Through the Eyes of the Youth

Exploring Youth's Imaginaries of Sustainability in Curaçao

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By Ashmarine Francisca (6760147)

a.c.francisca@students.uu.nl

Supervised by Prof. dr. Ajay Bailey

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Utrecht University Faculty of Geosciences

Abstract

Sustainability has become a central concept for many development plans, for Curaçao this is no exception. Active participation of young people is increasingly recognized as a necessary accelerator to achieve sustainable goals. Here, youth are seen as 'agents of change' and are frequently encouraged to envision their desired sustainable future. This research seeks to explore the different narratives of sustainability that young people in Curaçao have, how different the education system and the media support these narratives, and which sustainable behaviors are practiced by the youth in Curaçao. Ultimately, this will give insights into youth's imaginaries of sustainability in Curaçao. In order to explore this, a media analysis was conducted for two local newspapers, 'Amigoe' and 'Èxtra', along with semi-structured interviews with students.

It was found that youth in Curaçao mostly link sustainability to the environment and the community. Here, sustainability is seen as a concept that is focused primarily on protecting the environment and supporting the local community. This is also reflected in the practices carried out by the youth, which include recycling, using less plastic, using less water/ electricity, and motivating fellow peers. Ultimately, it was found that youth in Curaçao are aware of major local challenges that can impede them from reaching a sustainable future. The local mindset is seen as the biggest challenge when it comes to fully adopting sustainability on the island. From what was gathered from the media, this is being addressed by setting up awareness campaigns and educational workshops in order to build a sense of responsibility within the community. Furthermore, the youth acknowledged that renewable energy could be an important step in the development of a sustainable future for Curaçao. This research provides insights into the perceptions of youth in Curaçao and makes recommendations that can be useful for the promotion of sustainable initiatives for the young population and involving their ideas more effectively into development plans.

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Mi stima bosnan!

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List of Abbreviations

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics (Curaçao)
EEA	European Environment Agency
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NDP	National Development Plan (Curaçao)
OECD	Economic Co-operation and Development
RKCS	'Rooms- Katholiek Centrale Schoolbestuur' (Roman Catholic Central School Board)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UDC	University of the Dutch Caribbean
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UoC	University of Curaçao

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1. Introduction

In 1990, the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), stated that "People are the real wealth of nations" (UNPD, 1990). It was recognized that development can be more self-sustaining when people are given the chance to use their creativity and local problem solving skills to set their own goals and approaches. More recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were introduced as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The targeted 17 goals promote sustainability by offering a comprehensive vision for sustainable development. This vision includes active participation of young people in development processes as they are seen as "agents of change". Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old account for 1.2 billion of the world population, that is 16 percent of the global population (United Nations, 2022). According to the United Nations (UN) (2020), this population is expected to grow by 7 percent by 2030. As a result, there is now greater emphasis on the role of young people in development plans, with a focus on bettering their education and future opportunities (UN, n.d.). Young people are seen as both the current members of society that are experiencing all the global challenges, and as the future members of society that will have to deal with the effects of future advancements (Raikes, Yoshikawa, Britto & Iruka, 2017). Therefore, their involvement in decision-making is crucial to achieving effective development. Accordingly, they are frequently encouraged to envision sustainable futures (Oinonen & Paloniemi, 2023).

Dealing with the global challenges requires complex, systematic changes regarding the social economic, political, cultural and technological systems. These changes or transformations may be triggered by creating visions of the future (Milkoreit, 2017). This idea has prompted researchers and governments to seek out visionary narratives that can inspire and motivate collective decisions on policy and actions (Chabay, 2015; van Dorsser et al.,2020). For instance, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) makes use of strategic forecasting in order to anticipate future challenges and opportunities by systematically analyzing visions of the future (Wilkinson, 2016). The European Environment Agency (EEA) has come up with a project that uses a set of imaginaries that offers plausible and contrasting images of what a sustainable Europe could look like in 2050 (EEA, 2023). Furthermore, the Inclusive Imaginaries project was launched by the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in 2021. This project recognizes the need for creative solutions for sustainable development and does this by integrating social imaginaries in development processes (UNDP, 2022). These are a few examples of how the use of imaginaries has been implemented.

1.1 Relevance & Knowledge gap

As Braun (2015) mentions, existing literature lacks in imagining just and sustainable alternatives to the existing political, economic, and ecological practices. Therefore, the use of imaginaries has been

promoted as a forward-looking tool in order to envision possible futures, but also to acknowledge the current challenges and opportunities.

Gugganig & Klimburg-Witjes (2021) mention the need for more research on the imaginaries fostered by island inhabitants and how this may differ from the Western imaginaries. This is due to the higher vulnerability of smaller countries. Traditional concepts of sustainability cannot be replicated for small islands due to their different context. Politically, small islands have a different governance system and are highly impacted by colonial history, and geographically, their size, resource base and ecosystems are more vulnerable and thus can impact their development paths (Connel, 2023). This research intends to contribute to the literature by focusing on the imaginaries of sustainability fostered by islanders, taking into account their personal experiences with local challenges.

The case study for this research, Curaçao, is a small island in the Caribbean that has been making efforts towards incorporating sustainability into their development plans. In order to address local challenges, the government of Curaçao has shown the commitment to achieve sustainable development by focusing on six priority SDGs, namely SDG 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 14 (Life Below Water). These goals are actualized in the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2015- 2030 (2016) and in the Roadmap for SDG Implementation which was introduced in 2018. This roadmap mentions youth as an important accelerator for implementing sustainable goals (UNDP, 2018) (See Chapter 4 for more information on the local context).

While there is a growing body of research on sustainability in Curaçao, there is a notable lack of studies that focus on youth's perspective and their contribution to sustainability. The visions of young people are underrepresented in the existing literature. There is also insufficient research on the role that different institutions play in forming youth's perceptions of sustainability. By focusing on these roles and perspectives, this research can provide insights for education and policy formulation surrounding sustainability. The Curaçao SDG Roadmap mentions raising awareness for climate change and encouraging environmental stewardship to increase youth empowerment (UNDP, 2018). This empowerment is crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and active participation in sustainable development. Hereby, this research provides a platform for young people to voice their opinions and contribute to the sustainability discourse in Curaçao.

1.2 Research objective & -questions

This research seeks to understand the imaginaries of sustainability constructed by young people in Curaçao, with a focus on the different narratives, institutional role, sustainable practices, and visions of the future that support these imaginaries. By doing this, the research seeks to explore the perceptions of youth surrounding sustainability in Curaçao. This research aims to understand how the youth in Curaçao envision a sustainable future for their island, including their aspirations and fears

that shape these visions. Furthermore, this research also aims to evaluate the level of engagement and participation of the youth in sustainable initiatives, and identify barriers and motivators influencing their actions. Ultimately, this research works towards providing insights that can be valuable for educators and leaders to effectively incorporate these perspectives into strategies, policies, and educational programs. This will be achieved by answering the following research questions:

- How are local challenges connected to sustainability, and how is this constructed in the media?

- Which narratives of sustainability are prevalent among the youth in Curaçao, and how does this relate to their visions of the future?

- How do the education system and media shape youth's perceptions of sustainability in Curaçao?

- In which activities or practices are young people in Curaçao engaging to promote sustainability?

The first part of this paper will be focused on discussing the literature and theoretical framework on which this research is built on. This chapter (2) will discuss the two main concepts of this research namely, the concept of imaginaries and sustainability. This will be followed by a reflection on how these concepts will be used in this research, which will be visualized in a conceptual model. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodological choices made within this research along with the limitations and ethics of the research. Chapter 4 will give a brief description of the case study, Curaçao, along with local context that is relevant to the research topic, such as efforts towards sustainable development. After this, the results gathered during the fieldwork will be discussed in Chapter 5. This will be divided into different sections that focus on different parts of the conceptual framework. In order to put these findings into perspective, Chapter 6 provides a deeper discussion into the most important findings and how this relates to the literature. Lastly, a conclusion will be provided in which the research questions will be addressed and answered. This final chapter will also discuss some recommendations for future research.

2.   Imaginaries and Sustainability: Literature & Theory

In order to explore the perspectives and narratives of sustainability constructed by young people in Curaçao it is necessary to first discuss the literature and theory behind this research. As mentioned, the theoretical basis of this research stems from two concepts, namely the concept of imaginaries and the concept of sustainability. Both of these concepts will be discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Imaginaries

Central to this research is the concept of imaginaries. This concept was formally introduced by Charles Taylor in his book "Modern Social Imaginaries" (2004). In this book Taylor offers an understanding of the structure of Western modern life and how different forms of modernities have taken shape around the world. As he puts it, social imaginaries are about how people "imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie all these expectations." (Taylor, 2004). In contrast to the use of theory to explain social life, Taylor adopts the term 'imaginaries' in order to give attention to how ordinary people interpret their surroundings. Social imaginaries are shared by a large group in society which makes it a common understanding. Imaginaries are necessary for societal functioning as they consist of both factual and normative common understanding of social life (Taylor, 2004). According to Taylor (2004), this is often carried out in forms of images and stories instead of theoretical terms. Imaginaries take materials (e.g. memories, experiences, images) from the known environment to create different versions of the reality (Peet, 2000).

2.1.1 Imaginaries as a social construct

The concept of imaginaries was also discussed by Cornelius Castoriadis (1987). Castoriadis' work is based on the idea that societies are not a product of determinism, rather they are self-creating and self-instituting. Societies are not determined by preexisting conditions but rather build themselves from collectively constructed imaginaries (Elliot, 2002). Castoriadis thought of imaginaries as a source of creativity and form of freedom, both on the individual and societal level (Strauss, 2006). He noted that the societal imaginary is institutionalized within the society and based on the community, whereas the individual imaginary is embodied in the self-consciousness and based on personal thoughts. Therefore, one of the characteristics of social imaginaries is that it emphasizes the social aspect of imagination, rather than reducing it to a product of the individual mind (Adams et al., 2015). This can also be derived from Taylor's work; imaginaries are crucially influenced by social and cultural factors, and rather than being an individual process, imaginaries are socially constructed within a community (Taylor, 2004). These factors can be embedded in institutions, practices and different perceptions (Archibald et al., 2020). Take for example the modern capitalist imaginary. This imaginary is created

in the society by communal values such as individual freedom, wealth accumulation, and competitiveness. Zittoun, Glăveanu & Hawlina (2020) discuss how imagination draws on culturally available resources and memories of social interactions, but at the same time the construction of these imaginaries also builds societal resources and can ultimately shape a society and culture.

2.1.2 Imaginaries as visions of the future

Imaginaries are not only constructs of how the current society works, but also how they ought to be in the future (Bazzani, 2023). The future is based on the imagination of individuals which is constructed by what is currently happening in the world, how current relationships are held, and how it is desired to be (Vershraegen & Vandermoere, 2018). Actions and decisions taken as a result from these imaginaries can influence future outcomes (Cantó-Milà & Seebach, 2015). This results in positive or negative long-term collective outcomes, e.g. visions of environmental catastrophe, extreme poverty, or technological advancement and complete system transformations (Oomen, Hoffman & Hajer, 2022). According to Bazzani (2023), imaginaries can change the course of action in three ways. First, by changing its route; aspirations for a certain desirable future and how it ought to influence the way actions are taken, i.e. if the practice does not align with the desired future it will be invalidated. Second, by helping individuals cope with uncertain futures by providing them with alternative actions to fill that time. And lastly, by fostering projective agency capacity, i.e. a shift to the ethics of possibility. Rather than basing the future of expectations, it is based on creative opportunities (Copeland, 2023).

2.2 Sustainability

For the past three decades, the term 'sustainability' has been widely used as a buzzword for politics, management, and environmental discourses. According to Scoones (2007), sustainability has become a 'boundary term': where science and politics meet. Sustainability is a term used to describe a common goal, the 'boundary work'. This regards building communities with a shared understanding of a common commitment, i.e. to link environmental, economic and social development (Scoones, 2007). Sustainability encompasses sustaining the environment, society, and the economy. In recent decades, there has been more public attention on global challenges, such as climate change, inequality, and environmental degradation. Consequently, there has been a raise in the public awareness of sustainability (Bañon Gomis et al., 2011).

Despite the rise in importance of this concept, sustainability as a term is highly inconsistent. There is not one common definition for sustainability (Moore, Mascarenhas, Bain & Straus, 2017). One of the most known and commonly used definitions was given by the UN Brundtland Commission in 1987. Here, sustainability was defined as "the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own future needs" (Brundtland, 1987). However, defining sustainability still remains a difficult task. As Virtanen, Siragusa & Guttorm (2020)

conclude, definitions of sustainability range due to conceptual and moral differences among different communities and peoples. Consequently, the understanding of what sustainability is can differ from person to person. One person may be more influenced by this so-called "universal" definition, while another person will look more to issues that are close to them.

2.2.1 Dimensions of Sustainability

Sustainability is composed of three dimensions; the environmental, the economic and the social (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). The environmental domain clusters around ecological interests. This would include actions to minimize environmental impact such as lowering ecological footprint. According to Bañon Gomis et al. (2011), this domain can be associated with two rationalities, aesthetic and security. Aesthetic regards the beauty or aesthetic associated with nature. Essentially, conserving the environment so it does not lose its beauty, e.g. due to pollution. Security regards focusing on the environment as it concerns human survival, e.g. actions regarding climate change or droughts that affect people. Ultimately, environmental sustainability serves as the basis for the two other dimensions seeing as our survival depends on it. The economic domain is concerned with carrying out economic activities in such a way to promote long-term economic well-being and economic growth. This domain is more useful on the corporate level or country level as it requires adopting policies and regulations, or promoting sustainable economic models. The social domain focuses on the well-being of people and communities, by promoting human rights, access to education, decent work, and equity. Social sustainability regards reducing inequality, discrimination, social exclusion, poor governance, conflicts, and community participation. These three domains of sustainability are interconnected, for example economic sustainability requires environmental considerations such as resource management, but also social equality. A complete sustainable development would focus on all three dimensions, but societies can also choose to focus on one particular dimension. Whilst the SDGs are a more diverse and comprehensive way to understand sustainability and how one should act, they are based on these three domains (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). This structure serves as the basis of the way many practitioners and thinkers approach sustainability issues (James & Magee, 2017).

2.2.2 Youth as 'agents of change'

The UN defines "youth" as individuals between the age of 15 and 24. This is the period in which individuals gain independence and awareness that they are part of a community (Hwang & Kim, 2017). Young people are considered to be critical agents of change and the main contributors to sustainable development. Effective youth involvement is also considered beneficial for the development of the youth involved (Browne, Garst & Bialeschki, 2011). Involving young people in, for example decision-making committees, makes them feel more connected to the community and fosters healthy behaviors (Browne, Garst & Bialeschki, 2011). Youth involvement in the SDGs is especially important because it can raise awareness, foster a sense of responsibility for the ongoing

challenges and encourage environmental behavior (Borojević et al., 2023). Young people can also develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can be useful for their future careers (Bouronikos, 2023). Young people are capable of bringing real change as they bring new and unique perspectives and innovative ideas. Youth often question societal norms and push for new visions of the future. For young people, addressing the future resonates with their present experiences and possible trajectories of their lives (Carabelli & Lyon, 2016). Therefore, young people are important actors for addressing global challenges and introducing possible solutions. Recently there has been more awareness to the active participation of youth in finding solutions for the sustainable development challenges, for example through climate change actions and supporting sustainable food systems (Narksompong & Limjirakan, 2015; Yusof et al., 2022).

2.3 Framework for Imaginaries

Archibald et al. (2020) configuration of social imaginaries can be used here as a tool to better understand the workings of imaginaries. They identified three spheres, namely institutions, collective discourses, and collective practices. For this research, these three spheres will be applied to the concept of sustainability and in perspective of youth.

2.3.1 Institutions

The definition of institutions is two-fold. Institutions can be defined as collective rules and norms that are often embodied in organizations, for example local laws and informal norms. Institutions can also be understood as the established organization, think of the media and educational institutions. In both cases institutions are systems that structure social interactions, and therefore define and control behavior within a society (Hodgson, 2006). Institutions are crucial for the inner workings of a society and can therefore play an important role in constructing imaginaries (Archibald et al., 2020).

Research shows that mass media and education systems are two most influential institutions in the forming of young people's values (Medvedeva et al., 2020). Mass media and social networks are seen as influential factors for the formation of environmental behavior among young people (Shutaleva et al., 2022). Media has become incorporated in all parts of society. This so-called mediatization has been found to encourage societal and cultural change (Marinescu et al., 2021). The use of mass media can be extremely effective in promoting sustainable development. It can create enthusiasm among youth and contribute to permanent change (Confetto, Covucci, Addeo & Normando, 2023). Media has the ability to raise awareness about certain global challenges, but also to encourage collective action.

Education is also considered indispensable for achieving sustainable development. By incorporating sustainability in school curriculums, students can develop a sense of connectedness with nature and foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment. This is the case of the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This approach focuses on the promotion of sustainable

development through teaching and learning (Boeve-de Pauw, Gericke, Olsson & Berglund, 2015). As knowledge can inspire people to engage in actions towards sustainable development (Pabian & Pabian, 2023; Ding et al., 2018).

2.3.2 Collective Discourses

Discourses are closely linked to institutions. According to Peters (2005), it is the means through which institutions are articulated, challenged and changed. Discourses represent the ideas and values of what is important and what is not, in a particular context (Shand, 2015). This is often formed through conversations and discussions on a range of topics. According to Palmer (2006), discourses reflect and construct knowledge about certain social issues through different institutions. Discourses are tied to the relevant local socio-cultural context, for example discourses of sustainability are clustered around different issues of agriculture, resources and the environment. Discourses are a way of organizing knowledge (Miller, 1990). According to Ahl (2007), discourses have power in that they form what society holds as knowledge or truth. Discourses can bring about changes in individual knowledge, attitudes, and values, but also long-term causal effects on a community (Fairclough, 2003). For sustainability this knowledge stems from awareness of global or local challenges and understanding of what the concept of sustainability is. Awareness of global or local challenges, such as climate change and geographical inequalities, can originate from conversation or discussions with other people, gathering information online, or learned at school. Therefore, awareness is defined as the social consciousness of individuals, to empathize with their environment, a sense of belonging, and norms that determine their sustainable behavior (Shutaleva et al., 2022). Besides having awareness, understanding the concept of sustainability is also a crucial part of forming a discourse. This understanding, just like the awareness, is gathered through conversations, education and self-curiosity.

Media platforms are one of the most popular public sources to broadcast discourses. These discourses are often oriented towards a non-present reader, listener or viewer. Because media discourse is public and consumed by most individuals, it also plays an important role in forming individual perspectives and discourses (O'Keeffe, 2013). Written media, such as newspapers, are often criticized for their lack of objectivity and manipulation of language. On the other hand, newspapers also play an important role in meaning-making for individuals. According to Fowler (1986), discourse in newspapers is rarely an objective configuration of reality, but rather a way to transmit a certain ideology. This is done through the language of the written text, i.e. by indirect or vague means of expression (Yu & Zheng, 2022).

2.3.3 Collective Practices

In order for discourses to be visible in society, individuals need to engage in practices that support these ideas (Gunckel, Covitt & Anderson, 2009). Practices are defined as actions or intentions of acting that are shared by individuals (Archibald et al., 2020). Discourses determine which activities or

practices members of a community will participate in. In order to participate in these practices, the individual needs to have the right knowledge. Practices can be personal, but also on a community level. For example, environmental behavior is often discussed among friends and acquaintances, but do not necessarily need to be carried out together. Practices would include, for example recycling, waste reduction, and using less energy. For sustainability this also includes a sense of responsibility held by the individual towards doing the "right thing" in order to protect the environment or to foster social growth so that the current condition is not exacerbated (Ding et al., 2018). In addition to this, personal norms also play an important role in these practices. Here, individuals often act as a sense of obligation based on conformity with their personal values (Stern at al., 1999). According to Oinonen & Paloniemi (2023), youth express their agency towards sustainability by engaging in many different practices or actions, ranging from low-effort to high-effort actions.

2.4 Conceptualization

Researching imaginaries can be difficult due to their intangible nature. According to Salazar & Graburn (2014), the only way to study them is by focusing on the different pathways through which they become visible in the form of images and discourses. In order to understand these pathways, this research makes use of an adaptation of the framework of social imaginaries proposed by Archibald et al. (2020). This framework consists of three spheres; institutions, collective discourses, and collective practices. They propose that imaginaries are constructed through shared discourses and practices via institutions. Discourses surrounding a certain topic are shared through institutions which then determine collective practices. These interlinked variables form the imaginaries. For this research, the same framework will be used to explore the youth imaginaries of sustainability. It is argued then that youth imaginaries of sustainability are formed through discourses which are shared through institutions, such as the education system, family and media. This in turn determines sustainable actions taken by young people or other members of the community. This framework is visualized in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model
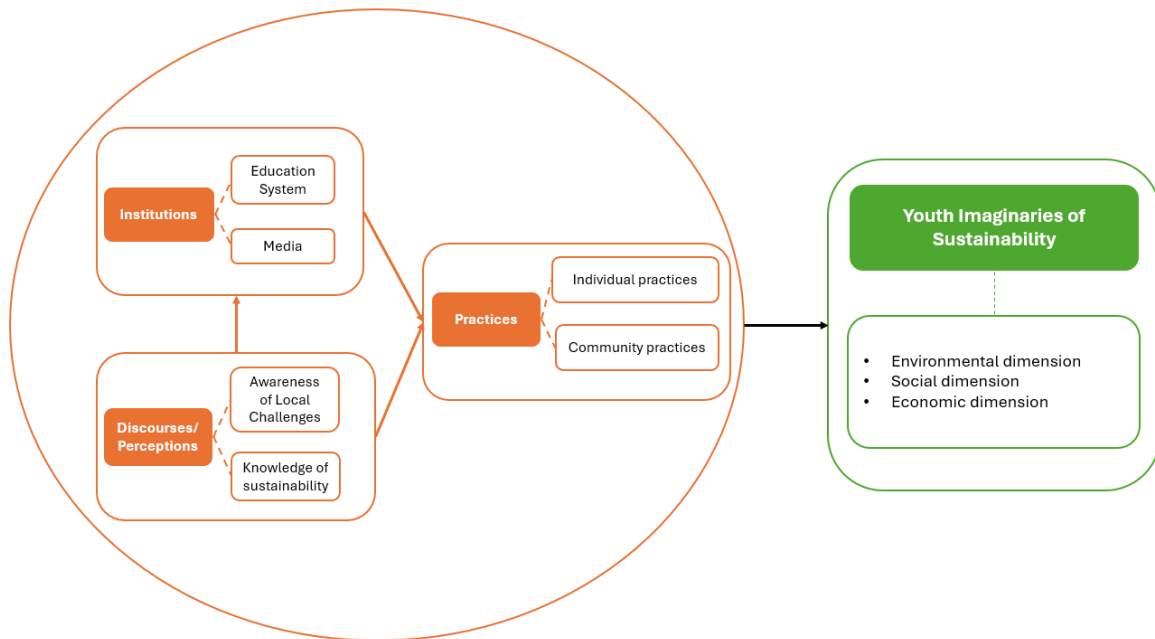
  The concept of sustainability is divided into three dimensions, namely economic-, social-, and environmental sustainability. Consequently, the imaginaries can include all three dimensions or one or two dimensions. As discussed in section 2.2.1, these dimensions can be expressed through many different indicators. The indicators for 'sustainability' were chosen due to their correlation with Curaçao's agenda for the SDGs 2030. It should be noted that these indicators will not be measured through quantifiable means; the idea is to discover how these imaginaries of sustainability include all or some of these dimensions through the different themes mentioned and discussed. The concept of imaginaries is divided into discourses, institutions, and practices. Discourses are measured by the participant's awareness of local challenges and opportunities, and their general knowledge on the concept of sustainability. Institutions are indicated by the role of the education system and the media. And lastly, practices are measured by participation in different forms of sustainable behavior or activities that promote sustainability (See Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Operationalization of concepts

Concept	Definition	Subdivisions	Indicators	Instrument: Interview questions
Imaginaries	Imaginaries are the collective and shared systems of discourses and practices that embody and produce the values, beliefs and norms that organize societies' goals and decisions (Archibald et al., 2020)	→Discourses (collective or individual)	• Awareness of local challenges/ and opportunities • Knowledge on the concept of 'sustainability'	• When I say the term "sustainability", what comes to mind? • Have you seen/ heard people online or on the television talk about sustainability? And in which way? • What sustainable initiatives/ practices do you observe in your community?
		→ Institutions	• Education system • Media	
		→Practices (collective or individual)	• Participation in different forms of sustainable behavior/ practices • Community initiatives/ actions	
Sustainability	The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own future needs (UN, 1987).	→Economic sustainability	• Economic growth • Reducing poverty	• What do you think we need to work on to make Curaçao more sustainable and why?
		→Social sustainability	• Local support • Youth empowerment	
		→Environmental sustainability	• Renewable energy • Plastic pollution	

Table 2.1 shows a clear operationalization of the concepts discussed in this chapter. The concept of imaginaries is defined as the collective and shared systems of discourses and practices that embody and produce the values, beliefs and norms that organize societies' goals and decisions (Archibald et al., 2020). Furthermore, sustainability is defined as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own future needs (Brundtland, 1987). The table shows the indicators discussed above and the interview questions that were used as instruments to measure these indicators.

3. Methodology

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this research seeks to understand the imaginaries of sustainability constructed by young people in Curaçao. In achieving this objective, emphasis is placed on the different narratives that are based within these imaginaries, the role played by different institutions in constructing and promoting these narratives, and the sustainable practices that support these imaginaries. In this chapter the methodological choices for this research will be discussed. The chapter will first delve into the research design and data collection methods used, this includes the use of a media analysis and semi-structured interviews. Next, the methods applied for data analysis will be discussed. The end of this chapter will reflect upon the positionality of the researcher during fieldwork along with ethical considerations and limitations to this research.

3.1 Research Design

In order to achieve the research objectives, this research adopted a qualitative approach. According to Hay (2000), the use of qualitative methods allows the researcher to understand social matters through conversations with individuals. Using a qualitative approach allowed us to identify how different experiences shape the perceptions of individuals. Imaginaries are based on shared understandings and perceptions of the current and future social life See Section 2.1). Conducting qualitative research provides insights into these shared understandings and perceptions of the participants. Furthermore, this research can be considered explorative, i.e. it tries to understand how different perceptions and experiences that young people have can contribute to their construction of imaginaries of sustainability.

3.2 Data collection & Analysis

This research was supported by two data collection methods. First, a media analysis was conducted in order to get insights into the discourses presented by the media regarding sustainability. And second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students.

3.2.1 Media Analysis

The first part of data collection consisted of a media analysis of two local newspapers. Discourse analysis usually encompasses language material, whether this is spoken or written texts, that are examined as a social phenomenon. Here it is assumed that the discourse goes beyond the individual person, but rather includes general evidence of society including their shared values and priorities. Therefore, analyzing discourses provides the researcher with an understanding of the local cultural context. For this research, the media analysis serves as supporting data. It provides the research with essential information on the socio-cultural context of the case study and an overview of how sustainability is viewed in the media discourse. Furthermore, the media analysis serves as a tool for comparison between how the youth experiences sustainability and how this is portrayed in the media.

Based on the popularity of the different newspapers it was chosen to analyze articles from 'Amigoe' and 'Èxtra'. Both of the newspapers are distributed to vendors across the island, but they are also published online and are accessible for readers with a subscription. The first newspaper, Amigoe, is a daily afternoon newspaper written in Dutch. The second newspaper, Èxtra, is a daily morning newspaper written and published in the local language, Papiamentu. It was chosen to analyze articles that were published from 2019 to 2023. This was done to maintain a manageable scope for this research. A broader scope would have included a larger number of articles, which given the limited resources and timeframe of the research would not have been manageable for the researcher. The start year 2019 was chosen because it was presumed that this is the year that the local government started to consider sustainability more, as a result of the SDG Roadmap which was brought out at the end of 2018. Due to the fact that the year 2024 was still ongoing and during the time of data gathering was only three months in, it was chosen to exclude this year to ensure a complete data set for each year. In order to find the right articles the database of both newspapers were searched using terms that are synonyms to 'sustainability' in the published language . For the Amigoe newspaper, the search included articles that mention the terms 'duurzaamheid', 'duurzaam', and 'sustainability'. For the Èxtra newspaper, the search terms were 'durabilidat', 'duradero', 'sostenibel', and 'sustainability'.

Based on the search criteria, 285 articles were found in the Amigoe newspaper. Each year there was an increase in the amount of articles published that mention these terms (see Table 3.1). Although not included in the analysis, in 2018 there were 30 articles and in 2017, 24 articles. This increase in mention could be explained by an increase in interest for sustainable development. In the Èxtra newspaper there were 141 articles published that meet the search criteria. This is a lower number when compared to the Amigoe newspaper. When compared to the number of articles published in 2018 and 2017, respectively 19 and 17 articles, from 2019 there is an increase.

Table 3.1: Number of articles published in 'Amigoe' and 'Èxtra' that mention the search terms for 2019-2023

Newspaper	Year of Publication					Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Amigoe	36	37	43	53	116	285
Èxtra	28	24	33	24	32	141
Total	64	61	76	77	148	426

Due to the large number of articles found, it was chosen to narrow down the inclusion criteria by focusing on articles that mention the search terms more than once in the article. This also serves as a credibility check, by choosing articles that are truly focused on the concept of sustainability. This resulted in 16 articles from the Amigoe newspaper and 20 articles from the Èxtra newspaper, thus a total of 36 articles were analyzed (See Appendix A for a complete list of the articles).

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The media analysis was followed by semi-structured interviews conducted with young people. Interviews were chosen as a data collection method based on the aim of the research. Imaginaries are formed within a community but still hold a personal element; the way in which individuals interpret events and actions differs. Conducting interviews provides more insights into an individual's perceptions and ultimately, the different imaginaries of sustainability. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility and adaptability of the interview questions to the individual participating.

The interviews were conducted with a total of 24 students between the ages of 18 to 25 years old. This age group deviates a little from the one discussed in section 2.2.2. It was chosen to focus on youth above 17 years old due to their accessibility and attendance to the university/ college. Consequently, this also included a few participants aged 25. Furthermore, it was easier to obtain consent from this age group than underage participants, hence why the ages 15 to 17 are not included. The participants included students from both universities, University of Curaçao (UoC) and University of Dutch Caribbean (UDC), with different study backgrounds. The interviews were conducted separately, with each individual being interviewed for approximately 20 – 30 minutes. The duration of the interviews varied amongst the participants as some gave more nuanced answers and others kept it short or did not fully know how to answer some of the questions. The participants agreed to stay anonymous and will be addressed by pseudonyms. An overview of the participants can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: List of participants for interviews

Interview number	Gender	Age	Pseudonym	Education level	School	Study
1	Male	23	Alex	Bachelor	UoC	Law
2	Female	25	Barbara	Bachelor	UoC	Applied Psychology
3	Male	24	Chris	Bachelor	UDC	Law
4	Female	24	Diana	Bachelor	UDC	Law
5	Female	23	Emily	Bachelor	UDC	High Executive Management
6	Female	19	Fiona	Bachelor	UoC	International Hospitality and Tourism Management
7	Male	23	Germain	Bachelor	UoC	Engineering Sustainability and Technology
8	Female	23	Hannah	Bachelor	UoC	Applied Psychology
9	Female	24	Irina	Bachelor	UoC	International Hospitality and Tourism Management
10	Female	20	Josephina	Bachelor	UoC	Applied Psychology
11	Female	21	Kelly	Bachelor	UoC	Applied Psychology
12	Male	19	Leon	Bachelor	UoC	Applied Psychology
13	Male	25	Maurits	Bachelor	UoC	Engineering
14	Male	24	Nigel	Bachelor	UoC	ICT
15	Male	18	Orion	Bachelor	UoC	ICT
16	Male	25	Patrick	Bachelor	UDC	Management
17	Male	22	Quincy	Bachelor	UDC	Assistant Executive
18	Male	20	Ronald	Bachelor	UDC	Management
19	Female	19	Sofia	Bachelor	UDC	Pediatric Psychology
20	Male	21	Terence	Bachelor	UDC	Industrial Technology and Mechanical Engineering
21	Female	20	Uti	Bachelor	UoC	Accounting
22	Female	22	Vera	Bachelor	UoC	International Business Management
23	Male	20	Win	Bachelor	UDC	Hospitality Management
24	Male	22	Xavier	Bachelor	UoC	Engineering Sustainability and Technology

Each individual interview was composed of twelve questions (See Appendix B). This included questions on the knowledge of the participants regarding sustainability, how they define it, what they have seen or heard in the media regarding sustainability, which initiatives they have noticed in the community and what their opinion on these initiatives are, and lastly what they think should be done to make Curaçao more sustainable. The questions were limited to twelve questions in order to provide the participants with room to be more engaged in the interview process and to give detailed answers to each question, including their personal experiences and room to reflect on each answer.

3.3 Data analysis

The newspaper articles were analyzed by using a coding matrix adapted from Mowri & Bailey (2022) (See Table 3.3). The matrix examined content of the articles (e.g. themes, events, actors) and tone (e.g. use of emotive language and portrayal of sustainability).

Table 3.3: Coding matrix for Media Analysis, adapted from Mowri & Bailey (2022)

Inventory variables	Description
Article title	*Title of the article*
Where published	*In which newspaper was the article published?*
Year of publication	*In which year was the article published?*
Content variables	**Description**
Action—Events	*What happened in this story? What is the central action? What else happened?*
Broader discourse(s)	*What is the broader theme here? Choose from: *different sustainability challenges**
Topics	*Which topics are discussed in the article? Are they related to sustainability? How?*
Characters	*Who are the people mentioned in the article? What are their roles? Who are the central actors? The secondary actors?*
Sources	*Who tells the story? Who is quoted as an expert? What makes them an expert? How are they described? Are they officials—their authority comes from professional experience, education, or designation.*
Social value	*Why is this story being reported? How does it relate to the society? Why is this important? How is it sensationalized?*
Tone variables	**Description**
Tone of article	*What tone is used in the overall article? Is it positive, negative, neutral?*
Emotive language	*Is there use of words that evoke emotions? Which words are used?*
Portrayal of sustainability	*How is sustainability portrayed? Is it optimistic, skeptical, pessimistic, urgent?*
Message	*What, if anything, are readers advised to do? What are characters in the story advised to do? What is the underlying message?*

The interviews were thematically analyzed with the help of a comprehensive codebook. This codebook was set up by deductive coding, i.e. the themes and codes correspond with the conceptual model. The four main themes correspond to the main concepts presented in the conceptual model, namely discourses, institutions, practices, and future. These themes were then divided into different codes that correspond to the operationalization of the main concepts (See Table 3.4).[1]

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[1] A complete overview of the coded news articles and interview transcriptions can be provided upon request.

Table 3.4: Codebook for Interviews

Themes	Codes	Descriptions	Examples from transcriptions
Discourses	Self-definition	Definition provided by the participants for the term "sustainability"	"...that it is something that is long lasting, so you could say that it is more focused on how we can ensure that it can go on for more generations."
	Interest	Personal interest of the participants to know more about, or practice, sustainability	"I would say the interest is there, but I would also say that I am not a person that is sustainable."
	Responsibility	Sense of responsibility from the participants to act more sustainable	"I don't see the use of me being sustainable if a lot of little things that we can do in Curaçao isn't being done."
Institutions	Education	Role of education in forming a discourse on sustainability for the participants	"...you would learn about recycling, and other things. This was through a workshop given by Selikor and Carmabi during summer school."
	Media Sources	Type of media source the participants makes use of	"I listen to the radio when driving to work or school."
	Media Content	What according to the participants is mentioned in the media regarding sustainability in Curaçao	"Like here [in Curaçao], you have the Isla case, that is also a big deal, but besides that locally I don't really hear people talking about sustainability on the news or in politics."
Practices	Individual practices	Type of sustainable practices conducted by the participants	"...the only other thing is that I try to not use a lot of plastic bags."
	Personal Motivation	Why the participants conduct certain sustainable practices	"...choosing to not throw trash on the streets is purely a principle, but the other one, is not that I consciously think about being sustainable if I'm being honest."
	Community Actions	Sustainable initiatives or actions in the community that were noticed by the participants	"I can see a lot of initiatives around agriculture."
	Perception of Community Actions	What the participants thinks of these initiatives	"I think they need to promote it more, but I also think they should focus on what I consider to be the biggest problem."
Future	Future Individual Practices	Practices the participants would want to conduct in the future	"I think I also want to start planting."
	Future Opportunities	Opportunities the participants identify for the future of sustainability in Curaçao	"Instead of building a whole entire house, there are many of old building in the city center that could be given a new life."
	Future Challenges	Challenges the participants identify for the future of sustainability in Curaçao	"Public transport here is very bad compared to other countries, obviously like the Netherlands. For the environment, I mean it's already kind of damaged, people throw away trash on the streets."

3.4 Positionality & Limitations

When conducting research on a complex topic such as sustainability it is important to consider the researcher's positionality before and during the process of the research. Along with this is the consideration of possible limitations to the research and ethics.

3.4.1 Positionality of the researcher

I chose this topic because of my personal interest to find out how sustainability is being practiced in Curaçao. This personal interest stems from my connection with the country, as I was born and lived there up until a few years ago. But with this personal interest comes also some possible presumptions and bias. Firstly, I recognize that sustainability is a predominantly western construct and that this concept is not accepted or implemented at the same pace or in the same way in non-western countries. Secondly, the topics discussed in my studies and the fact that I now live in a country that is far developed in the process of sustainability have provided me with a broad knowledge and some personal experiences on the topic of sustainability. When conducting this research, it was necessary to reflect on my connection to the case study country, and the knowledge that I have acquired by living in the Netherlands. As a researcher, it was crucial to separate my own presumptions when interviewing the participants, but most importantly when discussing and interpreting the results of the research (See Appendix C for an overview of the process of fieldwork for this research).

3.4.2 Limitations and Ethics

Despite all practical considerations, there are some limitations to this research. These limitations could have a potential impact on the quality of the findings in this research or the ability to answer some of the research questions.

First, the study was conducted during a small research period. This lack of time may have prevented the research to have a deeper understanding of the entire local context in Curaçao and how sustainability is practiced in the country. The study included a media analysis which provided great information on the local efforts surrounding sustainability and how this is connected to the local challenges. In regards to this, it must be considered that the sample size of the media analysis was limited to only 36 articles. A broader sample size would have provided the research with more information. Furthermore, the sample size of the interviews was also limited to 24 interviews with only university/ college students. A bigger sample size compromising of secondary school and university students would have provided a better representation of the young population of Curaçao. Ethical factors were taken into consideration when conducting the research. Participants were asked for their consent to be recorded and for their answers to be used in the research. Furthermore, it was made clear that their identities would remain anonymous and that their participation is completely voluntary. In each case they could resign their participation at any time throughout the research. In order to protect this anonymity, the participants are addressed by a pseudonym (See Appendix D for the Informed Consent Form).

4.   Geographical Context Chapter

For this research fieldwork was conducted in Curaçao, an island country in the Caribbean (See Figure 4.1). Before presenting the result gathered in fieldwork, it is necessary to delve more into the country's local context, their commitment to sustainability, and the positionality of youth in Curaçao. Most of the information provided in this chapter is gathered from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of Curaçao.

Figure 4.1: Map of Curaçao

Source: Google Maps, 2024

4.1 General information

Curaçao has a population of around 150.000 inhabitants, composed of many different cultural backgrounds. The demography of Curaçao is characterized by an imbalanced sex ratio and a high percentage of middle-aged and old age groups (See Figure 4.2). The country is mostly known as a popular tourism destination due to its historical center, Willemstad, which is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, and the flora and fauna of the country, which includes a diverse marine ecosystem and biodiversity. After the abolishment of slavery in 1863, the country was faced with significant social and economic changes. In 2010, Curaçao officially became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Figure 4.2: Demographics of Curaçao, 2023
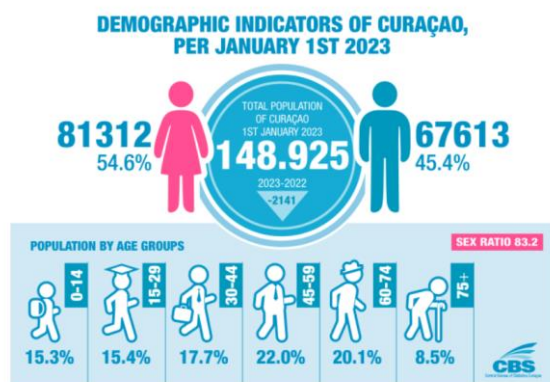
Source: CBS, 2023

Curaçao has a relatively stable Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is expected to grow with 27.8 percent between 2020-2028 (Hosein, 2024). The country's geographical location provides a strategic advantage to facilitate logistical harbor activities, business and commerce. This attributes to one of the economic activities most prominent in Curaçao. Curaçao has a relatively diverse economy. In 2021, the financial and insurance industry contributed the most to the GDP, followed by real-estate, technical, administrative services, and retail trade (CBS, 2022). Despite this, the economy faces challenges such as underperformance of the tourism industry, inflexibility in the labor market, and regulatory complexities.

For a long time the oil refinery in Curaçao was also an important economic industry, which served as the first step towards modernization (Goedoe, 2011). The refinery was closed down in 2019. This refinery was criticized due to its unsustainable practices. In 2015, fossil carbon dioxide emissions amounted to 36 metric tons per person. After its closure, there has been a huge decrease to 12 metric tons (in 2022). Despite this, Curaçao still has one of the highest CO_2 emissions per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean region. Now, the primary cause of CO_2 emission is transport.

Thirty percent of Curaçao's energy comes from renewable sources (Bulbaai, 2019). The island has an array of different renewable energy sources possibilities, including solar energy, wind energy, and ocean energy. Aqualectra, the sole utility company in Curaçao, together with other actors have been investing in renewable energy in Curaçao by establishing more wind farms, exchanging knowledge, and investing in smart grids. The latter is also done in efforts to reduce the energy consumption on the island which is considered quite high.

4.2 Commitment to the SDGs

The government of Curaçao has expressed their commitment to six of the Sustainable Development Goals. The path towards achieving sustainable development is guided by a comprehensive roadmap for the implementation of these goals in Curaçao which was introduced in 2018. The roadmap identifies gaps in the current government plans in regards to the SDG targets and also accelerators that

may have a positive multiplier effect on the implementation of the SDGs. These included inclusive and sustainable economic growth, environmental sustainability, improved education system, poverty reduction, and empowered youth. Furthermore, the roadmap also discussed the need for better internal monitoring systems, data collection methods and collaboration efforts. The first step into actualizing these goals was to incorporate them into the NDP. This plan is based on five interconnected themes, namely education, economy, sustainability, national identity and good governance, and is formulated as a long-term vision for change. The NDP focuses on four development goals, namely 'quality education', 'affordable and clean energy', 'decent work and economic growth', and 'life below water'. Furthermore, Figure 4.3 shows a website that is completely dedicated to the SDG's development in Curaçao. This website provides information about actors and partners involved, events that have been organized, and a link to the Roadmap. The website is also accessible through the CBS website and Government website.

Figure 4.3: Website dedicated to the SDGs in Curaçao

Source: https://www.curacao2030.cw/

4.3 Youth in Curaçao

The roadmap for SDG implementation mentions youth empowerment as one of the accelerators for goals implementation. The population under 29 years old accounts for 30.7 percent of the population in Curaçao (See Figure 4.2). Efforts surrounding youth participation are mostly in regards to education and knowledge-building through different activities. There are activities to support youth participation such as the Youth Parliament, which encourages young people to participate in government activities or the UNESCO Youth Program, which hosts different projects to promote cultural heritage and fostering life-skills. Another relevant activity is the "MyNewWorld" project by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which took place in 2021. This project gave young people in Curaçao the

chance to present their vision of the world after the corona pandemic and how this vision relates to their needs.
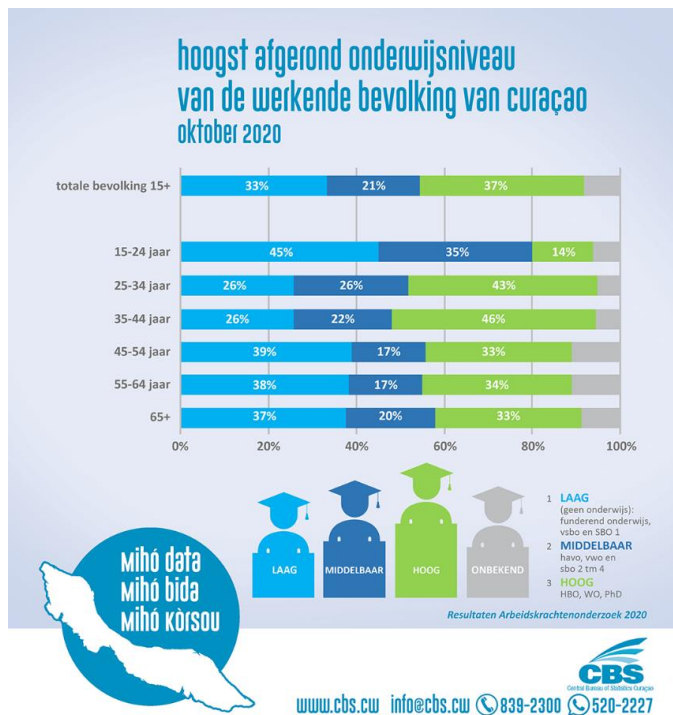
Youth in Curaçao experience many different challenges, ranging from education to incorporation into the labor market. A study by CBS (2020) concluded that 33 percent of the total working population has attained 'low education', which is classified as no education, primary school or VSBO and SBO1. These numbers can be related to challenges that have been identified in regards to the education system. Curaçao has a relatively large number of dropouts, 32.9 percent of youth aged 15-24. Dropouts are found to be mostly due to poverty and the desire to start working and earning money instead of completing a higher education level. It was also found that the education system does not fit with the requirements of the local labor market. For example, the two strategic economic development areas, tourism and construction, are not well represented in the educational curriculum. The NDP mentions the improvement of the educational curriculum to invest in special education, improve participation rates, better integration with the labor market, and more attention to vocational skills.

4.3.1 Sustainable education in Curaçao

The education system in Curaçao is mostly based on the Dutch education system. Hence why the official language for the schools is Dutch. Most of the schools are government funded, but there are also some private schools on the island. Secondary education is divided into different education types such as vocational education (VSBO, SBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO), and pre-university education (VWO). Tertiary education in Curaçao is provided by two institutions, namely the UoC or the UDC.

In 2005, the UoC adopted sustainable development as its research goal, but according to Goedoe (2011), any real progress into achieving this has been slow. Furthermore, there are a few efforts to integrate Carmabi, a non-profit research and management of biodiversity foundation on the island, which has been providing schools on the island with programs and fieldwork regarding the topics of sustainability, protection and conservation of the environment and nature. According to Goede (2011), youth in Curaçao should be more targeted for Education on Sustainable Development through the promotion of events and actions. This creates local role models which the youth can look up to. Along with support from the mass media, this can create enthusiasm and help achieve effective change in how sustainability is viewed on the island. The last couple of years there have been more efforts in promoting sustainability in the education system for example through the SustainaBUL award created by the Hòfi Vidanova , a real estate developer on the island.

Figure 4.4: Infographic of Highest completed education level of the employed population in Curaçao, 2020

hoogst afgerond onderwijsniveau van de werkende bevolking van curaçao
oktober 2020

	LAAG	MIDDELBAAR	HOOG
totale bevolking 15+	33%	21%	37%
15-24 jaar	45%	35%	14%
25-34 jaar	26%	26%	43%
35-44 jaar	26%	22%	46%
45-54 jaar	39%	17%	33%
55-64 jaar	38%	17%	34%
65+	37%	20%	33%

Mihó data
Mihó bida
Mihó kòrsou

LAAG   MIDDELBAAR   HOOG   ONBEKEND

1 **LAAG** (geen onderwijs): funderend onderwijs, vsbo en SBO 1
2 **MIDDELBAAR** havo, vwo en sbo 2 tm 4
3 **HOOG** HBO, WO, PhD

Resultaten Arbeidskrachtenonderzoek 2020

www.cbs.cw info@cbs.cw 839-2300 520-2227

CBS Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao

Source: CBS, 2020

Curaçao's diverse cultural background, economic activities, environmental system and social context makes it an adequate case study for this research. Sustainability is now considered in a lot of the local governmental plans and is forwarded with the influence of the Netherlands. Youth are also considered in Curaçao as 'agents of change'. The previous projects and activities point to the interest in inclusion of youth in a lot of development processes. Consequently, this research tries to engage with the youth in order to provide more depth into their perceptions of the sustainable development of Curaçao.

5. Results Chapter

In this chapter the results from the data analysis will be presented. The chapter will be divided into four sections, namely on discourses, institutions, practices, and future visions. The results in this chapter will be based on the semi-structured interviews and the media analysis of the two local newspapers.

5.1 Discourses

As mentioned in section 2.3.2, discourses are a reflection of what is relevant about certain social issues and are tied to relevant socio-cultural context. Consequently, they also form what society holds as knowledge (Ahl, 2007). In order to identify these discourses, this part of the research was focused on self-definition of sustainability and themes related to sustainability.

5.1.1 Self-definition

First, students were asked to give their own definition of what sustainability is. Sustainability was defined by some as ways in which we can make different aspects of life better, or how to improve the environment in which we live. Due to the variety of definitions, a word cloud was created to show the most used words when defining the concept. Figure 5.1, shows a frequent use of 'environment' when defining sustainability. One student said that they would define it as "finding alternative ways that we can make use of things that we use or do on a daily basis, without causing damage to the environment." (Leon, 19) Like Leon, there were many other students that mentioned 'environment' paired with either 'damage', 'better', 'care', e.g. how to better care for the environment or how to not damage the environment. There were also references to the word 'use', e.g. "everything that helps you to use less." (Chris, 24) Furthermore, students also included the temporality of sustainability by mentioning words like 'long-term' and 'future generation'. Some students focused more on the literal interpretation of the word 'sustainability', for example one student said "the word says itself. Sustainability. So it's about sustaining yourself, but also sustaining the world." (Terence, 21)

Figure 5.1: Word cloud of 'Definition of Sustainability'

The majority of the news articles did not give a definition for sustainability. One article mentioned that "Sustainability is about meeting current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs." (DCNA Conference on Climate and Nature Conservation, Amigoe, November 22, 2021). Another article defined sustainability as "a broad concept aiming for a lifestyle that does not further deplete the Earth, ensuring that future generations can also inhabit it." (Sustainability Can Only Be Achieved Together, Amigoe, January 13, 2023). The first definition is more similar to the one given by the UN, which focuses on 'needs' and 'future generations'. The second definition also focuses on the needs of the future generations, but is more focused on the environmental aspect by mentioning 'Earth' and how the future generation can 'inhabit it'. The rest of the articles did not give a clear definition for sustainability, but there was a notable portrayal of sustainability in the articles. All of the articles had an optimistic stance towards sustainability. Sustainability is portrayed as a solution to environmental challenges but also as a way to achieve social growth. Sustainability is linked to words like "crucial" and "importance". Some articles make use of sentences like "…leader in sustainability" and "…frontrunner for sustainable energy…" to express that Curaçao possesses potential to develop in a sustainable manner.

5.1.2 Sustainable Themes

As discussed in section 2.2, sustainability can be related to many different themes that can stem from different dimensions of sustainability, i.e. economic- , social- , and environmental dimensions. The media analysis identified a range of topics related to sustainability that were mentioned in these newspapers, including sustainable energy, sustainable tourism, and sustainable governance. Sustainable energy was linked to the potential to transform the entire energy grid on the island by expanding the use of wind energy and solar energy. Most of the articles linked sustainable tourism to increasing awareness of travelers and the local community of environmental protection and plastic

pollution. But also how the tourism sector can provide more job opportunities for the local community. For example, an article on the launch of a waste upcycling project mentioned the global problem of plastic pollution and how upcycling could be a solution for this problem, to inspire local communities and "promote more conscious and sustainable travel" among tourists (TUI Care Foundation and Green Phenix to launch upcycling project, Èxtra, August 3, 2022).

When conducting the interviews it became apparent that there were some similarities with the themes presented in the newspapers. The students were asked to say the first thing that comes to their mind when the word 'sustainability' is mentioned. It became clear that 'recycling' and 'reusing' were the most common themes to link to sustainability. At the same time, students mentioned pollution and garbage, and the use of less plastic. Patrick (25), mentioned "less plastic, recycling things and helping our future generation". Green energy was also mentioned by the students. One student said "I think because from what I've been reading about sustainability they say that it [green energy] is the future." (Nigel, 24) Lastly, there were also mentions of social themes such as participation and community support. Sofia (19) mentioned "How to sustain people. How to sustain our generation. But also how to motivate the younger generation."

Overall, there was more attention to the environmental and social dimension of sustainability. There was little mention of the economic dimension of sustainability. One student said "Honestly I only see it [sustainability] correlated to the environment because if I think about the economy, I don't think I would use the word sustainability." (Uti, 20) Nonetheless, the news articles also touched upon the economic aspect of sustainability. For example, one article mentioned how sustainability can also be beneficial due to lower cost of energy when using solar energy (269 Solar Panels for Skaih, Amigoe, November 11, 2019). Another article linked the need of sustainability to the tourism industry; "…integrating the economy with sustainability plays a crucial role because if tourism harms the environment and nature, tourism itself will suffer." (IPKO: Major Environmental Challenges, Amigoe, June 6, 2020). Such references to economic benefits were mentioned in most of the articles, even when the main focus of the article was not on economy or business.

5.1.3 Interest and Responsibility

Sustainable governance was mostly mentioned in the local newspapers, specifically this was expressed through the need for regulations, the development of sustainable governance within businesses, encouraging partnerships and collaborations, promoting transparency, and knowledge-sharing. One article on waste management read: "The Ministry of GMN and the unions represented in SELIKOR recognize the importance of science-based decision-making and shared results to develop solutions that benefit society as a whole." (GMN and the unions BTG and ABVO of SELIKOR have joined forces for a sustainable future, Èxtra, Augustus 8, 2023). Another aspect of governance that was mentioned in a few articles is 'responsibility'. One article mentioned: "Despite government support, it is a shared responsibility… it is important for all parties in society to take their role and responsibility,

each in their own area and capacity." (Restart of Water Refill Program, Amigoe, July 7, 2020). This shared responsibility was also mentioned in other articles, not only as responsibility from parties with power such as the government, but also responsibility of locals; "It's important for organizations and customers to take responsibility and create a sustainable future." *(Kooyman is driving sustainability with the 'Go Green' initiative, Èxtra, October 4, 2023).* During the interviews this sense of responsibility towards helping the environment and taking action was mentioned by some of the students. On the one hand, some students acknowledged their responsibility to practice more sustainable behavior and also the responsibility of others to do the same. On the other hand, some students were conflicted whether it is their responsibility to be more sustainable or whether this is a priority for them;

"I think it's good for everyone to start thinking about how they can link sustainability to themselves, thing that they do on the daily basis but also how it can link to their own future and goals." (Diana, 24)	Vs	*"I don't see the use of me being sustainable if a lot of little things that we can do in Curaçao isn't being done - And I think it's because I can see so much other problems here, that I start to think if that really is a priority or not."* (Alex, 23)

When asked about their interest in being more sustainable or broadening their knowledge regarding this concept, some students talked about how they do not see being sustainable as a priority for now. Most of these students mentioned how it is difficult to adopt some of these sustainable practices as it takes more time to adjust to the new practice, or costs more to change to this new behavior. As Barbara (25) says, "it's difficult to go out of my comfort zone". Consequently, it is easier to do things that are not considered sustainable than to act sustainable.

5.2 Institutions

The above mentioned discourses are said to be promoted and constructed through different institutions. The literature identified two institutions with the most impact on young people, namely the education system and media. The students acknowledged the role played by both of these institutions in shaping their narratives of sustainability. These will be discussed below.

5.2.1 Role of Education

The students were asked to provide an account of the first time they heard about the concept of sustainability. Some of the students couldn't recall this instance as it could have been years ago or not something that many would recollect. The ones that did remember mostly mentioned that they were first introduced to the concept through some form of education. Some were introduced to the concept early on, in high school, as one student recalled; "At high school, I think the third year…I think it was something in geography... I remember reading about sustainable energy in the textbook and thought

about what it is and then the teacher explained it." (Chris, 24) For others, they heard of sustainability later on, in university during different courses. One student also recalled that they were introduced to sustainability through scouting, at the 2019 Scouting World Jamboree.

5.2.2 Role of Media

Next to education, a large portion of the students first heard about sustainability through social media. Social media was also identified as the primary source of information for many of the students. They talked about content they see or hear in the media relating to sustainability. Some students mentioned hearing about the Refinery, an upcoming plastic ban law, and advertisements on the television about using less water/ electricity and keeping the island clean. At the same time there were a lot more students who mentioned not seeing enough content about sustainable initiatives on social media.

> *"…they also talk about cleaning up the island. So like group of people that are cleaning up like beaches or dump sites. Sometimes they also complain on the radio, so like people call in to complain. About certain things like, uhm, dumping trash in public areas."* (Sofia, 19)

Although there were not a lot of students that included newspapers as a source of information for them, it was intriguing to analyze how sustainability is discussed in local newspapers. One important component of this analysis was the tone analysis. Most of the articles analyzed were written in a neutral or positive tone. Neutral articles did not make use of emotive words. Other articles made use of positive wording such as "incredibly proud", "win-win situation", "there are plenty of initiatives…", "concrete steps are being taken towards…". The last two show how in some articles the progress made by Curaçao towards sustainability is praised. This appraisal was also mentioned in comparison to other countries: "…unlike the vast majority of countries worldwide, Curaçao generates…", "Curaçao has made progress that can serve as an example for other countries." In relation to the aforementioned references to responsibility in the articles, some articles focused on using "our" as a possessive adjective, for example "our people", "our nature and environment", "our own sources", "our children". The use of this adjective makes the article sound more personal to the reader and consequently issues responsibility to the reader. There were also some articles that took a slightly negative tone, not in reporting the situation or event at hand but mainly when mentioning challenges that can interfere in making progress towards sustainability. This was evident through phrases such as "Necessary actions to achieve this goal are lacking.", "Significant negative consequences…", "…the path ahead is long", "There is still much work to be done...".

5.3 Practices

As mentioned in section 2.3.3. discourses are made evident through practices. These practices can be divided into individual actions and community initiatives/ actions. During the interviews the students

were asked if they practice any kind of sustainable behavior, even if this is not purposely to be sustainable. They were also asked to name some initiatives they have seen in the community.

5.3.1 Individual practices

When asked about sustainable behavior they engage in, most of the students mentioned one or two behavior they conduct on the daily basis that they consider to be sustainable. Table 5.1 shows the practices that were mentioned by the students.

Table 5.1: List of individual sustainable practices mentioned by the interview participants

1	Not throwing trash out on the streets
2	Using less plastic (cups, bags)
3	Recycling and repurposing
4	Using less water and electricity
5	Compost for plants
6	Motivating youth through scouting
7	Buying eco-friendly products

Some of the practices, like "not throwing trash on the street", were not done in the first instance as an act of sustainability. The students mentioned that this was a principle that they were taught in their earlier childhood and just became a habit of sorts. Like Patrick (25) mentioned "I don't throw things on the street just because, um, but I think that's something that I've done my whole life, but it may have been because my parents don't do it and I just picked up after them that it shouldn't be something to do." Other practices, like using less plastic, water and electricity were also not always consciously done as a way to be more sustainable, but due to its convenience or as a way to reduce personal costs. One student mentioned being tired of having to get a new plastic bag every time they buy groceries, so having a reusable bag was more convenient. Others mentioned the convenience of having your own reusable water bottle.

5.3.2 Community Initiatives

The media analysis identified many different initiatives regarding sustainability that are/ were active in the community. For example, setting up solar panels for schools (269 Solar panels for Skaih, Amigoe, November 29, 2019), promoting use of reusable water bottles for tourists (Restart of Water Refill Program, Amigoe, July 16, 2020), and upcycling projects (New Project: Making New Products from Waste, Amigoe, Augustus 2, 2022). A majority of these projects revolved around helping the plastic pollution problem on the island by promoting the use of reusable bottles or cups. For example, the D-Bottle initiative, which intends to promote less plastic use on the island, by locals but also tourists that visit the island. The D-bottle foundation tries to promote environmental and social protection by reducing plastic use, but also promoting art and cultural heritage (D-Bottle remains innovative in promoting Curaçao's art, Èxtra, Augustus 29, 2022). But there were also projects that were focused on

sustainable construction. An example of this is "the development of a New Neighborhood by Aqualectra and Vidanova" (Èxtra, October 20, 2021). Here the article talked about the collaboration between these two actors to promote more new innovative houses and how these types of sustainable housing have a great potential for the future of Curaçao.

There were quite a few similarities between the initiatives presented in the newspapers and what the students mentioned. The most mentioned initiative was the introduction of recycling containers on commercial places all around the island. Students also mentioned the use of aluminum cups during the carnival season. The government alongside the carnival foundation handed out aluminum cups before the start of every carnival parade in order to reduce the use of plastic cups. Other students mentioned initiatives to support the local community such as setting up food markets, development of the sport sector, which is especially important for kids that take part in these sports, and community volunteer work through CuraDoet (See Table 5.2). There were also students who struggled to think of any initiative that they have noticed in the community. As Chris (24) said when asked of any initiatives that they have noticed from the government in regards to sustainability; "I think if they were doing enough I wouldn't be struggling to think of something like this."

Table 5.2: List of community initiatives mentioned by the interview participants

1	Recycling containers/ -bins
2	Aluminum cups during carnival season
3	Renovating parks
4	Food markets to support locals
5	Supporting sports sector for kids
6	Volunteer work by CuraDoet
7	Workshops by Carmabi
8	Launch of a reusable water bottle designed by children
9	More electric cars

In order to get a better idea of the impact of these initiatives, the students were asked to give their thoughts on some of these initiatives. (See Text Box below)

On supporting the sports sector:

"I think they are **good**, but I also think there can also be more attention given to them. Because sometimes they start with something, but then all of a sudden they just stop. So there's **no continuity**. Most of them are like **short term**. So I think they should be more consistent with these initiatives."(Terence, 21)

On the CuraDoet Volunteer work:

"I think that they are **good**, of course, because you're involving everyone, you're **involving the whole community.** You're also **educating** them or making them **more aware** about a certain problem. Even though it may be for that one day only." (Ronald, 20)

On the recycling containers:

"They are **good**, it is nice to see these types of things, but also they are **not a lot of them**. I guess there are people that make use of them but it's kind of like 'its there now, and now what'. Like I think **the biggest part of the population is not using them**." (Orion, 18)

Overall the students acknowledged that these initiatives are good and needed in the community, but they were also very critical of the course of these initiatives. Lack of continuity, lack of promotion, lack of accessibility, and lack of information were some of the criticisms mentioned by the students.

5.4 Future Visions

Imaginaries can also be considered as visions of the future, a vision to work towards, how does a community see itself in the future, what do they need to do to reach this vision. In order to have an image of the future visions of youth in Curaçao, students were asked what they think should be done or changed in Curaçao in order to reach a sustainable future and how they would want to practice sustainability in the future. This resulted in a list of challenges but also opportunities to reach a sustainable future (See Table 5.3).

5.4.1 Future opportunities

There were different types of mentioned opportunities, that included the environmental dimension but also the social dimension. Students were optimistic about the future of green energy and the potential that Curaçao has in using renewable energy. One student was even surprised that Curaçao is not reaching its full potential yet; "I have noticed how far we can reach with green energy, honestly I didn't know that we could do all of that … And then I start asking myself why haven't we taken the step yet and I think it's a shame that we are not moving much into that part." (Alex, 23)

There was also a lot of mention of education, especially to build awareness among the community about sustainability; "there are a lot of people that don't know what sustainability is. So how can they contribute to something that they don't know what it is. So more awareness and more

attention to what sustainability is and how you as a person can help, even if it's just by doing something small." (Diana, 24) Along with Diana there were other students who thought that there should be more small-scale solutions that individuals can easily implement in their daily lives. They also saw the chance to motivate more people to take part in sustainable behavior such as recycling. This could be achieved by providing compensation for people that recycle, for example by implementing a similar concept as the Netherlands; "Something like that would be very good here. I mean it's a form of recycling and you are also giving the people something in return for their effort to have kept all their plastic bottles and not just throwing them away."(Germain, 23) Other students mentioned that there should be more thrift shops and that the existing stores should focus more on selling eco-friendly products. Furthermore, one student mentioned the potential in restoring and renovating old existing buildings, especially in the city center, instead of constructing new ones.

5.4.2 Future Challenges

Along with all the positive opportunities, there were also specific mentions to potential challenges in achieving these opportunities. One of the biggest challenges mentioned was the local mindset. According to students, this mindset is not yet set to focus on sustainability. A mindset change is needed, especially for the older generation (See Text Box below);

> "Before you start coming up with changes, it is also about the way we think , the way our mindset is, and that should change first. Because for example if you talk about this with grown people, maybe your elders, they would look at you a certain way or say like 'no I'm not going to do that'. So I think before we can make any concrete change, we need to **first change the people, the way the people think, how their mind is set on this topic.** That would make it easier to actually implement a certain initiative because then you also have the support of the people, of the community, they should get the importance or necessity of whatever it is we want to change first. And that is what is missing in Curaçao." (Leon, 19)

Other students pointed out that there is a lack of transparency, specifically lack of information and evidence from organizations and the government, which impedes action from the community. There should be more information on what happens with the recycled materials and how this process works. Also more evidence on why people should, for example, recycle. According to the students, there is also a lack of laws and penalties for people who litter or for illegal dumping. Furthermore, one student mentioned that there is a lack of attention given to the well-being of youth in Curaçao. Quincy (22) explained; "if you have a kid that has a lot going on, the last thing they are thinking about is recycling, so it just becomes an afterthought. But if you focus on their emotional well-being, then at some point they will also be in a state of mind where they can focus on things that maybe primarily they wouldn't see as a priority such as recycling." Other students mentioned lack of funds and barriers for installing solar panels by the utility monopoly company Aqualectra. In regards to this, students were of the opinion that the government should be more open to external investors and organizations who want to

help with sustainability and who want to share their knowledge with the local community. Lastly there was also mention of short-term solutions for poverty and how this should be fixed "I think in regards to battling poverty, it would be to raise the minimum wage and provide more job opportunities... Because donating or handing out food bags isn't helping to minimize poverty at all, that just helps for one or two days and then they are still back to zero." (Emily, 23)

Table 5.3: List of opportunities and challenges for achieving a sustainable future in Curaçao

Opportunities	Challenges
Renewable Energy	Local mindset
Restoration and renovation of existing buildings	Lack of transparency
Educating the older generation	Barriers for installing solar panels
Invest in local entrepreneurs	Littering and Illegal dumping
Awareness on sustainability	Lack of funds
Promote Recycling containers	Single-use plastic
External knowledge sharing	Lack of penalties for littering
Compensation for recycling	Lack of information/ evidence to the public
Thrift shops/ Eco-friendly products	Lack of attention to youth well-being
Small-scale individual solutions	Poverty/ Short-term solutions

5.4.3 Future practices

Lastly, the students were asked if they were interested in conducting any sustainable practices in the future or if there are things that they would like to do now but lack the information or resources to do so. A majority of the students said that they have not thought about this yet or that they need to do more research about what their possibilities are. The ones that did know mentioned wanting to do activities such as planting, thrifting, volunteering and using less plastic. Some of these students also discussed why they have not started yet. This was mostly due to lack of information, time and motivation. Alex (23) mentioned why he has not started to plant yet; "it's because I don't have the methods to do it but also I don't have the motivation and the know-how to do it." More students also mentioned not having the necessary information and knowledge; "I think I need more information on what I can do to be more sustainable before I start thinking about what I want to do for the future, but I don't have that information right now." (Patrick, 25) Others mentioned not having enough time; "It's not that I don't know how. I know how to start, but I don't have enough time. I need to make more time to try out more things." (Quincy, 22).

6.   Discussion of Findings

This research aims to explore youth's imaginaries of sustainability in Curaçao. In order to do so, this research gathered data from a media analysis of two local newspapers and by conducting semi-structured interviews with students. The data from the media analysis contributed to the understanding of the local debates and actions in regards to sustainability in Curaçao. The interviews with students provided the research with nuanced information about the personal experiences, narratives and opinions of young people in Curaçao. The previous chapter shows the data gathered from both the media analysis and the interviews. In this chapter the insights from the previous chapter will be placed within the conceptual framework and the societal context.

6.1 Social narratives of Sustainability

There are many different ways in which sustainability can be interpreted. As mentioned in section 2.2, the definition of sustainability is highly inconsistent. The common definition used for sustainability, which is derived from Brundtland (1987), puts 'needs' and 'future generation' central. The definitions presented in the media were close to this definition (see Section 5.1.1). This is understandable assuming that the newspapers make use of official sources like the UN to base this off. In contrast to the media, the students provided many different definitions for sustainability. The definitions included words such as 'environment', 'better', 'use', 'future generation', and 'long- lasting'. This shows the complexity of sustainability as a concept. People can put different definitions to the concept based on their knowledge and interests. This was also the case for the themes related to sustainability. The literature review discussed how sustainability can be understood from many different angles. These angles can be based on the three dimensions of sustainability. A complete and comprehensive understanding of the concept of sustainability in its entirety would have to include all three dimensions (Mao & Robinson, 2019). However, this is not always the case. The students showed a preference to the environmental dimension of sustainability. That became clear when analyzing their definition of sustainability and answers about their first thoughts when hearing the word 'sustainability'. Most of the students thought about recycling and green energy, which is linked to the environment. As the interview progressed the students started to address the social and economic aspect of sustainability. This preference can also be explained by the role of the media. People are mostly influenced by what they see around them and ultimately this effects their narratives of a certain situation, or in this case, a concept (Zittoun, Glăveanu & Hawlina, 2020). Youth in Curaçao are mostly influenced by social media as deduced by the interviews. This could mean that their framing of sustainability is also influenced by what they see on social media. As mentioned in section 2.3.2, media platforms are crucial for transmitting a certain idea or discourse. According to the students interviewed, social media posts regarding sustainability in Curaçao mostly involve plastic pollution and overuse of water and electricity. Consequently, their framing of sustainability is primarily focused on the environmental

dimension. Although there was a prominent mention of the environment in relation to sustainability, it cannot be ignored that there were quite a few mentions of the social dimension of sustainability, especially in regards to community-involvement. Overall, it can be said that there is not one common understanding or narrative of sustainability. Different definitions of sustainability are derived from differences in personal interest and knowledge gathered from, for example social media posts.

6.2 Role of institutions: social media and sustainable education

The media analysis showed a broad understanding of sustainability from the local newspapers. But it was also discovered that most of the students do not read newspapers; social media is the primary source of information for many students (See Section 5.2.2). As explained by some students, they follow different news pages on different platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. These news pages post most of the news that is also published in the newspapers. According to the students, there is not a lot of mention of sustainability in the content that they see on social media. Despite this the research found some similarities between what is published in the newspapers and answers given by the students. For example, when asked about events or initiatives in the community regarding sustainability, students mentioned actions towards the reducing plastic pollution on the island by recycling and the increased use of electric cars, which was also majorly mentioned in the newspapers. The students also mentioned initiatives that were not mentioned in the newspapers, such as local food market events and volunteer work (See Section 5.3.2).

Education, which is an important institution in the lives of young people, is recognized by both the media and the students interviewed as an important factor to achieve sustainability. In the media this was presented by reports on events that involved educating and raising awareness for youth in Curaçao. Most of the students recollected that their first introduction to the concept of sustainability was through an educational institution e.g. university, secondary school, summer school, or scouting. This shows that education plays an important role in the first introduction to sustainability for youth. As mentioned in section 2.3.1, including sustainability in the education system is important for achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, adopting sustainable measures, such as more youth engagement and after-school activities, into the educational curriculum could also help with the drop-out rates mentioned in Section 4.3. This is also mentioned in the literature in Section 2.2.2; effective youth involvement can also be beneficial for the development of the youth involved. There were a lot of mention of including the concept of sustainability to raise awareness in the education system, but not about making the education system itself more sustainable. As mentioned by one of the students, focusing on youth well-being could be an important first step to ensure that young people have the capacity to be engage more in sustainable practices.

## 6.3 Individual role: responsibility & future practices

The local newspapers talked about a sense of responsibility that should be shared by all members of the society. In section 2.3.3 this was discussed as a sense of doing the "right thing" in order to not worsen the current situation. In the newspapers it was depicted as a responsibility of the government but also members of the community. Here, the language used in some of the articles played an important role, i.e. by using possessive adjectives like "our" when talking about the environment or the community. Talking to the students it became clear that this sense of responsibility does play an important role in their construction of sustainable imaginaries. It impacts whether or not they choose to engage in sustainable behavior and practices and whether they want to broaden their knowledge in regards to the concept of sustainability. Some students expressed that they have the responsibility to act and contribute to a sustainable future. However, some students also expressed their dilemma regarding whether they should be sustainable when other people are not being sustainable. This dilemma stems from seeing what is happening in their community and questioning whether their individual action is valuable if other people are not doing the same. Other students also talked about weighing other problems against being sustainable. Here, other problems and needs are prioritized more than focusing on sustainability. Overall, most of the students mentioned current sustainable practices that they do on a daily basis. Most of these practices were based on their personal norms and values; behaviors that they were taught as children or picked up along the way. This makes their practices personal, but also based on discourses they are surrounded by in their daily lives (See Section 2.3.3). This sense of responsibility may also be related to the future practices of youth. When asked about practices that they would want to engage in the future, a large number of students expressed that they have not thought about this yet. If the individual is confronted with other issues or needs that they find to be more important than sustainability, they would not have the capacity to think about future actions. The economic aspect of this is mentioned in an article by Pieters, Cascone, Pankratz & Novak (2023). Here, it is questioned whether sustainable behavior is a luxury for some. This perspective was mentioned by some students who talked about the expensiveness of adopting some of these sustainable practices and how it would require much more effort from their side. Overall, the research found that the individual decision to act sustainable is not only an individual decision. Actions and behaviors that are observed in the community play an important role in the sense of responsibility that the individual carries. Prioritization of other needs and accessibility is also considered.

6.4 Imaginaries of Sustainability

The main objective of this research is to provide an overview of the imaginaries of sustainability of young people in Curaçao. According to the literature, these imaginaries are also visions of the future, how the society desires to develop and how this should happen. In order to find out what this future

looks like for the youth, the students were asked about opportunities and challenges to reach a sustainable future in Curaçao. This provided input on which issues the students considered as most important for the future of Curaçao and also which actions should be taken to achieve this desirable future. The complete overview is visualized in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Mind map of Opportunities and Challenges for a sustainable future in Curaçao
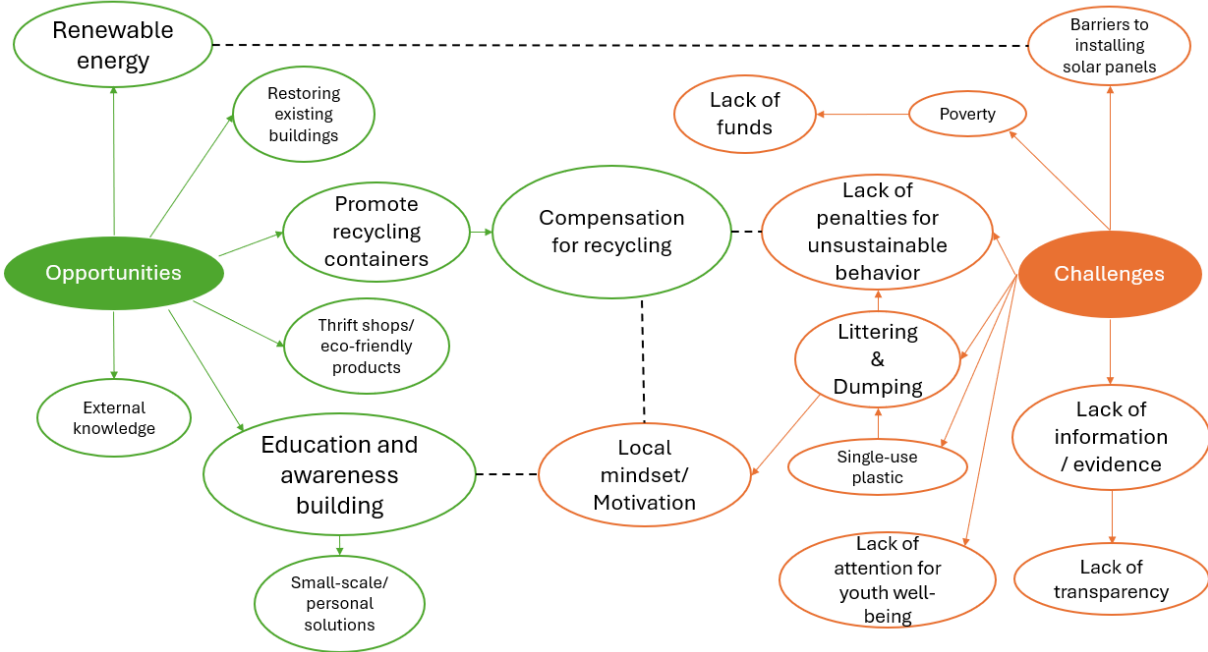
Most of the opportunities presented were centered around education and awareness building, this was mentioned by the majority of the students as the main opportunity and biggest challenge for sustainability in Curaçao. According to the students, this mindset does not prioritize sustainable actions. This was linked to a lack of knowledge and awareness of the community. Lack of awareness was not only mentioned by the students but also in the newspapers. In order to raise more awareness there should be more attention given to the information being presented to the public. In order to form a concrete perspective on sustainability, the community needs to have the necessary knowledge and understanding of sustainability (See Section 2.3.2). This local mindset was also linked to recycling. It was discussed how there is not any incentive to recycle and how the local mindset is set to expect some sort of reward for doing certain activities such as recycling.

7.   Conclusion

This research aimed to understand the imaginaries of sustainability constructed by young people in Curaçao. This was done by exploring the perceptions and aspirations of youth regarding sustainability in Curaçao. These imaginaries were constructed by looking at the different narratives of sustainability, the role of institutions in constructing and promoting these narratives, and which sustainable practices support these imaginaries. Ultimately, this provided the research with insights on the visions of a sustainable future of Curaçao. This chapter will answer the research questions central to this research. This will be followed by some recommendations for further research.

7.1 Research questions

The first research question was "How are local challenges connected to sustainability, and how is this constructed in the media?". Answering this question mainly focused on the media analysis of the two local newspapers, 'Amigoe' and 'Èxtra'. During the research there were a few challenges that were identified. First, the local mindset is seen as a challenge for sustainability in Curaçao. Locals tend to prioritize other issues that they deem to be more important and this could be due to not having enough information or knowledge about the concept of sustainability. In the media there is a lot of mention of the need to increase awareness of the community by giving workshops, but also that this should be a responsibility of the different members of the community to take responsibility for their actions and act in their own capacity. Another challenge is the issue of littering and illegal dumping in Curaçao, which is also directly linked to the problem of plastic pollution. This could also be connected to the mindset of individuals i.e. by not seeing the consequences of their actions. The media addresses this by promoting a lot of events and projects regarding recycling and reusing materials. Other local challenges are the lack of transparency from the government, short-term solutions for poverty and lack of attention to the well-being of youth in Curaçao. In contrast to the previous mentioned challenges, these ones are not discussed in the media, but were mentioned by the youth.

The second research question was "Which narratives of sustainability are prevalent among the youth in Curaçao, and how does this relate to their visions of the future?". Based on the interviews conducted for this research, it was found that most young people link sustainability to the environment. Here, the narrative is that sustainability revolves around how to better care for or protect the environment and how to live without doing damage to the environment. Consequently, most young people are also focused on the environmental implications of the future. By paying more attention to future opportunities like renewable energy, awareness, and promotion of recycling containers. Another narrative that is popular among youth in Curaçao is that of a sustainable community. This involves attention to local support, sustaining oneself, and education. This narrative is presented in a vision of the future where there is a sustainable local mindset, more attention to the well-being of young people, and investing in local entrepreneurs. It should be noted that these narratives are not explicit but can be

linked in several ways. For example, the sustainable mindset would also include awareness on environmental protection.

The third research question was "How do the education system and media shape youth's perceptions of sustainability in Curaçao?". Both types of institutions were identified as crucial for shaping youth's perceptions of sustainability. The education system is in many cases the place where most youth are introduced to the concept of sustainability. For some this would be in secondary school, for others through university courses, or even through educational programs like workshops or scouting. Most young people do not make use of the traditional media i.e. newspapers, radio or television, but they get their information about what is happening around them through social media. Social media is then considered a useful tool to promote projects related to sustainability or to raise awareness on certain issues. Trends and posts on social media influence how young people perceive progress on sustainability, whether this is about the Refinery, plastic ban laws, or efforts to keep the island clean. Yet, there is not a lot of local content about sustainability in Curaçao.

The fourth question was "In which activities or practices are young people in Curaçao engaging to promote sustainability?". Young people in Curaçao engage in different sustainable practices. Although, some of them are not purposely done with sustainability in mind, but rather as a principle or due to convenience. Most young people find ways not to litter, for example by keeping their trash in a pocket or in their car. This is noteworthy, seeing as one of the biggest challenges on the island is pollution due to littering. They also try to use less plastic by using reusable cups, -bottles and -bags. This is primarily done due to the convenience of having a product that is reusable. Another sustainable practice mentioned is making use of less water and electricity. As mentioned in section 4.1, the energy consumption on the island is relatively high, which makes this practice also noteworthy. Other practices included recycling, composting, buying eco-friendly products, and motivating fellow peers.

Lastly, it can be concluded that the imaginaries of sustainability held by the youth in Curaçao are quite diverse. Although there were similarities between perceptions and practices, there were also quite a few differences that show how these imaginaries are not only constructed through the community but also through personal experiences. In Appendix E, a visualization of these imaginaries can be seen. Despite their difficulty to visualize, imaginaries are still a representation of the overall perception of a community, in this case, of the youth in Curaçao. Sustainability being a complex but also broad concept makes it even more interesting to analyze these imaginaries. A crucial take-away from this research should be that youth in Curaçao are aware about local challenges that are affecting their future. They are conscious about their actions and behavior and also how the mindset of the community is affecting their path towards a sustainable future. Because of this, they also feel that there is a lack in knowledge sharing and transparency, from not only the government, but also other organizations that are said to be promoting sustainability in Curaçao.

7.2 Future Research & Recommendations

Although this research was conducted in a short time frame, it provided interesting insights to how young people in Curaçao view the concept of sustainability. From the researcher's own observations of activities happening on the island regarding sustainable development, it seems that Curaçao is still in an early stage of adopting sustainability in its plans and actions. The introduction of recycling containers and plastic ban law are first steps into steering the local mindset into more sustainable behavior. This mindset was mentioned by many of the students and in the media. Overall, it seems that there is an acknowledgement that the local mindset is a barrier to achieving sustainability. For future research, it could be interesting to do research on the local mindset seeing as this was quite frequently mentioned during the research. Future research could research what this mindset entails, and how it affects sustainable behavior. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, there was quite a difference between the amount of references to sustainability between the two newspapers. This could possibly have an effect on the awareness of the public if one newspaper has a bigger readers pool than the other one. Future research could look into the difference between the newspapers on the island and how their content affects their readers. Furthermore, from the perspective of the students it was clear that the education system plays an important role in raising awareness on sustainability. It could also be interesting to conduct research on the impact of educational programs on shaping the youth's perceptions of sustainability. This could include formal education, but also informal learning environments and extracurricular activities that may be focused on sustainability such as scouting. Here, the research could focus on knowledge and awareness building through different educational institutions.

This research recommends that media outlets, especially the ones that operate through social media, should promote projects and events related to sustainability more. Most students mentioned that there is not a lot of content regarding sustainability, especially local content. This could be a useful take-away for organizations that want to promote sustainability more on the island, not only among young people, but also the older generation. Media is a powerful tool to get a message across. By promoting more content on social media on environmental protection and conservation, and youth empowerment, this could have a great impact on how the local community feels towards sustainability. Furthermore, the government should provide more information about current actions of activities that are taking place, such as the introduction of the plastic ban law and the process of upcycling. This lack of transparency was mentioned by many of the students. Being transparent about these activities could build trust between the government and the community, not only trust in their governance but also trust in the actions that they are taking, making sure that the public is aware of the utility, effectiveness and importance of these activities.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of News articles for Media Analysis

Article #	Article Name	Newspaper	Date of publication
1	Sustainability Conference Chata: MoU for a 'green' tourist sector	Amigoe	22-11-2019
2	269 Solar Panels for Skaih	Amigoe	29-11-2019
3	Goals for Sustainable Development are the responsibility of the government	Èxtra	24-12-2019
4	CHATA signs MoU with BPM to work together on sustainable future	Èxtra	22-11-2019
5	Scientific Defense by Richenel Bulbaai: 100% Sustainable Energy Achievable in Curaçao by 2033	Èxtra	14-10-2019
6	IPKO: Major Environmental Challenges	Amigoe	10-06-2020
7	Restart of Water Refill Program	Amigoe	16-07-2020
8	Sulex brings sustainable housing to Curaçao	Èxtra	18-09-2020
9	Communities need to be more environmentally conscious	Èxtra	10-01-2020
10	Government delivers sustainable transformation program to CFT	Èxtra	17-06-2020
11	Curaçao Can Become the First Island Donut in the World	Amigoe	28-01-2021
12	Tamira La Cruz, New Chair of BPM, Focuses on Business Sustainability and Post-Covid Curaçao	Amigoe	15-04-2021
13	DCNA Conference on Climate and Nature Conservation	Amigoe	22-11-2021
14	Ipko: Sustainable Energy is the Future	Amigoe	24-08-2021
15	SCAN & GO: Launching a Project to Protect the Environment and Promote Sustainability	Èxtra	14-08-2021
16	DCNA Highlights the Economic Value of Nature	Èxtra	14-12-2021
17	Aqualectra Assists Vidanova in the Development of a New Neighborhood	Èxtra	20-10-2021
18	Kadaster & Public Registers Curaçao Moving Towards a Sustainable Future with a Smart Energy System	Èxtra	01-10-2021
19	Establishing a sustainable economy must start immediately	Èxtra	18-06-2021
20	New Project: Making New Products from Waste	Amigoe	02-08-2022
21	Report on Sustainability and Green Projects in Curaçao	Amigoe	22-07-2022
22	TUI will install 55 electric car charging stations	Èxtra	21-12-2022
23	D-Bottle remains innovative in promoting Curaçao's art	Èxtra	29-08-2022
24	TUI Care Foundation and Green Phenix to launch upcycling project	Èxtra	03-08-2022
25	Agreement at COP27: More cooperation between islands to promote sustainable energy	Èxtra	21-11-2022
26	Carlson Manuel: Curaçao has a lot of experience with sustainable energy and can help the Netherlands	Èxtra	09-11-2022
27	'Curaçao Should Become a Showcase for the Region'	Amigoe	07-07-2023
28	Club17: Roadmap to a Sustainable Curaçao	Amigoe	24-05-2023
29	Sabine Berendse: "It is economically interesting to recycle."	Amigoe	15-04-2023
30	Pooling Forces for Sustainable Waste Management	Amigoe	31-08-2023
31	Kooyman Launches 'Go Green' Initiative	Amigoe	05-10-2023
32	Sustainability Can Only Be Achieved Together	Amigoe	13-01-2023
33	Kooyman is driving sustainability with the 'Go Green' initiative	Èxtra	04-10-2023
34	Club17; Roadmap for a more sustainable Curaçao	Èxtra	25-05-2023
35	Hòfi Vidanova; Sustainable Local Investment	Èxtra	21-01-2023
36	GMN and the unions BTG and ABVO of SELIKOR have joined forces for a sustainable future	Èxtra	31-08-2023

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Research questions:

- Which narratives of sustainability are prevalent among the youth in Curaçao, and to what extent does this relate to their visions of the future?
- How do different institutions, such as the education system, family, and media shape youth's imaginaries of sustainability in Curaçao?
- How do young people in Curaçao engage in sustainable practices, and what types of practices are adopted by the youth?

Introduction:

- Greet participant and introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the research: *to gather information about how young people in Curaçao think about sustainability, it's not to test your knowledge, but I do want to know your perceptions of the concept and especially how it fits with the development of the island.*
- Ask participant for consent to record and to use their answers in the research
- Inform participant about the confidentiality of the research

Interview questions:

Student Background

Can you tell me something about yourself? (incl. age, grade level)

Knowledge, Institutions and Practices

1. When I say the term "sustainability", what comes to mind?
   - Why does this come to your mind?
   - How would you define it in your own words?

2. How have you learned about sustainability? (probe: at school, in class, with friends, at home, social media)

3. What have you seen or heard in the media about sustainability?
   - What media sources ?

4. What sustainable initiatives or practices do you observe in your community?
   - What do you think about these initiatives/ practices?

5. What do you do to be more sustainable (probe: at school, at home)?
   - Is there anything you would like to do (but can't due to lack of resources or knowledge) to be more sustainable?

6. What do you think we need to work on to make Curaçao more sustainable and why?
   - How do you think we should do this?

Appendix C: Process of Fieldwork in Curaçao & Information Sheet

For this research fieldwork had to be conducted in Curaçao. At the start of the research process, the researcher was working with a host organization, namely the RKCS (Rooms-Katholiek Centraal Schoolbestuur). The RKCS is the central school board on the island. It was intended that the researcher would join an ongoing project on the island, namely a project that was focused on exploring youth well-being and life-skills through the co-creation of inclusive imaginaries in Curaçao. Here, the researcher along with another researcher would have had to conduct interviews with students of a specific secondary school (See Next page for the Information sheet about the project). Ultimately, this information sheet was not used for this specific research. Due to a lack of time and late reply from the secondary school, it was chosen to follow a different path for the fieldwork. In order to reach possible participants for the interviews, the researcher chose to approach the scouting organization on the island. Here, the researcher came in contact with one of the scouting groups which provided the researcher with a couple of young people that were willing to participate in the research. The rest of the participants were personally approached at the different educational institutions, the UoC and the UDC, during free time of the students Ultimately, the process of gathering data was done independently of the host organization.

Dear parent, guardian, caregiver,

We would like to invite your child to participate in our research initiative 'co-creating inclusive ideas for the well-being and life skills of young people in Curaçao,' which aims to understand and address the challenges faced by young people in schools. With your child's contribution, we will gain a better understanding of the development of youth in Curaçao. Additionally, the valuable contributions may help better tailor education to the challenges experienced by the youth in the future.

Background of the Project

Young people are at crucial crossroads in their lives, which can bring various challenges. We see that schools and school environments can be both havens and places of challenges for children and young people. Therefore, the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Central School Board, in collaboration with Utrecht University, has started the project 'co-creating inclusive ideas for the well-being and life skills of young people in Curaçao.'

Goals of the Project

Understand the causes and reasons for inequalities from the perspective of youth, teachers, social workers, and social networks.

Gain insight into the life skills the youth currently possess, which life skills are lacking, and how these can be further developed.

Approach of the Project

Young people, educators, social workers, and social networks face challenges and inequalities in various ways. With this research, we want to learn what concerns the young people in this area by hearing their stories. We aim to understand the life skills they possess and how they use them in different situations. These skills are important for developing positive and healthy relationships with their environment and preventing risky behavior. By collecting more information about this, we will look at where there are possible gaps and where we can best help the young people.

Request for your child's experiences

We ask your child to share his or her experiences with us in a short interview (30 minutes) and/or through self-made photos and/or videos of his or her environment (no people) to engage in conversation with us. In the conversation, we will discuss the challenges your child faces and how they cope with them. We want to emphasize that the interview and all personal information will remain completely anonymous and that your child will not be identifiable in the results.

Next Steps

Finally, the project will organize three workshops with young people, teachers, and social workers, applying a specific approach (based on the 'UN Development Program inclusive imaginaries toolkit') with the aim of promoting various core principles. Based on the collected information, we will develop a toolkit that can be used to improve educational practices.

Research Team

Interview Implementation

Drs. Tarini Pandt, Researcher, Foundation Roman Catholic Central School Board, Email: tarinipandt@gmail.com

Ashmarine Francisca, master student-researcher, Utrecht University, Email: a.c.francisca@students.uu.nl

Other Research Team Members

Ashley Duits, Professor, Curacao Biomedical Health Research Institute and Institute for Medical Education University Medical Center Groningen

Drs. Royla Paula-Pierre, Director, Foundation Roman Catholic Central School Board

Ajay Bailey, Professor, Utrecht University, Faculty of Geosciences, Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning

Patricia Wijntuin, University Lecturer, Utrecht University, Law, Economics and Governance, Organizational Science

Dr. Izzy Gerstenbluth, physician-epidemiologist, Curacao Biomedical Health Research Institute, Medicine and Health Affairs (GGZ) Curaçao, regional consultant National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)

For questions regarding the research, you can contact Tarini Pandt (tarinipandt@gmail.com) or Ashmarine Francisca (a.c.francisca@students.uu.nl)

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Agreement to participate in MSc. Thesis research project

Title: Youth Imaginaries of Sustainability in Curaçao

Thank you for taking the time to consider my MSc. Thesis research project. I am at your disposal for any questions you might have.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to gather data on the visions of a sustainable future imagined by youth in Curaçao in order to contribute to the literature gap regarding sustainable development of small island.

Procedures
As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview, where you will be asked some questions regarding sustainability in Curaçao and how you imagine a sustainable future to look like. The main use of the information you provide will help me to understand how sustainability is viewed in Curaçao. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Risks, discomforts and Benefits
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. The benefits of participating in this study include the potential for contributing to the understanding of imaginaries of sustainability in Curaçao.

Confidentiality
Your participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be associated with any data collected, and any data collected will be kept confidential.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the research privacy, the treatment of research participants or this study project, please contact Ashmarine Francisca at a.c.francisca@students.uu.nl . If you have any complaints regarding the research or the researcher, you may contact the supervisor Prof. dr. Ajay Bailey at a.bailey@uu.nl .

I can confirm that (please tick box):

- ☐ I have read and understand the information sheet and consent form of this research project.
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to discuss this study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.
- ☐ I agree that my participation in this research project is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study until the moment that the study has been published, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study without needing to say why.
- ☐ I understand I will not be paid for my participation.
- ☐ I understand I can ask questions at any point during, before or after the activity about any aspect of the research.
- ☐ I understand that I can request any texts with identifiable features to be blurred, made non-identifiable or removed from the research.
- ☐ I understand that the data collected for this study will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password-protected encrypted file on a password-protected computer of the researcher and that transcripts will be removed after the completion of the research.
- ☐ I understand that the information collected for this study will be used only for research purposes for MSc thesis and presentations.
- ☐ I consent to my interview being audio-recorded, and understand I have the right to ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off at any time.
- ☐ I understand that my name will not be used on any documents, presentations or other output of the research.

"I agree to participate in this individual research project and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."

Signature of participant:_____   Date: _____

"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure to minimalize harm done to any participant during this research."
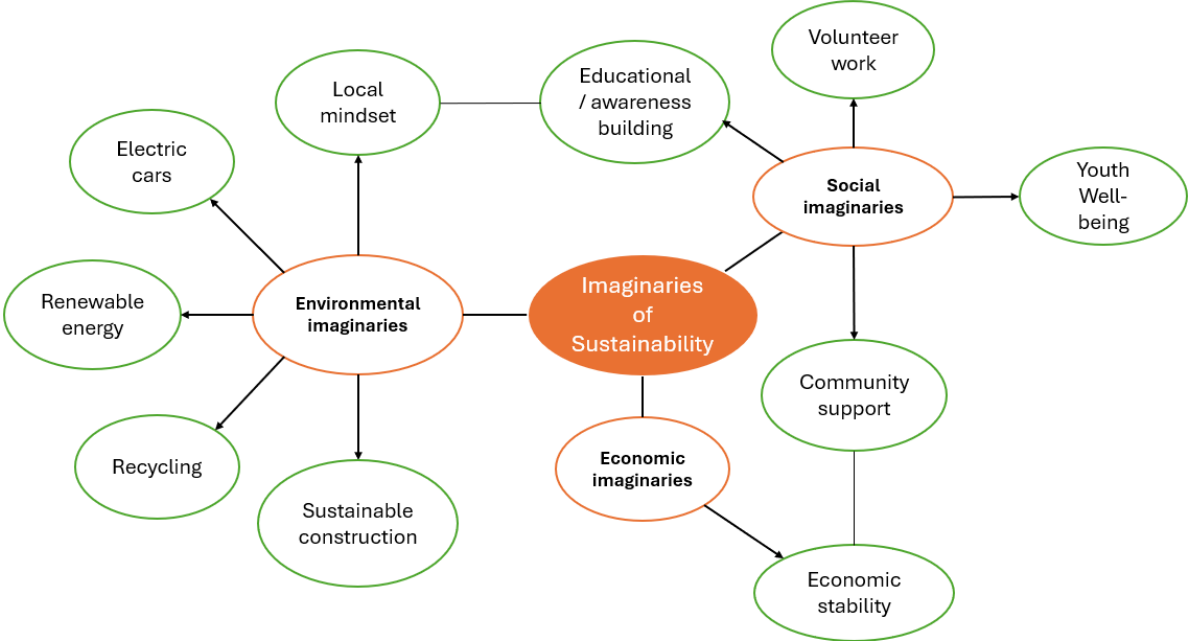

Signature of researcher:_____   Date: _____

Please fill in the following information. It will only be used in case you want to be sent a copy of interview notes and/or transcripts [so that you have the opportunity to make corrections].

Address:_____

Email:_____

Appendix E: Visualization of Youth's Imaginaries of Sustainability in Curaçao

The figure above shows the final visualization of youth's imaginaries of sustainability in Curaçao. As discussed in section 2.2.1, there are different dimensions to the imaginaries. For the environmental imaginaries most of the discourses and practices included the use of electric cars, renewable energy such as solar and wind energy, recycling and reusing, sustainable construction by repurposing places and restoring old buildings. All of this needs to be supported by the local mindset which can be influenced by education and awareness building through, for example workshops or better information to the public. That leads us to the social dimension of the imaginaries. Here volunteer work, youth motivation, and education were put central. Supporting the community through different activities such as food markets and sport activities are not only part of the social imaginaries but also the economic dimension of these imaginaries. This support is needed to achieve long-lasting economic stability and growth.