



NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Confronting Caribbean Challenges

Dear readers,

As many of you all know, the Dutch Research Council (NWO)-funded 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges' (henceforth, CCC) project got started in September 2014. Even though the project has only been up and running for a short time, with the two postdocs starting in September 2014 and our Ph.D.'s even more recently (read below), we've been pleased to see how much interest there is in the project. Because there's been so much interest by so many people, we've decided to update interested parties approximately every three months with the latest developments, events, and general news regarding CCC in newsletter form. In addition, of course, you can always visit our [website](#).

Though my own role is primarily the supervision of this project, I do plan to contribute with research and publications of my own – more about that later. But this first newsletter is really for the four researchers to introduce themselves and then give an update on their individual sub-projects. Having worked with them over the past months and having seen three of them 'in action' on the islands last January, I am confident that their work will, indeed, make a difference.

Our point of departure is that our findings should be relevant and useful, not only in theory, but in practice. Moreover, we are convinced of the importance of making use of local expertise. This expertise will improve the quality of the project as a whole as well as increase the usability of the research findings. We are also committed to respecting local knowledge and norms on the islands while conducting the research. We believe that keeping local experts, stakeholders, and other interested parties informed of our progress is part of this overall commitment.

You've received this mailing because we thought you were one of these local experts, stakeholders, or other interested parties. We hope you'll find our information interesting and useful and we welcome your feedback. However, if at any point you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, simply let us now and we'll remove you from our recipients list.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the CCC-team, Gert Oostindie



Introduction team

The CCC-researchers; Jessica Roitman, Wouter Veenendaal, Stacey Mac Donald, and Sanne Rotmeijer, introduce themselves.



Update sub-projects

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

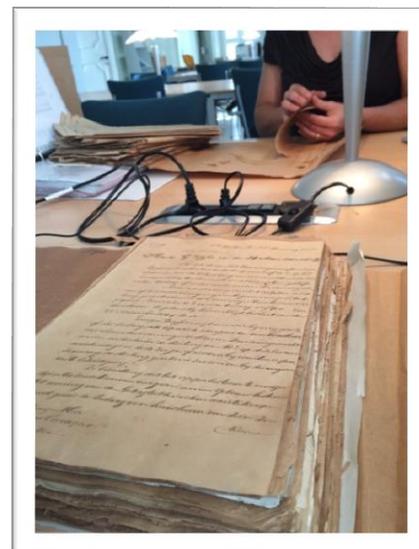
Introduction

Jessica Roitman



Jessica Vance Roitman is a postdoctoral researcher at KITLV working as part of the NWO-funded research project 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges'. She 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.

Jessica received her Ph.D. in 2009 from the University of Leiden's Institute of History. She has been a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the recipient of a Dutch Research Council (NWO)-funded Rubicon post-doctoral fellowship at Birkbeck College, University of London. She has published on diverse topics including inter-cultural trade, networks and network failure, comparative migration histories, the construction of identities and ethnicities, trans-nationality, conflict resolution, cross-cultural encounters, the dynamics of colonial law-making, and the history of Dutch colonies in the Atlantic. Jessica also lectures at the University of Leiden's History Institute.



Update project

I began my project by working intensively in the National Archives of the Netherlands in The Hague, which houses much of the documentation relating to the Dutch Leeward islands until 1849. My focus when examining these records has been to uncover, in as much as possible, the lived experiences of the islanders, enslaved and free, black and white, Dutch and non-Dutch.

In January and February 2015, I visited Curaçao, St. Maarten, Saba, and St. Eustatius to do research (and made a day trip to Bonaire to see what Wouter, Jannine, and Stacey were up to). I spent two weeks at the National Archive of Curaçao, which houses many of the records for the 'Bovenwinden' islands from 1850 onwards. One of the goals of my trip was not only to delve into the archival collections in Curaçao, but also to see what other records might be extant on the 'Bovenwinden' islands themselves. This initial visit has shown that there are important documents – documents in desperate need of conservation – on the 'Bovenwinden' islands. Furthermore, there are likely far more materials to be uncovered outside the inventoried collections on Curaçao. Another goal of the trip was to make contact with local experts in the history of the 'Bovenwinden' islands, and I met with many people who were generous in sharing their insights and expertise. In the coming months, I will write articles on slavery and emancipation on the 'Bovenwinden' islands as well as on the emergence of oligarchies (with Wouter).

Wouter Veenendaal is a postdoctoral researcher at KITLV working as part of the NWO-funded research project 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges'. His 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.

Wouter obtained his PhD at the Institute of Political Science of Leiden University in 2013, on the basis of a dissertation in which he examined the influence of a small population size on political and democratic development. His Ph.D. dissertation won the 2014 annual thesis prize of the Dutch Political Science Association (*Jaarprijs Politicologie*). While doing research for his Ph.D., Veenendaal conducted fieldwork in four microstates around the world: San Marino (Europe), St. Kitts and Nevis (Caribbean), Seychelles (Africa), and Palau (Pacific).

Introduction Wouter Veenendaal

In January 2014, he conducted fieldwork in the Principality of Liechtenstein as a visiting researcher at the *Liechtenstein Institute*.

Wouter's research and publications have focused on politics and democracy in small (island) states, and he has published on political representation, political competition, foreign policy, and institutional legitimacy in small jurisdictions. His research has been sponsored through grants of the Netherlands Institute of Government (NIG) and the Leiden University Fund (LUF). Wouter's articles have been published in high-ranking international refereed journals such as *Comparative Politics*, *Democratization*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *the Journal of Democracy*, and *Party Politics*.



Update Project

In January and February 2015, Jannine and I visited five islands in order to conduct a pre-test of the questionnaire. On each island between 10 and 15 respondents were interviewed in three different languages (Papiamentu, English, and Dutch), and we established contact with local statistics offices and educational institutions, with the purpose of training local students to act as interviewers. The pre-test results have been extremely helpful in lending insight into people's responses to the various questions, their use of the answer categories, and the trickier cultural and sociological aspects of conducting survey research on the islands. In the coming months we will improve the question list, and we will plan the organization of the survey itself in greater detail.



From September onwards, I have primarily focused on the organization and planning of an opinion survey on the six Dutch Caribbean islands. An Advisory Council (*Raad van Advies*) was established in order to acquire advice on methodological matters pertaining to the survey, and cooperation was set up with [Jannine van de Maat](#), a PhD student at Leiden University with a great deal of expertise in survey research. In December 2014, a draft list of questions for the survey was established, based partially on the comments and suggestions of local researchers on the six islands.

Introduction Stacey Mac Donald



Stacey joined the CCC-team in January of this year. Her project focuses on the challenges of cultural heritage and nature conservation in the Dutch Caribbean municipalities.

Born and raised on Curaçao, with Surinamese/Aruban parents, Stacey moved to the Netherlands at the age of 17 to continue her studies. Stacey received her bachelor degree in Child and Family Studies (2009) and her master's degree in Social and Organizational Psychology (2012), both at the University of Leiden. For her master's thesis, she focused on Environmental Psychology and did extensive research on Curaçao on the impact of social norms on littering behavior.

For her PhD project within the CCC-project, Stacey is interested in uncovering behavioral differences between/within the BES-islands when it comes to nature conservation and cultural heritage. By means of case studies centered on debates about, and policies for, cultural heritage and nature conservation, her project will answer questions about governance, history, heritage, environment, and identity on a micro-level, all of which impact the economic development of the islands.



Update project

As the last member to join the CCC-team and with no time to waste, I hit the ground running on the 15th of January. Making good use of the fact that I was still living on Curaçao, I joined Wouter and Jannine on their research trip to Bonaire. In addition to assisting Wouter with his survey pre-test, I used my time on Bonaire to get inspiration for my case studies.

We met Donkeys. Lots and lots of donkeys. Why are they relevant? The donkeys on Bonaire (and St. Eustatius) have been making headlines lately. Where did they come from, whose responsibility are they, who is taking care of them, and should they stay or should they go? The issue of the donkeys combines elements of nature conservation and cultural heritage and that means it is very possible I will be mentioning these funny creatures more often.



After settling-in in Leiden, I am currently occupied with a lot of reading. I'm eager to provide this project with "hard data" (as a psychologist, I'm in need of numbers!). Therefore, I'm currently trying to find a balance between creating a theoretical framework that both contributes significantly to the discipline of Social Psychology and adds to the interdisciplinary approach of CCC as a whole – and, as importantly, I hope to make a valuable societal contribution to the BES-islands. As part of my PhD-project, I will have a whole team of supervisors: apart from Gert Oostindie, this will be Professor of Anthropology Gerard Persoon and Social Psychologist Henk Staats, both of Leiden University.

Since December 2014 Sanne has worked as a PhD researcher on the research project 'Media in the Dutch Antilles: Identities, Politics, and Change,' which is part of the 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges: Hybrid Identities and Governance in Small-scale Island Jurisdictions' project. Her 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.

Sanne graduated *cum laude* in Humanistics at the University for Humanistic Studies, Utrecht. As a research intern at Kosmopolis Institute, she joined the Pluralism Knowledge Program working together with scholars, civil society and social activists from Indonesia, Uganda, India and the Netherlands on attaining in-depth knowledge on transformative spaces of inclusiveness and pluralism.

Introduction Sanne Rotmeijer

Sanne's research interests include cultural differences, postcolonial thought, migration, identity formation and politics, perception and mechanisms of representation through media. She explored this latter interest during her master's thesis research on processes of identification and differentiation in the conflict region of Jammu and Kashmir (India).

She has previous work experience in both public sector consultancy and in the academic world where she was a lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her Ph.D. project will be supervised by Gert Oostindie and Professor of Journalism and New Media, Jaap de Jong, both at Leiden University.



Update Project

During my colleagues' research trip to the Caribbean in January 2015, I worked on mapping the expansive, multi-lingual 'Dutch' Caribbean media landscape and acquiring a better understanding of the socio-political, historical and cultural dynamics at play in the Caribbean (also see [my blog](#) on the KITLV website).

So far, this has resulted in broader insights on the role of 'Dutch' Caribbean media in reflecting and shaping national debates on 'us' versus 'them', which have become more powerful in the lead up to, around and in the aftermath of the official dismantlement of the Netherlands Antilles on 10-10-10. Moreover, previous research shows that traditional 'Dutch' Caribbean media face political, economic and professional challenges related to 'small scale' on the different islands.



The emergence of new, digital media may meet some of these challenges by providing new spaces for bottom-up, peripheral voices and for younger generations and diaspora communities to participate in mediated (trans)national identity constructions. The research will take both traditional and new media into account, as well as address the way these media deal (differently) with constraints related to 'small scale' and cope with ongoing migration to and from the region. In the coming period the research plan, including fieldwork on the islands, will be further elaborated.



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