




NEWSLETTER

#2 | 2015

Confronting Caribbean Challenges

Dear reader of the CCC Newsletter,

In this second issue you will find updates about the research we have conducted, and also about the new contacts we have made, as well as about our upcoming activities. We are working hard to make this project a success. But it's not all about what we can do. It's also about what's going on around us. As I write these lines, the timing for a project such as 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges' seems both extremely suitable yet also a bit awkward.

Suitable, yes. It's been almost five years since the reorganization of the Kingdom on 10 October 2010 (10/10/10). Various committees are now evaluating the results of this change for the three Caribbean countries of Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten, and, much more intensively, for the newly-established overseas Dutch municipalities of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba. I won't say anything about the possible upcoming reports and advice – if only because I am actually involved in some of these endeavors myself. But it is clear that five years later, it's not only good news and consensus. On both sides of the Atlantic, politicians are worrying and complaining and, one assumes, reflecting on ways to make things better. But, then again, they often seem to disagree about even basic

facts, and often fail to understand one another's realities. In this sense, more research about what has actually been going on, not just in the past few years but over a longer period of time, seems most welcome as it could help with the implementation of sensible policies and inform all sides of the current debates.

But, alas, it is also a slightly awkward moment during which to be embarking upon projects such as 'Confronting Caribbean Challenges'. There is agitation in the air and we, as researchers, obviously prefer not to be part of that, much less add to it. And there is a certain weariness on the islands about all these Netherlands-based experts conducting research of which often nothing is heard afterwards – at least not outside scholarly circles. We are very much aware of this mood. We will keep this in mind while engaging in our research – and even more so when figuring out how to share our findings with a wider audience, starting with the population of the six Dutch Caribbean islands. Please, feel free to remind us of this anytime!

Gert Oostindie



Update sub-projects

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



Picture compilation of attended conferences and expert meetings

- Association for Caribbean Historians conference, the Bahamas
- Caribbean Studies Association conference, New Orleans
- UNESCO expert meeting 'Evidence based heritage policies for inclusive societies', Leiden

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.

When I returned from my research trip to the islands in mid-February, I had what felt like a surfeit of information. I have spent the past several months processing all the documents I gathered from the archives in Curaçao and St. Maarten and trying to make some sort of coherent whole out of them. My focus has been to move away from the bi-lateral Windward – Netherlands approach and, rather, to place the histories of St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, and Saba in a regional perspective that incorporates the non-Dutch islands. I've done that in the article on the lead up to, and aftermath of, slave emancipation in the Windward islands that I wrote and have submitted to a scholarly journal. Watch this space for publication information. And speaking of writing articles, Wouter and I are working on an article together on St. Maarten in which we combine insights from history and political science, as a major goal of the Confronting Caribbean Challenges project is to transcend interdisciplinary boundaries. Lastly, an article I wrote with Han Jordaan on the history of St. Eustatius right after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in the late eighteenth century has come out in the *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis (The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History)* 12, no. 1, pp.79-100. Although this article isn't part of the current project research, some readers of this newsletter might be interested in it.

But, of course, dry scholarly publications aren't meant to be the only output of this project. A treasured goal of mine is to make as much of the history of the Windward islands as accessible as possible to the islanders themselves, who often can't travel to Curaçao and/or The Hague to consult the archives themselves. To that end, I've started writing a column for *The Daily Herald* in which I bring information I find in these archives to the public. My first [column](#) was published last month. Because I think it's so important to try to preserve and make accessible the rich and endangered historical documentation on the history of the Windward islands, I've begun working with a few tireless advocates for the preservation of cultural heritage on St. Maarten in order to get some important documents protected by UNESCO. I've also been talking with the National Archive in The Hague about the digitalization of some documents so that they'll be both preserved and accessible. That people on the islands are interested in this history has been amply demonstrated by how much media attention the project has gotten so far. *The Daily Herald* published an [article](#) on my research last month which was picked up a few days later by [Amigoe](#). I'm both happy and humbled by this interest.

Scholars are also fascinated by the Windward islands. Although I haven't been back to the Windwards since February, I have been attending some conferences to share what I have learned about the islands thus far. I was recently at the Association for Caribbean Historians conference in the Bahamas, the Caribbean Studies Association conference with Wouter in New Orleans, and the Slaving Zones and the Forum for European Expansion and Global Interactions (FEEGI) conferences, both of which were held here in Leiden. Scholars want to know more and incorporate the fascinating history of Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten into their work. I'll be busy trying to help them do just that in the coming months.

In the past few months, I have primarily been focusing on putting together the opinion survey on the six islands, which will be conducted in the Fall of this year. With the help of Jannine van de Maat and the members of my advisory council, the questionnaire for the survey was finished, and was translated into four different languages (Dutch, English, Papiamentu, and Spanish) by professional translators. I set things up on each of the islands with a local survey coordinator who will supervise the data collection and the interviews on his or her respective island. At this moment, these coordinators are recruiting local interviewers on the islands to assist with the data collection and to conduct the interviews.

In the first two weeks of September, I will visit each of the six islands to provide interview training to the local interviewers. Subsequently, on the 15th of September, the interviews will start, and the data collection period will last until around the end of October. I hope to be able to present some first results of the survey by the end of this year, and results will be communicated to the island populations via local news outlets.

Update Project: Wouter Veenendaal

In the last two weeks of June, I will visit St. Eustatius to conduct field research, and to interview various people on the island. In particular, I hope to interview prominent Statian politicians, journalists, academics, and representatives of non-governmental organizations in order to gather their opinions and perspectives on the political reforms of 2010, the new political status of St. Eustatius, and the changed relationship with the (European) Netherlands. In addition, during this research visit I will conduct a small, second pre-test of the questionnaire by interviewing a small number of citizens on St. Eustatius.

Between 24 and 31 May, Jessica and I attended the annual Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) Conference in New Orleans, where I presented my paper on the benefits and downsides of smallness and non-sovereignty in the Dutch Caribbean (see photo). The panel included researchers studying the British Caribbean (Peter Clegg), the French Caribbean (Justin Daniel), and the American Caribbean (Emilio Pantojas-García), and it was a great opportunity to discuss recent economic and political development in the non-sovereign Caribbean.

Finally, last month my article on the Dutch Caribbean municipalities was published in the *Island Studies Journal* (<http://www.islandstudies.ca/sites/islandstudies.ca/files/ISJ-10-1-Veenendaal.pdf>). In this article, I discuss the effects of the 2010 political reforms within the Kingdom for the islands of Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius. The new municipal status of these islands is analyzed from a broader regional perspective, and is compared to recent developments in the British Overseas Territories and the French Départements d'Outre Mer (DOMs).



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.

The past couple of months I've been working on my research plan. One of the main goals of my research is to find out whether it can be determined if the recent developments and changes, as a consequence of the constitutional reforms, are visible in the actual behavior of the residents on the BES islands. To be able to answer this question I have combined the disciplines of Anthropology and Social Psychology, which has meant a lot of reading and brainstorming. By means of a mixed method research design, using both quantitative psychological measurement instruments and qualitative anthropological observation techniques, I will make comparisons between the three islands to assess whether it can be said that the constitutional changes impact the behavior of the residents and, if so, how.

The first part of my research will focus on systematically describing everything that is currently being done when it comes to protecting the natural environment and "cultural heritage" on the BES islands. I use quotation marks, because I am aware that when speaking of culture or cultural heritage on the islands, it is crucial to distinguish between colonial heritage (such as the tangible forts and monumental buildings) and everyday culture (such as festivals, rituals, language). In order to make my research plan less theoretical, I will visit Saba and St. Eustatius for two weeks at the end of June. During my visit I aim to verify whether my perceptions of the islands are correct and to collect the first set of data for my research. With this knowledge I plan to further elaborate my research plan.

Besides lots of thinking and writing, our CCC-team made our first appearances in the media. Together with Wouter and Gert, the radio program "[Dichtbij Nederland](#)" interviewed me in April about our research project and what we are hoping to achieve with it. In addition to this live interview, several articles on our (sub) projects were published on [ntr.caribischnetwerk.nl](#), [The Daily Herald](#) and in the [Antilliaans Dagblad](#). Even though it is quite early in the course of our project to be profiled in the media, we know how important it is to keep people on the islands informed about what we are doing and what they can (and cannot) expect from our project.

Since the last update, I've attended several meetings, including a UNESCO expert meeting on cultural heritage. There I had the pleasure of meeting many experts in the area of Cultural Heritage in the Caribbean. More recently, the CCC-team met up with a group of researchers focusing on the Dutch Caribbean municipalities to inform each other about our projects and share our experiences. Attending these meetings makes it ever more clear that it is important to collaborate with each other when doing research, (especially) on the islands. In the coming months I will continue to focus on acquiring the necessary skills to collect my data and broaden my network. Summer schools, expert conferences and various courses are starting to dominate my agenda. But as they say, "well begun is half done"!

Update Project: Sanne Rotmeijer

Bon dia! Konta?

The last couple of months I've been working on my Papiamentu skills! By following an intensive language course in The Hague and acquiring new vocabulary on a daily basis, I am learning this unique Creole language step-by-step. Language is a crucial part of one's identity, in general, but particularly on the Leeward Antilles. Therefore, I consider learning Papiamentu to be an indispensable part of my research on representations of national identity in the Dutch Caribbean media.

Moreover, since the previous update in March 2015, I have further developed concrete research plans. What exactly do national identities mean on the islands? And how can we understand the influence of media texts on Dutch Caribbean societies? In order to understand this mutual interaction, I will use the method of critical discourse analysis from a discourse-historical approach.

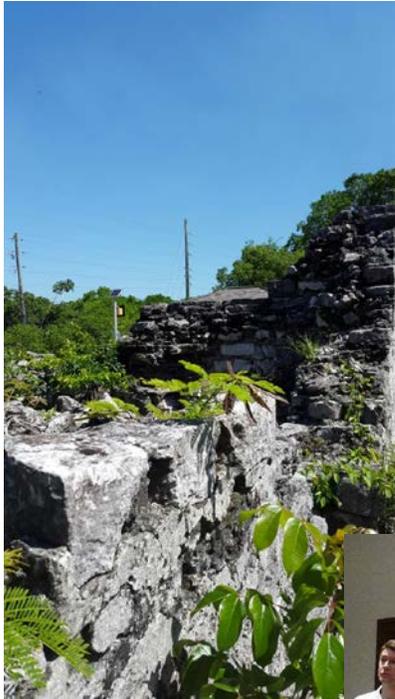
This methodological approach was developed to investigate the discursive constitution of national identities by analyzing the different texts and contexts in which national narratives are constructed. The emphasis on (the memory of) a common history is one of the important contextual factors. Furthermore, national narratives are produced, reproduced and spread by actors in concrete institutionalized and political contexts. In addition to in-depth textual analysis, I will explore these socio-historical, institutional and political contexts by conducting comparative fieldwork at three big newspapers (Dutch, Papiamentu, English) on the islands and online by analyzing weblogs and Facebook groups

In September 2015 my first four months of fieldwork will start at the *Antilliaans Dagblad* on Curaçao.

In total, I plan to conduct one year of fieldwork on the islands at newspapers located on Curaçao and St. Maarten. During this one-year period I hope to gain worthwhile insights on how the local media interact with society, particularly during times of political change, by participating in media production processes and by talking to local journalists and experts. Regarding the latter, I hope to meet some of you on the islands. Also, of course, to practice my Papiamentu!



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.



Upper row L-R: "Great House" ruins at the [Clifton Heritage National Park](#) in the Bahamas; Jessica in New Orleans making new friends; [Destrehan plantation](#) in Destrehan, Louisiana (about 45 minutes from New Orleans).

Bottom row L-R: Wouter giving his presentation at [Caribbean Studies Association conference](#) in New Orleans; Stacey attending the [UNESCO expert meeting](#).



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