
Traveling Caribbean Heritage

Survey results Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, the Netherlands

Dr. Rose Mary Allen

Dr. Luc Alofs

J.H. Arion, MSc.

Liliane de Geus, MA, MSc.

Dr. Valika Smeulders



Introduction

The objective of the TCH survey has been to offer a situational analysis of heritage management in Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and The Netherlands. This paper summarizes the survey results.

TCH survey results on four locations

Heritage concept - Aruba

The respondents highlight linkages between the tourism industry and cultural heritage as these offer opportunities on a variety of levels. However, while tourism and branding surfaced as the principle topics in various conversations, connecting the industry with the actors active in the field of heritage seems to form a bottleneck.

The concept of heritage is generally associated with folkloric traditions, national symbols and the Papiamentu vernacular. Thus, a need to 'modernize' the concept of heritage by acknowledging and incorporating conceptualizations pertaining to heritage of younger generations, ethnic and cultural minorities, is considered essential. In other words, achieving inclusivity while raising general awareness and ownership with regards to Aruban heritage is pointed out as a crucial intervention.

The ethnic and cultural pluriformity characterizing *Arubanness* emerges in various conversations. Many respondents think of Aruban society as being well embedded regionally and holding a cosmopolitan and tolerant attitude towards 'newcomers', evidenced by the multilingual and multicultural Aruban society. At the same time, however, migration/immigration provoke questions about authenticity with regards to notions of Aruban cultural identity. This matter particularly relates to the inter-generational transfer of ideas and knowledge pertaining to heritage. Migration/immigration is generally assessed as enriching Aruban cultural identity. It is furthermore recognized that the Kingdom structure and a shared (post)colonial history stimulate a common interests between the island territories with regards to heritage.

Capacity Strengthening - Aruba

- A need was expressed to encourage the development of cultural activities and to improve inter-insular exchange and collaboration between organizations active in the areas of culture and heritage.
- A strengthening of local capacity in professional and educational areas is presumed essential in order to meet the constraints of an inadequate middle and senior management, heritage conservation and documentation expertise and educational workers.

In summary, Aruba has expressed a strong emphasis on the commercialization of heritage and on developing the commercial branding of the island's tourism product. In comparison to the other island territories, there is a strong focus on the organizations' strengths. Monumental heritage, the arts, craft and the utilization of the public space are considered unique selling points in achieving these objectives, while simultaneously offering possibilities of linking the island territories of Curaçao and Bonaire in capacity exchange by offering best practices and lessons learned.

Heritage concept - Bonaire

Bonairean respondents unanimously stress the seriousness of the generation gap with regard to the transmittance and conservation of heritage. A strong sense of identity is expressed through the performance of folkloric traditions.

Bonaire seems to have a wide range of possibilities to diversify the tourism industry. A variety of museums on site, calendar of folkloric events in combination with a large scale tourist industry that caters to the consumers of the Bonairean brand as a nature island. However, the generation gap is seen as a bottleneck, as knowledge and interest concerning Bonairean heritage and cultural traditions is steadily declining amongst Bonaireans generally, and particularly amongst the youth.

Capacity strengthening - Bonaire

Bonairean respondents express strong notions on cultural identity, which, similar to Aruba, implies emphasizing folkloric traditions. The discussions on Bonaire convey an accent on external flaws (weaknesses) pertaining to structural developments in the area of heritage. Flaws which also seem to correlate with the constitutional changes of 10/10/10, as the non-sovereign status of the Bonairean nation is perpetuated, curtailing self-reliance in the development of the cultural sector. More in-depth research is required in order to map the current state of affairs of the municipal governing (public) body of Bonaire. Special interest should be paid to the (in)effectiveness of the public entity of Bonaire in supporting the nation's cultural development, and cultivating a sense of insular identity.

As a direct consequence of its constitutional status, the Bonairean internal strengths of monumental regulation(s) and the cultural policy plan are striking. The large quantity of monumental (built/material) heritage offers great opportunities to strengthen ties and exchange expertise with both island territories of Aruba and Curaçao. Monumental heritage offers potential for branding activities, and for tying into the process of nation-building.

However, deficient capacity within the policy and administrative areas seem to bring about poor conditions to implement the structural development of heritage management.

In summary, Bonaire has many opportunities for commercial diversification of its tourism product and national *brand*, seeing the strong occurrence of traditional folklore and performative nature of this cultural heritage element. Much could be gained by coupling tourism operators and cultural entrepreneurs and/or social agents active in the area of culture and heritage, while simultaneously institutionalizing organizations active in the area of heritage.

Heritage concept - Curaçao

Not unlike the survey outcomes for Bonaire and Aruba with regards to the concept of heritage, on Curaçao too material heritage, i.e. monumental buildings and structures, are considered to provide opportunities. Respondents specifically stress the inter-relationship of these monumental buildings with the particular immaterial heritage embedded in the social histories of these buildings. Willemstad is a world heritage site and provides a *best practice* in terms of management and branding pertaining to this particular heritage.

Notions of *Curaçao*ness and a strong sense of cultural identity are frequently expressed, without however producing consensus about its contents. Clearly there is much interest in grounding a shared sense of identity. *Mental heritage* is believed to be a strong determinant in processes of identity formation and self-image. This topic is frequently explored. A recurrent issue is the fragility of mental heritage in the community. A presumed general disregard and neglect of heritage is seen as a consequence of mental heritage, leading to a deficient awareness of heritage and a lack of ownership within the island's community.

Capacity strengthening - Curaçao

The professional field of heritage on Curaçao contains the largest organizational density of all three Dutch Caribbean Leeward Antilles islands and shows, in that regard, a more developed middle to senior level management structure. The most common concern expressed by the surveyed respondents pertains to a lack of cohesion amongst the various organizations. In the focus group conversations on Curaçao, little thought is paid to the internal strengths of the organizations, as opposed to the emphasis on the need for improvement regarding structural developments in the field of heritage management. The general view is that there are many opportunities for establishing more cohesion amongst organizations and within heritage communities, by connecting heritage makers with heritage professionals, developing policy and administrative structures and by creating a general awareness in society of heritage and heritage management. A strengthening of local capacity by connecting the UoC with the large variety of stakeholders is mentioned several times, in an effort to further the development of the management structure of these various organizations.

Defining a shared sense of cultural identity, starting from bottom-up and particularly targeting youth, requires a strong focus on education as the principle agent in the transmittance of knowledge, traditions and heritage. A fundamental node in the process of nation-building, this requires a serious input of the educational institutions. Regrettably, however, the educational institutions failed to appear in the focus group meetings held for this particular needs-assessment, making the concerns of the generational gap, effects of mental heritage and the overall transmittance of knowledge all the more acute.

In summary, Curaçao contains the largest community of heritage professionals of all island territories and offers a large knowledge-base and infrastructure pertaining to heritage management. More cohesion would improve the effectiveness and efficiency within the field of heritage, which could also benefit the sister-islands Aruba and Bonaire.

Heritage concept - the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the heritage of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao is the result of a shared past dating back to 1634. This mainly colonial past is shared in the constellation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but also has a localized Dutch dimension, resulting from the migration from the Caribbean to Europe. In spite of these linkages, the heritage of the islands receives limited attention in the European part of the Kingdom and there is little reflection on its relation to nation building, much less to nation branding. Even so there are some heritage institutions and Antillean organizations that aim for representation of inclusive heritage of the Kingdom and the acknowledgement, protection and development of heritage of the islands.

The overall heritage field in the Netherlands is extensive, thematically very diverse and geographically layered. Collaborations between heritage partners are numerous and the focus varies from heritage policy, research and education to the organization of commemorations, festivals and exhibitions. Because of the scale and diversity of the heritage field in the Netherlands, the consortium of Dutch and Antillean Dutch organizations prefers to limit new collaborations to concrete projects, building on existing collaborations and/or organizing projects with TCH and its partners. Other institutions and organizations in TCH's network have expressed the same interest and intentions. The partners would like to build bridges across the divides between Dutch heritage institutions and the Antillean community in the Netherlands, as well as to further collaboration between the four regions in the project, within larger Caribbean and global contexts. The ultimate goal is to connect people working towards a sustainable future.

Regarding the conceptualization of heritage for the TCH project, respondents mention both the cohesive context of the Kingdom and the specificity in insular heritage, within larger global contexts. They stress the need to also study the development of diversifying Caribbean heritage in different parts of the Netherlands. Partners are interested in the relationship between heritage, identity and social structures in the Netherlands among Antilleans and between

Antilleans and other groups. They propose that heritage may be a means to combat social divides discernible in both political and populist discourse.

Capacity strengthening - the Netherlands

In general, respondents call attention to the poor knowledge on Dutch Caribbean heritage in Dutch heritage institutions and in heritage education. This means that capacity building is necessary in the Netherlands too. In line with the aforementioned intention to build on existing work and work on attainable goals, the following ideas were proposed:

- Antillean organizations in the Netherlands express the desire to work together with organizations and institutions on the islands. These collaborations may entail exchanges and collaborations on the performative level, knowledge exchange, and collaborations regarding the safeguarding of shared heritage.
- To increase the visibility and accessibility of knowledge, data and collections, for example by clustering databases. An extensive group of Dutch heritage institutions in cooperation with experts in digitalization is already working on a sustainable shared, interconnected infrastructure on a national scale and is interested in extending this cooperation to other regions in the Kingdom. This is seen as crucial.
- Non-profit organization Wikimedia NL, part of an international organizations built on volunteers, is interested in stimulating the representation of Caribbean perspectives and lemmas, and building Caribbean participation in the Netherlands. This is also seen as an opportunity.

In summary, of the four regions that are part of TCH, the Netherlands is the only region in which Antillean heritage is considered the heritage of a minority group. Consequently, the relationship with organizations and communities on the islands is vital. The Netherlands is the largest of the four TCH regions and therefore offers advantages in scale. Its existing national cross-sectoral collaboration in sustainable digitalization may offer opportunities for the islands.

Commonalities between Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and the Netherlands

All island territories express an urgency to cultivate general awareness and knowledge about the social and cultural histories of the individual islands. There is great concern about the generation-gap which leads to poor inter-generational transmittance of heritage, and disinterest for heritage management.

The Netherlands possesses an extensive and diverse institutional and organizational infrastructure working on heritage education and awareness which could increase its intercultural relevance and scope.

Common interests of the four localities include:

- Connecting heritage (material, immaterial) to contemporary societies across the four territories .
- Furthering the development of heritage education.
- Improving cohesion and achieving collaboration within the field of heritage between different parts of the Kingdom

Appendix – SWOT matrixes

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Aruba</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Capacity / Expertise</i></p>		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dutch Caribbean Heritage Platform – collaborative effort of six island territories in reaching awareness and exchange pertaining to monumental heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No structural (government) funding as regards the field of heritage and cultural entrepreneurs Lacking ability and expertise in the areas of inventorying, research, oral history & documentation, educational workers Little attention on holistic and integral cultural policy Deficient higher educated personnel in middle and senior management Deficient inter-organizational collaboration Weak ties with community (volunteers, heritage community, artists, youth, educators, etc.)
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural exchange and collaboration Leeward Antilles Digitalization of heritage documentation Organizations willing to assist in the progress of TCH Collaboration, communication and commitment key components in strengthening capacity Strengthening capacity in the areas of education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HBO-Plus; Middle management – on-the-job-training; General employees – courses Capacity exchange on local, insular, regional and transnational level, particularly pertaining to branding/marketing and monuments. Awareness raising and exchange of knowledge/ know-how of organizations to strengthen political leverage Documentation initiatives based on oral history practices (DCA) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor vision on (heritage) education and educational training Poor political will pertaining to policy in the area of culture 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>

Aruba

Heritage – Concept & Themes

		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral history fundamental as documentation method • Multilingualism should be regarded more positively than at present • Youth (up to the age of 25) require special attention, as do migrant populations and tourists • Large-scale research on Nation-building and Nation-branding (ATA) • Connecting monumental/ build heritage with the embedded ICH/ social-& cultural ensembles and histories of the buildings • Development of quality standards regarding cultural activities • Participation of youth in development and acknowledgment of ‘new heritage’ • Create more general awareness of Aruban cultural history • Public space underused for initiatives and branding activities pertaining to art • Economic benefits accompanied by globalization not utilized sufficiently • Cultural tourism has potential of generating income in field of heritage • Artists and youth would benefit from more support and acknowledgement 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or insufficient inter-generational transmittance of heritage • Culture and heritage management requires ethnic & cultural inclusive approach in order to mirror Aruban society • Tourism and migration undermine inter-generational transmittance of heritage • Modernity provokes notions on cultural identity and nation-building • Personal networks impede constructive collaboration between organizations and structuring of management 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	
		<p><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	
		<p><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Bonaire</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Capacity / Expertise</i></p>		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-insular cooperation with regards to monumental heritage policy and management – Aruba Holistic and integral approach in process improvement Development of heritage education and educational materials/ curriculum related Institutionalize cultural organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICH and monumental (material/ build) heritage policy and regulation Inter-insular cooperation with regards to cultural heritage (Monumental & ICH) policy and management – Curaçao (NAAM & Monumentenzorg/-fonds). Inter-departmental cooperation (SKAL, Monumentenzorg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continual lacking of capacity (expertise, workforce, dedication, vision) in middle and higher management Poor relations between various levels of management impeding policy tasks Insufficient political will/ priority with regards to development of cultural education, policy and HR infrastructure Insufficient/ inadequate human resources; volunteerism crucial Decline in general interest pertaining to cultural activities amongst youth
THREATS	-	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	<p><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>
THREATS	-	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	<p><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Bonaire</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Heritage – Concept & Themes</i></p>		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monuments (material/ build) heritage well embedded in notions of Bonairean cultural identity • Bonairean folkloric traditions are well documented and upheld (San Juan, Maskarada, Dia Di Rincon, etc.) • Regatta crucial component in <i>branding</i> Bonaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little general awareness and communal ownership of cultural heritage (particularly targeting youth and public sector) • Insufficient inclusivity/ participation community in the valuation of monuments and implementation of policy plan • Insufficient branding of shared notion/ idea of Bonairean identity • Disinterest amongst youth with regards to Bonairean traditions and cultural elements. • Little continuity cultural initiatives • Decrease in interest for Bonairean heritage amongst general population, incl. public sector • Decline in general interest pertaining to cultural activities amongst youth • Tourist operators disconnect with local cultural entrepreneurs
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting monumental (material/ build) heritage with the embedded ICH/ social-& cultural ensembles and histories of the buildings • Produce and disburse cultural calendar • Developing (societal) appreciation with regards to Bonairean heritage • Increase general awareness and acknowledgement of Bonairean cultural heritage, tradition & icons. • Establish cultural national theatre & cultural center 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	<p><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalization compromises Bonairean heritage • Constitutional change of the Kingdom charter imposes a threat to/ marginalizing effect on the conservation of Bonairean heritage • Immigration/ influx from Dutch migrants induces imbalance in proportion to Bonairean population on a variety of levels • Modernity brings about declining interest of Bonairean traditions and cultural elements 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	<p><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Curaçao</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Capacity/ Expertise</i></p>		<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large presence of organizations in the area of culture and heritage • Sound knowledgebase pertaining to monumental (material/ build) heritage (e.g. social-& cultural ensemble and histories of monumental buildings) • Proper research centers and archival records (e.g. <i>Antilliana, Judaica, national archives, NAAM</i>) • Heritage and education module/ masterclass at the TF, UoC 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking expertise & human resources related to heritage management • Non-conducive environment and lack of political will regarding cultural heritage initiatives, development and implementation of policy • Lacking awareness of registries, catalogs, collections and repositories amongst organizations and general public • Little cohesion & collaboration amongst organizations within field of culture and heritage • Large scale aging sector wide
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create heritage inventory and inventory methodology adapted to local context • Develop policy providing context, structure and criteria for art and culture while regarding notions on insular character, branding & cultural industry • Prioritize and increase societal inclusivity of monumental heritage policy • Expand workforce and build-up human resources • Produce heritage educational products • Develop heritage education (incorporate ICH) and internship program of UoC • Improve methodological expertise (i.e. documentation, conservation and safeguarding) • Create structural conservation and safeguarding procedures complying with best practices • Create pool of experts: connecting organizations and offer technical & practical support • Create platform for inter-organizations exchange • Set-up 'leer-werk' team/ liaison personnel between educational sector and heritage & arts sector • Create general database of collections & artefacts of the various organizations • Enhance entrepreneurship within field of culture & art and support of 'local' cultural entrepreneurs • Balance human- and financial resources • Create inter-& intra insular and region (digital) repository and exchange of expertise • Create platform for the arts and heritage sector: connect and represent individual initiatives, manage a central database while holding a public and political consultative function • Develop heritage workshops in a effort of varied organizations • Connect cultural entrepreneurs and general population with tourism industry 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	<p><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/ inefficient investment in awareness (campaigns) concerning particular heritage elements and little continuity of particular projects 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	<p><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Curaçao</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Heritage – Concept & Themes</i></p>		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonize heritage and raise awareness about the colonial experience and contested heritage • Public space (e.g. market) to showcase art and culture • ‘Modernize’ concept of heritage (e.g. contemporary meanings and prospective purpose of monumental buildings) & functions of institutions by adapting to contemporary societal dynamics • Make material heritage socially relevant & inclusive, by e.g. seeking linkages with immaterial heritage • Sensitize public & government/ politicians for heritage management • Target youth in heritage educational activities • Branding of local neighborhoods while incorporating the interconnectedness of ICH and Tangible heritage • Hold informative & social forming activities/ workshops with regards to heritage education on neighborhood level (target youth in particular) • Make collections/ data available for public • Branding of Curaçao with regards to cultural industry 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to take advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>	<p><i>Overcome <u>Weaknesses</u> by taking advantage of <u>Opportunities</u></i></p>
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental heritage present against the backdrop of various societal structures and on the level of the conceptualization of self • Immigration and migration provokes thoughts about cultural identity • Modernity brings about loss of traditional knowledge (ICH) and material heritage (changing landscape) • Tourism has exclusionary effect as public space becomes politicized, resulting in lack of public ownership with regards to heritage sites 	<p><i>Use <u>Strengths</u> to avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>	<p><i>Minimize <u>Weaknesses</u> and avoid <u>Threats</u></i></p>