



NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Confronting Caribbean Challenges

Welcome to the sixth CCC newsletter!

As you will see from the reports written by our team members, a lot of exciting work has been done. Sanne Rotmeijer concluded an extended period of field research, working in the world of media for over a year on Curaçao and Sint Maarten: both with and for local newspapers and via new digital fora. Stacey Mac Donald has just finished up her first period of fieldwork on Saba, Statia and Bonaire, gaining a better understanding of the actions and motivations of islanders working for nature conservation and the preservation of cultural heritage. As you will learn from the reports of these two PhD students, Sanne and Stacey are juggling two roles, that of researchers but also their roles as members of the activist communities they are studying.

Meanwhile, postdocs Jessica Roitman and Wouter Veenendaal are continuing their research, publications, and presentations with admirable enthusiasm and productivity. It is a rather sad comment on the present state of Dutch academia that even as they are in the middle of their present work for CCC, they already need to work hard on grant applications for new projects, lest they find themselves without a job in the near future.

As for myself, I am mainly involved with the work of our team in an advisory role. What we learn in this project does feed into occasional contacts I have with politicians, government officials, and the press on both sides of the Atlantic – as the CCC survey conducted by Wouter underlines once more, there are very evident frustrations on all six islands of the former Netherlands Antilles that need to be taken seriously. I also made two short visits to the Caribbean, one to Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao to develop a joint program on cultural heritage, and one to Cuba to make a television documentary on the island at the eve of president Obama's historic visit, see <http://www.kitlv.nl/blog-cuba/>. Talking of Caribbean challenges, the transition of Cuba no doubt will have a major impact on the entire region in the upcoming years.

Gert Oostindie



Update sub-projects

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



Picture compilation of attended conferences and fieldwork:

- Association for Caribbean Historians conference, Havana Cuba
- Fieldwork action
- Presentation of research findings
- Behind the scenes in Cuba

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.

Research, writing, presenting, requesting money for more research, repeat *ad nauseum* . . . That's my life at the moment, and I can't complain too much – at least not about the research, writing, and presenting.

Since our last newsletter came out, I've spent two very fruitful weeks on Curaçao doing research at the [National Archives of Curaçao](#), where Director Dr. Max Scriwanek and his staff were, as usual, friendly and helpful. Although there's always so much more to do, I think I've finally gotten through most of the records for Saba, St. Maarten, and St. Eustatius for the nineteenth century. Of course, I wasn't able to read all of them while there, but I was able to photograph them, and going through all the pictures I made is taking a lot of time – not to mention helping me learn a lot about the history of islands.

I wasn't only doing research at the National Archives, though. I also spent my mornings at the [Mongui Maduro Library](#) looking at the records of the Jewish communities of Curaçao in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Esther van Haaren-Hart and her staff, particularly Gerda Gehlen, went above and beyond the call of duty in making my time there as productive as possible. Many thanks to them. One of the reasons I was spending time there was to start preparing a grant for the [Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research](#) (NWO)'s second and, alas, last ["Caribisch onderzoek: een multidisciplinaire benadering"](#) research and funding scheme which I submitted at the end of May.

I proposed studying the relationship between Afro-Curaçaoans and Jews and their roles in the creation of Curaçaoan culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Competition is stiff, so fingers crossed.

In June, I went to the [Association of Caribbean Historians](#) conference in Havana, Cuba, where I presented my research on maritime marronage in the Dutch Leeward (Windward) islands. It was very well-received, and it was heartening to find out how many people are interested in the Dutch Caribbean islands. I was struck by many things on the island itself, including the role of tourism, which I wrote about in my latest [blog](#) for the KITLV website.

In the meantime, a follow up to my article ["Land of Hope and Dreams: slavery and abolition in the Dutch Leeward islands, 1825-1865"](#) in the academic journal [Slavery & Abolition](#) entitled "The Price You Pay: Choosing Family, Friends, and Familiarity over Freedom in the Leeward Islands, 1835-1863" will be coming out in the [Journal of Global Slavery](#) in a few months. As always, I'll do my best to make sure it's as widely accessible as possible, even though we lacked funding for an open access publication. I've also been asked to write an article for a special edition of [Atlantic Studies](#) on free blacks in the Atlantic world. I'll finally get a chance to write about some of the great characters I've uncovered in the archives. Well . . . I've already written a bit about them in a recent [blog](#), but it will be nice to have the opportunity to explore the important role of free blacks on Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten in more depth.

And now . . . back to reading, writing, presenting (although I don't have any conferences scheduled until November), and asking for money, as I'm preparing project proposals for the [European Research Council](#) and another one for the NWO. Wish me luck!

With the summer break approaching, I am astonished to realize that the second year of our CCC-project is already about to end. In the past months I have conducted some additional analyses of our opinion survey data, and the final report of the survey [has now been published on our website](#). Last March, Gert and I presented our findings to the staff of the Department of Kingdom Affairs in The Hague, and it was a pleasure to discuss the main results of our survey with the Antillean and Dutch civil servants that attended the presentation. Together with our survey expert, Jannine van de Maat, I am currently writing two academic papers about the survey, among which is a research note to report about our rather unfortunate experience with the survey in St. Maarten. In the coming months, Gert and I will also write an article in which we compare the results of the CCC-survey with the [survey that he and Peter Verton conducted in 1998](#).

With the second CCC-year drawing to a close, I will conduct my last stage of field research in the Dutch Caribbean in July. After having visited St. Eustatius one year ago, and Saba last January, I will now travel to the largest of the three 'BES' islands, Bonaire.

Update Project: Wouter Veenendaal

I look forward to having interesting and thought-provoking discussions with Bonairean politicians, journalists, and civil society activists, as well as public officials working for the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. After the Bonairean status referendum last December, the publication of the evaluation report of the 2010 reforms last October, and the fall of the PDB-UPB coalition last April, it appears that there will be plenty of issues to discuss during these interviews! As part of this trip, I also presented the results of the CCC-survey on all three of the ABC-islands, starting with Curaçao (23 June) and Aruba (24 June), and ending on Bonaire (7 July).

In addition to the publication of the final report of our survey, two other papers that I wrote about the Dutch Caribbean islands have now been accepted for publication, and will shortly appear online. The first is a theoretical article about the survival of the Kingdom of the Netherlands from a political-institutionalist perspective and it will appear in the leading Dutch political science journal, [Acta Politica](#). In addition, a paper that I wrote to report about the findings of my research on St. Eustatius will be published in the [New West Indian Guide](#). This paper discusses the effects of the 2010 reforms on local political dynamics on St. Eustatius, and also analyzes the tense relationship between St. Eustatius and the Dutch government since 2010.

Since both Sanne and Stacey will soon return from their field research in the Caribbean, I also very much look forward to being reunited with my all my fellow CCC researchers, and to exchanging our findings and strengthening our research collaboration. The third year of my own subproject will focus on making comparisons with other islands and non-sovereign jurisdictions, and last April I already had a very interesting discussion with the mayor of the Dutch barrier island of Vlieland. This conversation strengthened my conviction that the political effects of smallness and insularity can be observed around the world, as the politics of Vlieland are in many ways comparable to those of the Dutch Caribbean Islands! I very much look forward to analyzing the experience of other small island jurisdictions in the coming year.



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.

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.

I'm writing this newsletter update while enjoying a last couple of days at home on Curaçao. Three months' of fieldwork on St Eustatius, Saba and Bonaire have flown by, and I have learned and experienced so much that it is almost too hard to summarize. Like Sanne, I would like to thank everyone who helped me along the way, shared their time, insights, experiences and stories, and pointed me in the right direction for my research.

My fieldwork started out on St Eustatius, then I went on to Saba, and ended up on Bonaire. On each island I was exposed to the many struggles of the island and islanders when it comes to nature and cultural heritage conservation, and got to witness firsthand their efforts and preservation. I spoke with many individuals with very different backgrounds, but who all shared a similar vision for the islands and their community when it comes to the environmental or cultural heritage conservation.

In addition to interviewing people, I also made video recordings of groups and individuals interacting with each other and/or talking about their experiences with the natural environment or cultural heritage of the islands. These images capture and illustrate the emotion of people trying to protect their natural and cultural environment. I made a short (rough) compilation of one of these interactions, which can be found [here](#). This adds an extra dimension to my analyses and helps me to understand and describe the complex dynamics within the field of nature and cultural heritage conservation. I am very much looking forward to delving into all my field notes, raw footage, and interviews to write about my findings.

To get an even better feeling for the field of nature and cultural heritage conservation, I participated in several cultural or nature-related events that took place during my stay on each island. On Bonaire, for example, a [Trash to Cash campaign](#) was held to promote plastic recycling on the island. This campaign was organized by [Boneiru Duradero](#) in collaboration with the [Plastic Soup Foundation](#) and [Selibon](#). On Saba, I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon with the Saba Lace Ladies in the recently opened [Saba Heritage Centre](#). These two activities are both examples of fruitful collaborations between the islands and The Netherlands.

Further outreach about my project was another focus point for me. On St Eustatius, I presented my research on the local radio station during the Governmental Information Service broadcast. I am currently in the process of writing a piece for the newsletter of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) and for the *Bonaire Reporter*.

Besides interviewing and video-recording, I tested my survey and made several adjustments to ensure a valid outcome. This (unfortunately) took much more time than I initially anticipated, however there is no use in working with poor materials. While the survey is accessible via [the following link](#), the official launch will take place in the second week of July.

The coming months I will focus on digesting all my observations, analyzing my retrieved data, launching and monitoring my online survey, and a whole lot of writing. But first: soaking up some more sunrays and energy these last couple days at home.

After almost one year in the Caribbean, my fieldwork in Curaçao and St. Maarten has come to an end. I returned in mid-June from the places I now call my 'second home', mainly due to the people I've met along the way. I am deeply grateful for the knowledge, insights, and experiences they all shared with me. A special thanks goes to everyone working at the [Antilliaans Dagblad](#), [Éxtra](#), and [The Daily Herald](#) newspapers, for allowing me to participate in their newsrooms and observe the news production process. Also, thanks to all the (freelance) journalists and news bloggers I've spoken with, interviewed, and accompanied during their daily routine. It is through these connections that I have not only learned how the news media in St. Maarten and Curaçao operate within the complexities of small-scale, postcolonial (is)lands, but they are also the reason that I have felt 'at home' from the start.

In addition to saying goodbye, during the last weeks in Curaçao I mainly focused on gathering the final material I need for my research by doing interviews, spending time in the newspaper archives, and by attending journalists' meetings and conferences. Regarding the latter, the launch of the UNESCO report "[Assessment of Media Development in Curaçao](#)" in May was particularly interesting. This report is the result of a year-long assessment of the media landscape in Curaçao based on [UNESCO's Media Development Indicators \(MDIs\)](#).

Update Project: Sanne Rotmeijer

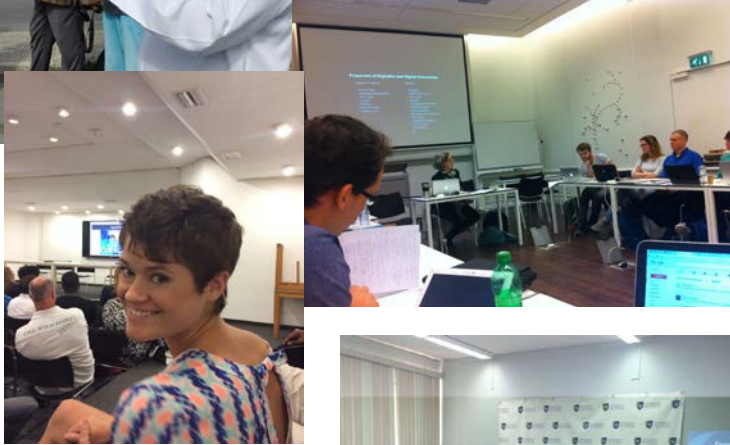
The MDIs are applied worldwide to evaluate national media-related policies in the context of good governance and democratic development. Having been in close contact with UNESCO's lead researcher last year, we expect that combining the results of our complementary research projects (mine being more qualitative by nature and focused on the digital media landscape, among other things) will contribute to an in-depth understanding of the role of the press in Curaçao.

Since my return to the Netherlands, I have had plenty of opportunities to immerse myself in the academic world again. First of all, by talking to my CCC team and colleagues at the KITLV. Moreover, at the end of June, I participated in the summer school '[Datafied Media Historiography](#)', organized by the [Research School of Media Studies \(RMeS\)](#) with which I am affiliated. This year's program focused on developing a critical stance towards current processes of digitalization, such as digitizing newspaper archives, the development of databases in which they are made available as well as the digital tools used to explore them.

The summer school has offered me valuable insights and approaches to prepare myself for the next phase of my research, which is working out the material I have collected in the field. In the upcoming months I will focus on selecting and preparing the fieldnotes, interviews, and newspaper articles for further analysis.



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.



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