

# Introduction

*Alex van Stipriaan, Luc Alofs, and Francio Guadeloupe*

## The Project

Centuries of intense migrations have deeply impacted the development of the creolised Papiamentu/o-speaking cultures of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. These three islands, together with the three windward islands of St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, or Statia, and Saba, nine hundred kilometres to the northeast, plus the Netherlands in Europe, another seven thousand kilometres to the northeast, form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1845, the six islands were made into one administrative colonial entity governed from Curaçao and subordinated to the Netherlands. In 1954 the Netherlands Antilles obtained autonomous country status and as such became responsible for internal affairs as laid down in the Kingdom's Charter. Cultural and heritage exchange remained a one-way street from The Hague, the seat of the Dutch government, to the Caribbean.

That changed when on May 30, 1969 (*Trinta di Mei*) an enormous uprising took place in Curaçao with obvious anti-colonial and Black Power sentiments. Two people were killed by police forces and parts of the inner city of Willemstad fell victim to burning and looting by protesters. From that time on a process of Antillianisation set in. For decades, the other islands had felt subordinated not so much to the Netherlands, but more so to Curaçao, the seat of the colonial government. Particularly Aruba experienced this constellation as a pressing yoke and managed, in 1986, to assume an autonomous position (*status aparte*) within the Kingdom vis-à-vis the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands.

The remaining Netherlands Antilles fell apart afterwards, and since the October 10, 2010 official dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, Curaçao (over 160,000 official residents), Aruba (115,000) and St. Maarten (41,000) have been autonomous, non-sovereign countries; meanwhile, Bonaire (21,000), St. Eustatius (3,100), and Saba (1,900) have become municipal entities of the Netherlands (17.6 million). Numbers illustrate the asymmetrical demographic relationships and also hint at extended postcolonial political, economic, and ideological metropolitan dominance. The question arises as to whether this applies to travelling cultural heritage within the Kingdom and how this relates to cultural heritage policies in the wider Caribbean.

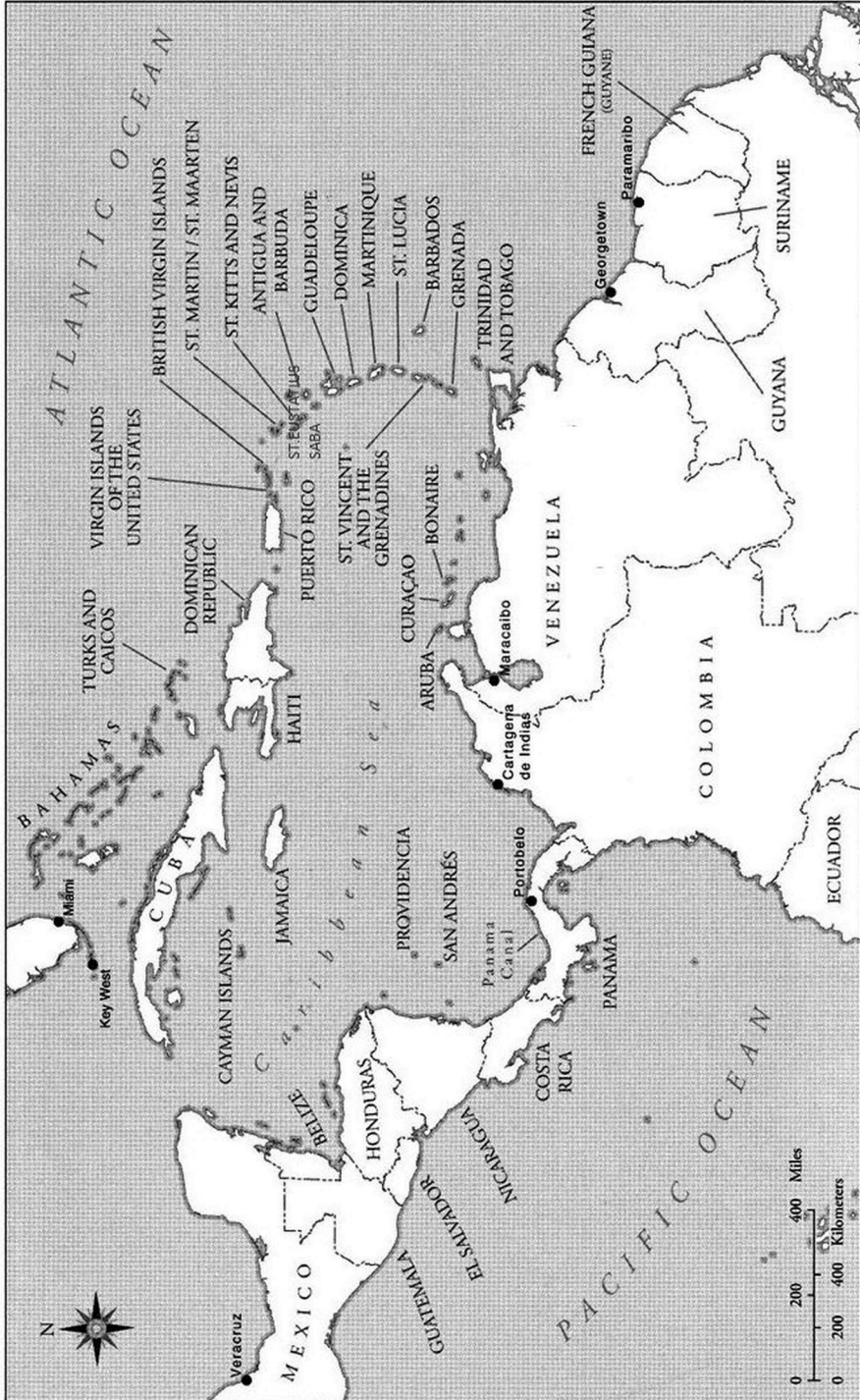


Fig. 1. Map of the Caribbean Region

## The Caribbean Region

In 2017, two academic institutions in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup> and two in the Caribbean,<sup>2</sup> with the partnering support of some 20 heritage organisations in both parts of the Kingdom,<sup>3</sup> started a research and capacity building project called *Traveling Caribbean Heritage*.<sup>4</sup> The islands' asymmetrical and complex relationship to the Netherlands spurred questions regarding insular identities as well as relationships within the Kingdom. Additional questions arose as contemporary migrations<sup>5</sup> deeply impacted insular demographics and understandings of what it means to be Aruban, Bonairean, or Curaçaoan, and as many islanders lived in the Diaspora in the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup> Because of the comparability in a number of aspects, such as the increasing role of tourism, the decreasing importance of the oil industry, and particularly the common language of Papiamentu/<sup>7</sup> and a sizeable heritage field, our consortium decided to focus on the three islands off the Venezuelan coast. We also decided to focus on the question of whether cultural/historical heritage is part of each island's "national" identification and whether this is used top-down and/or bottom-up in questions of nation-building and nation-branding. Put differently: What heritage do citizens cherish and what heritage strengthens the idea of a common "we" (nation-building)? What kind of image of the island is simultaneously presented to the outside world (nation-branding) and how does that image relate to this national "we"?

This project has resulted in a large number of lecture series and courses for cultural practitioners and professionals on the islands (on, among other subjects, historic canons and intangible cultural heritage); workshops (on, among other subjects, individualised heritage or how to write the Dutch Caribbean into Wikipedia); and participatory exhibitions (photographs as living heritage). Additionally, the project has resulted in a number of academic articles, a biography of Dutch Caribbean artist Mo Mohamed by Luc Alofs,<sup>8</sup> and a two-volume edited book in Dutch by project leaders Gert Oostindie and Alex van Stipriaan: *Antillean Heritage, Then and Now* and *Now and Beyond* (Leiden 2021). These two volumes address a large number of heritage dimensions, from eighteenth-century collections of curiosity to contemporary mental heritage; from carnival to the literary canon, from museums and photo collections to the digital future; from food to song; from fishery to art; and from heritage policy to heritage education. The outcome of this investigation is that the role of heritage and heritage policies differed very much over time and per island, as did the importance attributed to (particular) heritage in processes of identification. It turned out there is considerable ambivalence surrounding heritage and identification. There is a lot of pride in a more traditional kind of heritage (music, dance, food, festivals); there are mixed opinions on the role of Papiamentu/<sup>u</sup>; and there are even feelings of shame for heritage and memories

related to slavery and cultural heritage from migrants who arrived on the islands in the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

Finances and enough trained staff are a problem everywhere, and some have stated that since the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles care for heritage and culture in general has deteriorated substantially, especially in the special municipality of Bonaire.<sup>10</sup> The already precarious financial situation of most heritage institutions went into free fall after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the collapse of tourism and tourism incomes, and the loss of public funding for non-governmental cultural organisations. The heritage sector came to a virtual standstill and the cultural infrastructure on the ABC islands was seriously affected. Museums and galleries were temporarily or indefinitely closed and heritage professionals lost their jobs.<sup>11</sup> Post-pandemic recovery has been slow.

This book aims to investigate how the three islands plus the fourth “island”: Caribbeans in the Netherlands, compare to the surrounding Caribbean region. We decided to focus on more heritage fields—such as sports, visual arts, ecology, archaeology, music, and tourism—than in the two volumes mentioned above. Taken together, the chapters cover a large and sometimes unexpected part of Aruban, Bonairean, and Curaçaoan (and Caribbean in the Netherlands) heritage, which, we think, is of particular interest to residents and policymakers in the Kingdom. The comparison with the wider Caribbean primarily is a means to find out how and why the three Dutch Caribbean societies differ or do not differ from others, and to understand the history of European colonisation and slavery. Simultaneously, this approach draws attention to the Dutch Caribbean for anyone interested in Caribbean history and culture in general. In English, French, or Spanish studies of the Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean is often neglected or comes only marginally into focus.

## The Nation

The essays collected in this volume revolve around the question of the nation in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao by questioning these nations. Note that the two questions are radically dissimilar. The question of the nation is undecidable about whether or not the peoples inhabiting the ABC islands should be defined as nations. Questioning these nations, on the other hand, takes the presence of there being a *nation* for granted. Now while these questions form an unlikely pair, they articulate to one another in the essays of this volume.

Questioning Dutch Caribbean nations has been a mainstay among Caribbeanists.<sup>12</sup> They usually, and at first glance rightfully, depict Caribbean nations as lacking strong institutions, economic fortitude, a sense of cohesion, and a general will to move from nationhood to sovereign statehood.<sup>13</sup> All these factors are true

as far as conventional understandings of truth are concerned. Interestingly, this depiction's critiques by Caribbean scholars in the Netherlands and on these islands are based on the same premises as the established Dutch scholarship.<sup>14</sup>

There is much arguing for these academic and popular analyses to remain on the level of questioning these nations. After all, these islands, like the rest of the Caribbean, were peopled by the descendants of Africans, Asians, Europeans, and the remaining Amerindians, who sought to transform European- and North American-run plantations into societies. This is a story of triumph in the face of almost insurmountable odds. These are nations with a will to national self-determination.

This volume, however, parts company with this triumphalist reading of Caribbean becoming. There were undeniable transformations, albeit incomplete, from plantation factories to societies. But societies aren't nations; they cannot be equated in their modern conceptual usages. It is perhaps best to begin explaining the difference between the two concepts by rehearsing what is understood by "nation."

Mainstream academics are constructionists when it comes to the nation.<sup>15</sup> A nation is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign".<sup>16</sup> Individuals who see themselves as part of a nation need not ever meet one another to cultivate a sense of common identity. Note that we are here in the order of totality—whether imagined or real—whereby there are clear borders. All critiques based on this understanding will theorise or empirically show who is not fully recognised within a particular nation or who is altogether left out.<sup>17</sup> In questioning the nation, the aim seems to be a more total totality; thus far, what a nation signifies conceptually.

Unlike conceptualisations of the nation, today few in the social sciences and humanities conceive of society as a totality, an example of imaginary holism. Rather, in the most sophisticated theorising, society only signals recursive socialities enabled by and simultaneously enabling cross-cutting multiplicities.<sup>18</sup> A recursive sociality in this case is a set of iterative encounters between peoples, persons, ideas, humanly produced and extra-humanly constituted objects, and landscapes—these are examples of multiplicities.<sup>19</sup> Movement of multiplicities, also their articulations and disarticulations, is what matters, but not all movement that matters takes place at the same pace. The landscape of the ABC islands that are the main focus of the essays is disarticulating and moving so slowly that *it gives the impression* of set boundaries where a particular recursive sociality is taking place. However, what enables the recursive sociality of the ABC islands (a shorthand being society) are outside multiplicities that are simultaneously inside. They are inside through articulations, which the case of a Trinidadian-style carnival on the island of Aruba demonstrates. However, as Aruba is an ongoing set of multiplicities shooting outwards, there is the concomitant influence on Trinidad, too: think only of the speeding up of Trinidadian Soca that nowadays resembles the Aruban Roadmarch!

Society and the concept of the nation are not compatible, for they deal with different social processes. Easy equations won't cut it. Questioning nations means interrogating imagined thing-like social substances solidified in laws, books, cultural heritage, language, and social institutions. It is to move to a more inclusive nation or to national self-determination—that old Hegelian dream that every nation's telos is to be a nation-state. Society, on the other hand, is liquefying and becoming in odd ways of peoples, ideas, and objects, whereby every boundary can be articulated as a door. When such an articulation is wilfully blocked, there are calls to question whether injustice is taking place. Easy equations between society and nation are insufficient.

When the question of the nation is raised, however, an articulation between the concept of the nation and society can take place. This is because every nation is understood as an imagined political community always being undone, always in strife, always troubled by multiplicities from the outside. Many of the essays in this collection demonstrate this, working with the conceptualisation of society as explicated above, without mentioning it.

### **Nation-Building and Nation-Branding**

Nation-building and nation-branding are often perceived as two opposite though closely linked phenomena. The first is focused on the internal cohesion of a nation, while the latter is focused on the external promotion of that nation. The first seems to be more of a (social) process, the latter a (commercial) strategy. The first can be simultaneously a top-down policy as well as a bottom-up movement. The first creates an exclusive “we,” whereas the latter invites others to take part in, or at least taste, that “we.”

Moreover, both phenomena seem to have several dimensions, which makes defining them all the more confusing. Economic nation-building is about the creation of prosperity for the nation symbolised by a strong economy with a high GDP. Sociopolitical nation-building is about building trust, by creating cohesion through common goals and a trustworthy state. And then there is also sociocultural nation-building, which is about the creation of common national identifications.<sup>20</sup> At first sight nation-branding seems to be related solely to economic nation-building, i.e. as an instrument to directly attract capital through investments, or indirectly, for instance through tourists who spend their money with you.

In reality, these processes, strategies, and dimensions of nation-building and -branding are tightly entangled: one cannot do without the other. The self-perception of nations, just like that of individuals, is fed and stimulated through the mirror of the other. The need to build a strong and cohesive nation in which the



population believes and with which it identifies is simultaneously a need to at least be seen and recognised by others. And if such cohesiveness had not (yet) a sound economic basis, that significant other would be needed for its capital as well. And that is, of course, where the branding—or showing off particular assets you know the other is interested in—comes in. Positive outside responses to the branding results in positive incentives for the self-perception and attempts to push these particular assets even harder. Internally, the branding message might even become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For example, once the island of Aruba acquired status *aparte* as a more or less autonomous nation within the Dutch Kingdom, its successive governments put all their cards on tourism. The accompanying branding slogan for many years now has been “One Happy Island.” This helped to bring in millions of tourists, which produced increasing prosperity, which made Arubans, generally speaking, ever happier, which in turn stressed the attractiveness of the island to tourists.

As one of the main tourist websites reads:

Happiness radiates from the island through the cheerful colors of the colonial buildings in Oranjestad, the Caribbean atmosphere, the pleasant shops, restaurants, night clubs and bars, the cordiality and hospitality of the Aruban population, and the kilometers of hail-white sandy beaches with waving palm trees. All this, made Aruba one of the most popular destinations in the Caribbean.<sup>21</sup>

So this kind of branding works as a self-fulfilling prophecy indeed. It boosts, or maybe even alters, people’s self-perceptions and their identification with the nation. It strengthens ideas of nationhood. However, as will be shown later in this book, there are limits to that as well. Some have warned that branding might actively shape social relations; for example, by putting material consumption front and centre, nation-branding can become counterproductive when (changing) circumstances no longer parallel the branded promises.<sup>22</sup>

Another interesting case might be the one-and-a-half to two million euros per year deal the Curaçao Tourist Board concluded in 2020 with the most successful and internationally famous football club in the Netherlands, Ajax Amsterdam. American influences had made baseball the number one sport in Aruba and Curaçao. However, because of their massive Diaspora in the Netherlands, and owing to globalisation, European football has become a rising number two, particularly in Curaçao. Players such as Hedwiges Maduro, Jetro Willems, Vurnon Anita, Riechedly Bazoer, Lutsharel Geertruida, Jürgen Locadia, and Denzel Dumfries were and are stars and role models for bottom-up success, while branding their island of descent in the Netherlands as well as in the rest of Europe. The Curaçao Minister of Economic Affairs was invited to unveil the sponsor logo on



Curaçao as a brand logo  
on Ajax football shirt

the Ajax jersey shirt sleeve and saw the first match during which the team wore the jersey.

On that occasion the minister stated:

Tourism is an important pillar of the economic development of Curaçao. The collaboration with Ajax is a fine way to tell our Dutch and international target group more about Curaçao as a versatile holiday destination ... a partnership with Ajax, with their international reach and gaze on future generations fits very well with our own objectives. We look forward to a good cooperation and to receive the team in Curaçao so that they can experience how much there is to do on our island.<sup>23</sup>

Receiving the team, of course, was a means to create ambassadors for the island, but simultaneously it was a means to stimulate local pride, and to use sports in general as part of nation-building. It would not come as a surprise if football culture gradually replaces baseball culture, which entails much more than watching another weekly game.

Certainly in popular culture, two kinds of branding can be observed, one top-down (e.g. Curaçao-Ajax), the other bottom-up (football players becoming stars). This reflects Dinnie's distinction between a "nation brand image" which lives in the minds of the target groups and a "nation brand identity" which lives in the local society, respectively.<sup>24</sup> The first is the top-down branded image produced to attract capital in order to stimulate prosperity. This is a rather static, i.e. it promotes a static, but always positive and inviting image that lives in the minds of the target groups (tourists and investors). This image has to be static because it should be sustainable and reflect stability.



What Dinnie calls nation brand identity can be promoted top-down too but in reality is at least a mix with and for the bigger part a bottom-up kind of branding living in local society. This can most clearly be observed where continually creolising popular culture (and its heritage) goes beyond local borders, often when nongovernmental, commercial and diasporic agency goes international, meanwhile strengthening nation-building: “Look, this is us!”

At least as interesting in these processes is what is not branded. The problem with small societies that depend mainly on one product, in this case tourism, is that the country and its population is the brand. In bigger, richer and more diversified economies locals as well as foreigners are perfectly aware that the branded image only relates to particular parts of that society. Generally, what is not promoted far outweighs what is. However, given Caribbean societies’ small scale and their dependence on tourism, the image is the island and vice versa. What is not branded, and whether this is nonetheless part of nation-building, is what’s interesting.

In this book the interrelated workings of nation-building and nation-branding are analysed from a perspective often used in “nation projects” but in a much broader and mosaical sense than is usually the case, and that sense is historical. Or rather a particular historical dimension, namely that which a nation publicly cherishes and makes efforts to preserve and protect for future generations: cultural or historical heritage. Generally, the idea of heritage in this sense is limited to museum collections, historical city centres and/or monuments, and folkloric traditions. This kind of heritage is often celebrated on national days as well as promoted as the extra attraction and unique asset next to the sun, sea, and sand promotion in tourist advertisements. The variety of heritages related to the project of the nation presented in this book shows there is so much more than that, including the serious dilemmas inherent to them. It shows that it may be too simple to phrase it as Derek Walcott did in a few lines of his masterful epos *Omeros*, in which he refers simultaneously to the female protagonist and the native nation of St. Lucia:

She was selling herself like the island, without  
any pain, and the village did not seem to care  
that it was dying in its change, the way it whored  
away a simple life that would soon disappear

## **This Book**

This book consists of fourteen chapters and an epilogue. In the first chapter, “Nation-Building and Nation-Branding in the Caribbean: Comparative Reflections on National Imaginaries and Their Consequences,” Michiel Baud and Rosemarijn

Hoefte analyse the intertwined and contradictory processes of nation-building and nation-branding. Nation-building is defined as the process in which peoples and societies align behind a shared set of notions and narratives of uniqueness and belonging; nation-branding, on the other hand, is a commercial process presenting and “selling” selected elements of a nation’s narrative to outsiders such as tourists, investors, and international organisations. Both processes tend to empower and make visible preferential groups while at the same time ignoring, marginalising, or exoticising marginal population groups.

Baud and Hoefte compare nation-building and nation-branding practices in the independent states of the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Suriname. Nation-building and branding in the Dominican Republic is grounded in its nineteenth century independence movement and the republic’s struggle to come to terms with its authoritarian, anti-Haitian, and suppressive Trujillo regime. Attempts to rebrand the Dominican Republic are in contradiction with its violent past and current social, economic and environmental problems. Similarly, nation-building and nation-branding activities in Suriname must cover up the country’s ethnic tensions and its poisonous former military dictatorship. An “accommodationist” nation-branding strategy tropicalises the indigenous Amerindian and Maroon communities for the sake of ecotourism and investment. Jamaica also faces the contradiction of how to build a nation characterised by poverty, drugs, crime, and countercultures and simultaneously brand the nation as a safe tropical sun, sand, and sea destination. Through nation-branding, entrepreneurs and state authorities want their country’s population to comply with stereotypes stressing the servicing of foreign visitors. Baud and Hoefte set the tone for a debate on nation-building, nation-branding, and the nation-state as lived in and thought of by cultural practitioners, governments, and academia in the Caribbean, the Diaspora, and postcolonial metropolises.

In the second chapter, Jorge Ridderstaat presents the assertion that tourism development can go together with a nation-building process with crucial roles for branding and heritage. This is illustrated by the case of Aruba. Particularly since it became an autonomous country within the Dutch Kingdom in 1986, the government has put all its cards on tourism under the brand of “One Happy Island.” Sun, sand, and shopping are the main reasons for tourists to visit the island. The heritage part in the tourist package centres around language, folkloric traditions, and national symbols.

Until recently, this destination branding strategy worked for tourists and Arubans alike. However, increasing dissatisfaction with excessive building and massive labour immigration and Aruba’s tourism expansion is starting to undermine residents’ happiness. This threatens the attractiveness of the island for tourists, which in turn is a threat to economic development. Ridderstaat finds the main solution in a drastic turn towards a sustainable tourist industry, in which

the happiness of tourists and residents go hand in hand. The remaining twelve chapters and the epilogue may provide us with pointers on how to achieve this.

Rose Mary Allen, Gert Oostindie, and Valika Smeulders' contribution, "Slavery and Debates about National Identity and Nation-Branding," concerns the entangled, though differing dynamics of memory-making around slavery, debates about national identity and nation-branding within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the aftermath of Curaçao's May 1969 revolt, slavery and its legacies became part of a national narrative that has fostered pride in Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage. Slavery is even included in Curaçaoan nation-branding strategies, though tertiary to the sun, sand, and sea image, and the rosy picture of colonial architectonic heritage. Aruba perceives itself as a Mestizo nation that hardly has a slavery past. Thousands of Afro-Caribbean migrant labourers settled on the island before World War II, introducing the (Trinidadian) carnival celebration to the island. In the domain of heritage, carnival is recognised as part of Aruban heritage and branded as such, but local slavery and its legacy are neglected in cultural and nation-branding policies. Bonaire's original population is predominantly Afro-Caribbean. However, the narrative of island identity is about a tranquil, post-emancipation society of peasants and fishers, whose fate was interrupted by massive migration from the Netherlands, tourism, and recolonisation by the Dutch after the island's incorporation into the Netherlands. Partly because of Caribbean migration to the Netherlands, the debate on slavery has come to the fore. For now, debates on the slavery past seem to be more nation-splitting than nation-building on both sides of the Atlantic.

Building upon the previous chapter, in "Representations and Reparations of Slavery in the Caribbean," Alex Van Stipriaan compares the representation of slavery in museums in Barbados, Cuba, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, the Bahamas, and Guadeloupe to those in the Dutch Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao from the angle of reparations: what is the role of Caribbean nations in articulating a reparations discourse and how does the Dutch Caribbean fit in? In most Caribbean nations, slavery is recognised as the central part of national history, but Caribbean museums treat slavery less thoroughly than might be expected. The reason for this can be the fear of stimulating anti-white sentiments, which might not be favourable to national cohesion and the tourism industry.

The representation of slavery in museums in the ABC islands varies. Most museums are small, understaffed, and lacking substantial government support; they are often located outside tourist areas. Kura Hulanda Museum, located in the heart of Willemstad, makes Curaçao the exception to the rule. This privately owned slavery museum is mainly aimed at Afro-American tourists from the United States. Slavery is represented in museums in Aruba and Bonaire only superficially. Overall, Dutch Caribbean museums present indigenous archaeological objects but lack a coherent narrative of slavery. This reflects the state of the debate on reparations in the Dutch

Caribbean. Commemoration days are hardly celebrated and local governments do not take a firm stance in the reparations debate.

Archaeological heritage practices across the region are rooted in representation, persistence, resistance, and decolonisation processes. In their contribution “Aruban Archaeological Heritage: Nation-Building and Branding in a Caribbean Context,” Tibisay Sankatsing Nava, Raymundo Dijkhoff, Ashleigh John Morris, Joseph Sony Jean, Jorge Ulloa Hung, Pancho Geerman and Corinne Hofman explore how archaeological heritage influenced nation-building and branding processes in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti. Concerning their main case, Aruba, the authors describe the dominance of indigenous legacies in research by the National Archaeological Museum Aruba and in the role of indigenous symbolism in nation-branding activities such as the inclusion of Amerindian symbols in bank notes, the names given streets and schools, the promotion of indigenous rock art for tourists, and emphasising the cultural and historical ties with the Amerindian Wayuu community of La Guajira, Colombia. These express Aruba’s identification with indigenous elements and illustrate the omission of Afro-Caribbean and Asian heritage and the lack of multivocality in nation-branding activities.

After comparisons with archaeology, indigenous heritage, and nation-building practices in the wider Caribbean, the authors conclude that in order to decolonise archaeological agendas and practices, archaeologists need to establish a true connection between science, society, and nation-building processes.

In “Four Islands,” Rob Perrée and Alex Van Stipriaan discuss and explore the role and potential of contemporary arts for nation-building and nation-branding in independent Suriname, the non-sovereign countries Curaçao and Aruba, and the special municipality of Bonaire. The authors compare the political and economic climate, arts infrastructure, the prevalence of art galleries, arts education, the market for arts, the funding of art projects, and the local and international connections of artists. Scale is identified as a factor in the stagnation of artistic life.

Common to all islands is the absence of national art museums. In spite of individual international artistic success and the national bank interest in the arts, the national Caribbean art worlds are characterised by isolation. Young talents lack possibilities for higher arts education and are forced to enrol in arts programs abroad, while the tourism market is underdeveloped and the state shows limited interest in cultural and arts policies. On the ABC islands, tourism has a major impact on the arts. Street art, more specifically murals, are attracting interest, especially in Willemstad, Curaçao, and San Nicolas, Aruba. The potential of the arts for nation-branding is not fully recognised by the state.

In the Caribbean, there are two national Creole languages, Haitian Creole and Dutch Caribbean Papiamentu, which is the language of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao.

In “Papiamentu: An Official Caribbean Creole Language from Legal Repression to Full Recognition,” Joyce Pereira and Luc Alofs illustrate that the colonial linguistic discourse was based on a supreme ethnocentric self-confidence and the oppression of the mother tongue of the island populations. The struggle for the recognition of the Creole language, by local and metropole governments and even its own speakers, is far from over. Papiamentu has its origin as a pidgin language that developed during the transatlantic slave trade. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the language was spoken by practically the entire population of the ABC islands. However, the colonial authorities did not consider Papiamentu a valid language. As of 1819, only Dutch was permitted in schools. Subsequent colonial language policies aimed to eliminate Papiamentu. In 1954, the Dutch Antilles obtained an autonomous status. The islands could make their own educational and language policies. In the 1960s, the first publications appeared denouncing the language problems in the educational system. In the decades that followed, educational innovations took place and Papiamentu became the language of instruction and a subject in primary and secondary education. Language emancipation was reversed in Bonaire after 2010, when the island was integrated into the Netherlands and Papiamentu lost its official status.

Centuries of language oppression resulted in a low status of the language, even amongst its own speakers and the local and Kingdom governments. NGOs and educators play a crucial role in the safeguarding and promotion of Papiamentu. Despite the flourishing of Papiamentu in literature and other art forms and its potential for nation-branding, Pereira and Alofs seek the creation of an institute for language planning and policy, which should devote special attention to prestige and image planning to further popular and political awareness of the importance of the mother tongue as a language of instruction in education, and hence nation-building and nation-branding.

Sara Florian argues that displacement is part of the process, in “Nation-Building and Nation-Branding: Aruban, Bonairean and Curaçaoan writers between the Caribbean and the Netherlands.” Florian analyses the literary works of Nicolas “Cola” Debrot (born in Bonaire, 1902—died in the Netherlands, 1981), Frank Martinus Arion (Curaçao 1936—Curaçao 2015), and Quito Nicolaas (Aruba 1955). In *Mijn Zuster de Negerin, My Sister the Negress* (1935) Frits Ruprecht returns to Bonaire from the Netherlands where he revisits the plantation house of his forefathers. He gets involved with Maria, who turns out to be his half-sister. Ruprecht gets caught between colonial nostalgia and slavery’s racist legacy. Debrot was governor of the Dutch Antilles during the May 30, 1969 revolt in Curaçao. In its aftermath Debrot wrote his plea for racial harmony in his short novel *De Vervolgden* (1982), which was based on the sixteenth-century history of Curaçao.

In *Dubbelspel* (1973), Martinus Arion focuses on the “négritude” aspect of Curaçaoan culture. In an imaginary suburb in Curaçao, four dominoes players

represent different social classes. Again, the May 30, 1969 revolt was a spur to fight for racial and gender equality. Through Maureen, the main character in *Verborgen Leegte* (2016), Nicolaas explores the migration and diaspora of the ABC-islanders. Maureen studied in the Netherlands and in Washington—only to discover her multiracial family background by accident. In the works of the three authors, Florian discerns identity shifts from late colonialism to extended postcolonial Kingdom relations.

If literature is best conceived as the artistic practice of seeing the future in the present—a point made by Caribbean and Black Atlantic luminaries such as Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott—Charissa Granger’s essay “Radical Imagining in Dutch Caribbean Music” is a rumination about viscerally experiencing and attempting to make a future for cultural heritage and inclusive national belonging on the ABC islands that is musical. Such a musical future, meaning representational and evocative of what one hopes is to come, is open-ended and cannot be owned by a particular *ethnie* or class, because it is driven by and stems from what Audre Lorde terms the erotic: “the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual that forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.” Granger argues that the sharing in forms of Caribbean musical performances such as steelpan panoramas and carnival, where the audience is recognised as a group of performing agents, is always all of the aforementioned modalities of being—physical in dance and chant and also emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

Granger’s chapter is a critique of the ideological state apparatuses on the ABC islands— educational institutions, media houses, and policymakers tasked with creating legislation on cultural heritage—that in her polemic are (un)willingly depriving the peoples of the isles of the creative nourishment of artistically engaging with the questions of national belonging, the economy, and governance.

Comparable to cricket’s popularity in the Anglophone Caribbean, baseball and soccer are popular sports on the ABC islands. These may not strictly fit the UNESCO instigated heritagisation of traditional sports and games, but in the Caribbean all heritage is marked by colonial encounters and subsequent creolisations. In his contribution, “Sport Heritage, Nation-Building and Nation-Branding in the Anglophone and Dutch Caribbean,” Roy McCree compares the cricket museums in Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada to similar initiatives in Aruba and Curaçao: sport heritage in the process of nation-building.

The Sport Museum Curaçao’s aim is to have “sport heritage in Curaçao [serve] as a mechanism for not just nation-building but helping to repair the damage of colonialism to people’s [negative] sense of self.” In Aruba there are plans to create a sport museum to assist in social cohesion and nation-building. Curaçao and Aruba may be lagging behind their Anglophone Caribbean counterparts Trinidad and



Tobago and Grenada, but not by much. Sport museums on these islands are the initiatives of a professional cricket club in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, and business owners in Grenada. Not surprisingly, when government funding was not forthcoming, the Grenadian businessman closed the museum. What works better is the articulation of nation-branding to sports. The professional Caribbean Premier League is linked to the tourist industry. This is a lucrative enterprise, but UNESCO does not feature here—cold cash does: American dollars and British pounds.

Confirming McCree's main argument, Francio Guadeloupe explores "The Nation through the Lens of Baseball." In popular culture, social classes meet on relatively fair terms in a context of struggle, entertainment, and commerce. In a (Dutch) Caribbean context, class is very much related to the differences between "oldcomers" and "newcomers." During games the nation might be understood from a non-hierarchical perspective. Neither ethnicity nor class play dominant roles, teams are mixed, and winning is the common purpose. Most players come from the working and lower-middle classes, and if there is any racial superiority on the baseball diamond, it would be Black rather than White. Simultaneously articulations of popular culture in terms of nation-building, nation-branding, and national self-understanding do connect people, however, in different modes over time. Commercial popular culture, as opposed to historical folk culture and traditional cultural heritage, has little to do with the nation-state, but expresses what Guadeloupe terms "outernationality": commercial popular culture has a strong local, bottom-up signature and is meanwhile interacting in transnational and global top-down contexts.

Sports in general and baseball in particular cannot escape from the socio-economic and political dynamics of society and the world at large. Therefore, baseball goes very well together with the state's promotion of the common Creole nation. Caribbean states can choose to treat local commercial popular culture and internationally acclaimed sports heroes as a national brand, similar to those of reggae and the image of Bob Marley in destination branding for the tourist industry.

In "Facing the Ecological Crisis in the Caribbean," Stacey Mac Donald and Malcom Ferdinand discuss the global ecological crisis as it manifests itself in the Dutch and French Caribbean. Colonisation, slavery, imperialism, and disaster capitalism have been the conditions for the destruction of Caribbean environments. While the region contributes little to global warming, it is at the forefront of its consequences: rising sea levels, high category hurricanes, and ocean acidification. The ecological crisis impacts biodiversity, food sovereignty, energy production, and cultural and natural heritage preservation. The authors consider the "double divide of modernity": the environmental divide (man/nature) and the colonial divide (coloniser/colonised). This double divide has led to a tension between ecological and cultural heritage preservation.

The historical and cultural value of fishery is obvious in Bonaire. Fishers are celebrated yearly during the Virgin of the Valley festival on 8 September. Over the years, fishery has gained attention from a nature conservation perspective. However, Eurocentric environmentalism and island policies lack a local perspective and local voices in ecological debate and decision-making. The same is true of pesticide pollution in Martinique and Guadeloupe, where state agencies neglect the local ecology protest movement. Cultural heritage and ecological policies must no longer be thought of separately. The dialogue between nature and culture, environment and society, ecology and politics can ensure a place to live for future generations and lay the foundation for a common world vibrant with plural histories and cultures.

While bottom up practices of nation-building and nation-branding are under pressure because of political and economic interests, Margo Groenewoud argues that “digital humanities” in the field of cultural heritage can be a means to reinvigorate UNESCO’s mission to have culture instigate social justice and nation-building in the ABC islands. The term digital humanities refers to the use and application of digital resources in education, research, and art practices. Inspired by UNESCO, Groenewoud writes, “When culture is approached as a driver for the sustainable development of just societies, the active promotion of heritage preservation by definition should be about promoting inclusivity, democracy, and human rights.” The endeavours in the field of digital humanities have not yet been made compatible with highly commercialised nation-branding pursuits. This neglect may enable digital humanities to be a useful tool in forging Caribbean nations where each citizen is considered and treated as a valid person. Groenewoud is aware that the tandem of commodification and commoditisation in nation-branding is the ethnic and national absolutism in many nation-building projects. She advocates a tactic of going below and above the nation, by focusing on grassroots organisations and regionalism in an attempt at nation-building for social justice and inclusivity. Groenewoud’s essay provides the reader with a survey of emancipatory projects in the digital humanities throughout the Caribbean. This survey is employed to avert that Papiamentu/Papiamento has to be both the linguistic vehicle and primary symbol of cultural heritage in inclusive nation-building in the ABC islands. Digital humanities is a field that has yet to yield many of its promises.

In the final chapter, Francio Guadeloupe and Gert Oostindie’s “Caribbean Diasporas, Metropolitan Policies and Cultural Heritage,” the authors state that cultural heritage as an instrument of Caribbean nation-building and nation-branding is mainly limited to “authentic” heritage from (pre-)colonial times. It is mainly about the heritage of the islanders who trace back their local roots many generations, who often exclude the cultural legacies of newcomers even though they might be third- or fourth-generation islanders.

In the Dutch metropole, Caribbean heritage seems to be much more integrated into an encompassing Black identity influenced by White politics, on the one hand, and globalised African-American identity politics on the other. Following Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, the authors state that two kinds of Black identities can be discerned: a static and essentialising one and a dynamic, continually creolising one. The first one can be found among Black activists, among whom are quite a number of Afro-Caribbeans in the Netherlands. They fight institutionalised racial exclusion based on an essentialist understanding of Blackness as being the inverse of early White negative stereotypes. This kind of Black identification is termed a politics of fulfilment.

The other kind of Black identification is dynamic and open to change and is termed a politics of transfiguration. By interacting and exchanging with other ethnic groups, transformation takes place, as can be observed in urban popular culture. The authors show hip-hop in the Netherlands as a strong case in point. Its basis was and to a great extent still is a coming together of musicians, dancers and audiences from all Caribbean, Surinamese, and native Dutch backgrounds, creating “their own [and new] thing.” The authors conclude that transnational urban popular culture is transfigurational, and in many ways mirrors the multicultural reality in the metropole and on the islands. Creolisation still is a driving force in nation formation.

In the epilogue, Alissandra Cummins reflects on the essays presented in this volume.