminary results in January 2016. If you are interested, eventually the results of the survey will be published on a separate page of our [website](#). Since one of the explicit aims of our CCC-project is to share and communicate our research findings with the island populations, we will do everything we can to make sure that the survey results are published in local media outlets. In addition, in January 2016 Gert Oostindie and I will present some first results of the survey on the three Windward Islands (Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten).

Having conducted field research in St. Eustatius last June, between 10 and 23 January I will visit Saba to have interviews with local politicians, journalists, academics, and other people active in Saban society. These interviews will of course address the changes of 2010 and the new municipal status of the island, but will also focus on local Saban politics and the effects of smallness on democracy and elections in Saba. I very much look forward to visiting this beautiful island again and learn more about its history, society, and people.

In terms of output, my CCC-colleague Jessica and I finished our article about the origins of oligarchy in St. Maarten, which we submitted to a suitable international journal. In addition, a more theoretical article I wrote about the effects of smallness on political status debates in non-sovereign territories was accepted for publication in *Geopolitics*, and should appear online in the beginning of next year. Finally, on 10-10-15, five years after the momentous constitutional reforms of 2010, an opinion piece I wrote about the three public entities was published in the [Volkskrant](#).

Wouter's research focuses on the impact of the new municipal status of the smallest Dutch Caribbean islands on the opinions and behavior of local citizens, civil servants, and politicians. The project also draws comparisons with the larger Dutch Caribbean islands and other non-sovereign island jurisdictions in the Caribbean and elsewhere.



Editorial piece in the Volkskrant

Update project: Stacey Mac Donald



Stacey is interested in uncovering behavioral differences between/within the BES-islands when it comes to nature conservation and cultural heritage. She will use identity principles to explain the dynamics of locals and immigrants who are active in conservation of nature and cultural heritage on the BES islands.

SPLIKA Gathering

On October 21st I attended the Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of the Dutch Caribbean community (Aruba, Bonaire & Curacao) in the Netherlands, organized by [Fundashon SPLIKA](#). Under the supervision of SPLIKA, a team consisting of residents originating from the ABC-islands, developed an inventory of the Antillean traditions that are being kept alive in the Netherlands. They presented this inventory, after which the attendees were asked to vote for the three most important cultural traditions to be presented to the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands. It was concluded that Papiamentu/o, [Tambú](#), and [Kaha di orgel](#) are the first to be nominated to include in the National Inventory of Immaterial Cultural Heritage. If approved by the [VIE](#) (Dutch Centre for Folk culture and Intangible Heritage), their placement on the inventory will ensure that these traditions will be actively maintained by the Antillean community in the Netherlands.

The voting was lively with heated discussions among the voters. These discussions illustrated their need to stress the differences between the Dutch Caribbean islands. Even though the three islands have a lot in common, there is no "one size fits all" cultural heritage item that can represent all three islands equally. Even though the attendees have lived in the Netherlands for many years, their discourse was (not) surprisingly similar to that of the island residents.

It was quite experience to attend this event, as it confirmed my earlier observations as to which individuals are engaged concerning the protection of Dutch Caribbean Cultural heritage. Besides Dutch Caribbean residents, there were also several representatives of the VIE present and other native Dutch residents, as well.

Questionnaire development

Currently I'm working on my questionnaire with which I will collect my first set of data. Besides open ended questions, I'm including several psychological scales to measure the extent to which respondents engage in specific types of behavior and to assess their local identity. To ensure my questionnaire will measure exactly what I'm aiming for, I am using existing psychological behavior and identity scales that have been tested by previous researchers. I am also planning to test my questionnaire among a group of residents of Dutch Caribbean origin to make sure the questions are comprehensible. Testing the questionnaire will also give me an indication of the duration of the interviews which will help me with the planning of my data-collection. The development of this questionnaire and the overall planning and preparation for my fieldwork in April will consume most of my time the coming months.

After two months of doing participant observation research at *Antilliaans Dagblad*, during which I had the opportunity to closely follow its news production process and to interview key editorial staff, I have continued my research at the *Èxtra*, the biggest newspaper of Curaçao. The *Èxtra* is known as 'e korant di e pueblo' (the newspaper of the people). First of all, this is reflected in the language of the newspaper, which is, in contrast to the Dutch of the *Antilliaans Dagblad*, Papiamentu. Also, the *Èxtra* reports about subjects that relate to the daily lives of men and women in the street, such as court cases, sports, crime, and the obituary notices, commonly referred to as "the heading where people first look after they have bought one." People buy their *Èxtra* literally in the street, while waiting at a traffic light in the early morning rush.

Numerous journalists have shared with me their ambitions to develop and promote critical thinking. Especially in a community where children learn not to question their teachers, which is reflected in a broad shared mentality to obey and respect authorities. A first impression of the biggest newspaper of Curaçao that tends to fill up its pages with moral lessons -i.a. to 'respect your parents' or to 'keep the island clean', teaches me that although individual journalists might opt for change, certain customs are deeply rooted.

Update Project: Sanne Rotmeijer

Along with observing the media landscape, I have also increasingly participated in the news production process by writing reviews and news articles for both the *Antilliaans Dagblad* and the *Èxtra*. At this moment, I am working at an article for *NTR Caribisch Netwerk*, a Dutch/Papiamentu news website that provides background features for local media outlets.

Meanwhile, my planning for the next months has changed somewhat. Instead of three periods of four months in which I had planned to observe media outlets on all six islands, I have decided to focus on Curaçao and St. Maarten. These islands are most interesting for my research in terms of the number and impact of their media outlets, and their autonomous status since 2010: debates on national identities have been most prevalent and manifest on Curaçao and St. Maarten. I will be heading to St. Maarten at the end of January 2016 to continue my research at *The Daily Herald*.



Sanne's research focuses on how traditional and new 'Dutch' Caribbean media reflect and shape discourses of (trans)national identities in the context of non-sovereignty, migration and small-scale politics.



Reuvenplaats 2, 2311 BE Leiden
Postbus 9515, 2300 RA Leiden
+31 (0)71 527 229
www.kitlv.nl