

**EXCERPT from the presentation during the Travelling Caribbean Heritage Workshop
Bonaire, September 25, 2017 given by Liliane de Geus, M.A., M.Sc. entitled:**

Sustainable Development: Culture, Education & Tourism - Context Bonaire

Development is not a straight line, Culture is more than you think, Education is progress and Tourism is very political. My presentation will be weaving through these concepts bringing it to the local context, hopefully trigger and keep your interest along the way.

Development is done by people and where there are people concerned; it is a matter of culture: "Culture as in 'the complex whole,'" as Sir Edward Burnett Tylor describes it in his book: *The Origins of Culture.*"

"Development is not merely an economic and political concept: it is more fundamentally a process of culture and civilization" **The Scheveningen report.**

So, culture is at the heart of any development and education as we are ultimately dealing with people and it is people who create culture and are the civilizations, past, present and future.

"Culture is rooted in nature – not materialism. Culture is holistic therefore capable of coming to grips with the enormous amount of complexity and diversity in the world, primarily because it is perceived, defined and manifests itself in the world in many different ways and not just one way. As culture is holistic, it makes it possible to see the big picture, come to grips with key components and strategic relations within all-inclusive perspective, and achieve more balance, stability, and sustainability in the word." **Ralph Waldo Emerson (1802-1883)**

Now economics is essential and it is a powerful force in the world. It is concerned with production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services and creation of material and monetary wealth. These things affect people's jobs, income, and sources of livelihood and are fundamentally important. Also important is living a full and upright life, finding one's place, role, responsibilities, and identity in the world, creating artistic and humanistic works, experiencing happiness, fulfillment, and love in life, and evolving a way of life that respects the needs and rights of other people.

Sustainable development emphasizes not merely strong economic performance but a holistic, equitable, and farsighted approach that rests on a balanced consideration of social, economic, and environmental goals and objectives in both public and private decision-making. In the realm of public decision-making, we encounter politics as in policy, power, and place.

Politics is a fundamental yet much ignored component of tourism development and tourism studies. Research into the political dimensions of tourism – a social and economic phenomenon that has substantial implications for the allocation of power within host communities, cultural representation, socialization, and international relations – is in a relative poor state.

In the context of Bonaire, as a small island development state, a small Caribbean island, economic development is based on tourism as the driver of nation building and nation branding. To understand tourism and its related impacts in this context we must acknowledge its inherently political nature.

Rapid tourism growth brings rapid change of local norms, new power structure, and economy. Slow growth (individual developments, local ownership, and expanding local commerce) brings slow change of norms, stable power structure, and expanding local economy.

I have studied policy, tourism planning and development, education, environmental concerns, culture and heritage, and I keep returning to critical issues of power, values, interests and control within the decision making process. In both our workshops, in Aruba and Curacao, the concern was raised about politics and power.

The nature of tourism in any given community is the product of complex, interrelated economic and political factors, as well as particular geographical and recreational features that attract “outsiders.” Decisions affecting tourism policy, the nature of government involvement in tourism, the structure of tourist organizations, and the nature of tourism development emerge from a political process. This process involves the values of individuals, interest groups and public and private organizations in a struggle for power. Politics therefore enables a disconnection between well-intended tourism policies and their implementation.

The impact of tourism often leads to the question of capacity as this relates to the negative aspects of tourism and the long term viability, sustainability, of tourist destinations such e.g. Aruba, a mass tourism destination, and more increasingly Bonaire, a growing destination. More research is needed for determining causal mechanisms and interrelationships between tourism, culture, and education. There are macro and micro political considerations a.o. nation building and nation branding.

Until recently, culture has been missing from the development equation. To ensure that culture takes its rightful place in development strategies and processes, UNESCO has adopted a three-pronged approach. It spearheaded a worldwide advocacy for culture and development, while engaging with the international community to set clear policies and legal frameworks and working on the ground to support governments and local stakeholders to safeguard heritage, strengthen creative industries and encourage cultural pluralism. UNESCO’s work with and for youth is committed to empowering young women and men and helping them to work together to drive social innovation and change, participate fully in the development of their societies, eradicate poverty and inequality, and foster a culture of peace.

On the local level, Bonaire has a Cultural policy plan: “Sin Kosecha no tin Simadan.”

The Cultural Policy for Bonaire is the domain of the public entity of Bonaire. The area where the Netherlands’s cultural policy interfaces with the local policy is in the area of Arts & Culture education. The government of the Netherlands provides the framework for Art & Culture in our secondary and vocational education. The framework provides flexibility especially when it comes to secondary areas of key competencies and subject matter. The island cultural policy plan, unanimously accepted by Island Council in 2013 has Art & Cultural education as one of eight main policy goals.

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