



Being Aruban in the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Processes of identification amongst scholars at the University of Aruba

Nicky de Leeuw & Inge van Hoek

University of Utrecht



Bachelor thesis Cultural Anthropology

26-06-2019

Supervised by Gijs Cremers

Acknowledgements

In this thesis we present the findings of anthropological fieldwork conducted by Nicky de Leeuw and Inge van Hoek in Aruba between January 27th and April 20th, 2019. We would like to thank everyone that has helped us conduct our research with some of them in particular. First and foremost, we are very grateful for all informants for taking time out of their day to participate in this research and for sharing their personal stories with us. They have helped us feel welcome in Aruba and have taught us a lot. Secondly, we would like to thank the University of Aruba for opening its doors and giving us the opportunity to conduct our fieldwork in the academic sphere. Lastly, we would like to share our appreciation for our supervisor, Gijs Cremers, for supporting us and guiding us through this process. Without his insights, feedback and 24/7 availability for our questions, we would not have been able to present the result in its current shape.

We have experienced the last months as inspiring and educational and we are proud of the end result. The process of developing the research proposal and plan, the discussions on applicable theories, ten weeks of fieldworks and hours and hours of transcribing, analyzing and writing this thesis have made us grow personally and we have gone through an incredible academic development.

We hope that the work and emotions we have put in this project are visible in this thesis and hope you will enjoy reading it.

Nicky de Leeuw and Inge van Hoek



Maps

Map of Aruba



Maps of the Kingdom of the Netherlands





Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Theoretical framework	13
Decolonial societies	13
Identity and identification	15
National identification	18
Processes of belonging	21
Context	23
Historical overview	23
National identification with Aruba	24
National identification with the Kingdom of the Netherlands	25
The academic environment in Aruba	26
Empirical chapters	28
Chapter 1: National identification	28
Processes of national identification	28
Layers of identification	33
Chapter 2: Nationness	38
Language as a binding factor within the nation	38
Sameness and shared identification	41
Chapter 3: Place-belongingness	46
Symbolic spaces and territorial places	46
Feeling at home	50
Discussion and conclusions	55
Bibliography	59



Introduction (Inge van Hoek & Nicky de Leeuw)

*Aruba appreciated native land
our venerated cradle
you may be small and simple
but yet you are respected.*

Chorus:

*Oh Aruba dear country
our rock so beloved
our love for you is so strong
that nothing can destroy it. (repeat)*

*Your beaches so much admired
with palm trees all adorned
your coat of arms and flag
is the proudness of us all!*

Chorus

*The greatness of your people
is their great cordiality
that God may guide and preserve
his love for liberty!*

Chorus¹

The text cited above are the lyrics from Aruba's national anthem, called Aruba Dushi Tera which translates to Aruba precious country. The lyrics of the anthem reflect a great appreciation of the country on several aspects like the nature and its people. This admiration of the country is something that children learn from a young age, in primary schools.² The lyrics tell us that the Aruban people love and respect their island which makes one wonder how they identify with this country. Do they recognize themselves in the characteristics mentioned in the anthem and do they feel like they belong to this rock and these beaches?

¹ <https://www.visitaruba.com/about-aruba/general-aruba-facts/national-anthem/> (English translation, accessed on [June 13 2019])

² Interview with Emma 07-03-2019



For this thesis we have conducted fieldwork research on national identification in the academic spheres of the University of Aruba. Our research concerns the students' and teachers' national identification with Aruba, and additionally their identification with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. National identifications are constructions (Eriksen 2002) which are formed and transformed (Hall 2017) and therefore we have focused on the processes of identification with the nation. We have approached the nation likewise as a construct which is imagined by its members (Anderson 2006). Inhabitants of Aruba have the Dutch nationality, but how do they identify as Aruban? And in what ways do they identify with the Kingdom of the Netherlands? Or can we speak of a hybrid identification (Easthope 1998) in which scholars switch between different national identifications to create common worlds in which people can unite (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016, 32)? Furthermore, we have studied processes of belonging to Aruba and to the Kingdom of the Netherlands amongst these scholars, using two concepts of belonging Yuval Davis (2006) employs which are belonging to the collectivity and to places. We have studied at the experience and negotiation of sameness and shared identification with the collectivity which we employ as nationness (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016) and how space and place can play a role in belonging, conceptualized as place-belongingness (Antonsich 2010) to Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

We strongly believe that our research is socially relevant because we have studied identification in a nation that nowadays still has strong ties with its ex-colonizer, despite their autonomous status in the kingdom since 1986. Currently, the Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of four countries: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. The Netherlands does not only hold territory in the western part of Europe, but also in the Caribbean, with the special municipalities: Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius. Therefore, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is made up of the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, located at different parts of the world with different histories, cultural customs and mentalities. Even though many differences can be pointed out between the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, similarities can also be found, such as a Dutch nationality and the use of the Dutch language.

The complicated history and relation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, due to the colonial past, makes it relevant to study processes of identification in Aruba. This postcolonial context is of importance since identity must be understood as context dependent (Wodak 2009). We have decided to study processes of identification as our aim is not to determine a collective identity but to find underlying processes that help construct the national identity (WRR 2007). A lot of literature can be found on decolonial Caribbean societies (Guadeloupe 2009, Hall 1992; 2017, Baldacchino & Royle 2010, Connell 2009), but little research has been conducted on these topics specifically in Aruba. We therefore believe the theoretical relevance of this research can be found in our aim to offer an



expansion on current knowledge on national identification as Aruban within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

We set out to answer the following research question: *How do scholars at the university of Aruba negotiate and give meaning to national identification, nationness and place-belongingness in relation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands?* To answer this research question, we focused on the following themes. Firstly, we aim to get a closer look at our research population, therefore we looked at who scholars at the University of Aruba are. Secondly, to get a sense of Aruban scholars their national identities, we looked at how scholars at the University of Aruba negotiate and experience national identification. Thirdly, to get a sense of the connection Aruban scholars feel to Aruba as a nation and fellow Arubans and the Kingdom of the Netherlands and fellow members of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, we looked at how Aruban scholars negotiate and experience nationness. And lastly, to research how Aruban scholars feel connected to Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a place, we looked at how Aruban scholars negotiate and experience place-belonging.

To do so, we have conducted fieldwork in Oranjestad, Aruba, between January and April 2019. One of our main methods of gathering data has been participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011) at the University of Aruba, located in the center of Oranjestad. This entailed various levels of participation, varying from observing classes at the university to fully participating in events organized by the university. Participant observation gave us the possibility to come in contact with scholars at the university. By “hanging out” at the university, a well-known research method in anthropology based on the assumption that merely being present in the research field will benefit the research, we got to observe our research population as well as get into contact with the scholars. Because we were present at the university on a daily basis, we became associated with students as well as staff. Due to this daily contact with the scholars, we built up rapport (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011), which in turn made it easier to find informants to conduct qualitative interviews with. Furthermore, by participating in events organized by the University of Aruba, we got to experience what it feels like to be active as a scholar at the university. We became truly included into the academic world in Aruba.

Together we have conducted a total of 40 interviews. Out of these Nicky has conducted 20 interviews with either students actively studying at the University of Aruba, or participating in the Academic Foundation Year (AFY). AFY is a one-year program offered by the University of Aruba so high school students have the possibility to get their VWO certificate, which is a necessity to study law at the University of Aruba. The other 20 interviews were conducted by Inge with staff active at the University of Aruba. These were all qualitative interviews, and we seldomly made use of pre-asserted questions. Mostly we made use of topic lists, related to the points we were wishing to discuss. Afterwards we have transcribed and coded these interviews (Boeije 2010). Naturally the scholars we



interviewed were made aware that their participation in our research was completely voluntary, by communicating the implications of informed consent beforehand of the interviews. To guarantee their anonymity we have anonymized the scholars, the names mentioned are not in any way relatable to actual scholars at the University of Aruba.

Because one third of the Caribbean population has European descent(Guadeloupe 2009, 50) we did not necessarily stand out from the scholar base at the University of Aruba. However, during our fieldwork we always kept in mind that our Dutch nationalities carried a certain meaning in Aruba, an area formerly colonized by the Netherlands. Therefore, we always tried to be aware of the influences our personal backgrounds could possibly have during our fieldwork, especially because our research topic can be directly related to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Like Guadeloupe(2009, 208) fittingly wrote: "...one neither writes about nor represents informants, but one presents the intersubjective encounters in the field by having these informants critically interrogate academic works".

We have chosen to research processes of identification in the academic community of the University of Aruba. Nowadays universities are a site where various nationalities cross each other, for universities and governments around the world are encouraging transnational education and the global exchange of students(Verbik & Lasanowski 2007). This is one of the reasons why believe it is interesting to study what it means to identify as an Aruban scholar within the Dutch Kingdom at the University of Aruba. Since this is a complementary research, Inge has focused on teachers and Nicky has focused on students active here. There is an interesting field of tension between these groups regarding their age and what events in the history of Aruba they have consciously experienced. The difference in life experience may have changed their processes of national identification.

The university itself should be viewed as a specific space that is imagined within the larger imagined nation, therefore, a distance between the university and overall society can possibly be found. Scholars at the university tend to have a higher socio-economic status and higher education than Aruban society has over average. This could result in a different identification with the nation and community and a different perspective on the society overall. However, we want to underline that we do not perceive either of these groups to be a homogenous group without differences within that specific group. Individuals in the two groups are not all the same and we value that there are not only differences between but also within those groups. We aim to refrain from stereotyping and will always try to clarify differences within these groups. We will keep in mind the differences in their backgrounds and will not generalize all scholars.

Theoretical Framework

1. Decolonialization (Nicky de Leeuw)

As we indicated in the introduction, our research has focussed on identity construction among scholars at the University of Aruba. Before we elaborate on the anthropological paradigm on identity and identity construction, we will first discuss the contextual factors in which this identity construction is happening. Aruba is part of the Caribbean, an area with a complicated colonial past. Therefore we will first explore the notion of decolonialization, in relation to the Caribbean context. Even though colonialism is often regarded as a thing of the past, the results of colonial times are still present in contemporary postcolonial societies. Hence our research falls in line with a tradition of decolonial thought (Asher 2013), for we question how colonial legacies continue to shape processes of identification. Though our main focus is more specifically on an ex-colonialised territorial area, namely the Caribbean, we do want to point out that race as a structuring societal element, which originated in colonial times, is also still present in Western societies (Wekker 2016).

1.1 Decolonial theory

Historically, decolonialization can be defined as the struggle of colonized territories to form nation-states and gain sovereignty during the cold war (Mignolo & Walsh 2018). However, at the end of the 20th century it became clear that decolonialization had failed in most nations: ex-colonialized states were ruled by minority elites and structures of colonial power continued internally (internal colonialism) and externally, in regard to global structures (Mignolo & Walsh 2018). It is the continuing of these structures of colonial powers we are interested in, in relation to identity construction. By looking at identity construction in the theoretical paradigm of decolonial thought, we therefore look at processes of identification within structures of power originating in colonial times. According to Slocum & Thomas (2003, 557), in contemporary societies the past is always embedded in the present, namely in the form of social processes structured in unequal power relations. These unequal power relations might be structures along the lines of race, class, ethnicity, gender or culture. It is therefore that, even though colonialism has come to an end in the 20th century, the legacy of European colonialism continues to shape contemporary global political, economic and cultural discourses and institutions (Rizvi et al. 2006, 250). Race as a classifying structure originated in colonial times, but is still a structuring element in contemporary societies (Wekker 2016). Hence colonial times are over, but the legacies of colonialism still shape social processes and unequal power relations in contemporary



societies, Caribbean societies included. Even though our focus is on Caribbean societies in general, we do want to stress that we do not want to generalize all Caribbean societies. Every ex-colonised society has and still has a unique relation to its former colonizer(Loomba 1998), hence we are aware that differences can be found between different postcolonial societies in the Caribbean as well.

1.2 Decolonial Caribbean societies

Islands in general hold a special relation to colonialism. They were in the age of European discovery tours the first territories to be colonised, but the last to seek independence(Baldacchino & Royle 2010, 140). These conditions have resulted in an extraordinary form of postcolonial societies, as islands have higher contemporary incomes and living standards(Baldacchino & Royle 2010). Moreover, island states have actively been postponing or trying to prevent independence from their ex-colonisers. Caribbean islands are no objection to this. Baldacchino (2010) has labelled this *upside down decolonization*, with which he points at the way in which many island territories fight full independence. Sovereign islands in the Caribbean that are independent complain about the economic benefits decolonised islands still linked to their former colonizers enjoy, mostly by international migration due to retained citizenship of that ex-colonizing country(Connel, 2007). As a result of this upside down decolonialization, most Caribbean societies cannot be defined by strict territorial boundaries or common discourses on sovereignty in relation to the state(Duany, 2000). It is therefore that island states are not necessarily imagined as inherently limited and sovereign political communities(van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015, 89).

As said before, certain results of colonialism can still be perceived in Caribbean society, one of them being labelled by Caribbeanist scholars the *shipwreck experience*(Guadeoupe 2016, 163). The shipwreck experience in a metaphor of the journey millions of people had to make towards the Caribbean during colonial times. Once they settled in the Caribbean, they were no longer able to perform most of the cultural identifications and practices they were accustomed to, for the institutions and contexts in which they usually performed these practises were non-existent in their new homelands, the Caribbean area. This has led to *presences*, the actuality where traces of the old world, such as Africa, Asia or Europe, are transformed in cultural expressions and performances in the new world. One of the most recognisable structuring elements throughout the Caribbean is the African presence. Hall(1992, 229) pointed this out by stating “Africa, the signified which could not be represented, remained an unspoken, unspeakable “presence” in Caribbean culture”. Caribbean society can be regarded as a milieu characterised by colonial, neo-colonial and internal structural inequalities,



especially for the working classes who are constantly struggling to position themselves within this milieu(Guadeloupe 2009).

The Caribbean population is also conscious of these presences in Caribbean societies. Therefore, there is a certain awareness that everyone has come from elsewhere and is ultimately a newcomer. Guadeloupe(2009, 213-214) uses the term *creole genesis* to indicate this phenomenon. Since the earliest days of colonialism, West Indians have moved across the different islands constituting the Caribbean area. And still the Caribbean islands remain a centre of immigration, and performance of mobility. Due to this constant flow of people moving to and between the Caribbean islands, everyone is perceived as a newcomer. This creates a form of sameness felt by inhabitants of the Caribbean. Furthermore, most academics don't touch upon politics of autochthony in the Caribbean, because nationalism and ethnicity have never divided Caribbean people against each other.

One of the structuring elements of Caribbean societies is their reliance on tourism, which is (locally) called the *money tie system*(Guadeloupe 2009). The money tie system points to the societal structure wherein all social relationships are ultimately based on acquiring more money and power. No matter which social class one belongs to, everyone is an active participant in the money tie system. Since there is general awareness of the structuring element of the money tie system, and active participation of the entire population into the system, a certain kind of shared identification is experienced. This experienced unity is what connects inhabitants of Caribbean societies, regardless of ethnic background. The money tie system is also perceived to be the dominating performative space, therefor righteous living comes after the money tie system(Guadeloupe 2009, 138). This can be perceived as a pragmatic way of living, one should worry firstly about acquiring power and wealth, and secondly on living along certain (mostly religious) moral guidelines. Another effect of the money tie system is the distrusting of politicians throughout the Caribbean. Because people are aware that all social relations are ultimately based on the acquiring of money and power, and even though there is no disapproval of this, politicians are often throughout the Caribbean distrusted for they also participate in the money tie system(Guadeloupe 2009, 154).

2. Identity and Identification (Nicky de Leeuw)

2.1 Identity

Since we will look at the way members of the academic community in Aruba identify with Aruba and the Dutch Kingdom, we want to take a closer look at the process of identity construction. Identity is a

very broad and complicated concept, where a lot of scholars have touched upon with different ways of looking at identity. We argue identity should be understood as a context-dependent and dynamic concept (Wodak 2009) and is crafted through social performances and relations (Brodwin 2002, 323). Therefore identity should not be considered as static, but as a dynamic process that is being negotiated within different contexts and (re)shaped over space and time. Therefore, identities are fluid and context dependent, hence they should be understood in the context they were constructed, and in the context in which meanings are attached. This is in line with the elaboration given by Hall (Hall & du Gay 1996, 4) on the construction of identity, and how it can be understood: "Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity - an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation)."

2.2 Identification

By stating that identities emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, Hall means to point out that the construction of identities does not happen individually and independently, but that external influences also shape identities. So, identities are not just constructed on the base of our own perception of our identity, but identities are also ascribed to us by people around us. This happens by the means of categorization, through this process people are ascribed different categories of identity. Examples of these levels of categorization can be found in ethnicity, or social status. Hence, identities are the product of different levels of categorizing by ourselves as well as the people around us, that should be understood in an intersectional way (Nagel 2003). This means that identities are constructed through different means of categorization, and these categorizations also influence each other. Therefore, you get a division, between the way you identify yourself and the way others identify you. The process by which you are constantly positioning yourself between the way you perceive your own identity and others perceive your identity, called politics of identification, is how identities are negotiated (Wekker 1998). This is closely related to open politics of identity, which can be understood as the switching between one national or different transnational identities, that creates a common world (Guadeloupe 2009). With the use of identities as plural, we do not mean the identities of different peoples, but that someone can experience multiple identities.

Identities should not be understood as single entities, but as a complex constructions of multiple social identities, that are all interrelated and intertwined(Wodak 2009). These different categories that construct social identities are called identity markers, and all together they stand at the base of identity construction. Different identity markers construct a multiple identity, also known as hybridity(Easthope 1998). Hybridity emphasizes on intertwinement, instead of specific closed of entities, in this particular case on the entanglement of several identity markers. In contrast to people identifying themselves on the basis of a certain shared sameness with the other, people can also feel a lack of that sameness, which causes them to perceive the other as different.

Continuing on the idea that identities are constructed in relation to the Self as well as in relation to others, there are also certain categories that one ascribes to oneself as well as to others. These shared categories construct a feeling of sameness, and causes one to identify with someone sharing that category. However, at the same time there will be contra-identification when a lack of shared categories and with that sameness is perceived. As a result, one will perceive this person to be different, due to this lack of sameness. This process is called othering, and causes the positing of a basic difference between oneself and the other(Sökefeld 1999, 418). So, due to the process of othering, one might identify with people on the basis of certain shared identity categories, and feels different to others because of the lack of these categories.

2.3 Decolonial identification

As we mentioned, the way colonisers and colonised people interacted with each other, differed in different places. Naturally, these different modes of behaviour influenced racial discourses and identities(Loomba 1998, 110). Linking the concept of identity markers back to transnational processes, the constant flow of people going in and out of a country challenges the idea of linking one's identity to a certain bounded territory in the form of a nation-state(van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015). Gupta and Ferguson (1992) contribute to this idea by stating that identities are increasingly de-territorialized. The increasing movement of people around the world, challenges the idea of belonging to a certain territorial bounded nation. Therefore, people can still feel sense of belonging to a certain place without actually being present at that place, one could perceive them as (un)voluntary displaced people. At the same time nondisplaced people are also experiencing feelings of displacement, because due to globalization places are rapidly changing, with among other things the coming of new people(Bhabha 1989, 66). So people find their relation to places to be changing, which causes a disappearance of the connection between the place and the culture(Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 10). As a result, people do not identify themselves in relation to a certain place that can be pointed to on a map anymore. We will

continue on this topic by looking at one of the markers of an individual's identity, namely the national identity. This segment of the identity is shaped within the nation, which we will approach as an imagined community as explained in the next paragraph.

3. National identification (Inge van Hoek)

3.1 National identification

Attachment to the nation is commonly experienced as inherent, deeply rooted and natural, but in reality the national identity is a fluid and multidimensional concept based on a sameness between two or more entities. National identities are constructions: they are not natural (Eriksen 2002, 99). National identities are not attributes we are born with but are rather formed and transformed (Hall 2017, 137). Meanings ascribed to a national identity differ in every cultural context (Eriksen 2002), in each nation territory, myths, historical memories, culture, economy and legal rights and duties differ and therefore, the context in which identification is constructed differs. Consequently, every process of national identification differs. Despite the complexity of the concept of national identity, Smith (1991) has defined it as "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 1991, 12). He distinguishes two of national identity models; a Western model based on a political community and an ethnic model (Smith 1991). Eriksen (2002) elaborates on this division by distinguishing between national identity connected to ethnicity and a national identity without ethnicity. He defines a national identity without common descent as a mosaic of cultures that together form a new nation and argues that there is no necessary link between national identity and ethnic identity (Eriksen 2002, 117). National identity is therefore not a super-ethnic category through which performance becomes part of who people think they are (Guadeloupe 2009, 215), especially in nations which are composed of multiple ethnic groups.

National identities, as a specific aspect of the hybrid identity, can be produced, reproduced and transformed. A national identification can be part of an individual's identity but is not the exclusive identity. In this research we focused on national identification as a process rather than a solid identity. With this approach the processes of identification will be most central, instead of a description of what the national identity should be (WRR 2007, 33). A nation is not simply the biggest form of an objective collective identification (Anderson 2006, 6). A sense of national identification provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world (Smith 1991, 17). As discussed before, identity can be understood as a complex and fluid concept that cannot be determined by one singular identity marker, but must be studied intersectional, in relation to other aspects of identity



construction(Wodak 2009). This implies that there is not just one solid national identity, instead in the process, national identification is constructed in relation to other identity markers. The very idea of the nation presupposes that there are other nations, or at least other peoples who are not member of the nation(Eriksen 2010, 134). Processes of national identification take place within the nation, which is approached as an imagined community.

3.2 The nation as an imagined community

The nation can be defined in countless manners and for the purpose of this research we have used the definition of the nation as an imagined community. Anderson (2006) explains the origin and spread of nationalism by conceptualizing the nation as an imagined community: ‘an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’(2006, 6). Members of a nation often feel loyalty and belonging to an imagined community. This nation is imagined as the people will never meet all of their fellow members, it is therefore not to be understood as territorial but purely in the imaginary. It is imagined as limited because it contains boundaries beyond which lie other nations(Anderson 2006, 7), the very idea of the nation presupposes that there are other nations, or at least other peoples, who are not member of the nation(Eriksen 2010: 134). Anderson also described the nation imagined as sovereign, because the concept was born in an age in which enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm(Anderson 2006, 7). To have self-determination through enlightenment and revolutions is a precondition for nationalism. Simultaneously, the convergence of capitalism and print technology created the possibility of a new form of imagined community which set the stage for the modern nation(Anderson 2006, 46). Print capitalism was a condition to create a community in which everybody could identify with others in the community: everybody with the same nationality had the same rights and society became horizontally structured. A conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable equally contributed to the possibility to imagine the nation(Anderson 2006, 36). Due to print capitalism every member of society had access to historical information in their own language and could therefore connect to the nation. Despite not knowing everybody else in the community, it can be imagined through this shared language and shared history. The nation as an imagined community is, according to Anderson (2006), both open and closed. It is closed when you are not historically connected to the nation, but it is open because the nation invites you to learn the language and thereby neutralize and become a member of the nation. Stories, myths and collective memories give strength to this collective membership to the nation(Endesor 2002, 5; Eriksen 2002, 110).

Due to processes of globalization and transnationalism, human mobility has made national borders fade. The nation as an imagined community has become de-territorialized(Gupta and Ferguson 1992),



but this does not necessarily fade the boundaries of the imagined community. The conceptualization can be applied to the nation, but also to larger entities that are imagined as a community. People can be connected in the imaginary community of a supra-nation. As national identification is only part of a hybrid identity, individuals have the possibility to switch between identification with the nation, or the supra-nation, and other identity markers (Easthope 1998). The next chapter will concern the emotional identification with the nation through processes of belonging.

4. Processes of belonging (Inge van Hoek)

4.1 Feelings of belonging

The process of national identification is closely related to a sense of belonging with people around you and places you attach to. Most literature concerning feelings of belonging is addressed with a specific focus on identity and with less attention to the culture involved (Croucher 2018, 43). Belonging is a fluid construction and a multidimensional concept and is often mistaken as a synonym for identity or citizenship (Antonsich 2010), but cannot be reduced to one of these concepts. It is of relevance to distinguish these concepts, since they have different meanings and must be explained within the cultural context in which it occurs. Ultimately, belonging is related to various social dynamics like identity, citizenship, and nationality, as well as to spatial terms (Antonsich 2010).

Yuval-Davis describes identity as narratives of both the individual, but also their perception of being a member of a certain collectivity and the meaning an individual ascribes to this group (Yuval-Davis 2006, 202). Social dynamics in this world shape the way we define ourselves and the world around us and must be studied to understand perceptions of belonging. The concept of belonging as identifications and emotional attachments refers to the construction of belonging to particular collectivities (Yuval-Davis 2006, 197). Belonging, in this context, can be described as an act of self-identification whilst at the same time being identified by others (Nagel 2003). Sociocultural, political, and administrative groups, including family, church, school, ethnic group, the nation and the state, fulfill a certain need to belong (Croucher 2018, 47). People do not ontologically belong to one of these groups, rather, belonging is an achievement (Bell 1999, 3), therefore we will approach belonging as a social process. Individuals can be assigned an identity and belonging by organizations, states, politicians and social groups, but they aren't passive recipients in this process. Identity and belonging must be 'accepted, resisted, chosen, specified, invented and so forth' by the individual (Cornell & Hartmann 1998, in Croucher 2018).

4.2 Politics & processes of belonging

The place the national identity is commonly related to is often marked by the borders of the nation-state. Consequently, due to this relation to the nation-state, belonging is a political process. The state plays an important role in determining who is part of the nation by deciding who becomes a citizen (Croucher 2018, 48). Without permission to belong to the nation-state, it is impossible to construct a national identity and feelings of belonging towards the nation. De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak argue that the national identity changes from a mental construct to a reality through discourses by politicians, intellectuals and media (1999, 153). The process of identification is thus not only dependent on the individual narrative, but external influences interfere in shaping a national identity (Nagel 2003). In this context, belonging can be a discursive resource (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999; Antonsich 2010; Hall & du Gay 1996) which produces and maintains the boundaries of the nation. Applied by politicians, this discourse makes belonging a hegemonic political construction where the individual has to adapt to the dominant group by assimilating to their culture, values and behavior (Yuval-Davis 2006). The politics of belonging involve two sides: the side that claims belonging; the collectivity, and the side that has the power to grant belonging; usually the state (Croucher 2018; Antonsich 2010) and are therefore subject to power relations. Put simply, the politics of belonging are about deciding whether people fit in the determined set of boundaries of the imagined nation and are included, or if they stand outside these boundaries and are excluded from the community.

Within this determined set of boundaries, feelings of belonging are constructed on a personal level through several processes. Within our framework we will employ belonging as an individual, personal process in relation to the group or place. It must be noted that belonging is not just about the social locations and constructions of identities and attachments, but also about the way these are valued and judged (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203). People can belong to their environment in various ways; they can belong to people and to places and/or to many objects, which can vary from small entities to entire nations. Our framework is based on two concepts Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes in exploring the notion of belonging, namely identifications and emotional attachments to people or collectivities concerning defining our identity, and social locations concerning where we feel like we belong (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199). In this research we therefore divide processes of belonging into nationness, as belonging to the collectively that is the nation, and place-belongingness, as belonging to social locations as markers for identification (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016, 92).

The first process of belonging we have employed during this research is nationness. People identify themselves with a national identity, while at the same time being identified by others as belonging within the boundaries of the nation or not. This emotional attachment is, according to Anderson (2006), an attachment to an imagined community and achieving a sense of collective

national identification unites the members. Imagined communities contain borderlines that determine who belongs to the group and who does not and therefore make a distinction between 'us' and 'them'. These boundaries may be social, cultural, political, or economic in nature and range in importance (Croucher 2018, 47). However, these boundaries are fluid and not always clearly present; people have the possibility to shift between identities. Despite belonging to 'them', people can get included in a nation and go through the process of becoming 'us'.

Nationness can be understood as a mechanism of belonging; as a deeply felt essential attachment to the nation. A national identification binds people within the nation, based on a shared identification and sameness (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015, 89) and therefore contributes to a sense of nationness. Put simply, shared identification and sameness contribute to the imagining of a community amongst the collectivity in the nation. Festivities, traditions and symbols can support the process of emotional identification (WRR 2007, 209). The feeling of belonging in a group leads to an inclusivity and helps define who 'we' are. The experience of nationness can facilitate participation within society and therefore, facilitates becoming included in the community (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016, 89).

The second process of belonging we employed during this research is place-belongingness, which is characterized as the sociocultural location to which individuals belong and the dynamics involved in this (Yuval-Davis 2006; Antonsich 2010) and understood as a personal, intimate feeling, or emotional attachment, of feeling at home in a place (Antonsich 2010, 645). 'Home' here stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis 2006, 197). Place may be fixed in a material space or territory, just as it is made in a complex web of social and affective relations and attachments (Hooks 2009, 331). A home can therefore be experienced when being in a certain space; around a certain group like family, but can also be experienced on territorial places that hold emotional value. These territories will be viewed as a place where a sense of belonging can flourish (Hooks 2009, 329). According to Antonsich (2010), finding a place to belong is ultimately about leading a life that is meaningful and worth living, constructed through, among others, relational, cultural, economic and legal factors that generate a feeling of belonging (Antonsich 2010, 647).

Context

1. Historical overview (Inge van Hoek)

Aruba has its own distinct and unique history that contributes to the process of national identification. The Caribbean region consist of separate islands that contain a variety of cultures, hence to claim that the Caribbean as a whole can be defined by a singular identity is meaningless and can be perceived as offensive (Premdas 1996, Mijts 2013). Defining Aruban identity as Caribbean identity would therefore be inaccurate. Several historical developments have added to the unique, contemporary Aruba. In 1636 the Dutch colonized the island and until 1792 Aruba fell under the rule of the West India Company (Alofs & Merckies 1990, 15&41). After the termination of the West India Company, the governing of Aruba became the responsibility of the *Staten-Generaal*, but in the following years the island switched rulers several times. When the Dutch regained Aruba from the British in 1816, it formed a colony with Curaçao and Bonaire. In 1865 a new regulation was imposed, and the colony was organized with Curaçao as main island and the five subordinates: Aruba, Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius (Alofs & Merckies 1990, 41). The Lago oil industry established in 1924 and resulted in major changes in Aruba's population and governance. With the arrival of the oil industry, working immigrants from other Caribbean islands and North America arrived and a variety of ethnicities settling in Aruba.

The Lago became the administrative power in Aruba because of its high profits; Lago was the government (Alofs & Merckies 1990, 79). From the 1950's onwards the refinery automatized, and many who lost their jobs moved back to their countries of origin. However, a significant group of immigrants remained on the island, especially in San Nicolas after the Lago closed in 1985. Simultaneously, the political landscape of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands changed severely. In 1954 the colonial era definitively ended with the creation of the *Statuut*, which marks the birth of the Netherlands Antilles. The new, horizontal relationships between the states in the Kingdom of the Netherlands captured in this *Statuut* signify the start of the post-colonial era (Santos do Nascimento 2016, 19).

However, within the Netherlands Antilles the islands were vertically structured with Curaçao as the leader. This resulted in dissatisfaction in Aruba, mainly because they contributed the highest taxes due to the high profits of the oil industry. Already in the 30's and 40's of the 20th century the first separation movements against Curaçao arose. These movements are viewed as the precursors of the Separación movement in the second half of the 20th century (Alofs & Merckies 1990, 80) which



resulted in the Status Aparte. Aruba was granted a modified independent status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1986. This status stipulated that Aruba was granted prerogatives within the Dutch Kingdom, similar to those of the Antilles, but would no longer be part of the Netherlands Antilles and therefore became the third country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This arrangement was accepted, with the condition that Aruba would become fully independent in 1996(Aller 1994, Oostindie & Verton 1998) however, this full independency was never realized. Meanwhile, the economy went downhill because of automatization in the oil industry. In the 80's the economy stabilized due to efforts to expand the tourism sector(Alofs & Merckies 1990, 162) and today tourism is Aruba's number one economic pillar. Aruba's most reliable guests are tourists from the United States of America, but the tourism industry has also attracted migrants from, amongst others, Venezuela and Colombia to measure up to the high labor demand in the sector, which has added to the multi-ethnicity on the island.

Postcolonial relations and the history of mobility and movement in Aruba make the island an interesting area for research about identity, ethnicity and belonging. The constant presence of migration flows has caused the construction of hybrid cultures. Migration resulting in multi-ethnic societies enables individuals to encounter other nationalities and cultures, thereby altering perceptions of self and "other"(Ho 2009, 789). The struggle for separation from the Dutch Antilles resulted in a heightened interest in Aruba's cultural identity. Status Aparte has forced the Aruban community to detach itself from the Antillean search for national identity(Alofs 2011, 20). Suddenly, Aruba was an autonomous nation and questions arose about what the real Aruban identity was and who could call themselves Aruban. This period can be explained as the creation of a 'culture of resistance', which reclaims, renames and re-inhabits the territory concerned(Saïd 1994, 226). In this process, a search for culturally authentic symbols and practices is detectable, to achieve a renewed sense of identity(Saïd 1994, 228). The course of events in the history of Aruba plays part in how national identifications are constructed in the nation.

2. National identification with Aruba (Inge van Hoek)

Flows of people in the past and present have resulted in pluriform identifications of the inhabitants of the island(Mijts 2013, Alofs 2011). Many social dynamics concerning history, social relations, politics, cultural diversity and identity have influenced Aruban identifications and have made it difficult to determine a collective identity. The melting pot of identities makes defining a distinct identity for the population of Aruba difficult, but the multi ethnicity can also be viewed as a characteristic of this population. However, there is no such thing as *the* identity(Alofs 2011, 264, emphasis in original).



National identification in Aruba must be approached as a national identity without ethnicity (Eriksen 2002), due to the diversity of the population and the absence of a common descent. The absence of an ethnic identity raises the question of how the national identity is shaped in relation to the imagined community that is the Aruban nation.

As noted, individuals construct their identity using multiple roles and identifications (Smith 1991). Guadeloupe (2009) has conducted research on the multiethnic and multireligious island of Sint Maarten, another island in the Caribbean with post-colonial ties to the Netherlands. According to Guadeloupe, there is an open politics of identity performed by switching between one national identification to another, to create a common world (2009, 32). The concept of open identity politics can be applied to the Aruban nation to determine whether members of the imagined community construct a national identity to claim belonging, or whether they construct the boundaries of the imagined community with other identity markers. When switching between a national or supra-national identification in interaction with others, common worlds can be created and identities can unite (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016, 32). Keeping this in mind, it can be possible for inhabitants of Aruba to identify with the Kingdom of the Netherlands as well, since the country is part of this supra-national entity.

3. National identification with the kingdom of the Netherlands (Inge van Hoek)

The autonomous status of Aruba influenced the experienced feelings of belonging to Aruba and the Dutch Kingdom (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2016, 88). It must be noted that there are several layers of belonging for inhabitants of Aruba, due to the colonial and political past and present of the nation; there is belonging to Aruba, but there is also belonging to the greater Dutch nation (Guadeloupe 2009, 4). These different identifications are compatible, Aruban inhabitants stated that they felt Aruban as well as Dutch (Veenendaal 2016, 21). Pluri-identification with both Aruba and the kingdom depends on the spheres in which people move, colonial history, political relations, geographical location, economic ties and ethnic background of the inhabitants of Aruba, and therefore calls for a flexibility in identification (Mijts 2013). Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have a unique political relationship that affects the national and supra-national identification. The politics of belonging involve the Kingdom of the Netherlands holding the power to grant belonging and to set boundaries for inclusion and exclusion. The Arubans and the Dutch have the same nationality by birth and hold the same passports, but the construction of their sense of belonging to the kingdom differs. Identification with a kingdom appears to be more difficult than identification with a single nation (Alofs 2011, 268). Previous research concluded that the inhabitants of the islands in the kingdom do not identify with a

kingdom identity(Alofs & Veneman 2010). Since the focus in this research lies with the process of identification instead of a solid identity, identification is possible with certain markers of identity, especially since identity is a layered concept.

4. The academic environment in Aruba (Nicky de Leeuw)

Since Aruba achieved Status Aparte in 1986, education in Aruba falls under jurisdiction of the Aruban government. Two governmentally funded institutions of higher education can be recognised, namely the University of Aruba and IPA, a teacher training institute(WilWeg 2019). These institutions are derived from the Dutch educational system, and match a HBO level of education in the Netherlands. Next to these two institutions funded by the government, there are also several private education options. However these private educational institutes are not legally recognised. A certificate from the University of Aruba or IPA is also recognised in other parts of the Dutch Kingdom(Nuffic 2015). In Aruba, approximately 25 % of the population is lowly educated, 60 % of the population has an average level of education, and 15 % of the population is highly educated(Herman & Kösters 2019).

We conducted our research among scholars at the University of Aruba, which can be found in Oranjestad. With the 30th anniversary of the university coming up, it is considered to be a relatively new institution. It can also be considered to be quite small, with a student population of approximately 650. Out of those 650 students, about two third are female students(Diario 2018). The University of Aruba consists of four independent faculties and one faculty in collaboration with the KU Leuven. Next to that there is also the Academic Foundation Year (AFY), a one-year certificate program for students that seek entry into higher education programs(University of Aruba 2019).

As we mentioned, 15 % of the Aruban population is highly educated, therefore we want to stress that we do not believe our findings to be representative of the full Aruban population. We conducted our fieldwork in an academic environment and therefore our results are representable for the Aruban academic environment only. According to van der Pijl & Guadeloupe(2015, 89), classrooms are a crucial site of study when it comes to nationness and citizenship. They argue that it is the space of the classroom, where children are turned into political subjects and citizens, and therefore crucial to understanding politics of belonging and feelings of nationness. On the contrary to van der Pijl & Guadeloupe, who conducted their fieldwork in primary schools, we conducted our research at an institution of higher education. However, we do believe that universities as institutions of higher education, similarly to the classrooms described by van der Pijl & Guadeloupe, hold a certain relation to politics of belonging and feelings of nationness. According to Anderson (2006) and Gellner (1983),

formal educational systems are one of the principles means by which shared cultural values of the nation are transmitted. Furthermore, schools can be viewed as privileged institutions, wherein formative believes and principles are transmitted onto the students(van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015, 90).

Chapter 1: National identification

The national identification of scholars from the University of Aruba will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The process of identification will be explained using identity markers that construct hybrid identities in the multi-ethnic community. Consequently, national identification with Aruba will be treated as national identification without ethnicity (Eriksen 2002). The nation will be understood as an imagined community throughout this chapter, in which we will first elaborate on the processes of national identification amongst students, followed by teachers of the University of Aruba.

1.1 Processes of national identification

Research among Aruban students: by Nicky de Leeuw

To study the emotional attachment Aruban students feel to the Aruban nation and Dutch Kingdom, I have looked at their experience and negotiating of (supra)national identification. Therefore I held in-depth interviews with multiple students active at various faculties within the University of Aruba (UA) and the Academic Youth Foundation (AFY). One of those students studying at AFY who I had multiple conversations with was Ariana, a 21 year old girl born and raised in Aruba, with Aruban parents and grandparents. When we first met, she told me it was highly unlikely for an Aruban student to have two parents born in Aruba, let alone all grandparents as well. When I asked Ariana about her political preference in the Aruban political system, she told me she was very fond of this quote: *“At the end of the day, you should put down your political colour, and raise the one flag that matters, which is the Aruban flag”*³. Aruban political parties are referred to as colours, with the two biggest parties, the *Arubaanse Volkspartij (AVP)* and the *Movimiento Electoral de Pueblo (MEP)*, respectively being referred to as the green and yellow party. She told me that during election time, people all over the island will have flags in various colours in their front yard, to show their political support to one of the parties. Another flag that is highly visible in the streets of Oranjestad⁴, is the one that, according to Ariana, matters: the Aruban flag. When I asked her why the Aruban flag was important to her, she told me that it was not necessarily the flag itself that was of importance to her but what the flag stands for, namely the Aruban nation. So, the Aruban flag can be viewed as a material symbol for the Aruban nation, which is according to Anderson (2006) an imagined community. In his book on the origin and

³ Interview with Ariana, 21 year old AFY student – 28-02-2019

⁴ Fieldnotes 01-02-2019



spread of nationalism, Anderson gives the following definition of the nation: "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (2006, 6). Even though the nation is considered to be imagined, citizens of a nation can feel a deep emotional attachment to it (Anderson 2006), and this emotional attachment makes up part of their identity, in the form of national identification.

To understand the experience of national identification of Aruban students, I focussed on getting a sense of why they identified as Aruban, and what it meant to them to identify as Aruban. Maria, a 20 year old social student born in Curaçao whose parents are both from Curaçao as well, expressed to me that all of her friends have different backgrounds, but do identify as Aruban. Clay, a 21 year old finance student with an Aruban mother and Colombian father, shared that sentiment by telling me: *"Most students are basically a mix. Basically a mix of Latin, so Venezuelans, Colombians, people from Peru. We have a decent amount of people from Surinam. And yeah, one way or another they are mixed with Arubans. So people that were born here. I am a mixed kid, I'm half Venezuelan and half Aruban. But yeah, basically everybody here has Latin influences. So there's no such thing as a pure Aruban. Anybody who tells you that is smoking something pretty good"*⁵. Not only did most of the students I spoke with feel that it was not necessary to have an Aruban background or Aruban parents to identify as Aruban, most of them also did not find being born in Aruba a necessary criteria to identify as Aruban. This is in line with Eriksen's argumentation, who states that national identities are a culturally dependent construct, so even though they may appear to be natural entities, they are not (Eriksen 2002, 99). Because someone is born into a certain nation, this might seem the cause for a connection to that nation, experienced as natural ties. However, the way in which that connection is felt or experienced at all, is culturally dependent. This became evident when I was talking to Clay and Angel⁶, who were both born and raised in Aruba. Where Clay felt a strong emotional connection to Aruba as a nation, Angel did not experience a strong emotional connection to Aruba at all. So, purely being born into a certain nation does not necessarily provide a strong emotional connection to that nation.

Instead of feeling Aruban because she was born in Aruba, Ariana told me she felt Aruban because she spoke Papiamentu with her family and friends. In a society where almost everyone has a mixed background, one of the things people within that nation have in common is a shared language. According to Clay, the only way he could know for certain whether someone was from Aruba, was whether someone had the ability to speak Papiamentu, and the way that person spoke Papiamentu.

⁵ Interview with Clay, 21 year old finance student – 21-02-2019

⁶ Focus group with Clay and Angel – 20-02-2019



Papiamentu is spoken on the Dutch Caribbean islands Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire. However, the way the language is spoken differs between all three islands. Due to this, Maria told me that even though she was born in Curaçao, she did not identify with Curaçao, because she has an Aruban accent when she speaks Papiamentu. She still has extended family there so goes to Curaçao on a regular base, but told me people there would always know she is Aruban for the way she speaks Papiamentu. Next to the way she spoke Papiamentu, Maria felt Aruban because she identified with the Aruban culture: she shared Aruban norms and values, celebrated Aruban national holidays, ate Aruban foods, and experienced a certain sense of pride when it came to Aruba. In general, the students seemed to share this sentiment: *“You don't have to be born here, to be an Aruban. As long as you love Aruba then you're an Aruban”*⁷. So love for and pride of Aruba seem to be the biggest factors for national identification, alongside speaking Papiamentu.

Even though most of the students I spoke with identified as Aruban and felt connected to Aruba as a nation, they do not have an Aruban nationality. Aruba is part of the Dutch Kingdom, and therefore there is no such thing as an Aruban passport. Instead, if you are born in Aruba or have lived in Aruba for more than 10 years, you have, or gained the right to, a Dutch passport. These unusual conditions, namely identifying as Aruban but holding a Dutch passport, challenge the idea of belonging to a single, bounded territory, government and citizenship (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015). For it shows a connection to Aruba as well as the Dutch Kingdom. However to Ruiz, a 22 year old finance student with Colombian parents, the Dutch passport is a blessing, and there are no downsides to having one. When he was 10 years old he moved from Colombia to Aruba with his mother, and therefore holds a Dutch as well as Colombian passport. When he was doing an internship in Berlin he experienced first-hand how easy it was to move across the world with a Dutch passport, he called it a golden ticket to go anywhere he wanted. Nevertheless, gratitude to the Dutch Kingdom for providing a golden ticket to move across the world, does not necessarily imply an emotional attachment to the Dutch Kingdom. When I asked Anthony whether he personally felt connected to the Dutch Kingdom, he told me that there was a connection on paper, but he felt no emotional connection to the Dutch Kingdom.

When I asked Matteo, a 23 year old finance student with Venezuelan parents and Italian and Dutch descent as well, if he could describe his sense of national identity, he gave me the following answer: *“I'm so mixed. Latin American, Aruban, European. It's like Chinese rice, you know? Like they put everything in there? That's me”*⁸. Clearly Matteo does not solely identify with one nation. Instead,

⁷ Interview with Ruiz, 22 year old finance student – 05-03-2019

⁸ Interview with Matteo, 22 year old finance student - 08-03-2019

in different situational contexts Matteo experiences different forms of national identification. He told me that when he goes to a Catholic service given in Spanish with his parents, he feels connected to Venezuela. However when he is eating pastechi with his friends, a typical Aruban dish, he feels Aruban. When he used to speak Dutch in high school with his teachers, he experienced a sense of being Dutch.

National identities are not exclusive, so in different cultural contexts, Matteo experienced a different sense of identification with a certain nation. Wodak (2010) argued that identities should be understood as a complex construction of various social identities, that are interrelated and intertwined. These various social identities can also be various national identities, also intertwined with each other. Anthony, a 23 year old AFY student with a Colombian mother and Dutch father, expressed this experience of different national identifications, when he told me about the way he interacts with different communities: *“Of course I have my own identity, I have my own rules, my own norms. But I'm just like a sponge, I take out the best of what I see in Latin community, what I see in Aruban community, and what I see in Dutch community, and I try to mix those three. Of course I have my own, but that's what I do”*⁹. I found it particularly interesting that Anthony expressed he *takes out* the best of the various communities he comes in contact with. He described to me how he comes into contact with Latin friendliness because his mother is Colombian, Aruban helpfulness because he has lived in Aruba his whole life, and Dutch punctuality because his father moved to the Netherlands when he was little. He consciously perceives these community characteristics and practises them in his own daily life. The fact that he views this as a conscious action, again supports Eriksen (2002, 99) his claim that national identification is not a natural concept, it is, in the case of Anthony, consciously constructed. This falls in line with argumentation made by Guadeloupe (2009) on open politics of identification. One can constantly switch between national identities, in order to create a common world in the cultural context one is in. Therefore, Anthony told me that when he goes to the Netherlands he makes sure he is everywhere 15 minutes ahead of time, because being punctual is something he perceives to be important in the Dutch nation. What I also noticed about Anthony, is that he seemingly had no issue with mixing the different national communities he felt part of. He was living in Aruba, but at the same time feeling strongly connected to his Colombian heritage.

Next to being part of various national communities, the students were also involved in the academic community on Aruba. When I would hang out at the university, I noticed that all students seemed to know each other¹⁰. They would greet each other by name in the hallways and sit together in the courtyard or gardens. Ariana most clearly pointed to the university being a community itself. When I asked

⁹ Interview with Anthony, 23 year old AFY student – 27-02-2019

¹⁰ Fieldnotes – 25-03-2019



her whether she felt like she belonged to a certain group on the island, she told me she belonged to the academic community. According to her, the scholars on the island were *her* people, people she understood and thought like her. These were the people she could easily talk to, for they cared about the same things as her. One of the examples she gave was the way she and her fellow classmates cared about the environment. They had taken trips with their class to clean up the beaches, and she showed me how she personally reduced her use of plastics by using alternative reusable products. This shows a focus within the university on preservation of the environment, which I also noticed in the eco-friendly water tabs spread throughout the hallways¹¹. This falls in line with the argument made by van der Pijl & Guadeloupe (2015, 90), who state that schools can be viewed as privileged institutions wherein believes and principles are transmitted onto the students. At the university, awareness about the environment was clearly transmitted onto the students.

1.1.1 Hybrid identities

The students I felt like they were part of various communities, in which they experienced different forms of identification. This falls in line with Easthope (1998) his argumentation, that identities are constructed on the basis of multiple identities, altogether forming a hybrid identity. Identity should therefore be viewed as a multi-layered concept, and national identification is only one part of hybrid identities. One of my informants Angel, a 22 year old finance student with Surinamese parents, told me that even though he had been living in Aruba his whole life, he did not identify as Aruban. Instead, he told me he found it funny that people identify on the basis of where they are born, or where their family is from. Instead, he said he would like people to see him as an individual, not as part of the Aruban nation and with that a preinstalled image of who he is or how he should behave. I found this interesting, because he was the only one of the students that I talked to that did not identify as Aruban. In an interview with him and Clay, who very clearly identified as Aruban, Angel expressed that on the contrary to Clay, he did not speak Papiamentu at home. Just like Angel, Ruiz expressed the same opinion in that according to him people should judge others based on who they are as individuals, not based on a certain group they are part of, whether this is a religious community, an ethnic group or a nation. However, even though he would like to be judged on who he is as an individual and not as part of the Aruban nation, he is always aware of the fact that when he is abroad he represents Aruba: *“I mean at the end of the day, people tend to generalize. So, you do have that burden of having to wear the mask of an Aruban.”*¹² He told me that when he studied in Germany, he was always very aware

¹¹ Fieldnotes 07-03-2019

¹² Interview with Ruiz, 22 year old finance student – 14-03-2019



that he was representing Aruban people, and for that reason should always show his best side. So national identification can contribute to identity creation, but should not be considered an exclusive entity. Angel felt that being a student, or male were clearly parts of his identity, but being Aruban was not part of his hybrid Self.

For Anthony, multiple identities meant that he sometimes felt Aruban and at other times Colombian. The way he identified was dependent of the sociocultural context he found himself in. This was not unproblematic for him, since he had experienced discrimination towards the Latin community on Aruba himself. He told me about one of the phrases the Aruban tourist industry uses, namely: *One Happy Island*. According to him, this was most certainly the case when it came to tourists, Arubans would present themselves as friendly, helpful people. Outside public sphere however, Anthony had experienced discrimination towards the Latin community, and therefore whenever he could he would choose to present himself as Aruban, not as partly Latin. Angel told me about another form of discrimination in Aruba, which he himself had labelled micro nationalism. He said people from the northern part of the island living in Oranjestad, were discriminative towards people living on the southside of the bridge. San Nicolas, the most southern village on the island, was where a lot of immigrants coming to Aruba from the English Caribbean islands had settled down.

In conclusion, national identification among students at the university can be considered a fluid construct. Students experience different forms of national identifications in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, national identification is merely one of the multiple social identities students experience. Identifying as Aruban was mostly based on the use of Papiamentu, and a pride of Aruba as a nation.

1.2 Layers of identification

Research with teachers: by Inge van Hoek

1.2.1 Processes of national identification

National identification in Aruba became a process of becoming leading up to and after the achievement of the Status Aparte in 1986. The process of the Status Aparte is something that several teachers actively remember. When we sit in the small conference room in one of the university gardens, Willem explains that he was born in a country that did not exist anymore when he returned after studying in the Netherlands: *“My nationality, I was born in the Kingdom of the Netherlands in a country that does not exist anymore, the Netherlands Antilles...That country does not exist anymore, but I am not different, the people born there are still the same people. It is weird to see that these domains shift*



*politically and judiciary and all of a sudden there is a country: Aruba. But does that make me another person? No.*¹³. Questions were raised about what it means to be Aruban in this postcolonial era, as an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Peter, a teacher at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences who does research in the fields of anthropology and history, has done research about who the real Aruban is in the year before the Status Aparte. Initially the research was about why Aruban wanted to separate from Curaçao but the question ‘Ken ta Arubiano?’¹⁴ appeared to be a lot more relevant.¹⁵ With the new nation coming to existence, national identification became a hot topic. Even today, there is a lot of reference to this question and we are still looking for the real Aruban, Claire tells me¹⁶.

The approach of national identification as a process and not a solid entity was suitable during our fieldwork at the University of Aruba since this gave the opportunity to research the various layers and identity markers and the different processes of identification amongst the teachers. During several interviews it became evident that national identification of teachers at the University of Aruba exists of several layers and different identity markers in relation to which national identification is constructed. There can be national identification with other countries, despite being physically in Aruba and in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but also identification because of ethnicity, gender, and so on. Claire explains how she experiences multiple layers of identification: *“So, all that, so I think that I eh, I function accordingly. And the most constant me is the Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Aruban me, that's the most constant me...But I think that I surface that different characteristics, different identities, and, but we all do that...And I do that also very sometimes consciously, I use it also. Because I know in my case it is a benefit...I put it to my own advantage”*¹⁷. She is aware of her multiple identities, which involve different national identities and an ethnic identity, during our conversation she points out that she buys jewelry that reflects on her African descent. Different identity markers are intertwined to construct a hybrid identity (Easthope 1998). For Claire, these different identity markers come together as her identity and she makes use of the possibility to switch between these different identifications to her own advantage in different contexts. This can be interpreted as politics of identity (Wekker 1998), through which she can create a common world with the people around her.

Politics of identity also apply to two of the social identities of all teachers at the University of Aruba experience: their national identification with Aruba and with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The processes through which they identified with both entities differs per individual but there is some

¹³ Interview with William – 01-04-2019

¹⁴ “Wie is de Arubaan?”

¹⁵ Interview with Peter – 28-02-2019

¹⁶ Interview with Claire – 14-03-2019

¹⁷ Interview with Claire – 14-03-2019

overlap. There are several identity markers, categories that construct social identities, which seems to be reoccurring in identification with Aruba. I must point out that you do not have to be born in Aruba to be Aruban. According to Elizabeth, being Aruban is about how you feel: *“I think it is about being proud of your heritage, proud of being part of this and wanting to work for the island. And if you have passion for your country, that you really want to develop, that is an Aruban to me. That is just the most important thing...As Aruban, do you take responsibility for being Aruban? Because it is a responsibility”*¹⁸. Several emotions and ways of attachment are mentioned by her as ways in which an emotional connection to the nation can be experienced. Anna mentions that she has often heard people say that someone who loves Aruba and wants to do good for Aruba is the real Aruban¹⁹, which Alexander confirms, he states that it is about the connection that you personally feel²⁰. The origin of the national identification is therefore not based on ethnicity(Eriksen 2002), but of how teachers negotiate their own national identification. Moreover, despite that not all teachers that participated in this research are born in Aruba, they can still identify as Aruban since the national identity is not a super-ethnic category(Guadeloupe 2009). This relates to the multi-ethnicity of the Aruban population and the teachers of the University of Aruba. Teachers may not be representative of the population since they are middle class citizens and a lot higher percentage of the teachers is foreign born in comparison to the inhabitants of the island.²¹ Nevertheless, teachers of the university originate from various backgrounds; among others from other Caribbean islands, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States. Despite these different backgrounds, all teachers can identify with Aruba and ethnicity does therefore not have to be a prerequisite for national identification with Aruba or identification as Aruban. It was mentioned by Peter that borders between categories can easily be overstepped and that the boundaries between groups are not solid²². The multiculturalism does therefore not have to be a problem in creating a common world, because the staff at the university can still work peacefully together despite their differences.

However, ethnicity can cause for alternative processes of identification with Aruba because of experiences with discrimination. Victoria told me the following: *“I could fall but I would say Arubans are very racist...On the one hand they appear to be very welcoming to everyone, but on the other hand they don't really appreciate arrogance. And I have been discriminated. I have many, many, many experiences”*²³. Despite discrimination based on ethnicity, it is possible to identify with Aruba through

¹⁸ Interview with Elizabeth – 08-03-2019

¹⁹ Interview with Anna – 20-03-2019

²⁰ Interview with Alexander – 15-03-2019

²¹ Fieldnotes of conversation with Benjamin– 20-02-2019

²² Interview with Peter – 28-02-2019

²³ Interview with Victoria – 08-03-2019



other social identities than ethnicity. Even though Victoria feels discriminated because of others categorizing her as different because of her afro-Caribbean background, she herself identifies as Aruban. According to Nagel(2003), our identities are just as much constructed on the base of our own perception of identity and not just by the different levels of categorizing by the people around us.

1.2.2 Politics of identity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands

As mentioned before, the politics of identity means that teachers of the University of Aruba switch between two national identifications: their national identification with Aruba as elaborated on in the previous paragraph, and with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Concerning national identification with the Kingdom of the Netherlands there are various processes through which teacher identify with this supra-nation. The common opinion amongst the staff of the university is that Aruba is not equal to other countries in the kingdom, especially the Netherlands, and the political construction of the kingdom is not perceived as democratic. Alexander even states that the colonial power relations are still existent in the current construction of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²⁴ In daily life, the unequal power relations translate to a different appreciation of people or actions. Victoria tells me that it has become clear to her that everybody in Aruba seems to think the Dutch way of doing things is always the best way, without questions asked²⁵. Nevertheless, the existing dependency on the Netherlands is conceived positively because Aruba would not survive without support from the Netherlands. Anna tells me: *“Financially we are still dependent on the kingdom I think. Yes, because actually, I do not believe in the independence...We are not self-sufficient, I do not think we can just live off of tourism. It takes an oil spill, a hurricane, a natural disaster and we have nothing. And then, off what are you going to live?”*²⁶ Not being self-sufficient appears to be a good reason for her to still have some dependency on the Netherlands. The perception of Aruba being unequal to other countries alters the process of identification with the kingdom. A lack of sameness is perceived by the teachers which causes a contra-identification and the positing of a basic difference between oneself and the other(Sökefeld 1990, 418).

Clearly, identification with Aruba and the Kingdom are not the only identifications amongst the staff of the University of Aruba. In many cases, there was an intertwining of identification with Aruba as well as with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. For example, Peter: *Over here, I am a Dutch Aruban, but when I am in the Netherlands, I am an Aruban Dutch guy*²⁷. This shows that identifications with both the kingdom and Aruba are compatible(Veenendaal 2016, 21). There are various teachers

²⁴ Fieldnotes from conversation with Alexander – 08-03-2019

²⁵ Interview with Victoria – 08-03-2019

²⁶ Interview with Anna – 20-03-2019

²⁷ Interview with Peter – 28-02-2019

that have parents coming from other parts of the kingdom or that have lived in these countries themselves for an extended period, which results in an identification with these nations. Anna gives a clear example of this: *“We were born and raised here, but I have a lot of the culture of Curaçao [mother is from Curaçao], because I have been to Curaçao often, I went to the States when I was 16. So, you get a bit of everything”*²⁸. Julia had a similar experience which she explains as *“you take something from everywhere you have been...I am a mix yes. The things of which I think yeah, that does not do anything for me, or it does not add to who I want to be, those I have left there”*²⁹. This illustrates how individuals can identify with multiple nations, even when not physically present. Having spent time abroad for a longer period resulted in the insertion of aspects of other national identifications into one identity. These identities have therefore become de-territorialized; one’s identity is not linked to a certain bounded territory in the form of a nation-state (van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015); although teachers are not physically present in other countries, they still identify with it on an emotional level.

Concluding, identification with Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands are not isolated processes. There are many layers and markers of identification that are intertwined with the national identification and often hybrid identifications can be noticed amongst teachers. Politics of identity apply here when teachers switch between different identifications. Not only do they identify themselves, but they are categorized by the people around them as well (Nagel 2003). National identification with Aruba seems to be negotiated through emotional attachment rather than ethnicity (Eriksen 2002). At the same time, national identification is experienced with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, however, there are difficulties in this process due to a lack of sameness and othering (Sökefeld 1998). The processes of national identifications appear to be based on an emotional attachment such as nationness, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

²⁸ Interview with Anna 20-03-2019

²⁹ Interview with Julia 04-04-2019



Chapter 2: Nationness

In the following chapter we will discuss how a shared identification and sameness within the nation are experienced and negotiated by scholars from the University of Aruba. We will elaborate on symbols that contribute to the construction of nationness and therefore contribute to participation in the nation. These symbols contribute to a sense of belonging to the collectivity that is the imagined community. These processes will be discussed for both nationness with Aruba and nationness with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We will first discuss the nationness experienced and negotiated by students and secondly nationness experienced and negotiated by teachers.

2.1 Language as a binding factor within the nation

Research among Aruban students: by Nicky de Leeuw

When I asked Anthony whether he felt connected to other people from Aruba, he told me: *“Lets say I go to Colombia, for me another Aruban, I feel like he's my brother in a way of saying. I can really open myself up to him, because he grew up in the same environment as me, so we should have a lot in common”*³⁰. Anthony feels very connected to other Arubans, in the way that he would view them as his brothers and sisters in a foreign setting. Even though he might have never met this person before, purely because of a shared sense of national identification a connection comes into existence. Van der Pijl & Guadeloupe(2015, 89) call this shared sense of identification nationness: a cultural concept binding people based on shared identifications of belonging in relation to the state. This experience of nationness can facilitate becoming included within the nation as a community, and with that participating in society. When I asked Ariana how she felt connected to other Arubans, she gave me the following explanation: *“Because they're just like you, you know? They can't discriminate you. They can't make you feel less of a person, because they're just like you. Whereas if I would go to the United States, they would look at me weird if I spoke in my own language”*³¹. I found this answer giving by Ariana particularly interesting for various reasons.

First of all, she clearly experiences a sense of sameness with other Arubans, by stating that they are just like her. She does not entail why Arubans are like her, but does imply that this sameness

³⁰ Interview with Anthony, 23 year old AFY student - 05-03-2019

³¹ Interview with Ariana, 21 year old AFY student – 10-04-2019



is so striking that it does not leave room for discrimination. But more importantly, I found her answer interesting because she immediately names language as a reason for her connection to other Arubans, by stating that she would stand out in the United States if she were to speak Papiamentu. In his 1983 book on the origin and spread of nationalism, Benedict Anderson (1983, 146) argues that the nation is an imagined community, that is simultaneously open to everyone who speaks the corresponding language of that nation, and historically closed. According to him, a shared language is what might connect people within a certain imagined community, and when one does not speak that language, it is more difficult to gain entrance into the imagined community. At the same time, the nation is open, for one can be given an invitation into the imagined community by learning to speak the accessory language of that imagined community. A shared language is what connects people within a certain community, the performance of that language creating unisonance and physical realization of that community. This means that according to Anderson, people within a certain nation feel connected to each other because of a shared language. Ariana felt at home when she hears Papiamentu, it is this shared language that made her feel comfortable with other Arubans. Even though classes at the University of Aruba are taught in either English or Dutch, Papiamentu is still a familiar sound at the university. When I sat in on a class on research methods, given in English, the students and teacher would constantly switch between English, Dutch and Papiamentu³². This was unproblematic, for everyone participating in the class spoke all three languages. However, not everywhere in the Dutch Kingdom is Papiamentu the main language. Therefore I found it interesting to see if students still felt connected to non-Aruban members of the Dutch Kingdom, when the linguistic shared identity marker disappears.

In Curaçao and Bonaire, Papiamentu is the main language as well, however, the way Papiamentu is spoken differs from Aruban Papiamentu. Maria best described this to me, when she told me she paradoxically feels at home and like an outsider when she visits her grandparents in Curaçao. On the one hand she does speak Papiamentu, but at the same time she has an Aruban accent. So the identity marker she shares with people from Curaçao, namely a certain language, is at the same time the thing that makes her stand out. José, a law student with a Colombian background, told me that he had experienced a sameness with people from the Netherlands as well³³. When he was travelling through Europe and he lost his way in Italy, he heard people speak Dutch and decided to ask them for help. He told me he was surrounded by all kinds of different nationalities, but decided to ask the Dutch people for help because even though they do not speak Papiamentu, they still share the Dutch

³² Fieldnotes 27-02-2019

³³ Interview with José, 24 year old law student 20-03-2019



language. The Aruban education system is completely in Dutch, which is why the average Aruban speaks multiple languages. They speak Papiamentu because it is the main tongue on the island, they speak Dutch because their education system is Dutch, they speak English because the island is full of American tourists, and a lot of them speak Spanish due to a Latin background. However, some of the students I spoke with also felt that Dutch people looked down on Arubans. Ariana told me that a friend of her mother was a primary school teacher, and the parents of one of the children of her class had come up to her and said: *"I don't want you speaking Papiamentu to our kid, because that's a slaventaal, and I don't want our children learning a slaventaal"*³⁴. *Slaventaal* can be roughly translated to slave language. When I asked Ariana how she felt when she heard about this, she told me she was deeply hurt by the statement. She felt proud to speak her language, it was the language of her people. She also told me this was one of many incidents she had experienced, in which she felt that Dutch people on Aruba looked down on the Aruban population. She felt that Dutch people living on Aruba often did not bother learning Papiamentu, and that she considered that to be highly disrespectful. In her eyes, this could be seen as an example of the inequality between Dutch and Aruban people within the Kingdom. For when Arubans go to the Netherlands, they speak Dutch, however she felt that Dutch people did not do the same when they came to Aruba.

Language is not the only thing contributing to a sense of nationness. In general, all the students I spoke with shared a deep love and pride for Aruba and its people. One of the ways they expressed this love for Aruba is by calling the island their *little piece of rock*. Furthermore, multiple of the students I spoke with told me they felt proud when Aruban people got famous internationally, examples of this are the baseball player the X-man, and the singer Jéon. The reason these two national heroes are so loved in Aruba, is because they promote Aruba internationally. According to José, a law student with a Colombian background, Arubans are not just proud of their nation, they are also proud people. According to him Arubans will always make sure that they are looking good. I experienced this myself at the university, where it would not be hard to distinguish the Aruban students from the international students. In general, Aruban students would wear long jeans and neat trousers, whereas the international students would usually wear short skirts and shorts³⁵. Clay agreed with this, and pointed out a more negative aspect of this pride. He told me that sometimes people would have a hard time getting by financially, but would still spend their money on expensive clothing. Angel commented on this as well, stating that Aruban people are very much influenced by celebrity culture in the United States. Because the island is relatively small, with a population just over a hundred thousand people,

³⁴ Interview with Ariana, 21 year old AFY student – 19-03-2019

³⁵ Fieldnotes 06-02-2019

everyone in this small society seems to know each other. When I would interview one of the students at a café, often someone they knew would walk by, or come up to say hello. Another result of the relative smallness of the Aruban society, seems to be that there is such a thing as an informal information circuit. Ariana told me her mother is on the phone the whole day, talking to neighbours and friends. When I asked the students about characteristics of Aruban people, the fact that they are gossipers was usually one of the first things that was mentioned. Clay told me that Arubans avoid confrontation, so when they feel insulted they will not tell you directly, but they will talk about it behind your back. He called this the small mindedness of Arubans. This indirectness and avoidance of confrontation I found noticeable, because it reminded me of something Anthony had said. According to him, Aruban and Dutch people have a different mindset, because they grew up in different cultural contexts. He explained that for him there might be a connection between Aruban and Dutch people on paper, but that they have very different mindsets. I found pride a striking example of this, for Dutch people are known to be direct, and are proud that they speak up for themselves. Whereas Arubans are the opposite, and take pride in the fact that they avoid confrontations.

In conclusion, Papiamentu seemed to be the most important shared identity marker for students at the university. The use of Papiamentu is what made them feel connected to Aruba as a nation and the Aruban people. Interestingly, the use of the Dutch language created a similar connection, a sense of sameness with other inhabitants of the Dutch Kingdom and a connection to the Dutch Kingdom itself.

2.2 Sameness and shared identification

Research with teachers: by Inge van Hoek

2.2.1 Connecting to the Aruban nation through language

Festivities, traditions and symbols can support the process of emotional identification with the nation (WRR 2007, 209). There are several symbols in Aruba which function to create a sense of community for the teachers of the University of Aruba, of which the language Papiamentu is most prominent. Festivities and traditions are often mentioned as existing, but not something that teachers actively participate in. The creation of national symbols can be traced to nation building leading up to and after the Status Aparte and are therefore very political. Peter explains: *“The identity, symbol politics, it was so clear back then, relative to the dominant other, we are going to do it as different as possible. It is the emotional bonding, emotional identification, that they have put down in the 70’s and*



80's".³⁶ The spelling and pronunciation of the Papiamentu language was deliberately made different from Curaçaoan Papiamentu to create a culture different from theirs and this political decision was made to illustrate the differences between the countries, according to Peter³⁷. Claire believes that *"policy makers wanted to use language as a tool and they have singled out language to be a tool for nation building, a conscious use of the tool for nation building"*³⁸. The implementation of national symbols like Papiamentu was therefore deliberately executed to create sameness and shared identification within Aruba in opposition to Curaçao. By illustrating the differences between the nations in these symbols, sameness in Aruba is articulated. Through this shared language, people in the nation feel connected and are able to imagine the nation (Anderson 2006). Nowadays, Papiamentu is still an important symbol for national identification amongst teachers at the University of Aruba.

The national language of Aruba, Papiamentu, is a language that is unique to the country. Like mentioned before, the university's teachers have different backgrounds and therefore Papiamentu is not the first language to all. Universities are a site where various nationalities cross each other, for universities and governments around the world are encouraging transnational education and the global exchange of students (Verbik & Lasanowski 2007). Officially, the languages used at the university are Dutch and English.³⁹ Walking around the university, I noticed that many other languages, like Spanish and Papiamentu, were spoken during breaks and in the hallways,⁴⁰ which illustrates the multi-ethnicity of the university community.

It appears that speaking Papiamentu has been crucial for becoming part of the nation for migrant teachers. Shortly after he migrated to Aruba, Lucas started noticing that people started to respond differently to him because he tried his best to learn Papiamentu and he noticed he got more accepted by the community.⁴¹ The language Papiamentu makes the nation open to migrants, as it is open to readers, listeners and speakers. Through learning the language, teachers can feel connected to the nation (Anderson 2006). Teachers that have migrated from other countries, like Lucas, can become part of the nation and experience nationness by learning the language Papiamentu. They become part of the nation by neutralizing through language (Anderson 2006). Speaking Papiamentu makes it possible to imagine the nation and to experience being part of this collectivity. *"Papiamentu connects the people and this binding function applies to all, no matter the ethnic background"*⁴², Benjamin tells me when we meet in his office.

³⁶ Interview with Peter – 25-03-2019

³⁷ Interview with Peter - 25-03-2019

³⁸ Interview with Claire – 14-03-2019

³⁹ Fieldnotes 20-02-2019

⁴⁰ Fieldnotes 13-02-2019

⁴¹ Interview with Lucas – 13-03-2019

⁴² Interview with Benjamin – 02-04-2019



Another lingual marker for identification with Aruba is the capability to speak several languages. Most teachers can communicate in four languages; Papiamentu, Spanish, English and Dutch (in order of frequency) and words are often borrowed between languages. These languages vary in status and different languages are used in different contexts. According to Sophia speaking many different languages opens doors because *“If I go to South America I feel at home, if I go to an English speaking country I feel at home, and when I was in the Netherlands as well. And because of that we can speak with many different cultures and be very open and accommodating to them. So, when they come here, we speak their language”*.⁴³ This illustrates a great ability to adapt to others, as Papiamentu-speaking teachers adjust to the language their conversation partner prefers. Oliver notices this as well, as an originally Dutch speaking teacher it came to his attention that his Aruban neighbors always speak Dutch to him. Even when he starts the conversation in Papiamentu, they will respond in his mother tongue.⁴⁴

The importance of language as a national symbol reflects on a characteristic that many of the teachers of the university possess, which is the pride they have for Aruba or *‘our little rock’*⁴⁵ as Julia calls it and the pride to call themselves Aruban. Alexander confirms this by stating: *“There is a lot of good things and a lot to be proud of, next to the fact that we, the island itself, even though we refer to it as a rock, Barranca. There does not grow a lot, like you said, semi-desert climate, but we are proud of our piece of rock in the sea”*.⁴⁶ Notice that they both use ‘our’ when talking about the island, which reflects on a sense of ownership they experience in the nation; they imagine the nation as sovereign. According to Anderson (2006), having self-determination is a precondition for nationalism.

2.2.2 A lack of sameness within the Kingdom of the Netherlands

There are symbols that play a role in creating a sense of community within the Kingdom of the Netherlands for teachers of the University of Aruba. Again, language seems to play a prominent role in the process of emotional identification. In education in Aruba, so also at the University of Aruba, Dutch is still the main language used, resulting from the colonial era. Teachers therefore use Dutch at the university, but most of them do not speak this language at home. Benjamin has done research in the field of language and is working with Taalunie, an institution that tries to contribute to the emancipation of Papiamentu. We meet in his office where he elaborates on the link with colonization: *“you have the language of the former colonizer, Dutch, which kind of as a state like tradition continues*

⁴³ Interview Sophia and Laura – 11-03-2019

⁴⁴ Interview with Oliver – 28-02-2019

⁴⁵ Interview with Julia – 04-04-2019

⁴⁶ Interview with Alexander – 29-03-2019



in the current state structure. A typical something in former colonies when there has not been a violent rupture".⁴⁷ The presence of Dutch in the academic space on Aruba is a result of colonial times still present in contemporary society.

There is an apparent difference in status between languages used at the university, which affects people using these languages. Papiamentu is often seen as a language that is not qualified to us in science, law and politics, which decreases the confidence of the Papiamentu-speaking population. According to Benjamin *"those three facets; education, governance and law bring us to the point of identification. Because Dutch fills these roles, this works kind of alienating, more like a barrier than a key to success"*⁴⁸. Using Dutch in education alienates scholars from Papiamentu, like the St. Eustatius students who get alienated from their own language (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2013 in van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2009). One of the reasons I made an appointment with Benjamin is that I noticed that several teachers were frustrated with the use of Dutch in education. Elizabeth tells from her own experience how the use of Dutch language can alter your identification as Aruban: *"From the moment I went to school, I had to learn all the words in Dutch, it is absurd, it is creepy, it is weird. This does something and from that moment on you learn that Papiamentu has no value. And that does something with your identity, it does something with your self-confidence as Aruban"*.⁴⁹ Not only does it do something with your own identification and self-confidence, according to Elizabeth it is also one of the reasons children quit studying from an early age: *"And education does that to you, the wanting to learn, it is not about learning alone, but wanting to learn and that bothers me. You notice it with boys who do not want to study anymore, they are done with it, the learning, trying to understand the material you know. So, the colonial impact still is visible. It is still very visible"*⁵⁰. Again, we come to the point of colonial impact on the contemporary Aruban society. Using Dutch is for Elizabeth a way in which the old colonial power structures are kept in place, as the educational system is focused on Dutch and decreases the value of Papiamentu. This results in low self-confidence, because the Papiamentu-speaking population is not fully able to express themselves in Dutch; even university teachers sometimes have difficulties finding the right words in Dutch⁵¹. The use of this language creates a barrier for people to participate in the educational system and misunderstandings occur where Papiamentu speakers have not completely mastered Dutch. This works alienating for emotional attachment to the kingdom, as the Dutch language creates a barrier for actively participating in the

⁴⁷ Interview with Benjamin – 02-04-2019

⁴⁸ Interview with Benjamin – 02-04-2019

⁴⁹ Interview with Elizabeth – 08-03-2019

⁵⁰ Interview with Elizabeth – 08-03-2019

⁵¹ Interview with Sophia and Laura – 11-03-2019

kingdom and this does not help to construct a sense of community. Therefore, a lack of sameness is experienced.

Nevertheless, most teachers are happy to be part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and carry the kingdom passport with pride. Apart from the functional value of the connections in the kingdom, emotional value is attached to the kingdom as well. Julia is currently doing research for her master's degree at a Dutch university and she really wants to remain part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. She says: *"I think that it is a certain identity, a pride that we have as well, but I have the idea sometimes that the other way around, this pride is not there"*.⁵² It appears that there is a different process of nationness when identifying with the kingdom, than there is with the process of nationness in Aruba. The unequal use of the language and the different statuses result in the imagination of the nation as unequal. Despite that the nations in the kingdom have an equivalent status⁵³, an imagined distance instead of sameness and shared identification throughout the Kingdom of the Netherlands is experienced. Nevertheless, the functional relations with their former colonizer in the shape of easy travelling and economic benefits is valued often.

In conclusion, language seems to be the most prominent in the process of nationness. Using Papiamentu creates a sameness and shared identification amongst teachers and through this language teachers feel connected to the nation (Anderson 2006). This language is something that they are very proud in relation to the autonomy of the country. The use of Dutch is a common denominator throughout the kingdom of the Netherlands, but it does not have the same effect for nationness experienced. The difference in status of the languages used at the University of Aruba creates low self-confidence for Papiamentu-speakers, a barrier for participation and a lack of sameness in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

⁵² Interview with Julia – 04-04-2019

⁵³ Fieldnotes conversation Alexander – 08-03-2019



Chapter 3: Place-belongingness

In the third and last empirical chapter we will elaborate on the experience and negotiation of place-belongingness amongst the scholars of the University of Aruba. Place-belongingness refers to a feeling of home which can be experienced in symbolic spaces and territorial places, which are often intertwined. Again, we will firstly discuss place-belongingness in Aruba and follow with an elaboration on place-belongingness in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

3.1 Symbolic spaces and territorial places

Research among Aruban students: by Nicky de Leeuw

3.1.1 Space & place within Aruba

“I love the beaches, and I love the nature, and there is beauty in every crack at the end of the day. And the people are also very beautiful and warm, I see more than just what the outside seems to be. I feel like Aruban people are very beautiful”⁵⁴. This quote given by Ariana is very striking for the concept of place-belongingness, since she expresses a feeling of being at home on Aruba due to the meaning she holds to the territorial space that Aruba is, as well as to the people that make Aruba her home. One of the concepts used to understand students’ sense of place-belonging. So, the way in which they identify with and feel they belong to Aruba. This sense of place-belongingness is characterized by Antonsich(2010, 645) as a: “personal, intimate feeling, or emotional attachment, of feeling at ‘home’ in a place”. This intimate feeling of being at home can be symbolic, as the result of social relations experienced by being around a certain group. This sense of being at home can also be related to a territorial place, as a physical space that holds a certain meaning to an individual, such as the borders of a nation state. Since Aruba is a relatively small island, the symbolic and territorial places are intertwined. As a result of Aruba being an island and a relatively territorial small place, social relations and sense of community in the island are influenced. Clay once expressed to me that he could run into the same friend three times a day at three different locations. I will first elaborate on the symbolic aspects of Aruba as a place, and then on the territorial meaning of Aruba as a place. I will also disclose how symbolic and territorial meaning can influence each other on an island such as Aruba.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ariana, 21 year old AFY student – 19-03-2019



The intimate sense of feeling at home in a certain place can be constructed in a complex web of social relations (Hooks 2009, 331). Multiple students expressed that they felt at home on Aruba because their family is located on Aruba. Because Aruba is a small island and it is expensive to live on your own as a student, most students are still living with their parents. This is not only the case for students, as Ariana as well as Anthony told me they had siblings that were around 30 years old and also still living at home. Not only were most of the students I talked with close to their direct family, they also spent a lot of time with their extended family. I was interviewing Clay one afternoon. Just before, he had taken a nap at his uncles house, and after he went to have dinner with his grandmother. Another way in which the extended family is important is when it comes to small children, usually both parents have to work and the grandparents are the ones taking care of the children. Sometimes, when parents get too old to take care of themselves they move back in with their children, who take care of them from that point on. In Giovanni's case his grandparents were not present on the island, so he told me it was his brother who raised him. Interestingly, this family oriented mindset was also present with students whose family was not located on the island. Maria told me she faceted her grandparents in Curaçao every day, and Anthony did the same with his extended family in Colombia. It is therefore their sociocultural location (Antonsich 2010) what made the students feel at home in Aruba.

The way that students interacted with their parents was respectful, in different ways. Ariana told me she always said mom or dad when she talked to her parents, and never *Bo*, which is Papiamentu for you. This was a sign of respect towards her parents, and she felt very uncomfortable when her friends did not respect their parents in that way. Another example is that Clay told me he never got drunk, for his father was a doctor on the island, and it would give his father a bad name. Not only were students aware that they should behave respectfully toward their parents, respect was a big part of society in general. Bob told me it is standard to greet people on the street, even if you do not know them.

According to Ruiz, due to Aruba being an island, the sea is very important. First it is the image that is being sold to mostly American tourists, of white beaches, the blue sea and palm trees. The whole Aruban economy is focussed on the tourist industry, therefore it is critical for Arubans that the tourists keep coming. A phrase often used is: *"Your home away from home"*⁵⁵. Not only is this mentality of making everyone feel at home present in the tourist industry, it is noticeable all over the island, also among students. Maria told me she wants international students to have a great time on Aruba, so they will tell their friends who then will hopefully come to Aruba as well. Next to that a vast majority on the island speaks English, purely for the benefit of American tourists. The Aruban people are known

⁵⁵ Fieldnotes 30-01-2019

for their friendliness, partly so that people leave Aruba with a positive impression of Aruba and the people. Again, they are hopeful that this impression will make the tourists come back, and preferably bring their friends. The students I spoke to seemed to be very aware that the Aruban economy was dependent of tourism, and therefore they were always nice and polite towards tourists. Making tourists feel at home was something all Arubans benefitted from in the long run. Ruiz was very vocal about this. He explained to me that he would always be nice and friendly to me, in the hope that I would one day come, or tell my friends to go and study in Aruba.

Second, all goods on the island have to be imported, for Aruba does not have the ability to grow anything themselves except for a very small aloe plantation. However, the Aloe Factory museum could be viewed as a touristic attraction as well, since aloe is one of the main items you will find in souvenir shops, sold as a real Aruban good. Because all goods have to be imported, they have to be either flown or shipped in. Notable was that during our time on the island, Venezuela briefly closed their borders, and immediately there was an increase of prices of fruits and vegetables. I talked about this with Maria, who told me that to her this price increase showed the vulnerability of Aruba as a country, for it is an example of Aruba being completely dependent on other countries. Due to this, she felt very grateful that Aruba was part of the Dutch Kingdom, because in her eyes the Dutch Kingdom could be viewed as a support system to fall back on. Not only in the way of financial support and counselling, also from a more military point of view, since the Netherlands have a military base on Aruba, because Aruba does not have their own military force.

Third, the sea is used for leisure activities. Almost all of the students I spoke with told me that they grew up on the beach. When they were small they used to go with their families, now they are older they go with their friends. Ariana told me she never had any swimming lessons, she was always close to the ocean and that is where she learned to swim. There are also certain activities such as fishing and boat rides that are perceived as very much Aruban activities. Water sports are also being performed in Aruba, with the Aruban festival *High Winds* being the biggest surf festival in the Caribbean. Clay told me that if a person does not like to go for boat rides, that person is not really Aruban. He also told me that someone who does not like fish is not Aruban either, which brings me to the fourth reason, the Aruban cuisine. Seafood is one of the pillars of Aruban cuisine. And finally, during Easter weekend it is a tradition for Arubans to camp out on the beaches.

Next to a strong connection to the sea, many students also expressed a deep connection to the nature on the island and the wildlife. The past decades, the tourist sector has expanded. As a result, more hotel and apartment complexes are being build, and more tourists are coming to the island. To provide service for these tourists, more (Venezuelan) migrants are coming to the island, causing the

roads to be more crowded. This has put pressure on the Aruban nature and wildlife. Anthony told me that the beaches are getting polluted because cars are allowed on the beaches. According to Ariana several animal species are close to extinction, or have already gone extinct, because they do not have the physical space to survive anymore. Furthermore the coral in front of the coasts is dying, and the sea animals are endangered due to the increase of plastics in the ocean. When I asked Maria why she was worried about the disappearing nature, she told me a lot of tourist come to Aruba to get away from crowded places, and want to enjoy the nature on the island. So again, the will to preserve nature can also be related to the tourist industry. She expressed a fear that tourists would stop coming to Aruba if Aruba no longer represented the image of paradise it was presented to be. Concretely, if the beaches were polluted and no longer perfectly white, why would the tourists come to Aruba, when there are plenty of other paradises where the beaches are still perfect.

3.1.2 Space & place within the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The students I spoke with expressed to me that they did not feel a strong emotional connection to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Anthony told me he *respected* the king, but it was not *his* king. When I asked him why, he told me because he had never seen the king. Aruba is a small island with a strong sense of community under the population. An outside king however does not fit into this community, and therefore the students did not perceive the Dutch king to be *their* king. Nonetheless, the students felt a connection to the Netherlands for various reasons: Nina's parents were from the Netherlands and she visits the Netherlands every year, Bob used to live in the Netherlands himself, Ariana has friends living in the Netherlands and Giovanni wanted to start his studies in the Netherlands next year. Because of this they felt a greater connection to the Netherlands than other European countries. An example of this could be found in the attack in Utrecht on the 28th of March 2019, when an armed man shot multiple people in a tram. Clay and Angel expressed to me that they felt this attack hit closer to home, either because they had family or friends in the Netherlands. So due to their social relations with people in the Netherlands, they feel more closely connected to the Netherlands as a place. Interestingly, Clay feels connected to the Netherlands even though he has never been there. He has friends and family living in the Netherlands, and he speaks Dutch. For him that was enough to feel an emotional connection to the Netherlands, there is no need for him to physically be there. He feels connected to the Netherlands as a place, because of the social connections he has to people in the Netherlands.



A lot of young Arubans decide to go and study in the Netherlands. Due to the political structure of the Dutch kingdom, it is easy for them to move to the Netherlands and to be granted the *Aruba lening* (Aruba loan), making it financially possible for them to study in the Netherlands. Next to the financial benefits of studying in the Netherlands, it is also convenient that they already speak Dutch, making the transition to move to the Netherlands easier as well. They speak Dutch because the Aruban education system is in Dutch, which is not unproblematic. According to Ruiz, there are a lot of high school dropouts because some students their level of Dutch is not good enough to perform well in school. The ones that do manage to start their studies in the Netherlands, also often run into problems. Since the Dutch education system is different to the Aruban system, some of these Aruban students drop out once they are studying in the Netherlands. Since they do have to pay back the *Aruba lening*, some Aruban students end up in debt. Furthermore, Anthony told me that only 20 percent of the young Arubans that go to the Netherlands for further education eventually move back to Aruba. The vast majority stays in the Netherlands because wages are higher in the Netherlands, and there are more job opportunities. The ones that do come back are often overqualified for the eventual job they will perform in Aruba.

In conclusion, students at the university felt a very strong emotional connection to Aruba as a place. This became evident in their love for the nature and wildlife on the island. Furthermore, they expressed a sense of feeling at home in the Aruban community. Various reasons contributed to this sense of feeling at home, most importantly the presence of family on the island. Interestingly, the students also felt an emotional connection to the Netherlands as a place, due to social connections with friends or family in the Netherlands.

3.2 Feeling at home

Research with teachers: by Inge van Hoek

3.2.1 Space & place within Aruba

During this research Aruba was often literally referred to as a home by the teaching staff of the University of Aruba. There are different processes in place that construct this feeling of home. An important symbolic space that creates a feeling of home is family. Family is an important part of life on Aruba. The most prominent way in which teachers from the University of Aruba feel at home is being with their family, like Elizabeth says: *"In the end, my family is the driving force to feel at home, it*

is not a house, not for me, not a region, it is just being together".⁵⁶ Family does not necessarily have to be the biological family, but can also be other social groups like your colleagues or a church community. These groups fulfill a certain need to belong (Croucher 2018). For Emma family was important enough of a reason to move back to Aruba from the Netherlands. She herself was career wise not ready to move back, but after her son was born this changed: *"I realized he was growing up without grandfathers and grandmothers, nieces, nephews, he was growing up alone. And there you can see that that is very important to us, so that connection that we have"*.⁵⁷ Family was mentioned as a reason to move back to Aruba, but it is also a way in which people can feel home anywhere, as long as their family is there since the family itself creates a feeling of home and fulfills the need to belong. This causes an intertwining between the social relations and the territorial places that construct the feeling of home. It must be noted that individualization has made its entrance in Aruban society. During the fight for autonomy, Betico Croes managed to create unity between the people of Aruba but this is not as strong as it used to be. People have become busier with working and are spending less time with family.⁵⁸ This might change the process of belonging in relation to family, but that does not mean that the feelings of belonging are diminished, they are just different.

Victoria believes that the importance of family is connected to living on a small island. She explains this as islandness: *"the sense of roots, connectedness and a sense of belonging to a place, to a community and there is always family around. We do not have to wait for a family reunion to meet my family. I just drive and I am at my sister, or at my aunt, or at my cousin"*.⁵⁹ About family she comments: *"I think they [Arubans] have a sense of appreciation of family and doing things together and family time and the family getting together"*.⁶⁰ She makes a connection between being on an island and the importance of family. Aruba as a place is a small island, limited and isolated by the sea that surrounds it. This results in certain social relations across the islands which can be a factor in the process of place-belongingness (Hooks 2009). The smallness of the island was mentioned a reason that everybody on the island knows each other indirectly and there is a lot of information flowing through this informal circuit. Alexander believes that despite individualization, the importance of this information has not decreased. During a conversation in one of the gardens at the university, he gives me the following example: *"The informal circuit is important and it makes, because the society is small, it becomes hard to hide certain things. For example when you are in a fight with your wife and you want to sleep somewhere else, I think it is better not to do that because tomorrow everybody knows,*

⁵⁶ Interview with Elizabeth – 04-04-2019

⁵⁷ Interview with Emma – 07-03-2019

⁵⁸ Interview with Alexander – 15-03-2019

⁵⁹ Interview with Victoria – 08-03-2019

⁶⁰ Interview with Victoria – 08-03-2019

especially the people who you do not want to know it".⁶¹ The smallness of the island therefore creates an informal network in which everybody and anything is discussed. Because of the smallness of the island there are short connections between individual members of society and this network creates social cohesion. The smallness of the island also created a visibility, for example considering corruption in the government. Julia believes that the same amount of corruption is present in bigger countries, but it is more visible on a small island because of these short connections between people: *"It does not mean it[corruption] happens less in the Netherlands. Only that before it reaches you, you are miles away. You are one in so many, here we are one in 100.000"*.⁶² Again, this describes how information travels fast across the informal network, because of the ties between individuals, as a result of the territorial smallness and isolation of the island. In the example Julia gave me, this means that information will reach an individual way faster through the informal network of a small territory with a small population than it would in a bigger society with different social relations.

Next to family, nature is also a really important asset of the island which makes it beautiful and peaceful⁶³ and therefore becomes a place of comfort which is experienced as a home. The nature is a place where a sense of belonging can flourish (Hooks 2009). Aruba's dependency on tourism has affected the landscape. Sophia tells me that she is starting to worry about this effect: *"Why do we have so many of those tours that go drive in our dunes and you know, they ruin our flora and fauna. But it is a love-hate relationship, because these people provide jobs for all these immigrants"*.⁶⁴ The tourism industry in Aruba can be viewed as a money tie system, in which everyone is an active participant in the societal structure based on acquiring more money and power (Guadeloupe 2009). Since tourism is the most important pillar for the Aruban economy and a structuring element in society, the consequences of it must be dealt with which can result in a shared identification through active participation (Guadeloupe 2009). Concerning the harm to the environment, the teachers at the university seem to take this matter into their own hands. It seems to be important to Sarah to keep the island clean to maintain the income of power and wealth from tourism: *"the local people living here, we have to try to keep the place clean ourselves. I think we are becoming more aware of that, which is good I think"*. She takes her own responsibility by not littering, for example: *"I have my little bag in my car where I throw my trash and I do my best to keep my house, and my surroundings, in the garden and outside, clean"*.⁶⁵ The sense of pride and ownership resulting from the autonomy of the country contribute to the responsibility they feel to protect their home from the influences of tourism.

⁶¹ Interview with Alexander – 15-03-2019

⁶² Interview with Julia – 04-04-2019

⁶³ Interview with Daphne – 12-03-2019

⁶⁴ Interview with Sophia and Laura – 11-03-2019

⁶⁵ Interview with Sarah – 03-04-2019

When I ask Anna whether she feels responsible she answers: *“Yes, because if you feel Aruban those things affect you, then you do not do harm to those things [nature, historical places]”* and this feeling stems from a pride over the island, *“and that you feel like, we must do something ourselves to make sure that it stays as it is”*.⁶⁶ The teachers of the university seem to take responsibility in keeping Aruba a place of comfort (Yuval Davis 2006), which at the same time creates a space within which teachers can experience a shared identification by taking action together (Guadeloupe 2009), for example by participating in beach clean-ups that are organized by the university.⁶⁷ By taking action they construct a feeling of belonging, which is about leading a life worth living (Antonsich 2010).

However, the experience of this responsibility is limited to the spheres of higher socio-economic groups. The university is a space in which this shared responsibility is apparent. Alexander once again points out the difference between the university’s staff and the overall Aruban society: *“You should not forget, at least sixty percent of the Aruban people earns a minimum wage. They do not have the time to worry about birds and turtles and those kinds of things. Who worries about that? Yeah us, at the university, the students and our teachers, the higher educated...you see, there is something in there that is a disconnect, people forget that a lot of people do have a hard life on the island. Which you do not see, we are proud”*.⁶⁸ Being proud is once again an underlying characteristic for certain behavior, like taking responsibility for the island because of a sense of ownership, which makes it possible to imagine the nation as sovereign (Anderson 2006), but also a reason to hide poverty on the island which in its turn can be hidden to keep the island attractive for tourists.

3.2.2 Space & place within the Dutch Kingdom

In the kingdom an attachment to people is the main factor in feeling at ‘home’ as well. This feeling of home in the kingdom of the Netherlands can be experienced in several ways. First, having family in other countries in the kingdom provides attachment mostly because informants have studied or worked there and still have friends living in the Netherlands. When talking on the patio of the second building of the university, Peter explains to me how his family is rooted in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Peter went to Aruba in 1985 to do research on the Status Aparte, together with Carla who is now his wife. At that time, they both studied in the Netherlands. Peter himself is born and raised in the Netherlands, and his wife is born in the Netherlands but grew up in Curaçao where her family still lived when they moved to Aruba. Together they have a son, who is born in Aruba. The whole family has the Dutch nationality as they all originate from countries within the kingdom. Peter tells me that

⁶⁶ Interview with Anna – 20-03-2019

⁶⁷ Interview with Daphne – 12-03-2019

⁶⁸ Interview with Alexander – 15-03-2019

he sees his wife as Curaçaoan, their son as Aruban and himself as Dutch-Aruban or Aruban-Dutch.⁶⁹ His family creates a sense of home for him, which is intertwined with the territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The process of feeling at home here is both fixed in territory, just as it is in a web of social relations (Hooks 2009). Because his family originates from different nations within the kingdom, there is emotional value attached to all nations.

Apart from that, other countries in the kingdom are not as much valued emotionally as Aruba is. The other islands in the Caribbean, Sint Maarten, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius are sometimes also valued because of the nature but the motivation behind is not found in processes of belonging, the islands were referred to mostly as nice places to go on a holiday. Victor tells me that *“the islands are very, very different which is not what he expected and he would not want to live on any of the other Dutch Caribbean islands. But he would go on a holiday there”*.⁷⁰ Altogether there is not much experience and negotiation of place-belongingness in the kingdom. Some of the same factors in place-belongingness with Aruba are applicable but is not experienced as strongly in the kingdom. It seems that the idea of belonging to a large entity like the Kingdom of the Netherlands is too abstract to be able to attach emotional value to it. This may be due to the lack of visibility or confrontation with the kingdom in the daily life of the university's staff.

To conclude, it appears that there is a lot of intertwinement between space and place when a feeling of home is constructed through the process of place-belongingness. A feeling of home is mostly constructed through the space of family, both in Aruba and in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Considering belonging to Aruba, the environment plays an important role for the teachers of the university. This results in a strong sense of responsibility to keep the island the way it is; a place of comfort. The responsibility teachers experience is partly result from their high socio-economic status. Altogether, the process of place-belongingness in the Kingdom of the Netherlands seems to be too very abstract and there is difficulty to attach emotional value to this space and place.

⁶⁹ Interview with Peter – 28-02-2019

⁷⁰ Interview with Victor – 01-03-2019



In the final chapter of this thesis, we will discuss our most important findings, and put emphasis on interesting parallels and differences. We will discuss the results according to the structuring themes of this thesis, starting with national identification, followed by nationness and finally, place-belongingness.

Considering the experience and negotiation of national identification amongst scholars of the University of Aruba, there appear to be many parallels between the identification of the students and the teachers. The results of this research clearly show that to identify as Aruban, one does not have to be born in Aruba. The Aruban national identity is therefore not natural, but a culturally determined construct (Eriksen 2002). Scholars from the university form a community with many different ethnic and national backgrounds, just like the nation is very ethnically diverse, but it is believed that as long as you love the island and are proud of the island, you can identify as Aruban. National identification with Aruba can thus be seen as a national identification without ethnicity; there is no common descent necessary for national identification (Eriksen 2002). Students also mentioned that they felt connected to the nation by speaking the language Papiamentu, which is in line with Anderson's (2006) conceptualization of nationalism. They also mentioned the national flag of Aruba as a material symbol for their nation. Furthermore, the diversity of the scholars can be interpreted as a way in which the community is imagined (Anderson 2006). The diversity of the teachers can be explained by the different processes through which they construct their identity.

Many scholars in Aruba experience several layers and different identity markers that together construct their identity. Often, multiple national identities are experienced which together construct the hybrid Self. These hybrid identities are embraced by scholars and used in their own advantage by switching between these identifications to create a common world (Guadeloupe 2009). Both teachers and students consciously shape their identities using aspects of national identities they attach to. Apart from multiple national identifications, teachers use other social identities like ethnicity and gender to construct their identity (Wodak 2010). One of the students that participated in the research made an interesting remark. He does not identify as Aruban, because he wants people to see him as an individual instead of part of the Aruban nation. He does not want to be labeled to a preinstalled image of how he should be and be judged accordingly. Despite the multi-ethnic society, one of the teachers has many experiences of discrimination based on her ethnicity. This does however not mean that there is no national identification with Aruba, since identification is just as much constructed on the base of our own perception of identity and not just by the different levels of categorizing by the people around us (Nagel 2003).

Concerning identification with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, scholars at the University of Aruba articulated that they are very happy with the Dutch passport since it offers opportunities to travel, study or work abroad. However, this does not necessarily mean that emotional identification with the kingdom is experienced. The common opinion about the kingdom amongst teachers seems to be that Aruba does not have the equal voice they are supposed to have, since all countries within the Kingdom are officially equal. The current construction of the kingdom is sometimes compared to colonial power relations, like Santos do Nascimento mentions in his book(2016). Since most teachers have consciously experienced the period before and after the Status Aparte, it could be possible that they have stronger opinions about this construction. Even though there are different national identification processes amongst the scholars, an emotional connection can still be made to the collectivity through the negotiation and experience of nationness.

The experience and negotiation of nationness amongst scholars of the University of Aruba was prominently constructed through the language Papiamentu. People within a certain nation can feel connected to each other because of this shared language(Anderson 2006). Students clearly mentioned that they experience nationness because they feel like they connect to other Arubans because they are all the same. Since Papiamentu is unique to Aruba, the language creates a sense of sameness and a shared identification and therefore a comfortable environment amongst other Arubans(van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015). According to teachers this was a deliberate political move in the period of the Status Aparte, to create a culture of resistance opposing Curaçao(Saïd 1994). A student recognizes this as she partly connects to Curaçao Papiamentu, but the language also creates a distance.

Another way in which nationness is negotiated is through a shared characteristic of scholars at the University of Aruba which is a sense of pride they have. The island Aruba was often referred to as *'our little rock'* which illustrated both a sense of ownership and a sense of pride. Students are not only proud of the nation, but also believe Arubans are proud people. Teachers are also proud of the autonomy of the country and experience ownership and pride due to this. The little rock also refers to the literal size of the island, the relative smallness of the Aruban society seems to create an informal information circuit in which gossip is shared. This creates the possibility to know a lot about everybody in Aruban society, which entails only about 100.000 people, and therefore can create a sense of nationness.

Language also plays a role in the experience and negotiation of nationness with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As a remainder from colonialism, Dutch is used throughout the kingdom and functions as the main language for education in Aruba. This results in a shared identification and sameness with the Dutch, as everybody speaks this language(Anderson 2006). On the other hand,

students experience that Dutch people in Aruba look down on the Papiamentu speaking population and refuse to learn Papiamentu. Teachers believe that the use of Dutch in the academic sphere creates low self-confidence for Papiamentu speakers, as it implies that their own language is not qualified for education. For all scholars, this results in an experience of inequality in the kingdom which is again linked to colonialism by teachers. Overall, there seems to be a less strong sense of belonging to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and identification appears to be more difficult than identification with a single nation (Alofs 2011).

We have shown that for Aruban scholars, symbolic as well as territorial places contribute to a sense of feeling at home in Aruba. Furthermore, we have shown that symbolic and territorial places are not exclusive, but on a small island like Aruba are very much intertwined. The territorial smallness and isolation from the rest of the world by being an island, influences the way social relations are experienced. Likewise, social relations influence the way territorial spaces are perceived.

Our findings indicate that family is one of the most important factors that make Aruban scholars feel at home in Aruba. Students as well as teachers felt that the presence of family in Aruba is what made Aruba feel like their home. Students would often live with their parents and siblings until they bought their own house or land. For some teachers, family, or the lack of family, has been a reason to move back to Aruba. Noteworthy is that family does not necessarily mean there has to be shared blood. Family can also indicate a community, like a neighbourhood or church community. However, these communities are perceived as familial, they carry the same meaning. The nature in Aruba and sea surrounding the island also carries a lot of meaning for the Aruban scholars. Students as well as teachers expressed concerns about the damaging of the nature and the extinction of the Aruban wildlife. In general, the tourist industry was indicated to be the most damaging for the nature and wildlife. However, worrying about the nature and wildlife was also indicated to be part of the academic bubble, something you would not find outside the university. Which seems logical, for why would one complain about the effects of the tourist industry on the nature when you personally are financially dependent on that same tourist industry.

Scholars at the University of Aruba feel a connection to other places in the Dutch Kingdom for various reasons. They feel connected to the other Dutch Caribbean islands because of a shared language but do perceive those other Dutch Caribbean islands to be inherently different to Aruba. As we mentioned, each former colonized country has a unique relationship with its ex-coloniser and has experienced a unique process of decolonisation. Therefore, the Dutch Caribbean islands might be similar on paper, but are culturally very different. Moreover, clearly there is a connection visible to the Netherlands as a place. For the scholars in general because they either have family or friends living



there or have lived there themselves. More specifically for the students, some of the Aruban students are planning on studying in the Netherlands in the future or looking for a job there. A clear academic connection can therefore be made between Aruba and the Netherlands.

To conclude, we have set out to answer the following research question: How do scholars at the University of Aruba negotiate and give meaning to national identification, nationness and place-belongingness in relation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands? In general, the scholars of the university experienced a strong emotional connection to Aruba as a nation. Their national identification with Aruba was consistent of multiple identity markers and considered of great value to the scholars. To a different extent, an emotional connection to the Kingdom was also experienced. Interestingly, the teachers appeared to be more vocal about unequal power relations within the Dutch Kingdom. They recognised these unequal power relations within the university itself. We consider the educational use of the Dutch language to be a decolonial power structure. Students seemed to be more accepting of these decolonial structures at the university. In our view, this difference in opinion could possibly be related to the different positions students and teachers hold. Where the educational use of the Dutch language can create an experience of inequality, the use of the national language Papiamentu seemed to create a connection based on sameness and shared identification in Aruba. Papiamentu was not the only shared identity marker but is considered to be the most important. Furthermore, intertwined of symbolic spaces and territorial places contributed to a sense of being at home, and with that a sense of belonging within Aruba. Overall, scholars seemed to give meaning to national identification, nationness and place-belongingness to a greater extent with Aruba, than in relation to the Dutch Kingdom. However, this does not mean that national identification, nationness and place-belongingness were not negotiated within the Kingdom of the Netherlands at all.

For future research, we recommend further inquiry into the relation between power structures and educational institutions. As Wekker(2016) argued, the use of race as a societal structuring element is not only evident in ex-colonial areas, but also in the home territories of the colonizing countries. Therefore, it might also be of value to research the relation between power structures and educational institutions in former colonizing nations.

Bibliography

Aller, H. B. 1994. *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel: De Staatkundige Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba van 1934 tot 1994*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Alofs, L & Merckies, L. 1990. *Ken ta Arubiano? Sociale integratie en natievorming op Aruba*. Leiden: Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology.

Alofs, L. J. 2011. *Onderhorigheid en separatisme, koloniaal bestuur en lokale politiek op Aruba, 1816-1955* (Doctoral dissertation, Leiden University Institute for History, Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University).

Alofs, L & Veneman, J. 2010. *Identificatie met het koninkrijk*. Symposium: Toekomst van het Koninkrijk: Wederzijdse baten van het Koninkrijk voor Aruba en voor Nederland. Aruba: 29-06-2010.

Anderson, B. 2006. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books.

Antonsich, M. 2010. "Searching for belonging—an analytical framework." *Geography Compass*, 4(6): 644-659.

Appadurai, A. 1990. "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy". *Theory, culture & society*, 7(2-3), 295-310.

Asher, K. 2013. "Latin American decolonial thought, or making the subaltern speak", *Geography Compass* 7 (12): 832-842.

Baldacchino, G. 2010. "'Upside Down Decolonization" in Subnational Island Jurisdictions: Questioning the "Post" in Postcolonialism", *Space and Place* 13 (2): 188-202

Baldacchino, G. Royle, S. A. 2010. "Postcolonialism and Islands: Introduction", *Space and Culture* 13 (2): 140-143

Bell, V. 1999. *Performativity and belonging: An introduction*. London: SAGE.

Bhabha, H. 1989. *Location, Intervention, Incommensurability: A Conversation with Homi Bhabha*. *Emergences* 1(1):63-8.

Boeije, H. 2010. *Analysis in qualitative research*. London: SAGE

Brodwin, P. 2002. "Genetics, Identity, and the anthropology of Essentialism", *Anthropological Quarterly* 75 (2): 323-330.

De Cillia, R. Reisigl, M. Wodak, R. 1999. "The discursive construction of national identities", *Discourse and society* 10(2): 148-173.

Connell, J. .2009. We are not ready: Colonialism or autonomy in Tokelau. In G. Baldacchino & D. Milne (Eds.), *The case for non-sovereignty: Lessons from sub-national island jurisdictions* (pp. 157-169). London: Routledge.

Croucher, S. 2018. *Globalization and belonging: The politics of identity in a changing world*. Lenham: Rowman & Littlefield.

DeWalt, K. M. DeWalt, B. R. 2011. *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press

Diario .2018. "Como 20 di cada 30 estudiante na Universidad di Aruba ta femenino" September 18. Accessed [June 24 2019] <http://www.diario.aw/2018/09/como-20-di-cada-30-estudiante-na-universidad-di-aruba-ta-femenino>

Duany, J. 2000. "Nation on the move: The construction of cultural identities in Puerto Rico and the diaspora", *American Ethnologist* 27 (1): 5-30

Easthope, A. 1998. "Bhabha, hybridity and identity", *Textual practice*, 12(2): 341-348.

Edensor, T. 2002. *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Eriksen, T. H. 2002. *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Eriksen, T.H. 2010. *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Guadeloupe, F. 2009. *Chanting down the new Jerusalem: Calypso, Christianity, and capitalism in the Caribbean*. California: University of California Press.

Gupta, A. Ferguson, J. 1992. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 6-23.



Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and nationalism: New perspectives on the past*. Oxford: Black- well Publishing

Hall, S. Du Gay, P. 1996. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: SAGE Publications.

Hall, S. 1992. Cultural identity and cinematic representation. In *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean cinema*, edited by Mbye. B. Cham, 220-236. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press

Hall, S. 2017. *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (edited by K. Mercer, foreword by H.L. Gates, Jr.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Hermans, B. Kösters, L. 2019. "Beroepsbevolking op de Nederlands-Caribische eilanden", CBS: *Statistische trends*

Ho, E. L. E. 2009. "Constituting citizenship through the emotions: Singaporean transmigrants in London", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 4: 788–804.

Hooks, B. 2009. *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. New York: Routledge.

Loomba, A. 1998. "Postcolonialism – Or postcolonial studies", *Interventions: international journal of postcolonial studies* 1 (1): 39-42

Mijts, E. 2013. "Van Oost-Groningen tot Westpunt-Aruba: een Koninkrijk met vele culturen. Identiteit en identificatie in het Caribisch deel van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden." *Neerlandica Wratislaviensia* 22: 65-79.

Mignolo, W. D. Walsh, C. E. 2018. *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press

Nagel, J. 2003. *Race, ethnicity, and sexuality: Intimate intersections, forbidden frontiers*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nuffic. 2015. "Onderwijssysteem Aruba: beschreven en vergeleken met het Nederlandse systeem" Nuffic (5) [Januari 2015]

Oostindie, G. & Verton, P. 1998. "Ki sorto di reino / what kind of kingdom? Antillean and Aruban expectations of the Kingdom of the Netherland". *NWIG: New West Indian Guide* 72(1/2): 43-75.

Van der Pijl, Y. Guadeloupe, F. 2015. "Imagining the nation in the classroom: belonging and nationness in the Dutch Caribbean", *European review of Latin American and Caribbean studies* 0(98): 87-98.



Premdas, R. R. 1996. *Ethnicity and identity in the Caribbean: Decentering a myth*. Notre Dame: Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies.

Rizvi, F. Lingard, B. Lavia, J. 2006. "Postcolonialism and education: negotiating a contested terrain", *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 14 (3): 249-262

Saïd, E. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf.

Santos do Nascimento, R. 2019. *Het koninkrijk ontsluit*. Apeldoorn: Maklu uitgevers nv.

Slocum, K. Thomas, D. A. 2003. "Rethinking global and area studies: Insights from Caribbeanist Anthropology", *American Anthropologist* 105 (3): 553-565

Smith, A. D. 1991. *National identity*. Nevada: University of Nevada Press.

Sökefeld, M. 1999. "Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology", *Current Anthropology* 40 (4): 417-448.

University of Aruba. 2019. Accessed [June 24 2019] <http://www.ua.aw>

Veenendaal, W. 2016. *Eindrapport CCC-opinieonderzoek. Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba & Sint Eustatius*. Leiden: Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies.

Verbik, L. Lasanowski, V. 2007. "International Student Mobility: Patterns and Trends". The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2007.

Wekker, G. 1998. Gender, identiteits-vorming en multi-culturalisme: Notities over de Nederlandse multiculturele samenleving. In C. Geuijen, *Multiculturalisme: Werken aan ontwikkelingsvraagstukken* (pp. 39-53). Den Haag: Uitgeverij LEMMA.

Wekker, G. 2016. *White innocence*. Durham and London: Duke University Press

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WVR). 2007. *Identificatie met Nederland*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

WilWeg. 2019. "Studie op Aruba" May 23. Accessed [June 24 2019] <https://www.wilweg.nl/landen/meer-landen/aruba/studie-op-aruba>

Wodak, R. 2009. *Discursive construction of national identity*. Edinburgh: University Press.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2006. "Belonging and the politics of belonging". *Patterns of Prejudice* 40 (3):197-214.

