Scattered Citizenship

Unravelling the creation of Sint Maarten citizenship in a globalizing world

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Being a citizen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands myself, the fieldwork and writing and reading processes that preceded this thesis were sometimes confronting, recognizable and surprising. This thesis is the result of a cooperation of many people, not in the first place myself but all the more the people who inspired me to create this. In the first place I have to thank my informants on the beautiful, startling island of Sint Maarten, where I conducted my fieldwork. This thesis focuses on the perception of Dutch citizenship of those people living in one of the Caribbean parts of our Kingdom, the small, binational island Sint Maarten/Saint Martin. All people on the island deserve my deepest recognition for participating in my research and sharing there thoughts, opinions, experiences and time with me. Special thanks to my island friend and ‘colleague’ Mariska, my ‘publicity supplier’ Sanny and my Rastafari angel Mireille. Without you, it would have been so much harder to make the island my home. Also a big thank you to my roommates at Paula’s Inn, who were always there to extend a hand and without whom my weekends would have been so much more boring and lonely. Thanks to Mr. Velasquez for his stories and learning me how to shoot. All findings I present in this thesis are, however derived from our contact, my writing and therefore my responsibility – all mistakes in interpretation and formulation are mine.

Thanks to my teacher, supervisor and inspiration Francio Guadeloupe, who instigated my curiosity about this little island, learned me - assisted by all his knowledge - to create my own project and gave me the space and confidence to do so. Also thanks to my second supervisor – what a luxury – Tine Davids, who unraveled the knot I turned out to find myself in after a while. Moreover, without the support of my parents and sister I would not have been able to do all this, thank you for always believing in my capabilities and comforting me whenever needed. Thanks to my fellow students for sharing their experiences, lessons and coffee, and to my friends for comforting me and, when necessary, tearing me away from the thesis when I tended to lose my focus. Last but not least, a special thank you to Vince, who let me go again and at the same time gave me the confidence to always be there when I come back – thank you for giving me this trust and space and for being my stable factor in our chaotic lives.

All those people, on Sint Maarten and back home gave me much more than insights in only my research themes – my time on Sint Maarten has changed my view on both Dutch and Caribbean society and has given me new hope for the future of our globalizing world. This hope is something I wanted to express in this thesis as well. I wrote this text with what some might call utopian ideas in the back of my head: I did not only want to give an adequate image of Sint Maarten society and its citizens, but I wanted to highlight the special and positive aspects of this intriguing island in such a way that we, people from other areas and other countries, could learn something from it. I chose therefore to focus on the positive sides of globalization and to try to let go of the past and look forward to the future. And in this way, look forward to a world where all citizens, legal or illegal, black or white, Dutch or non-Dutch, can be equal and live and work together in a constructive way.

I do not attempt to be objective, in the first place because I believe it is not possible for a researcher to be so. A researcher cannot be absent in his or her own writing, although it is often thought to be so or pretended to be so. The sociologist Norman Denzin (2000) states that words and language have a material presence in the world and that words have effects on people. He inspired me to write this thesis in a way he calls ‘aesthetic writing’, in which “ethics, aesthetics, political praxis, and epistemology are joined” and “every act of representation, artistic or research, is a political and ethical statement”. Boundaries between for example art and science will become less obvious.
Denzin states that writing is not an innocent practice and that we, by writing social science, are not only in the business of interpreting but also changing the world. Development studies is a normative science: we do not only describe the social world, we want to change it in a certain way. From this point of view I chose to write the thesis which is in front of you, reader. I follow Denzin in his argumentation and I believe that these kind of texts, written from a certain ideology to unite people in the world, can really make a change. In this text, my thesis, my goals are to unite the people living in the Kingdom of the Netherlands by creating mutual understanding and respect, and by acknowledging one’s sameness and difference. I hope to provide a part of the answer to the multicultural question, which is becoming more and more important in our globalizing world. And I hope to contribute to a society where all people can live together, as individuals, in difference. I ask you, reader, to be an ‘active reader’, to use my attempts in your own practice and in that way participate in this project which we call the world.

Nijmegen,
July 2009
Introduction

The introduction to this thesis might be a little different than you, as a reader, are common with. Usually these kind of introductions begin with an explanation of the research themes and objectives, and they treat the actings and questions which emerged during the fieldwork as though these were the same as one imagined when one left to conduct this fieldwork. I have chosen to do this differently. I have chosen to be true to what really happened during my fieldwork, which took place from January until April 2009. And what happened, was something - I would not say completely, however - significantly different from what I expected to take place. Hence I begin this thesis with a set of vignettes of some encounters with my fieldwork interlocutors. Those are the people that shattered my expectations and, after that, shaped my findings in the way I present them in this thesis.

It all started on the balconies of different places on Sint Maarten, the island where my research took place. I was looking into the perception of Dutch citizenship of the people of Sint Maarten – although we share the same passport, we lead such different lives. While I was sitting on these balconies and talking to different types of people, with different looks and backgrounds, different ages and accents, the idea of a new conceptualization of citizenship came into my mind: ‘scattered citizenship’. This conceptualization treats citizenship as something dynamic, something changing and something individual – every human being shapes his or her notion of citizenship in his or her own way. This idea made me change my research objectives and research questions, for new questions came into my mind – more important questions, in my opinion. I will present those new questions to you in the following section.

Onandi, Robert and Felicia will lead you through this thesis, and through the history and present to the future of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In this introduction, I will introduce you to the three of them and show how they shaped my thoughts and influenced my research topics.

On the balconies

It was Mr. Onandi who made me realize for the first time in what kind of place I was landed. The airplane dropped me off on Sint Maarten, this tiny little island in the northern Caribbean, already three weeks ago, but still I could not put my finger on the place. Sint Maarten is a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which consists of three members – Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands, my own living place. Sint Maarten forms, together with Curacao, Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius, the Netherlands Antilles.1

I met Mr. Onandi in his own bar on Front Street, where some people from the Netherlands played a movie. His dreadlocks and his friendly, somewhat ironic face appealed to me, and for I knew he was one of the island’s most famous painters, I asked him to make another appointment. On the balcony of his bar we discussed the Sint Maarten and Caribbean life and identity, the influence of history and the road to the future. He spoke rapidly and in a livid manner, sometimes it was hard to keep up with him. His Caribbean accent - is it St. Lucian, is it Sint Maarten English? - made it even more complicated. Underneath us we heard the buzzing of the tourists, chatting and wandering, looking for a nice bargain. A woman with a loud voice tried to attract people to her taxi to take them ‘back to the ship’: the cruiseships. Although she looked like a Caribbean woman – dark skin, black hair - , she spoke American English. She addressed the tourists as if they were her friends, made compliments about their

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1 Sint Maarten shares an island with Saint Martin, which is a COM (Collectivité d’Outre Mér) of France. I conducted my research only on the Dutch side of the island, Sint Maarten. I recognize the influence of this special state on the Sint Maarten citizens, however, I chose to focus myself solely on the Dutch Sint Maarteners, for they are, by being member of the Kingdom, linked with the Netherlands.
clothes. I knew however, that she was, in a way, only trying to get their money: what the tourists did not know, was that the cruiseships were only a three minute walk away. This woman, explained Onandi, was a good example of the complexity of the Caribbean:

Like this lady over here, the voice right here, she tell you, I’m not an African, oke, I’m not an African, I know this is being a victim of the whole slave situation. Of course she is not an African, she isn’t born in Africa, but she is an African by.. I mean that shouldn’t be discussed. I mean, you don’t discuss that. Sometimes talking about whether you should talk about slavery.. In Jamaica I heard an interview in Guadeloupe on the radio station, and he say, what do you think of Guadeloupans coming to Jamaica, and he said in Jamaican accent ‘what hurts me the most is when I see black people coming from Guadeloupe and they say that they are French. I mean that’s ridiculous.’ They have French nationality, but when they speaking like ‘I’m French’, there is a problem. You might say this is nothing, of course it’s nothing, but it’s something. And what should they have said, I’m Guadeloupan, or.. I’m Guadeloupan and I have French nationality. Not I’m French, you see. That’s a little ridiculous. Something is wrong with you. He has a French passport, so what. Something is not right.

Onandi, who himself was born on St. Lucia and had lived on different Caribbean islands since then, thus made a clear distinction between ‘what you are’ and what kind of passport you have – this does not necessarily have to correspond with each other. What is the difference between your nationality and ‘what you are’? And why should it not be discussed that this woman was from Africa?

With this questions still stuck in my mind, I ended up on another balcony – away from the crowds on Front Street, with a beautiful view over the Simpson Bay Lagoon. Only a couple of hundred metres away from the street and its never-ending traffic jams, the island surrounded me with its quietness and beauty. This was the other side of Sint Maarten, where the Caribbean paradise is not yet covered with hotels, jewellers and rental cars. While looking at the small sailing boats underneath us, Robert told me his story during a coffee and some cigarettes.

Robert is 29 years old and a real ‘white guy’. His skin is tanned through the everyday exposition to the Caribbean sun, and his hair, which he wears in a ponytail, is blonde, almost white. Unlike many of his co-inhabitants, he wears a short and flip-flops. Robert moved from the Netherlands to Sint Maarten when he was only a little boy. He grew up on the waterfront, spent his afternoons surfing in the lagoon and, as he told me, can handle the Sint Maarten girls. Nowadays he is working in his father’s marina – even during our conversation his cellphone was always within arm’s reach and while discussing his childhood, he guided a long, shiny white sailing boat to the landing. Robert’s parents and grandparents are mainland Dutch, and Robert spent many years of his life in the Netherlands as well – on a boarding school, at university or while visiting family. But Robert is a Sint Maarten guy, who finds himself included in Sint Maarten society as much as Onandi. He told me proudly that, during his time in the Netherlands, he worked in a coffeeshop in Amsterdam where many Antilleans came.

In Amsterdam heb ik dus ook, de baan die ik het langste gehad heb is in een coffeeshop werken. Ik werkte dus voor een Surinamer, die had drie coffeeshops. Twee waren heel toeristisch, ik begon in een daarvan, The Get Down op het Leidseplein. Maar verderop zat de Easy Towns, dat was een reggae cafe, dancehall disco op vrijdagavond. Dat leek me veel leuker, dus ik vroeg mag ik niet daar eens werken. En hij zei meteen, pff, jij bent wit dat kan je niet. Ik zeg wat, try me weet je. Dus toen heeft ie me de kans gegund om daar achter de bar te staan. Het was natuurlijk even van je afbijten, verbaal natuurlijk, die
gasten.. gewoon die jongens laten zien dat ik die cultuur ken, dezelfde lingo kan praten weet je, dat was voor hun van he, a white boy can speak like that? Ze hadden wel eens eerder Hollandse jochies gehad, maar die werden zo gestemd en getest, van je begrijpt niet welke muziek je aan moet zetten enzo, maar ik zette de goede muziek aan, en na een paar weken werd ik geaccepteerd en ben ik daar voor vast gaan werken. Het was home away from home weet je, het gaf me het idee dat ik dichter bij huis was terwijl ik heel ver van huis was.\footnote{In Amsterdam I worked, the job I had the longest was working in a coffee shop. I worked for a Surinam guy, he had three coffeshops. Two of them were very touristic, I started in one of them, The Get Down on the Leidseplein. But further away there was the Easy Towns, a reggae café, dancehall disco on Friday night. That seemed much nicer to me, so I asked if I could work there once. And he said immediately, pff, you’re white, you can’t do that. I said, what, try me, you know. So he gave me the chance to work behind the bar over there. It was of course sticking up for yourself in the beginning, verbally, those guys… just showing them that I knew that culture, can speak the same lingo you know, that was for them, hey, a white boy can speak like that? They had some Dutch guys before, but they were needled and put to the trial you know, they didn’t know which music to turn on, but I turned on the right music, and after a few weeks they accepted me and I stayed at the place to work. It was home away from home, you know, it gave me the feeling to be closer to home while I was actually far away form home (All translations by author).}

So, who tells me Robert is not a Sint Maartener? In spite of his birthplace and familylines, he feels himself more comfortable with the people from the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. He wanted to be part of them, and he became part of them. But does Robert come from Africa as well, as Onandi said about the black woman who was calling at the tourists? What is Robert’s place in this history? Fortunately, Onandi gave me some insights in this situation as well.

Because you told me something interesting: can you just get rid of the history, and I know you cannot do that. It’s there, it will always be there, but you have to grow from it. I think that in a sense is a fair question. I have a friend in Holland, Rolan, and he is a white Sint Maartener you know.. there was a[nother, JS] white person, and he said, I didn’t know there were any white Sint Maarteners, he was drunk you know. And he [Roland, JS] said: who brought the black people to the islands? White people. Okay. So you have to understand that even when you talk about the Caribbean in full context, you cannot exclude white people, you cannot exclude black people, it’s just a spot where we have to understand each other and maybe break the stigma’s. I think that’s Caribbean culture, you cannot say it belongs to black people, or it belongs to white people. It’s everybody’s, it’s just there. The only problem is.. I think the Caribbean is more complex than you think, than you might even realise. Skin colour, shades of colour, dum dum dum dum dum, white black influence, […] I mean the Caribbean is a crazy place. The Caribbean is a mad place. Like it’s hot, it’s hot.

So both black people and white people belong to Sint Maarten and the Caribbean. However, the history of slavery and colonialism stays apparent and, as Onandi explains, will always be there. How can people live together as one people, on such a small island, while this history of inequality and oppression filters through all the time? What binds them together, what makes them Sint Maarteners? Both Onandi and Robert consider themselves as Sint Maarteners, as belonging to the island. Neither one of them, however, is born on the island. Not just those two people, but almost 80% of the Sint Maarten population is not born on the island. More than 150 different nationalities live together\footnote{Appendix II: Nationalities on Sint Maarten. Source : Census Office Sint Maarten, 2009.}. Sint Maarten inhabitants come from all over the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and America. How do all these people live together? How do the Sint Maarten people experience this supermulticultural society? And what is the difference with the multicultural society in the Netherlands, which is often considered very problematic by politicians like Verdonk and Wilders? One of my research

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question thus became: *how do the Sint Maarten people experience the multicultural society in Sint Maarten?*

And then I met Felicia - 35 years old and a personification of the complex reality of Sint Maarten and of its relationship with the Netherlands. Being a child of a Sint Maarten mother and a Surinam father, Felicia was born in the Netherlands and grew up in Surinam, Brasil and Sint Maarten. She studied in the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Italy, lived first on Sint Maarten, then in the Netherlands for a few years and returned recently to Sint Maarten to work at the government. I could not imagine to have lived in so many different places! So many influences, and where do you belong to yourself? Felicia speaks usually Dutch to her one year old son, sings sometimes Surinam songs to him, while he often replies to her in English. She made me realize that being a citizen on Sint Maarten is much more complicated than just ‘being Dutch’ because you have a Dutch passport. So what does this passport actually mean to the people on the other side of the Kingdom who carry it? I realised that there must be something like an emotive part of citizenship – where do you feel yourself connected to, and how is this related to your legal nationality? So, my next research question became: *how do the Sint Maarten people identify themselves as citizens of Sint Maarten?*

Felicia, who works at the Department of Education, brought me into contact with many policy workers and other government employees. In this area, I learned about the large influence of the Netherlands and Curacao on the Sint Maarten policies, and about the complex relationships between those different geographical areas of the Dutch Kingdom, which are bound by history and laws, but often divided in opinion. I also realized that this time is a very special time for the Sint Maarten government and, in a way, for the Sint Maarten people as well. The island finds herself on the road to independent statehood within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and large constitutional changes are on the agenda. This has major impacts on the government structures, but also on the feelings of unity of the people of Sint Maarten. Being in this area made me wonder, what exactly does it mean for the Sint Maarteners to be a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands? And, more importantly and thus my third research question: *what do the Sint Maarteners think about the upcoming constitutional changes and about the role of the Netherlands in this?*

Answers to these questions will be developed in the coming chapters. I decided to limit myself to those Sint Maarteners who followed higher education in the Netherlands. Although the Netherlands and Sint Maarten are geographically located in different parts of the world, the relationship with the mainland influences many people on Sint Maarten. Every year large numbers of high school graduates move to ‘the big cities’ in the Netherlands for higher education. Robert and Felicia were two of those students. Because they have lived in different parts of the Kingdom, they have experienced different climates within our country. Although those different localities officially form one country, they have experienced the distinctive realities. Furthermore, those people will be the policy makers of the future – they are going to lead our country and will have to deal with the Kingdom relations in the future. Their opinions can give us some insights in how these relations might develop.

The answers to above mentioned questions were arrived at through analyzing my data with the help of the theoretical contributions in the fields of philosophy, sociology, anthropology and political science. Together they will help me in finding an answer to my main research question, a combination of the three: *How do Dutch citizens from Sint Maarten who studied in the Netherlands and remigrated to the island perceive and interpret their citizenship within the context of the highly multicultural society of Sint Maarten and the upcoming constitutional changes within the Kingdom of the Netherlands?*

The conceptualization of citizenship as scattered makes room for the extralegal dimension of this citizenship. As both my informants and many scholars already stated, citizenship is much more than ‘just a passport’. Citizenship must be seen as a way of
belonging, which is partly defined by legal status, and partly by other factors: for example history and geography. All those factors – so, both legal status and extralegal aspects - are benchmarks people use to create their own perception of citizenship: thus, to give meaning to their citizenship status. In the following chapters, I will present those benchmarks – history, political situation, economy, geographical situation, ecological being - and the different meanings my informants gave to them.

First however I will present you with some of the scholars I had to work through to make better sense of my fieldwork experience. In the first, more theoretical chapter, I will complement Foucault’s theory of discourse with Baumann’s re-interpretations of this concept, in which he makes a distinction between the dominant and the demotic discourse. Moreover, I will use Alain Badiou’s new understanding of universalism to complement Appiah’s interpretations of cosmopolitanism. Working through all these theories in combination with my fieldwork data and experiences led me to the new conceptualization of citizenship and belonging that I have termed scattered citizenship.

At the end of the first chapter I will present my research methodology: what methods I used to get to the data and conclusions, how I found my informants and how I approached my fieldwork in general. In chapter 2 I will look at the history of the Caribbean, the Kingdom and Sint Maarten in particular and the extent to which this history still influences the perception of citizenship the Sint Maarten people create. Its specific history made Sint Maarten into what I call a ‘new society’, with a new kind of citizenship which is not only based on papers and passports, but also on other, emotive ways of belonging. Chapter 3 attends to the current constitutional changes Sint Maarten is going through and the special situation the island finds itself in: being part of the Netherlands Antilles, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and wanting to be an independent country within this Kingdom at the same time. This chapter focuses mainly on the legal side of citizenship. Chapter 4 then specifically looks into the different ways of approaching citizenship on Sint Maarten – although there is politically seen no such thing as a Sint Maarten citizen, there are many factors that influence the ways of belonging to the island and make people feel like ‘Sint Maarten citizens’. Chapter 4 thus looks into the emotive side of citizenship. Chapter 5 focuses on one of the main pillars of a new society, which is multiculturalism. The great variety of different people, makes Sint Maarten citizenship possible although the island is no political entity an sich. In this last chapter I will show in which manner this small island in the Caribbean sea can be an example for many other countries in the world, which might be more developed, but less united. Finally, in the conclusion, I will answer my research questions by summarizing my findings in such a way that Sint Maarten’s new society can serve as an example for many other societies in this globalizing world, and Sint Maarten citizenship as an example of a global citizenship, which can be a first step toward a more just and equal world.
1 Citizenship in the Kingdom: a Theoretical Grounding

It is so
true
that the future
is the undiscovered country
uncharted humannation
and we to be
are chosen
by the very labor that our love makes visible
to be
again
mariners
on the good ship now.

*Lasana M. Sekou, Direction II*
1.1 The Kingdom: an imagined community?

Already for many years the different parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have to deal with each other. Although this relationship has always been somewhat difficult, due to the fact that its roots lay in colonial times and slavery, especially the relation between mainland and rim-land seems to have worsened the last years. Constitutional changes within the Kingdom are on their way, however, negotiations about them are often problematically. The attitude in the Netherlands towards migrants from the Antilles and Aruba has become harsher, as well in media as in politics. Although the territorial borders of the country extend overseas, and the ‘state’ of the Kingdom of the Netherlands encloses both the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, the ‘Dutch nation’ tends to be restricted to the part of the country located in the North. There is a growing tendency in the Netherlands to equate Dutch citizenship with a homogeneous imagined national or autochtone culture.

In this thesis, I consider a nation something that Benedict Anderson (1983) calls an ‘imagined political community’ – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign:

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. It is imagined as limited because even the largest of them […] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. […] It is imagined sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. […] Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson 1983, 15-16).

Anderson thus explains that within this comradeship, people act as if there is no hierarchy or inequality within the nation. I would say that in the case of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, there is no such thing as a shared nation – there is thus a state without a nation. Even though slavery was officially abolished in 1863 and Het Statuut came into being in 1954, you can still distinguish a certain colonial discourse, which I will clarify more extensively later in this chapter. Central to this discourse is the notion of the colonized subject as irreducibly Other from the standpoint of a white “self” (Frankenberg 1993). The colonial discourse, which is as a matter of fact based on racism, ligatures with the formation of a restricted Dutch nation that I mentioned above. Being white makes it possible to belong to the privileged community of the Dutch nation. The ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ Anderson mentions is not apparent in the Kingdom.

Moreover, in the minds of the mainland Dutch people, there is in my opinion in most cases no image of a communion in which the rim-land Dutch are included: as I experienced myself, many mainland Dutch do not even know of the existence of the island Sint Maarten.

By recognizing this exclusivist discourse, which poses as being egEdnarian, the equal rights and status of all citizens of the Kingdom are questioned. I can not help questioning this in a normative sense for development studies is a normative discipline. It seeks to understand the is while seeking to transform it into the ought. In other words, through this study I hope to

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4 The different parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands can be distinguished with the terms mainland and rim-land. The mainland refers in this case to the Netherlands, the former colonist, and the rim-land to the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

5 Het Statuut is the official document in which the composition of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is arranged, and in which the relationship between the different countries is constitutionalized.
contribute to the discussion on how the relationship between the different parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands should be, and how it can be improved.

1.2 The new society

The three people I introduced above, Onandi, Robert and Felicia, gave me the grips to do this. They made me recognize the complex reality of Sint Maarten, and maybe even of the whole world – in this time of globalization every society becomes more intricate and interrelated with others. They also made me realize, that Sint Maarten is a very special place: a place I want to call a new society.

With this term I mean a society which has surpassed the old colonial discourse, and which is true to what happened in the case of the Kingdom in 1954: we have left the colonial times behind and now all live together as equal individuals in a globalizing world. By acknowledging this reality, this new society is able to be indifferent to the old realities and therefore to create something new.

For a new society, we need new approaches and that is exactly what I am looking for in this thesis. Onandi, Robert and Felicia gave me the idea that citizenship, which is in the first place the legal right to belong to a particular country, does not have to be something fixed and single, something that is the same for every inhabitant of a nation-state. This approach means that there is something next to the legal dimension of citizenship: next to ‘having a passport’ there is an extralegal side of being citizen of a country – those two sides constantly interact with each other and lead to someone’s individual perception of citizenship. Especially in the globalizing world we are living in, where the borders of nation-states are fading and people are more and more studying, living and working in other countries, someone’s feelings of belonging to a place can be linked to many other aspects than just papers and passport.

While looking for an answer to my research question, I realized that I was not just looking at the perception of Dutch citizenship specifically, but also on a more expansive analytical level at the relationship between globalization and citizenship – how do we deal with ‘being a citizen of a nation’ nowadays? In globalizing times, where there is so much interaction and exchange between different geographical areas, and where we try to build international partnerships and organizations such as the United Nations, people become linked to many different parts of the world. They become familiar with different languages and different habits. Nations are in this way no longer closed entities, but open locations, which can be reached by influences from all kinds of other locations. Onandi explains to me why this is such a good thing for him:

For instance, what I like about Sint Maarten is, if I never came to Sint Maarten, and stayed in St Lucia, I never showed in Holland. But Sint Maarten, because of how Sint Maarten is located, it is open to everywhere you know. […] Sint Maarten has the gateways to everywhere. That’s what makes it very very very interesting. They should use that power more often, because it’s a special place in the Caribbean. It’s like, how to call it, in French you say carrefour, crossroad, ehh, junction.

Onandi thus stresses the openness of the Sint Maarten society and the new opportunities this gives him, as an artist. More and more nations in the world are becoming open nations like how Onandi describes Sint Maarten. Borders are fading and supranational organs are established. However, also voices that are less positive about globalization than Onandi’s are heard. Many of the processes of globalization are economic in character (Barker 2000, 168). Some theorists propose therefore that globalization is actually the spread of consumer

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capitalism, and that it involves a loss of cultural diversity – we then talk about a domination of one culture over the other. Robins (1991, 25) states that “global capitalism has in reality been about westernization – the export of western commodities, values, priorities and ways of life”.

According to Davids and Van Driel (2005, 6-7) however, this alignment of globalization with capitalist restructuring is a stereotype which reinforces dichotomies such as oppressor - oppressed. Globalization is a more inclusive process: it ‘directly and profoundly interferes with systems of representation and identification’ (10) – and thus with cultural meanings. It is not only the economic aspect that influences other parts of the world, as the theories about westernization state, but also for example technology, media, ideology and ethnicity – and especially the changing meanings that are given to this. People must be considered active actors in the process of picking and choosing their identity out of all these different aspects and meanings – everyone individually. It is thus not a greater homogeneity, but a greater diversity that originates. My argument is then that globalization, if one follows cues from Davids and Van Driel, creates superdiversity and therefore multiculturality.

Multiculturality refers to the reality that every culture consists of heterogeneity of cultural expressions that are forever changing (Guadeloupe and De Rooij 2007, 9). How societies interpret and deal with this multiculturality is a political question. In the debate on multiculturality, it is important to distinguish between the ideology of multiculturism and Hall’s multiculturality question. While the former is by several authors (Yuval-Davis 2006, Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992) considered no more than ‘an administrative tool aiming to regulate collective diversity for cohesion and nation-state purposes’, the latter concerns all people and communities – locally, nationally-internationally and globally. The multicultural question is, whether it is possible for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic and historical backgrounds, to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city or a nation or a region – applied by circumstances. How can they live together without assimilation or images of degradation? Stuart Hall calls this the underlying question of globalization.

Sint Maarten is an extreme case of a society that has become superdiverse. Although in this superdiverse world that is created, people try to make pockets of homogeneity, these pockets of homogeneity and constructions of new difference have to be seen in a constant dialectical relationship with extra-national forces; those forces beyond the total control of those seeking new homogeneities and differences. As Appiah puts it: whatever loss of difference there has been, people are constantly inventing new forms of difference: new hairstyles, new slang, even, from time to time, new religions (Appiah 2006, 103). That those developments are sometimes not considered as new culture is a different story: people are often afraid of changes (103). They feel that their identity is threatened and they resist that idea, but it should be consciously acknowledged - as people unconsciously already do - that cultures are made of continuities and changes, and that the identity of a society can survive through these changes (107). Appiah rejects the theory of cultural imperialism, by stating that

Talk of cultural imperialism structuring the consciousness of those in the periphery treats people as tabula rasae on which global capitalism’s moving finger writes its message, leaving behind another homogenized consumer as it moves on. It is deeply condescending. And it is not true (Appiah 2006, 111).

Also in Robert’s words we see the intimations of someone who relates himself to the whole world where he tries to find his place in a kind of world citizen:

[...] hier opgegroeid weet je, ik denk lokaal, ik praat lokaal, ik had alleen maar lokale vriendjes, toen dan, nu heb ik meer internationale vrienden, Zuid Afrikaans,
Curacaoleans, Sint Maartens, Australisch, it doesn’t really matter, tons of different nationalities friends. Voor mij is de wereld, you know, ik ben een wereldburger, black white, it doesn’t really matter.7

The project of a certain kind of world citizen has been revived in recent times among various scholars including Anthony Appiah. He mentions the Cosmopolitan citizen – a citizen of the cosmos. There are two strains in cosmopolitanism: one is the idea that we have obligations to others, the other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives. The former is a kind of fleshless cosmopolitan, who cares about an abstract Other, however the latter, the real Cosmopolitan, pays attention to both the specific and the wider community, without generalizing them as being completely homogeneous. Appiah explains that as follows:

People are different, the Cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences...Globalization makes that we feel ourselves connected to people and places all over the world – we can realistically imagine contacting any other of our six billion cospecifics and sending that person something worth having: a radio, an antibiotic, a good idea (Appiah 2006, XV - XII).

People do no longer feel themselves (only) connected to others who live in the same area or who share the same habits or language. Arjun Appadurai concurs with Anthony Appiah on this point. Appadurai (2001) speaks about the emergence of ‘areal worlds’, which can be political, cultural, social and national. Those worlds are globally produced through artists, journalists, diplomats, businessman, etc. They are not only based on laws or papers, but they are based on imagination: that is where the extralegal citizenship comes in. People choose, out of their own experiences, in which areal worlds they belong. Those experiences are scattered all over the world, and can be legal and extralegal. So out of the scatterings they gather their perception of citizenship together.

1.3 Citizens in the new society

Someone’s perception of citizenship can be regarded as a specific combination of all the areal worlds a person belongs to. I will regard the extralegal dimension of citizenship as a transient concept, as something that can change over time and space and that is influenced by various aspects such as race, ethnicity and gender and their changing meanings throughout history as well as ordinary happenings and representations in everyday life. I recognize however that the legal and extra-legal aspects cannot be separated, and that both dimension influence each other constantly.

I regard citizenship as something that is created in interaction and articulation with the outside world and thus the Other. All citizens do this in their own specific way. To explain this, I have coined the concept of ‘scattered citizenship’. With this I mean, that citizenship is something that is symbolically - meaning privileged recurring though contradictory representations - and institutionally - meaning the legal and rule bound translations of the unruly representations - constructed and that is influenced by many extra-national occurrences. The individual citizen or agent collects and chooses from those scattered aspects

7 [...] been raised here, you know, I think locally, I speak locally, I had only local friends, by then, now I have more international friends, South African, Curacaolean, Sint Maarten, Australian, it doesn’t really matter, tons of different nationalities friends. For me the world is, you know, I’m a world citizen, black, white, it doesn’t really matter.
in the process of constructing his or her own definition of being a citizen, and thus of giving his or her own meaning to this status.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is from this point of view a very interesting case. Those scattered experiences that define someone’s notion of citizenship, can be literally dispersed over a large area. Scattered citizenship is thus a perception of citizenship based on roots, in this case in the Caribbean or elsewhere, as well as on borders – both legally and concerning the meanings adhered to this - and routes – through studying in the Netherlands, living in different countries, but also through direct or indirect contact via television, radio and internet with people on the other side of the world.

1.4 Structure and agency: another vision

By stating that citizenship is something that every individual picks for him- or herself, I am confronted with the structure-agency debate. Much wisdom has already been expunged on this topic. An important theory is Foucault’s theory of discursive construction. For Foucault, subjectivities and positions are understood as discursive constructions and the products of power (Barker 2000, 233). This means, that discourse regulates what can be said about persons under determinate social and cultural conditions. Discourse gives thus meaning to material objects and social practices (102). However, he does not provide us with a theory of agency: how and why particular discourses are ‘taken up’ by some subjects and not by others, how a subject produced through disciplinary discursive practices can resist power. For the early Foucault - the most influential Foucault - everything is discourse, thus there is nothing outside of discourse. I argue, however, that the individual’s agency exists both inside and outside discourse. Although every individual has to relate him- or herself constantly to the different discourses in society, he or she can pick his or her own parts out of these structure. In this way, it becomes possible for everybody to form an own, original notion of citizenship. Rorty (1991) explains this originality as follows

[…], while we are all subject to the ‘impress of history’, the particular form that we take, the specific arrangements of discursive elements, is unique to each individual. We have all had unique patterns of family relations, of friends, of work and access to discursive resources. Further, it is possible to see the processes of the unconscious workings of the mind as a unique source of creativity where each human being is a ‘tissue of contingencies’ (Rorty 1991, n.p.)

The concept of agency has commonly been associated with notions of freedom, free will, action, creativity, etc. It is possible to argue that agency consists of acts which make a pragmatic difference. Of course, precisely because agency is socially and differentially produced, some actors have more domains of action than others. To enact X rather than Y as a course of action does not mean we have chosen it per se. We have simply acted (Barker 2000, 237). By acting we create the social order (Giddens 1984). The subject is in my approach thus much more than ‘just discourse’.

However, people grapple with this social order to describe it using the terms they know. While they might enact something new, on a superficial level it seems that they are adhering to the old. The new society of Sint Maarten is a case in point, and the scattered citizenship of its inhabitants demonstrates this. My fieldwork on this island led me to understand that notions of nation-states and culture also have a new meaning in this society.

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8 Foucault later sought to rectify this with his Greek notions of making one’s life a work of art/the care of self, but died too prematurely to work this out. So his version of discourse making the subject has remained dominant among those working with a Foucauldian analysis.
which people struggle to describe with the words they know. I understood hence that those terms which are the building blocks of citizenship (on an extralegal and legal level) should thus be deconstructed. An argument that the philosopher Jacques Derrida made in a different context.

1.5 Deconstructing meanings

Words carry multiple meanings, and terms like citizenship, culture and nation-state do so as well. Meaning is inherently unstable so that it constantly slides away (Barker 2000, 97). This continual supplementarity of meaning challenges the identity of noises and marks with fixed meaning (98). By deconstructing those terms, we can dismantle binary positions like colonist – colonized, oppressor – oppressed, Western – non-Western, etc. For Felicia and Robert, for example, citizenship is already something scattered over different places: the Netherlands and Sint Maarten for Robert and maybe also Brazil, Spain and Surinam for Felicia. The ‘nation’ they feel ‘citizen’ of goes beyond the natural borders of Sint Maarten and the political borders of the Kingdom.

However, by deconstructing those terms, we do not yet have new terms available. The deconstructive approach puts key concepts ‘under erasure’. This indicates that they are no longer serviceable – ‘good to think with’- in their original and unreconstructed form. But since they have not been superseded dialectically, and there are no other, entirely different concepts with which to replace them, there is nothing to do but continue to think with them – now in their deconstructed forms, and no longer operating within the paradigm in which their originally generated (cf. Hall 1995). Derrida described this approach as ‘thinking at the limit’, as thinking in the interval. Concepts that are in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all (Hall 1996, 2). Citizenship is one of these terms.

As citizenship can be seen as something that is created as a result of a recognition of something common with a certain person, or a group of persons, it can – just like identity - be seen as a process, something that is always ‘under construction’. It is a process of articulation – it is never fixed or finished, but always moving, just like a person is always moving and meeting new people, reading new books and listening to new music. Stuart Hall (1996) talks about a ‘coming-to-terms with our routes, instead of a so-called return to our roots’. Exactly this is what the construction of one’s citizenship is about.

I do recognize, however, the existence and importance of a so-called wider structure: a dynamic movement which is the result of the sum of the interactions of individuals. The alignment of Dutch citizenship with a certain, narrowed image of Dutch culture is an example of this. A process of reification takes place. The exclusion of rim-land citizens in this notion of citizenship may cause a situation in which some agents are no longer able to construct their own citizenship in their own way. Those two movements, on the structural and the individual level, may collide and this can result in struggle. The larger structure is however not fixed or closed, but is open as well and under constant influence of the smaller open structures which we call individuals and agents.

What thus emerges, are two different movements, one on the higher level of society and social structure, and one on the lower level of the individual. Both are however open and moving: out of the dynamics between them, new meanings originate. The former exists because of the movements and reifying practices of the latter. This necessarily entails a more ethnographically sensitive understanding of agency that the anthropologist Gerd Baumann furnishes.
1.6 Telling the old, acting the new

You can compare the two movements I mentioned above, structural and symbolic, with what Baumann (1996) calls respectively the dominant and the demotic discourses. The dominant discourses are the discourses favored by dominant institutions and agents. They represent the hegemonic language. The demotic discourses, however, are alternative discourses that undermine the dominant ones, but do not make the dominant ones lose their salience. Demotic discourses are thus reactions to the dominant ones. The larger structure can be seen as consisting of dominant discourses, in which larger social order, for example—temporarily fixed—meanings of race, gender and ethnicity are expressed and reproduced. Often politics and media use and repeat this dominant discourse, which is the case with the division in allochtoon and autochtoon in the Netherlands—primarily based on skin colour. Also the proposal for a so-called Verwijsindex Antillianen, a registration of Antillean and Aruban people who came into contact with the criminal courts, which was supposed to make it possible to ‘send those people back’ to the islands is an example, or the stigmatizing exclamations about ‘criminal Antilleans’ from, among others, Hero Brinkman.

The demotic discourses however, are not as often expressed and reproduced, but nevertheless influential. These discourses are less clear and less static, and mainly visible in people’s acting: what they do and how they interpret and signify the things they do. The dominant discourses surrounding citizenship still use the old notions of the concept, and of the related concepts culture and nation-state. Culture is still often seen as something that you, or a group of people with whom you feel connected (or not) can possess.

Although in anthropology and other social sciences already since many years a more dynamic understanding of the concept is used, as Baumann states, it is not only anthropologists who ‘deal with’ what they call ‘other cultures’ (1996, 13). What we thus need to find out, is why, when and how the people we study may reify in some contexts what in others they are aware of creating themselves, that is, when they reproduce the dominant discourses and when they act the demotic discourses. Those reifications are the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things—it is a modality of men’s objectification of the world (13). In such an objectified way, the term culture can fix boundaries between groups in an absolute and artificial way.

During our conversation, Onandi realized that Sint Maarten does not really have a culture, or at least, not in this reified sense of the concept:

*Is there something like a real Sint Maarten culture, outside the tourist thing?*
That’s an interesting question. That’s a, I wouldn’t say, it’s difficult but it almost tricky. But it’s a good question. It’s a good question, I was speaking to a Dutch, a Dutch loterie. As a matter of fact he owns this whole place. Right? He loves Sint Maarten, a lot. He writes books on Sint Maarten. Once I said, we are bankrupt, culturally. So he says, I said we are culturally bankrupt. And he said, no we are not culturally bankrupt, because you could only be bankrupt when you had something and you lost it. Yes? If we say, do we have a culture? We could say, yes we have a culture, of course. Because every person have a culture, every one, the way you eat your food, the songs you sing. But in reality we are only speaking about the Caribbean, which is a very, speaking about being a sociologist, when you speak about the Caribbean what it really is, and what is the culture, it came from the society, a slave culture. Within the slave culture there is habits which is... they are European, whether you are aware of it or not. And even at the moment right

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9 Hero Brinkman is a member of the Second Chamber for the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV). During my fieldwork, he appeared several times in both Dutch and Sint Maarten media for some extreme statements he made about the Netherlands Antilles. All my informants disapproved of these statements for being too stigmatizing.
now, speaking of a Sint Maarten culture, a St Lucia culture, there are things you have to break away from, pushing away, and create a new sense of culture. [...] If you accept that as a culture that’s alright, but should we always accept that as our culture, I think we have to evolve and break away. Our culture is in transforming, I think it’s transforming, so there is a Sint Maarten culture, there is a St Lucia culture, a Caribbean culture, but it is evolving.

As Onandi states, Sint Maarten culture is evolving: it is not something static or easily definable. Sint Maarten, and many other societies, are becoming increasingly open, so-called multicultural societies and therefore a Creole concept of culture is necessary. I will expand on this culture concept in the Caribbean specifically in the next chapter.

1.7 Being true to the event

The dominant and demotic discourses as presented above show that there is a discrepancy in talk and action, or in politics and everyday life – in symbolic level and individual level. The dominant discourses reproduce power inequalities, which are founded in a history of slavery and colonialism. Radical changes would be necessary to break with these inequalities. Some see the solution in anti-globalism or communism, but I would rather present a new view on the situation. This new view is based on Alain Badiou’s radical universalism, which he calls a truer universalism (Ingram 2005, 562).

Badiou makes in his radical universalism a division in the ‘situation’ and the ‘event’. People’s task is to invent new identities that bypass existing identities. The situation, the ‘realm of being’ is a static, self-perpetuating multiplicity. An event, on the other hand, is the appearance of something foreign to the situation that cannot be encompassed within it (565). We can recognize those events only by their effects, or more precisely by the new thoughts and actions they make possible.

In the case of Sint Maarten, decolonization can be seen as the event. Something radical happened, radical changes were made in government and legal system. Large constitutional changes took place, new configurations came into being. Two movements can be distinguished: the formation of new nation-states, as for example Haiti and Dominican Republic did, and the formation of other configurations that had to surpass the colonial categories but hold on to the linkages that were already present.

Those institutional configurations, such as the United Nations, but also the Kingdom of the Netherlands, although having different origins, can be considered supranational alliances. Both configurations are established in the same time, respectively 1945 and 1954, and can be seen as the start of a new era, in which international cooperation is inevitable. Both configurations find themselves in grand restructuring programs. However, those processes bump into many problems as a result of, in my opinion, the use of outdated conceptualizations and being stuck in and too faithful to an outdated, colonial discourse. Because of this, ideas and institutions embraced by many progressives can in fact be conservative (Ingram 2005, 569).

Changes as a result of the event – decolonization – are thus already taking place, but are not acknowledged as the result of this event. They are still being looked at from a colonial discourse, in which a distinction is made between West and non-West, oppressor and oppressed, etc. We are thus not true to the event. To move forward, we have to abandon these categorizations – we have to deconstruct them, as Derrida would say. As I explained above, we have to deconstruct the concepts involved – nation-state, culture, citizenship – and renew the vision on structure and agency, with more emphasis on the role of the individual and with both structure and agency as open, changing relationalities.
What makes something universal is, according to Badiou, its universal significance. This lies not in the content of its truth, but in the "transformative, universalizing effects of the process it unleashed" (568). Badiou tells us that another world is possible. Through projects, taken up by active political – individual - subjects, that aim to reconfigure the situation. This chimes well with a normative science such as development studies. The challenge he poses to the counter-globalization movement is to invent ideas and forms of solidarity and action that transcend existing identities, interests and structures (270). The new identities that evolve out of an event should transcend differences and, eventually, create universal citizenship and global equality (571).

1.8 Individuals in the society of the future

Onandi, Felicia, Robert and many others made me aware of this event of decolonization and the changes it is producing and will be producing in the future. In their talk, they gave me the idea that they are actually being true to the event. They already live this new society, although the terms are still lacking. Being on Sint Maarten and talking with all those people made me realize that we have to break the old dichotomies, and deconstruct the dominant discourses, which are still colonial discourses. We have to recognize the demotic discourses, which shine through people’s words and actions, but which are not yet easy to see and to put a finger on.

Also while the old colonial discourses are still being used, in politics, in international organizations, in the old and the new constitutional documents that exist in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the new, post-colonial discourses, which are the result of decolonization and as a matter of fact, globalization and multiculturalism shine through and give us an idea of the possibility of a more equal world, which exist of individuals and not just of ethnic groups or racial groups. In this thesis I will slowly unravel this demotic discourses and show the realities of the new society of Sint Maarten: a multicultural, open society. A society of the future. In other words, I will be highlighting the intervals that we social scientists often neglect as a result of our bias towards the clearly heard and clearly seen, which for all intents and purposes is tied to a colonialist understanding of the world.

The stories of Onandi, Felicia and Robert are but a few of the many different stories the Sint Maarten people carry. By telling their stories, and many others, in this thesis, they will lead us through history via present to present in the making: the future. By understanding their stories, we will have to realize that the world consists of individuals, open structures with a gathering mechanism interacting with larger open structures which are a result of their interactions and reifying practices. We have to realize that, although globalization makes the world -in a way- smaller, this world is still –or maybe even more, as Appiah states above- created by individuals who are all shaping their planet in their own, creative and specific way. Globalization today is not solely the result of capitalist expansion, but also that of the decolonization process: the event in Badiou’s terminology. What we have to do, is being true to the event and recognize the consequences of this event. When doing that, we have to consider citizenship in a new way, an open way and an individual way. In this thesis I will show how the group of Sint Maarteners I conducted the research with deals with this open kind of citizenship. First I will explain how I started my search for the perception of citizenship of the Sint Maarten people, how I dealt with the problems I found and how I will analyze my data in the following chapters.
1.9 The How: Methodological Grounding

To reach my research objectives and answer the research questions I posed in the introduction, I used different research methods during my fieldwork. For Sint Maarten is such a diverse society, with so many different nationalities, I think it would be a colossal, if not impossible task to formulate general statements about the population on the basis of three months fieldwork.

What I’m therefore trying to do in this thesis is not to formulate such general statements, however to provide a holistic understanding of the complex reality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the processes of identity construction of a select group of Sint Maarteners, and the influence of different factors on this. The data I used in doing this, have been mainly collected through interviews, participant observation, life histories, mapping, (focus) discussions among groups of people and discourse analysis. The main research population consisted of those Sint Maarteners who have studied in the Netherlands and afterwards returned to their island. I conducted interviews with 26 of these people\(^\text{10}\). Moreover, I had interviews with politicians from different leading parties, five Sint Maarten artists who gave me deeper insights in the island’s cultural identity, two journalists from the Daily Herals newspaper, an archeologist and a political scientist, five teachers and many last year high school students. Onandi, one of the artists, and Linda, one of the journalists, became two of my key informants. I also met a girl in a Rastafari store, Mireille, who helped me a lot in finding my way on the island and can be considered key informant as well, as can Felicia, who I already introduced ample in the introduction. In total 130 people participated actively in my research. Next to that, I collected different texts focusing on Sint Maarten identity, nationality and history, which I analyzed by means of discourse analysis.

Although my main research population only consisted of 26 people, which is a very small part of the Sint Maarten population, I think the findings in this thesis apply for a much larger part of the Sint Maarten people. Due to the different key informants, who could supply me with a broader view on Sint Maarten society, I could expand my findings in such a way that they might count for more than those 30 people. Especially the connections with people from different fields – education, art, science, politics – broadened my understanding of Sint Maarten society. However, I tried to generalize as little as possible, and to search for universalities in Badiou’s sense of the words: statements that might count for all people, but that leave room for everyone’s own interpretation.

1.9.1 Qualitative and participatory research

During my fieldwork, I chose to do solely qualitative research. According to Desai and Potter (2006),

\[\ldots\text{Qualitative research differs from quantitative methods in aiming not primarily at precise measurement of predetermined hypotheses, but at a holistic understanding of complex realities and processes where even the questions and hypotheses emerge cumulatively as the investigation progresses. The possibility of ‘objectivity’ is questioned and instead the aim is to understand differing and often competing ‘subjectivities’ in terms of very different accounts of ‘facts’, different meanings and different perceptions (Desai and Potter 2006, 116-118).}\]

The goal of my research was not only gathering knowledge, but also - in the best tradition of development studies - using this knowledge in creating a better world where people can live together in difference. Therefore I chose to take an actor oriented approach, in which

\(^{10}\) See Appendix III for a more extensive description of these informants.
participatory research methods such as group discussions and mapping were useful. With this approach, I sought to investigate those groups in society who are marginalized in decision making and show their side of the story (Desai and Potter 2006, 118). In policy- and decision making of issues regarding the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Antillean and Aruban voices are often unheard. If there is any attention paid to these parts of the Kingdom, the main voice is usually Curacao and its government. In this research, the floor goes to one of the other parties – the Sint Maarteners.

Participatory research must involve the return of research findings to the community in a form which is meaningful for them (49). What I therefore thought to be important during my fieldwork, was working together with the research population. I wanted to write this thesis together with the people I worked with, and not only about them. Therefore I reflected a lot on my findings and my questions, with my research population as well as with local scientists, politicians, artists and activists. I used the results of these reflections and discussions in formulating my findings. I furthermore had an article published in the local newspaper, the Daily Herald, about the research and my experiences with it. On the streets, I got many positive reactions on this. This thesis will also be made available in the public library, and will be sent to all people who helped creating it.

1.9.2 Sampling
During my fieldwork, I changed the characteristics of the population among which I wanted to conduct research. In the first place, I chose to do research with a group of Sint Maarteners – for me in the first place, people who are born on the island - who followed higher education in the Netherlands and afterwards returned to their island. I wanted them to be younger than 30 and they should have returned within the last five years. Already soon after arriving on Sint Maarten, I realized that it was not that easy to define who was a Sint Martener: in fact, this became an interesting topic of discussion during my interviews and other conversation.

As I mentioned above, over 150 nationalities live on the island, and the majority of them is not born there. The major part of the Sint Maarten population migrated to the place. Did I really want to exclude all those people of my research? I realized that in doing so, I would not be true to the realities of the multicultural society of Sint Maarten. I would, in a way, exclude all those people from ‘Sint Maarten citizenship’, based on their birthplace, and as a result, fall back to something that I called earlier the old notion of citizenship. I thus concluded that I would not care about birthplace or passport, however, I would look for people who lived for a shorter or longer period of time on Sint Maarten, then moved to the Netherlands to study, and afterwards returned to Sint Maarten. I focused my questions on the experience of living in those different places, and I left it up to them to call themselves Sint Maarteners or not.

Furthermore, I realized quickly after starting, that the age limit of 30 I chose beforehand would not be very useful either, for many people who moved to the Netherlands to study stayed there for a couple of years to work. Many people lived in the Netherlands for over ten years and often exceeded the age of 30 already before returning to Sint Maarten. I changed this age limit therefore to 40.

I already started the search for my research population when I was still in the Netherlands. Via the Internet I contacted several people who are living on Sint Maarten or who have certain links with the island, for example people who used to live or work there and are in one way or the other still related to the island. With their help, I found my first informants. Soon, I found a small job, an internship at the Department of Education. Three days a week I helped them with some projects, mainly focused on the implementation of compulsory education for all children – legal and illegal. This job was a good way to get to know more people, and moreover, to get a good insight in the whole political and
bureaucratical system of the island. In short one can state that there was a snowball effect interspersed with self reflective stratified sampling procedures.

Those different entrances provided me with a large amount of informants in the first weeks. The longer I resided on the island, the easier it became to find more people, for example through contacting the high schools. As Sint Maarten is such a small place, you become easily visible as an outsider. I tried to use different entrances and social ‘circles’; when I ended up with the same people I started with, I knew I had to change the environment and start in a new barrio or a new workplace. I realize however, that this snowball sampling – although in a way stratified – gives you the risk of missing certain social groups and limiting yourself to certain social networks. I tried however to use different of these social networks and find informants with different backgrounds and work fields.

In the beginning of the fieldwork period, I had some difficulties finding male informants. In a way, I always ended up with females, who referred me to female friends, family and colleagues, but not to male. The men I met personally were often very weary of participation. It turned out, when I finally found those male informants, that I had to change my research questions to make them usable. For example questions about personal problems and experiences were easier to ask to female respondents, while many male respondents seemed to have difficulties sharing those experiences with me. Of course it has to be taken into account that I am a young, female, Dutch researcher and Sint Maarten can, in a (superficial) way, be described as a macho society. This topic needs more attention, however, the limited space of this thesis do not provide me with that.

1.9.3 Research methods
To achieve the abovementioned goals, I used different kinds of methods. The most important research methods were interviewing and participant observation. Interviews can range from a rather unstructured conversational style to a much more rigid question-and answer format (Desai and Potter 2006, 144). The type of interview I chose often depended on the situation and the person I was interviewing. I used mainly semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and tried to interrupt and direct the informant as little as possible. When trying to understand processes and relationships, talking is very important. Interviews are an opportunity to examine processes, motivations and reasons for successes and failures (146). The goal of an interview was for me not to obtain facts or factual data, but to gain insights in interpretation and perception of social situations and processes. Altogether, I did 45 quEdnative interviews. I recorded almost all of them on a tape, but in some situations this turned out to be difficult or unwanted. The length of the interviews differed from maybe 30 minutes to over three hours.

Participant observation is a method which is very useful to achieve holistic understanding of complex realities. Desai and Potter (2006, 116-118) call it an ‘ethnographic method’. By doing it, I studied the daily flow of social life: it always went on, every day during every activity. Participant observation requires time, and also a sensibility to culture, an appreciation of the value of observation and intuitive empathy (186). I think this is exactly what I have learned as a student of anthropology and development studies the previous years. I have developed something that Desai and Potter call ‘the anthropological eye’: a sensibility to culture, an appreciation of the value of observation and intuitive empathy (186). During the whole research period I used this anthropological eye and wrote down my observations in different types of notebooks. It is important to acknowledge your own influence on your observations as well, therefore I also used my personal diaries as a research source. I think participant observation makes it difficult, if not impossible, to regard the people with whom you are conducting your research merely as one-dimensional research subjects (Amit 2000, 3). It helped me to realize that you all are doing your research together, inter-subjectively, in the same time and the same place.
Next to those two methods, I used mapping, group discussions, a life history and discourse analysis. The latter is a method which ligatures with participant observation, for it broadens your view in the field and expands the research field to the whole society – newspapers, international context, literature, school books, legal documents and art. In analyzing these different texts, I used strategies as provided by Wood and Kroger (2000). This method was also very important in analyzing the verbatims of the interviews with my informants – by means of discourse analysis, I could recognize the demotic and the dominant discourses in their words and expressions.

Group discussions and mapping are methods I used merely without planning – it depended on the moment and on the willingness of the people I was talking with if I could start a discussion or if I did social mapping. I had for example some interesting discussions on birthday parties, and I organized some group discussions at different high schools, which turned out to be highly useful and very interesting. Mapping, asking people to draw a map of the Dutch Kingdom, I used several times at the end of an interview, if I felt the informant would like to do it. Those maps give an interesting view on the Kingdom, different for everybody.

The life history made me realize even more that, notwithstanding the similarities, every person has such a different, specific story that it is impossible and unwanted to generalize about them – although I tried to recognize the dominant and demotic discourses in them. This life history gave me the idea to use three people as the framework of this thesis. Those people, Robert, Felicia and Onandi, embody the patterns I found and will lead us in the following chapters through history and present to the future of Sint Maarten. I realized during my time on Sint Maarten how important those individual stories are to understand the whole. I will therefore try to ‘write the individual’ instead of writing culture (Guadeloupe 2009, 1). This focus leads to the areal worlds and intimations of an egEdnarian universal in Badiou’s sense.

1.9.4 Analysis

When trying to understand those individual stories, we will be able to understand the complex story of the island of Sint Maarten as well. We will never know what the future will bring us, although it would be interesting to see, as Onandi thinks as well:

If I had the power, I’d like to see Sint Maarten 90 years from now. Just to see what happens you know. It would be a very interesting place to look and see what happens.

Because all the other people who come, they will stay here and see what happens.

By trying to understand history and present in a thorough sense, we can get a possibly realistic idea of how this future is going to be, and what we can do to influence it and improve it. In this thesis I will unravel history and past through the stories of this group of Sint Maarteners, among who Felicia, Robert and Onandi. Together we will create an image of the future of Sint Maarten, a new society, which might serve as an example for many other societies in the world. In general we could look at the situation in the following way:
Figure 2.

Badiou’s being bursts open when it is ‘hit’ by an event. When the colonial world was hit by decolonization, everything changed and the whole structure has to be reformed. We are now still in the explosion-period, but the new being is already visible. In this explosion period, shifts in discourses take place – from dominant ones to demotic ones.

In the following chapters, I will look both at the transition period we find ourselves in (the ‘bang’) and give a provisional outline of this new being with the help of my informants, many books, newspapers, music and poetry. With this scheme in mind we can however now first take a look at the former being, the past, and see what this means for the transition period we find ourselves in right now.
2 History and Culture

There’s nothing here
This early;
Cold sand
Cold churning ocean, the Atlantic,
No visible history,
Except this stand
Of twisted, coppery, sea-almond trees
Their shining posters surely
Bent as metal, and one

Foam-haired, salt-grizzled fisherman,
His mongrel growling, whirling on the stick
He pitches him; its spinning rays
‘no visible history’
Until their lengthened shapes amaze the sun.

By noon,
this further shore of Africa is strewn
with the forked limbs of girls toasting their flesh
in scarves, sunglasses, Pompeian bikinis,

brown daphnes, laurels, they’ll all have
like their originals, their sacred grove,
this frieze
of twisted, coppery, sea-almond trees.

*Derek Walcott, The almond trees from The Castaway*
2.1 I had no nation but the imagination

Derek Walcott is a St. Lucia born poet and writer, whose roots and routes are spread over the Caribbean and Europe – as are those of so many Caribbean inhabitants. His poetry often reflects on this scattered ancestry, which makes it difficult to find a certain ‘own’ narrative. For: where do the Caribbean people come from? When looking at the case of Sint Maarten, this lack of a common historical narrative is apparent as well. There is no such thing as a clear Sint Maarten history, there are no big names, no heroes who saved the island, nor impressive monuments about which incredible stories can be told. At first sight, Sint Maarten has, as the rest of the Caribbean, no visible or noteworthy history – except for slavery and colonialism: European history.

Walcott beautifully addresses to these feelings of confusion about where to belong to. To the colonial rulers? To the people of Africa, as Walcott calls the Caribbean ‘this further shore of Africa’? The lack of a common descent of the Sint Maarten people, which has only been growing the last fifty years as the result of the large immigration streams, makes it difficult to describe a Sint Maarten culture, for culture is often linked to history and historical traditions.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Sint Maarten is a special case and needs new views on concepts as culture and tradition. The fact that the island does not fit the standards about history and culture, makes it as a matter of fact extremely interesting for sociological research. The fluidity of Sint Maarten society, which can be seen as a characteristic of a globalized society, makes the island an interesting spot to find out how to deal with belonging and citizenship all over our globalizing world, where we more and more have to let go of certain traditions and habits and are confronted with the superdiversity of our own surroundings.

Until now however, this capacity of Sint Maarten, and the other Caribbean islands as well, is not yet acknowledged by social scientists. Researchers seem to be still captured in the boxes of the colonial discourse we talked about earlier, and are not yet sensible for the new vibes that are coming from this tiny little piece of land. The arts, on the other hands, already feel the buzzing of this new society and can give us the grips to put our finger on these developments. Walcott stresses the complexity of Caribbean history and identity, but shows us also the possibilities this gives. In his poem The Schooner Flight, he concludes

I had no nation but the imagination.

And with these words he catches the Caribbean sense of belonging, which is based not on a collective past, a common narrative about the heroic coming to be of the islands (although this narrative is in most other countries also imagined), but on a shared feeling of being together on the same place, in the same time: not a collective history, but a collective present and therefore a collective future. In this collectivity everybody has the possibility to form his or her own nation – based on imagination.

In this chapter we will take a look at the perception of the Sint Maarten people on their scattered history. What does this history mean for the Sint Maarten people these days? And how is it expressed in current Sint Maarten cultural identity? So many different stories come together on this small island; look for example only at the stories of Onandi, whose roots are like Walcott St. Lucian, Robert, the white guy with Dutch descent, and Felicia, the beautiful coloured girl with all kinds of influences combined. They all have their own view on the history of their ancestors, who might have been colonial rulers, African slaves, or more recent immigrants from maybe India, Brazil or the Middle East. This diversity, which makes the
place so special, is however one of the main reasons why the area has long been neglected in social research.

2.2 The people without history who are glad to be so

As Derek Walcott tells us in his poem *The Almond Trees*, the Caribbean islands have almost no visible history. The lack of archeological artifacts and mythological buildings, and the influence of European domination have made the area a no-go place for anthropological and other social research (Mintz 1996, 290). While anthropologists focused mainly on the primitive societies –societies that lack writing and advanced machine technology-, as opposed to the civilised societies –particularly expressed in literacy and the first to undergo the industrial revolution; those societies also referred to as the West-, the Caribbean did not really fit this schema (Mintz 1996, 291). Neither could it be studied by development sociologists who studied the so-called societies in development. The reason for this omission is that all those categories –primitive, civilised, developed, developing- presuppose a pre-colonial authentic culture concept. Development sociology tries to match development with an indigenous culture, while anthropology studies this authentic indigenous culture. Sociology restricted itself to the Western societies. In the Caribbean case, however, one cannot presume “culture” if by this you mean a principle of homogeneity, determined by fiat, that would somehow find its parallel in an equally bounded entity referred to as “society” (Trouillot 1992, 23). The very existence of the Caribbean questioned this categorisation, upon which anthropology was premised (21).

“The swift genocide of the aboriginal populations, the early integration of the region into the international circuit of capital, the forced migrations of enslaved African and indentured Asian labourers, and the abolition of slavery by emancipation or revolution meant that the Caribbean would not conform within the emerging divisions of Western academia”. (Trouillot 1992, 20)

Because of its peculiarity, Mintz (1996, 305) calls the people of the Caribbean ‘the people without culture’. This means actually ‘the people without an authentic pre-colonial culture’ – or even a visible culture, as Walcott describes it. Many of those people were the enslaved from Africa who could not bring any tangible cultural attributes or expressions with them, no ceramics, no common language, no complex kinship systems, rituals or belief systems. What survived the middle passage, survived as shards. Because of this, Mintz calls the Caribbean a unique area in world history (299). Ruby Bute, Sint Maarten artist and poet, catches this feeling in one of her poems, *The Woman who will not bend*:

From across the ocean I came,  
Chained and mistreated  
Because of my colour and origin.

I was sold, bought, raped, and  
Stripped of my sanity,  
I have dearly paid for my identity.

*Ruby Bute, 1995, Floral Bouquets to the Daughters of Eve*

And even though the enslaved people have ‘dearly paid’ for their identity, an identity born of human carnage, this identity is often not recognized as real. Moreover, it is too complicated to be reduced to one thing. Perhaps it is best we speak about identities and not identity in the
singular. The singular does violence to the plurality of colonial and postcolonial experiences that today have made Sint Maarten their home. I often found myself included in a heated discussion about Sint Maarten identity, and the question of the real Sint Maartener: to whom belonged the island? With my informant Jane, a strong, vivid young woman with Surinam parents who was born in the Netherlands, I had the following conversation:

En ik heb gehoord, er is een kleine groep mensen die zichzelf ziet als de echte Sint Maartenaar. Al die mensen van andere eilanden..
…moeten maar weer oprotten.
Ja, dat zij de cultuur verpesten zeg maar.
Ja, dat is bullshit. Dat is bullshit. Want als je kijkt naar echte, echte Sint Maartenaren, dan is dat een heel klein groepje. Want iedereen komt wel van.. ik bedoel, de echt Sint Maartenaren die bestaan niet meer, dat waren de Indianen die het eiland ontdekt hebben, die er waren voordat Columbus er was, dat zijn dan de echte Sint Maartenaren. Maar ieder ander is of uit Zuid Amerika, of uit wherever hier naartoe gekomen.11

What Jane and many other Sint Maarteners are getting at, is that there is no such thing as a collective identity based on a shared history. Everybody is immigrant on Sint Maarten and everybody therefore carries his or her own history and the identifications born thereof. Sint Maarten is an exaggerated example of the Caribbean dynamic.

2.3 Caribbean culture?

As I mentioned before, the area cannot be approached with the old notions of singular cultures, modes of citizenship and national attachments. This is due to the fact that the population of the islands is very dynamic, it is always moving. People from Sint Maarten, as the rest of the Caribbean, have constructed their identity/ies for many years already in the presence of multicultural Others: thus, in the presence of different cultural expressions, norms, values and habits. Furthermore, the area is open to so many different influences, from the USA, Europe and also historically from Africa and Asia. Studying the Caribbean requires a Creole culture concept: a plurality of independent yet interdependent cultures that form a perpetually unfinished whole. The Creole description of culture of anthropologist Ulf Hannerz comes closest (1987, 550). He describes culture as something that is neither homogeneous nor coherent. Instead,

“…, we should take a distributive view of cultures as systems of meaning. The social organization of culture always depends both on the communicative flow and on the differentiation of experiences and interests in society.” (Hannerz 1987, 550)

In every society, there is always both cultural sharing and cultural difference. People are also to some extent in contact with (or at least aware of) others whose perspectives they do not share, and know they do not share (550). In this conception of culture, clear-cut lines between the ‘internal’ and the ‘external’ are swept away (Barker 2000, 174). Being a Caribbean country, Sint Maarten is no exception and needs a Creole conception of culture as well. Its

11 J. And I heard, there is a small group of people who claim to be the real Sint Maarteners. All those people from other islands..
N: …have to beat it.
J: Yes, they say they ruin the culture or..
N: Yeah that’s bullshit, that is bullshit. Because if you look at the real, real Sint Maarteners, that is just a small group. Because everybody comes from.. I mean, the real Sint Maarteners do not exist anymore, those were the Indians who discovered the islands before Columbus came, that then must be the real Sint Maarteners. But everybody else came from South America or wherever to here.
history effectively starts with colonization and most people on the island are either
descendants of these early comers or more recent immigrants (Guadeloupe 2008, 12). The
main source of income on the island is tourism, and annually more than one million tourists
visit the island. The quick growing economy has changed the environment on the island
extremely the last decades and the influx of immigrants has increased even more. For this
reason, a Creole concept of culture is even more needed. However, it can be difficult to work
with such a concept, also for the people involved themselves. They may live it but have
difficulties wording it. When asking for something typical Sint Maarten, people often did not
know what to answer. After some deep thinking, Percy cannot do anything but conclude:

There is no more such thing as a Sint Maarten culture. It is verwaterd. I could say
something about carnival, but I think even that is more a Caribbean culture thing.

This quote shows us that Percy still uses the old conceptualization of culture: a culture as
something static, that can be possessed and therefore can be lost as well. He concludes that
Sint Maarten does not have such culture, and therefore no culture at all. Although he does not
have the right terms, the Creole culture concepts shines through: the culture is verwaterd. The
lack of new terms makes that this Sint Maarten form of culture can only be described by
telling what it’s not. The same counts for history.

Interesting is also that Sint Maarten an sich is not an independent politically entity – it
is only a part of something else. It forms the Dutch Antilles together with Curacao, Bonaire,
Saba and Statia, and it belongs to the Kingdom of the Netherlands just like Aruba, the
Netherlands and the Dutch Antilles. But Sint Maarten on its own, although clearly defined by
its ecological being – an island - does not constitutionally count for much outside the Dutch
Kingdom. Many of the Sint Maarteners officially carry a passport of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands. How did this relationship develop and what does it mean to those affected by it
on Sint Maarten as part of the so-called rim-land? Also what do these social facts mean for
the feeling of belonging the Sint Maarten people have? Let me approach this through the
insights of my informants.

2.4 Kingdom Tales

¿Que es Patria? ¿Sabes acaso lo que preguntas, mi amor?14
Salome Urena, In the Name of Salome

The question what a homeland is, as the Caribbean poetress Salome Urena asked her mother
when she was a young girl, is not an easy one – especially not in the Caribbean area where
countries are sometimes dispersed over different islands, and in the case of Sint Maarten, even
over different continents and the Atlantic ocean. The question what a homeland is, is linked
not only to the legal side of belonging to a certain country, but also the the emotive side:
where do you feel at home? The Kingdom of the Netherlands might legally be called a
country, but how do the inhabitants of Sint Maarten, part of this Kingdom, express their
homefeeling in this country which has a history based on inequality and colonialism? In the
following section we take a look at the specific history of the Kingdom and Sint Maarten and
the way in which the Sint Maarten people deal with this nowadays.

12 diluted

14 What is a homeland? Do you know, my love, what you are asking? (Translation by author)
2.4.1. The Kingdom as a nation-state: how it began

Felicia exchanged the Netherlands for Suriname when she was only two years old. She spent her childhood in this country which was much bigger than its motherland the Netherlands and left it again when she was twelve years old. With a mother from Sint Maarten and a father from Suriname, then still a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Felicia can be called a real Kingdom Child. For her, being a citizen of this Kingdom meant living in different countries and experiencing many different influences in short times. However, not all its inhabitants might have experienced the realities of the Kingdom in such a way. It can be said that in this Kingdom, there is a struggle going on between nation and state, or even that there is a state without a nation.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is an interesting case of a nation-state. Perhaps the term trans-Atlantic nation-state is more appropriate. The Kingdom consists at this moment of three countries, Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands. The islands Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, Saba, Bonaire and Curacao together form the Netherlands Antilles. The Kingdom can be considered a supranational configuration, however, its origins lie in the colonial times. The Netherlands have occupied areas in the Caribbean from the beginning of the 1600s (Parry & Sherlock 1956, 46). Between 1630 and 1640 they seized Curacao, Saba, Sint Maarten and Sint Eustatius (51).

After the second World War the islands decolonized by becoming equal partners within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This was recorded in The Constitution of the Kingdom, called Het Statuut and formalized in 1954 on December 15. Het Statuut defines the Kingdom as a federal state of three autonomous countries: the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname. In 1975 the latter became independent and in 1986 Aruba obtained a status aparte within the Kingdom (De Jong 2005, 85). Next to these changes, Het Statuut is still operative in the same form as it was established in 1954. However, a restructuring is underway whereby Sint Maarten will become an autonomous country within the Kingdom, just like Curacao and Aruba. The other islands will become overseas municipalities.

Relations between the partners of Het Statuut were amicable until the 1980s. In the 1980 the islands went through an economic recession as a result of the closing of the Shell and Exxon oil refineries and the implementation of an IMF Structural Adjustment Program. The latter privatised the government, and this led, together with the closing of the refineries, to massive unemployment. Many of the unemployed Antilleans and Arubans moved to the Netherlands and many of them landed in the working class neighbourhoods. Since this time, there has been a growing migration between the localities, for example as a result of kinship relations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Mutual contact increased. My research population, people who – like Felicia - came to the Netherlands for higher education, is also an example of this increasing contact.

2.5 Sint Maarten stories: using history to build a collective future

Felicia’s story is however only one out of many. Although I states that there is no such thing as a common historical narrative, history will always play its role in people’s actings, for example in government decisions or in people’s attitude towards others. Especially the history of the Caribbean, which is marked by slavery, colonialism, inequality and exploitation, has its influence on current relations – as we can see in the case of the Kingdom. Despite this history, people of all different backgrounds have to live together and work together. In the following sections I will show how although the past is indissoluble interwoven with the present, people interpret this past and act to this interpretation in manifold ways. In fact what I encountered was many people who defied the idea of the space of blacks and colonized living in the Caribbean and the space of whites and colonizers residing in the Netherlands.
2.5.1 Sint Maarten population now and then

With his long, blonde hair and his blushing cheeks Robert can be characterized as a real white guy. Nevertheless, as he told me the first time we met on his balcony, as a child he never realised he was different from the majority. It was just a matter of fact for him to have another colour, and there were many more people and friends who shared this reality. He was only confronted with his difference when he first visited the Netherlands:

Hier was ik natuurlijk een local white boy, in de zin van, ik voelde me niet anders, ik stond er niet echt bij stil, dat was normaal voor mij. Toen ging ik naar NL, en toen besefte ik pas hoe de situatie voor mij hier was. Later pas hoor, toen ik naar kostschool ging. Maar de eerste keer dat ik naar NL ging was gewoon heel raar voor mij. Al die blanke mensen, […]. 15

Robert thus only started to think about his own position when he was confronted with his resemblance, as far as phenotype is concerned, with the majority of the inhabitants in the Netherlands. His comfortableness with his phenotype on Sint Maarten supports the idea that the island’s culture is an example of an open culture, where the old notions of black and white or colonist and colonized are de facto – in everyday life, as in: the demotic discourse - already surpassed. But how were these old notions utilized in the past?

Roberto, a 50+ development scientist who also studied in the Netherlands years ago, points me towards the specific history of Sint Maarten itself. According to him, the island has always been a special case.

Sint Maarten was een foerageerhaven, een heel belangrijke foerageerhaven. Niet zo door de geschiedenis neergezet, want het was Nederlandse geschiedenis en niet Sint Maartense geschiedenis maar goed. Dat betekende de schepen kwamen hier om te foerageren, en de geschiedenis heeft ervoor gezorgd dat Sint Maarten ook een vrijhaven werd, vrije doorvoer, invoer, whatever. En daardoor kwam de hele piraterij en iedereen kwam naar Sint Maarten om te foerageren want dit was ook de laatste stop voor de grote reis over de Atlantische oceaan met hun zeilboten. En net zoals Amsterdam, een hele grote verscheidenheid van mensen. Iedereen mocht hier in de vrijhaven komen foerageren, Fransen, Spanjaarden, kom maar hier.16

Consequently, many years ago Sint Maarten already had to deal with a changing, dynamic population. In this way, as Roberto tells me, it established a whole own economy, based on its function as a forage harbour. As a result, the few families who lived on the island started small industries related to this function: there was a family who made the canvas for the sailing boats (the De Weevers), a family who grew cabbage, a crop that was easily preservable for a long time, in the area which is now called Cole Bay17, and a family who made the cans to preserve this cabbage, the Kannegieters. Those large families with their slaves and their descendants can then be seen as the aboriginal Sint Maarten population.

15 Here I was of course a local white boy, in the sense of, I did not feel different, I did not really realize it, it was just normal. When I went to the Netherlands, only then I realized how the situation was for me here. Later, when I went to boarding school. But the first time I went to the Netherlands was just really strange for me. All those white people…[...].

16 Sint Maarten was a forage harbour, a very important forage harbour. Not situated in history like that, for it was Dutch history and not Sint Maarten history, but that aside. It meant that the ships came here to forage, and history brought on that Sint Maarten became a free port, free transit, import, whatever. And because of that the whole brigandage and everyone came to Sint Maarten to forage because this was their last stop before the big journey over the Atlantic with their sailing boats. And just like Amsterdam, a great diversity of people. Everybody could come here to forage, the French, the Spanish, everybody come over.

17 The Dutch word for cabbage is ‘kool’.
Nowadays, a small group of Sint Maarteners still identifies herself with these people and use this to claim the island as her property. Those people are significantly represented in the government, nonetheless, for most Sint Maarteners this politics of primacy, of autochthony, does not mean very much. Jane already altered us to a very powerful meta-story on the island: only the Caribs and the Arawaks, the first inhabitants of the Caribbean islands, can truly be considered the aboriginals. Also Yi Ling thought that there is no such thing as an original Sint Maarten. She however uses the argument of impurity to argue her case.

Do you think there is something like a real Sint Maarten?
I don’t think so, from what I’ve heard. You know my mother in law, she is 75 and she is from Anguilla. And you hearing lot it’s a lot of people that came to the island and made it Sint Maarten. Anguilla, many people came over and you cannot say they are not Sint Maarteners because they helped build the island. I’m not even sure, I can say some names. The Richardsons and so, but I’m not even sure where they came from.

The fact that she is not sure where they came from has to do with the economic revolution of the 1960s, the tourist boom, which transformed the island and which for the most part made a politics of autochthony a useless strategy with which to build a collective future.

2.5.2. Sint Maarten: outsider in the Kingdom
The huge amount of migrants who felt themselves attracted to the island, has everything to do with the fast economic development. Unlike the other islands of the Kingdom, Sint Maarten developed herself extremely quickly the last decades. As Roberto told me, before the tourist boom the island - both French and Dutch side – were inhabited by approximately 3000 people. In the last 50 years, the population on the Dutch side grew to more or less 50.000. Moreover, an estimated 20.000 illegal people live on the island. Next to these permanent inhabitants, as I mentioned above, more than one million tourists visit the island annually. Sint Maarten went through a rapid image change, from an island of small plot farmers to, as one informant called it, the biggest employment company in the Caribbean. And if farming was the major employer in the region, Sint Maarten was that arm of the company that consistently did not make any revenues. Neither The Hague (administrators in the Netherlands) nor Willemstad (administrators in Curacao), the most powerful actor in the Dutch Antilles, saw much in the island. According to Roberto,

De economische cultuur hier toentertijd, vanuit Nederland, vanuit Curacao, dit was een achterlijk stuk land waar niemand iets aan had. Curacao en Aruba hebben ze ontwikkeld om alle Antillianen te laten werken. […] Sint Maarten was een grote boerderij door een paar mensen aangevoerd. […] Sint Maarten was gereduceerd tot 3000 mensen want iedereen werd naar Curacao en Aruba gestuurd, alle scholen, alles werd daar gezet en Nederland deed weinig, alles was daar. 18

This politics of underdevelopment caused much bad blood that one still encounters among the “indigenous” Sint Maarteners whose grandparents experienced the systematic neglect. Jay Haviser, working as an archaeologist on different islands of the Netherlands Antilles for over 25 years now, explains the Sint Maarten unease as follows:

18 The economic culture here that days, in the Netherlands, in Curacao, for them this was a backward piece of land which was not useful at all. They developed Curacao and Aruba to let the Antilleans work […]. Sint Maarten was just a large farmhouse, led by a couple of people. […] Sint Maarten was reduced to 3000 people because everyone was sent to Curacao, all the school, everything was built over there and the Netherlands did almost nothing, everything was there.
How do you think, because I have the feeling that a lot of people have a negative feeling towards Curacao, where does that come from?

Yes. I can only tell you my opinion. My opinion would be that in the colonial structure, going all the way back to before 1954, Colony Curacao, Sint Maarten was technically called Colony Curacao. All of the islands were called Colony Curacao. That clearly illustrates the dominance that Curacao had in the distribution of goods and services, in the attention of the Dutch, in the potential. [...] This inequality in the distribution of goods and services and the tensions from the Dutch sort of created, I wouldn’t necessarily call it jealousy as much as just starvation anger, you know, when you’re not getting and you see them getting, when you’re supposed to get, it’s anger it’s a frustration. And eh, it carried over after the autonomy of 1954 in the political world too. Okay, Curacao did have the largest population therefore the parliamentary structure and infrastructures all were in their favour. Again there was always that feeling of a second citizen, of being looked down on, and I think that is the real root for the frustration.

In the 1960s Sint Maarten proved Curacao and the Netherlands wrong. Claude Wathey took advantage of the post-WO II developments in the USA and the region, he instigated a tourist-based politics. When Castro took over Cuba, the American investors sought a safer haven to settle. Sint Maarten turned out to be a good choice (Guadeloupe 2008, 16). The island was transformed into a 37 square mile resort interspersed with the domiciles of the workers, managers, and political administrators. The place is crowded with resorts, hotels and restaurants. The capital Philipsburg has changed into a tax-free tourist shopping paradise; jewellery, liquors, expensive clothing, Caribbean souvenirs and of course a Burger King and a McDonald’s determine the street scene. After six, when the cruise boats have left the harbour again, back on their way to a next island, the streets are abandoned; nobody lives in Philipsburg.

There is a downside to this miraculous growth though. Although the rapid growth has brought a lot of money to the island, cultural and natural heritage have had to make place for economic development. There is hardly any revolt against or lament about this development, for so few people identify with this heritage – as a matter of fact, it is not their history -, little attention is paid to it. Money comes first.

According to Jay Haviser, however, changes in attitude are necessary:

What’s happening is you’re getting this point that is reached in terms of population and development and growth. Prior to 1960 it was probably a sleeping fishing community, hay I think was the biggest export product or something like that. After 1960 and the Claude Wathey movement that he started, the whole attitude was, we can really make some money on tourism, we should just work hard and we will make money. And they build a hotel, they see results, they open hotels, they see results, they are getting jewellery centres, they see results. So this whole dynamic of tourism ripped itself into the culture in such a way that this is the way they make it. And that spin now has turned so hard, that the hardest thing for them to do now is to slow down.

The Sint Maarten Pride Foundation is one of the only organisations which is actively dealing with the preservation of environment and historical and natural heritage. They do not find many supporters in government, which makes it hard for them to reach their goals. While sitting in the only park the island has, the Emilio Wilson Park, Lacena tells me:

Even in the last five years, lots of cultural and natural heritage have got lost – for example the Great Salt Pond. They are now planning to build a road in the Salt Pond, while it is such a historical point. People on the island do not understand history, there are so many immigrants who have their own history or just don’t care. Sint Maarten is for
them just a stop to make quick money. There is practically nothing left from Sint Maarten cultural heritage. There is almost no history taught in school, only Dutch history.

Linda, one of my informants, wrote her own thesis for Cultural Sciences about Sint Maarten cultural heritage and icons. Her friend Priscilla however does not understand how the island deals with its cultural heritage:

I know Linda did a project on this and I gave my opinion about it last year. I don’t think the salt pond is an icon at all. Why turn the salt pond into a dump if that is your bloody icon?

Cultural heritage seems to have had to make place for economic development. New businesses, an extreme amount of cars – which causes a traffic jam every hour of the day -, nightclubs, beach sports, casino’s: it is all within arm’s reach on this new Sint Maarten. This focus on the economic has made the Sint Maarten history thus even less important, and gave the Sint Maarten people the attitude that now and future are much more important than the past. By collectively more or less neglecting this past, the island distinguishes itself from the colonial history and ‘ruler’ the Netherlands: the tourist boom has given the Sint Maarteners confidence. They made it despite the indifference of The Hague and the systematic neglect of Willemstad. In fact Sint Maarteners pride themselves in being the less Dutch of all the Antilles. Here is what Tallulah has to say about this:

Sint Maarten is an island where we have many different cultures, many different Caribbean cultures, and it is not like Curacao where there are a lot of Hollanders. In Curacao you can really see that Dutch influence, but on Sint Maarten I would say no.

The specific history of Sint Maarten as a Caribbean island, being a forage harbour, dealing with the constant presence of Others - both during colonial times as in more recent periods -, having a somewhat difficult relationship with the Netherlands and experiencing a large tourist boom all influenced the specific reality Sint Maarten finds itself in nowadays. All those aspects made Sint Maarten a vibrant society where everybody – oldcomers and newcomers – live together with at least one collective interest: securing the tourist sector and in this way securing a collective future.

Common history matters little in this, in fact, plurality might be an asset as Sint Maarten sells itself as a microcosm of the world. I will expand on this phenomenon in Chapter 5. The historical developments I mentioned above and the thereout following fact that the Sint Maarten society is very diverse made the island a bit of an outsider in the Netherlands Antilles. Many people have no links at all with the other islands. A large-scale opinion poll, which covered the views and expectations of Antilleans and Arubans with regard to the Kingdom and the Netherlands (Oostindie and Verdon 1998) showed that the people of Sint Maarten often had a distinct opinion of the other islands. They were the least enthusiastic about Dutch involvement (65) and substantially more people were positive about status aparte or even independence than on the other islands (64).

Concretely today Sint Maarteners are pursuing these options. A referendum and long negotiations with the Hague and Willemstad have paid off as Sint Maarten is currently undergoing changes to become a separate entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
3 Family Affairs

The Sint Maarten song

Where over the world, say where:
You find an Island there,
So lovely small with nations free,
With people French and Dutch,
Though talking English much,
As the St. Martin in the sea?

O, sweet Saint Martin's Land
So bright by beach and strand
With sailors on the sea
And harbours free;
Where the chains of mountains green
Variously in sunlight sheen;
O, I love thy Paradise,
Nature beauty fairly nice!

How pretty between all green
Flamboyants beaming gleam
Of flowers red by sunlight set!
Thy cows and sheep and goats
In meadows on or roads,
They donkeys keen can't I forget
Saint Martin, I like thy name,
In which Columbus fame,
And memories of old are closed.
For me a great delight:
Thy Southern Cross the night.
May God the Lord protect thy coast!

composed by G. Kemps
3.1 On the doorstep of a new relation

Sint Maarten finds herself at present in a special period. On the doorstep of a new constitutional status, the Sint Maarten people are filled with hope, dreams but also fears and doubts. In the upcoming chapter we will have a look at this so-called status aparte, on which so many words have been spunged already and so many verbal sword-plays have been fought, however which is still a little mystery to most people involved.

First we will look closer at the constitutional change itself, what will it actually mean according to my informants, and how do they look at the changes themselves? We will furthermore dive deeper into the relationship between the Netherlands, Sint Maarten and the other islands, mainly Curacao and get some more insights in the why and how of the status aparte. Is it a step towards total independence, or a step towards a more peaceful cooperation with the Netherlands? This chapter looks into the legal side of Dutch citizenship for the Sint Maarteners and the meanings they adhere to this.

Although the relationship between Sint Maarten, the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands originated in colonial times, the strength of the connection has become too great to simply throw away. In the course of time, this relationship has established itself as something that can metaphorically called a family bond. I come to this metaphor as the result of many conversations about the Kingdom with my informants: how do mainland and rim-land have to deal with each other? Very often, the comparison with a family was made.

This comparison tells us a lot about how the Sint Maarten people I spoke to perceive this relationship: not as something manufactured or forced, but as something natural. It already shows us that a radical break-through is for them not a possibility. The relation you have with your family is something that is simply there, or as some say, you cannot choose your family, you just have them. With this metaphor in mind, we can have a closer look at the Kingdom relations and the changes within it. For also the Kingdom family has, as every other family, its issues. Its complex political background makes these even more complicated.

3.1.1 Constitutional change: status aparte

Onandi told me an anecdote about an United Nations official who visited Sint Maarten. This person strikingly called the island a ‘monument of colonial absurdity’. Although the island can definitely be criticized in such terms, many people on Sint Maarten are comfortable with the complex situation, s evinces the island’s anthem. The Sint Maarten Song, which is often sung during special occasions such as Sint Maarten’s Day or the beginning of a new university year, positively mentions the special political situation Sint Maarten finds herself in, as a result of what others term this colonial absurdity. It speaks about Sweet Sint Maarten’s Land, for it is neither a country nor a self-regulating entity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the island is not yet a country itself – its representatives have to deal with both the federal Antillean government dominated by Curacao and the Dutch government in The Hague: a politically complex situation.

As I explained in the previous chapter, the Sint Maarten people gave a clear sign that they are ready for something new. This longing for change has been translated into the idea of a status aparte for the island, which means, politically speaking, that Sint Maarten becomes a separate more self-regulating entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Aruba obtained a similar status in 1986. It does not have full political sovereignty, such as for example a nation-state, however in Sint Maarten parlance this growth in their ability to self-regulate their internal affairs is called a separate country. In this chapter I will stick to this emic term.

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19 Sint Maarten’s Day takes place on the 11th of November and celebrates the discovery of Sint Maarten by Columbus.
Although the decision for a status aparte was already made in 2000, the negotiations about the requisitions that Sint Maarten has to reach before it eventually gets the status, are still afoot. Discussions about the situation are often agitated and, the longer it takes before actual steps are taken, the more people become suspicious and blame Dutch representatives in The Hague. Like John, policy worker at the Economics Affairs Department:

*And do you think the status aparte that is coming up is a good development?*
*I don’t think Holland wants to give it.*
*But it is already decided?*
*No. It was decided, but the funny thing about it is, the funny thing is there are always new conditions. First, believe me, I wanted to take the decision into court. Because it is not the real decision. You made a decision and you have to stick to it, you can’t change it all the time, help me to reach those new objectives but don’t say I can’t get it if…*

And also Edna, a journalist who came to Sint Maarten from Guyana ten years ago, expressed some frustration:

*The general feeling is that the Dutch keeps moving the doorpost. Every time we’re close enough something new occurs.*

As many more people confessed to me, they do not have much confidence in the constitutional changes. Things are too vague and are taking too long. Before we discuss this feeling of unease more amply, let us first take a look at the new constitutional documents to clarify the situation.

### 3.1.2 Brothers and sisters: Sint Maarten and the other islands

What attracts the attention immediately when looking more closely at the proposal for the amendment in Het Statuut, is that the actual changes are minimal. The same Statuut will be used as was formulated in 1954, in a total different time and situation. The changes that are made are mainly changes in formulations: the words *Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba* will be changed into *Aruba, Curacoa en Sint Maarten*.

With respect to content, it is for most of the common folk people not yet clear what the constitutional changes will encapsulate. I heard people talk about a Sint Maarten valuta, or a Sint Maarten passport. Many informants started asking me, as they mistakenly saw me as a Dutch representative, questions about the status: what will it actually mean for the education system, or for the influence of Holland? There was thus much confusion and unclearness about the status aparte, and, as the island’s archeologists Jay Haviser concludes, before people can really have an idea about the consequences of the new situation, they have to know what this new situation means. Despite their lack of knowledge, there is a consensus that almost all Sint Maarteners agree that something has to change, for the political context in which Sint Maarten operates is too complex and its realities too different from those of the main Antillean island Curacao.

The government of the Netherlands Antilles consists of delegates of all islands. However, as the number of delegates is defined by the size of the island and the number of inhabitants, Curacao has such a large number of delegates in comparison to Sint Maarten, Saba, Bonaire and St. Eustatius, that they can always have the majority in the decision-making processes. As there are 22 seats in the Antillean parliament, 14 of them are reserved for representatives of Curacao, while Sint Maarten and Bonaire each have three. Saba and St. Eustatius both have one seat. As a result, most decisions made in this government will be in

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20 See Appendix II
favor of Curacao. The other islands, and mainly Sint Maarten, often feel unheard and neglected. In an ideal situation, all representatives, no matter where they come from, should work together to one Antillean group of islands. However, as the result of large differences among the islands, both in geographic location and cultural identity of the people living on the different islands, a democratic deficit originated. As is, in my opinion, the case in the larger context of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, everybody is focused on their own territory and not on the larger whole. The governmental structure with its democratic deficits makes political decision making often seem unfair and thus illogical.

Clyde, a friendly, relaxed graphic designer, tells me a peculiar anecdote during an Ice Tea on the Boardwalk, one of the main touristic areas of the island:

A few years ago the Antilles needed money so they decided to raise the tax on gas. People here said, we don’t think it’s a good idea, because we have a Dutch part and a French part. On Curacao you just go to the gas station, but here.. But still Curacao said no, you have to do it. So what happened, everybody went to the French side!

Commissioner Maria Buncamper-Molanus gives me another, more money-related example:

When hurricane Lewis came in, in 1999, all the money from Holland went to Curacao while there was just a little damage over there. Sint Maarten was hurt really badly, and didn’t get anything until months later. Then it got a little bit, but not enough to repair the riolering [sewerage, JS], while the money was determined for that purpose.

The problematic relation with the other Antillean islands, and mainly with Curacao, thus plays a major role in the query for change the Sint Maarten people expressed both in the referendum as in our conversations. From a pragmatic perspective the status aparte is therefore a good way to ‘get rid of Curacao’. The new status will finally give Sint Maarten the possibilities to deal directly with the Netherlands, and to take care of their own finances although few consciously recognize that they will again have to face up to the democratic deficit this time on a higher level. Sint Maarteners worry little about this and have faith in the future. After all, with its booming businesses and tourist industry Sint Maarten provides the Antillean public treasury with a lot of money.

The first reaction most respondents gave me, when I asked them for their opinion about the status aparte, was therefore something similar to Yi Ling’s:

Hmmm.. It’s a good thing for them to get away from the Antilles, I can understand why because, well, that’s what I hear, I don’t know the facts, the money will always go to Curacao and not to the other islands.

As mentioned before, the comparison of the Kingdom with a family was often made. This metaphor, which was for many people a logical comparison, can be considered a biological explanation of the political. The political is thus made something natural and therefore something good – it is not debatable. Of course, the way the relationship should be approached is the point of discussion: but that the relationship is there, is for my informants a simple fact. I think this approach of the Kingdom as a family shows a shift in discourse from an hierarchical Kingdom (dominant ones) to a more natural and equal familiar bond (demotic ones).

Although the political relation with Curacao is a bit tense, all the Dutch islands in the Caribbean can consider each other brothers and sisters. The desire to split off is then more a financial issue than a dislike of Curacao or the Curacaolenean people. Edna, the Guyanese journalist, thinks that the feeling of a family is still there, but ‘in a family there are always
issues’. A family bond however does not only consider the siblings, but also the parents. In the case of the Kingdom, the Netherlands is symbolized as the mother country and thus as the mother.

3.1.3 Parental authority: Sint Maarten and the Netherlands

The comparison with the mother of the family shows not only a natural bond, but also an unequal one between the islands and the Netherlands. After all, the relationship between a mother and her children is, at least symbolically, one based on power differences in which the children have to obey the mother.

Although Het Statuut declared in 1954 that the relationship between all members of the Kingdom of the Netherlands would be equal, the centre of gravity has always been in the Netherlands. The relationship between islands and mainland originated during the colonial times and has long been based on inequality and exploitation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is not easy to forget history, and it can be said that this is also not desirable. For in the end, we have to work through historical wrongs and by means of this create a new situation. Nevertheless, old relations have to be surpassed to be able to deal with each other in a way that will be accepted by all parties. Many of my informants stated however that the relationship between the Netherlands and Sint Maarten is still unbalanced. Jay Haviser pointed at the colonial role of the Netherlands:

I think that the role of the Netherlands have been, of course people take it offensively, but I don’t mean it offensive, but has been as the colonizer. So long, that it’s, and it may even be something inherent of Dutch culture, that it’s a sort of a dominance kind of attitude.

In this quote, Haviser in a way reifies the Dutch culture as being oppressive. This attitude, which shines through announcements in politics and media as well, is in my opinion the dominant discourse on the Kingdom relations, which leaves no room for new relations to develop. By stating that dominance is something inherent of Dutch culture, a Creole conception of culture is missing and ‘Dutch culture’ is aligned with colonial dominance. Holding on to this dominant discourse means being untrue to the event of decolonization. However, a lack of knowledge concerning the islands on the mainland of the Kingdom enlarges the feelings of unease with the Netherlands.

According to my informants, both in politics and in everyday life in the Netherlands, all distinctions between Curacao and the Antilles are often ignored and the two political entities are considered one. My informants often had to explain where Sint Maarten is located, that it is a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and that it is absolutely not a part of Curacao. The lack of interest for and knowledge of the overseas parts of the Kingdom in the Netherlands is a source of irritations for many Sint Maarteners. Grace, born on Curacao and since a couple of months working on Sint Maarten, shared her annoyance with me:

Ik heb me altijd afgevraagd hoe Nederlanders naar de Antillen kijken. Want toen ik in Nederland woonde en geconfronteerd werd met mijn mede-Nederlanders, wist men vaak niet waar ik vandaan kwam. Oh, dat ligt ergens voor de kust van Zuid Amerika. Als het al zover was. Sommigen wisten het gewoon echt niet. Ik maakte er altijd een punt van, ik vind het schandalig dat zoveel Nederlanders hun achtertuin niet kennen.21

21 I have always wondered how the Dutch look at the Antilles. Because when I lived in the Netherlands, and when I was confronted with my fellow-Dutch, people often did not know where I came from. Oh, somewhere in front of the coastline of South America. If they knew anything at all. Some of them just really didn’t know. I always made an issue of it. I think it is outrageous that so many Dutch do not know their backyard.
Where, according to my informants, many mainland-Dutch do not know anything about the rim-land, the Sint Maarten people themselves learn a lot about the Netherlands in school, through travelling and via the media. Although many mainlanders do not even know where the islands are located, Grace calls the Antilles ‘the backyard of the Netherlands’. By using this term she bridges the large distance between main- and rim-land and expresses that, for her, they belong together as if they are one house – or, again, one family.

Grace approached the Kingdom in a way that surpasses the dominant discourse of colonialism and makes room for the demotic discourse of the Kingdom as a supranational entity: a configuration based on equal members for all share the same house. It can therefore be said that Grace is, by using this term *achtertuin*, being true to Badiou’s event, decolonization, and approaches the Kingdom in a constructive way. What is needed to better the relationships, is more knowledge about the different parts of the Netherlands Antilles in the Netherlands, for although we officially form one country, the people in the Netherlands often lack knowledge about their fellow citizens, which might indeed be the main source of misunderstanding.

Also the political relationship between Sint Maarten, or the islands in general, and the Netherlands is characterized by misunderstanding, which results in harsh discussions and insults – both from the rim-land and from the mainland. My informants, who have studied in the Netherlands and therefore lived there for a significant amount of years, think they often understand better why the relationship between the different parties is problematic. They see the different ways of thinking and the differences in attitude and approach towards problems. Cassandra described this very clear to me:

> I think the foremost important reason is misunderstanding. From Holland, basically feeling that these islands want to go, but not being ready for it. You know, Holland is always really procedure, procedure you know. You wanna do this, you have to do this, this, and if this is not working, it’s not working at all. On Sint Maarten they’re like, well this is not working, but we have this.. and we want to go there, let’s try that. Ja, it’s just.. that plays a role. And you have some historical things, pressure that some people still feel. Holland and the entire Antillean structure has always been a relationship that is tense. And I think history plays a major role in this.

Cassandra, and many others with her, emphasized that these misunderstandings are mainly based on differences in the bureaucratic system on the one hand, and not working through history on the other hand. Both problems are attitude problems: how do you approach each other and do you acknowledge difference, or do you think one of the two parties knows best? The role history plays in this process, with the Netherlands as the colonizer and Sint Maarten as the oppressed, should be recognized and surpassed. When holding on to this crooked relationship, we are not working through history as we should do, and thus not being through to the event: we are kept in the colonial discourse and unless we break out of this, we can not make any progress.

Cassandra thought that because of this attitude, the changes that are coming up will make the relations even worse. The Netherlands are often still approached as the colonizer, and requirements that are set by them are seen as oppressive:

> Especially now, in this transit time that the Antilles is going through, within the Kingdom you know, it’s funny, let’s say, to hear people’s opinions and their entire perspective on Holland and things, no offence to the Dutch, I’m like guys, they are just people like us, things that happen here, happen there too, it’s just misunderstanding. If they come here and live here for three years, they would understand it better and vice versa. It’s just ja, over en weer. I think it’s comical, you kind of understand where things come from.
It is often emphasized that the Netherlands and Sint Maarten are two extremely different places, with another mentality and other values. The Netherlands is trying too hard to change the islands in a ‘second Holland’, which is not possible and should also not be the goal of negotiations and changes as my informants mentioned. The Dutch government has to realize that Sint Maarten is located in a completely different area, with a diverse population, much influence from neighboring islands and, according to my informants, much influence from the United States. It is not a small Holland with just a better climate, as one of them tells me smiling. Sint Maarten is a different country.

Most people I talked to have lived in the Netherlands and experienced this difference themselves. Although it is often a logical step for many young Sint Maarteners to go to the mainland to study, it can still be hard to find your way in such a different place. In comparison with Sint Maarten, the Netherlands is a big country with extremely large cities. The size of Sint Maarten makes it an everyone-knows-everyone place, whereas in the Netherlands you are suddenly all alone. In general, all people I spoke to finally found their way in this big country, but the unavoidable feeling of being an outsider in the beginning made it easy for them to look at the Dutch society as an anthropologist might do: what is it that these people do, how do they treat each other, what is normal?

It was a nice topic to talk about: what are the main differences between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands. Things I heard most are the Dutch punctuality, the trains and the buses that are always on time, the cold weather as well as the colder people, and the blunt attitude: they say whatever they think. Someone who experienced this maybe even more is Linda, a beautiful, blonde girl from Dutch descent, but from the inside ‘a real Sint Maartener’. While studying in the Netherlands, people treated her as being ‘one of them’, whereas in fact she often did not understand them at all:

Mensen verwachten door mijn uiterlijk dat ik gewoon Nederlands ben, maar ik ben Antilliaans. Dit is waar ik vandaan kom, mijn roots liggen hier en mijn cultuur, niet in Nederland. Maar in Nederland verwachten mensen dingen van je, hoe je je gedraagt, dat je ze begrijpt, dat was wel lastig soms want dat deed ik niet altijd. Nederlanders zijn zo fel, zo direct, dat ben ik niet gewend en ik ben zelf ook niet zo. Daarom kwam ik denk ik heel saai over in het begin, heel verlegen. Ik heb altijd het idee dat mensen in Nederland me niet echt begrijpen, zelfs mijn oma’s niet weet je. Zelfs die hebben zo iets van, wat moet je daar. Ze hebben vaak een beeld van de Cariben en Sint Maarten dat heel negatief is.22

The differences between these parts of the Kingdom must thus be taken into account during discussions and negotiations. According to John, this does not happen, because the Dutch politicians know too little of the situation on Sint Maarten. He compared it with the difference between city and countryside:

I think Dutch people, Dutch parliamentarians, they take those things for granted. It’s like, it’s like you’re living in the stad [city, JS] en I’m living in een boerderij [farm, JS]. And you’re telling me, from the stad, oke, you don’t need a yard, you don’t need cows, you don’t need to get milk… because you can get it in the supermarket for instance. That is kind of how it is.

22 People expect me, because of my looks, to be just Dutch, but I’m Antillean. This is where I come from, where my roots are and my culture, not in the Netherlands. But in the Netherlands people expect things from you, how you behave, that you understand them, that was hard every now and then because I did not understand them. The Dutch they are so blunt, so snappy in the beginning, I’m not used to that and I’m not like that myself either. That’s why I think I looked like I was really boring in the beginning, very shy. I always have the idea the people in the Netherlands don’t really understand me, even my grandma’s you know. Even they think like, what are you doing there. They often have a very negative image of the Caribbean and Sint Maarten.
The words John chose here show us that he also situated the Netherlands and Sint Maarten very close to each other. In his metaphor, mainland and rim-land belong to the same country, but the Netherlands is the centre and the islands the periphery. This comparison indicates both unity and distance and is therefore a good description of the situation the Kingdom finds herself in. On the one hand, all parts are in a way destined to move on together, while on the other hand they do not understand each other enough to do so.

John himself does not really have a problem with ‘the Dutch’, for he ‘understands the way they think’. Many agree with him: more understanding gives those people a more positive opinion about the Netherlands and the Kingdom. They think that Sint Maarten and the Netherlands can eventually become equal partners within the Kingdom, and that the status aparte is a good first step towards that.

After all, being a member of the Kingdom provides the Sint Maarteners with benefits as well. My research population felt the comforts directly by being easily able to study in the Netherlands, which is financially the best option. But also in less stable times, like after the hurricane Lewis in 1995, who everybody still remembers very well. Support from the mainland was then really appreciated. Moreover, the rapidly increasing population of the island has negative results as well, and the crime rates have risen significantly the last years. Beverly, a girl who is very critical about the Sint Maarten government, is therefore not very enthusiastic about the status aparte:

> You know, we are understaffed and those departments, every day it gets more dangerous on the roads. Look at the roads, you’ve seen the roads. It is a mess. It is embarrassing. It is a mess. You know, the educational system, the infrastructure, everything is just a disaster. How can they think we are ready to go status aparte under these conditions? You know some things need to be tackled. If anything that happens to us during the hurricane, who are we going to cry to? We saw what happened to Suriname. We see Haiti. Is it a risk you really want to take? I know it’s a nice dream to have, but…

Although there are some struggles every now and then, the general feeling towards the Netherlands is thus also one of trust and protection – again like the metaphorical mother of the family we spoke about earlier. To take the step towards a more independent Sint Maarten, the status aparte, the island must win the confidence of both its inhabitants and the other parties involved, such as the Netherlands. As Cassandra told me:

> And there is no way any of the other parties within the Kingdom excepts you taking a step when you’re not ready for it, and on the end of the day you have to fall back on the others. That’s not fair. I wouldn’t want that either, if I had a child and she said I’m gonna make it on my own, and then she turns around and looks at me, I’d be like, hello, you’re the one who wanted to make it on her own.

I think, more knowledge and understanding from both sides can make this process of winning confidence easier. All parties have to accept that the colonial times are over, and that the Netherlands and Sint Maarten have to work together as partners. My informants showed me that living on both sides and experiencing both societies made it possible for them to see Sint Maarten as well as the Netherlands as special places with good and with bad characteristics, and as places where individuals are living instead of ‘colonizers and criminals’. These experiences made it possible for them to surpass the colonial discourse in which the Netherlands is the oppressor who makes the rules and Sint Maarten the oppressed who has to follow. In their perception, the country the Netherlands and the coming-to-be country Sint Maarten can finally really become equal partners, as Het Statuut already formulated in 1954, and live together as one happy family.
3.1.4 Sint Maarten Independence Movement

A small group of Sint Maarteners however, oppose this point of view and state that the colonial discourse can only be broken away from in more radical manners: the only option for them would be full independence. This group tries to convince the Sint Maarten people that a radical break-away from the past is the only step forward. They call themselves the Sint Maarten Independence Movement and although they are not really politically active, some eminent Sint Maarten artists participate in the movement. One of them is the political scientist and poet Lasana M. Sekou. The subsequent poets come from the bundle The Salt Reaper and give us some idea of the point of view of the Movement. However, most of my informants described the option of independence to me as ‘the stupidest move ever’, therefore I will not focus too much on this movement in this thesis.

Hear now, partners, succession time come to say
Caribbean man
S’maatin man
Study to do
Step up for your land, unbound the captive nation
With reason & rightness

*Lasana M. Sekou, part of the poem ‘Roughneck’*

When the divided of the nation cries
There is no longing for the land, our wholeness
Our homefullness
It has not yet been discovered as faith seen and wholly law
Not in the splintered oneness, not in truth
Not since its making fresh, salt heap and bled rip skin
In bitter soak, in the great basin of purple brine

   How now
To bring us through the dessert concord
Torn in territories of others
Or one nation to mine
Ore for us all?

*Lasana M. Sekou, ‘Claim’*
4 Citizens without a nation

I taking a sea bath, I gone down the road. 
I know these islands from Monos to Nassau, 
a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes 
that they nickname Shabine, the patois for 
any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw 
when these slums of empire was paradise. 
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea, 
I had a sound colonial education, 
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, 
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.
4.1 Homefeeling

The complex historical and political background Sint Maarten has to deal with, as we have seen in the previous chapters, has made the island a special case when looking at (the perception of) citizenship. Sint Maarten can be seen as a place of political in-betweenity, not only in between other nations (the Netherlands, the Antilles, the Kingdom) but also in between becoming a nation themselves: not yet an independent country, but willing to be one. Moreover, they are influenced by so many different area’s, Europe, the Caribbean – it is both Western and non-Western, it is local and global. It’s exactly like Walcott describes: it is either nothing – for, it is nothing describable – or everything: a nation.

In the first chapter of this thesis I spoke about the new society and its citizens, cosmopolitan citizens. Of course I came to this understanding during my fieldwork, through many conversations in which I found a glimpse of this cosmopolitanism. When time passed by and I heard more different stories, saw more sides of the Sint Maarten society and got the chance to look into some Sint Maarten lives intensively, I saw that people defined themselves as Sint Maarten citizens in multiple ways. Having the Dutch passport – a passport that gives you the comforts of easy traveling - is just one aspect of Sint Maarten people’s sense of citizenship and belonging to the island. Jane explained this to me in terms of ‘being at home’:

Ik weet het niet, ik voel me hier het meeste thuis, maar ik heb wel gewoon een Nederlands paspoort en daar kan ik overal mee gaan en staan waar ik wil. Ik zou het het liefst gewoon zo willen houden. Dit voel ik echt als mijn thuis, Sint Maarten, en dan dat papiertje...

In the previous chapter we have taken a look at the legal part of the perception of citizenship of the Sint Maarten people. Although a significant part of the Sint Maarten population carries a Dutch passport, another, also very large part has no legal binding with the Netherlands or the other parts of the Kingdom at all. The rapid population growth as a result of the tourism boom attracted many different nationalities to the island. According to information of the Sint Maarten Census Office, only 10,000 people are actually born on the island (and thus carry a Dutch passport), and about 5,000 people who are residing on Sint Maarten now were born on one of the other islands of the Antilles or on Aruba. If you realize that the whole registered Sint Maarten population is 53,000, and that there are moreover an estimated 20,000 illegal residents, this number is very small.

In this chapter, we will take a look at some other benchmarks the Sint Maarten people use to give meaning to their Dutch citizenship: political in-betweenity, economy, geography and ecological being, and in this way – by creating an extralegal dimension of this citizenship – create a Sint Maarten citizenship.

4.2 Sint Maarten citizenship: what is it built on?

In fact, a Sint Maarten citizen does not exist. There is no such thing as a Sint Maarten passport or a Sint Maarten nationality – at least, not yet. Still, the people I spoke to described and identified themselves as Sint Maarteners: not as Dutch and not at all as Antilleans. As I argued in the theoretical chapter, citizenship includes always more than just having a passport. It means having certain rights and duties, feeling responsible for your fellow citizens, being linked to all those people who are living in this same entity – it is imagined, as Anderson explained. It is something every person creates for him- or herself and this makes it possible

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to feel connected to others even though they do not carry the same passport or were not born on the same place. This emotive part of citizenship is for everybody specific and is by everybody created in a different way, it is scattered over time and place. However, on Sint Maarten, I found out that certain characteristics play a major role in one’s feelings of belonging or, in other words, in one’s creation of citizenship. Those characteristics can be bundled as political, economic and geographical types of belonging and can serve as examples of how people create their own, scattered citizenship.

4.2.1 Illegal citizens and inclusive citizenship: (a-) political belonging
Sint Maarten’s political in-betweenity is intensified by its large illegal population. The estimations about the size of this population differ, but it is a fact that thousands of unregistered people reside on the island. Those people come from all over the Caribbean, but mostly from Jamaica, Dominican Republic and Haiti. Although there are definitely stigmatizations about the illegal population, for example that they are criminal or rude, I got the feeling that in general, those people are accepted in Sint Maarten society. Let me explain this a little more ample.

The rapid economic growth on the island requires a growing labor force as well. Much of this work is construction work or maintenance: low-paid jobs, where education is not necessary. Mainly for this type of work many immigrants were attracted. Formally, working visas and residence visas will be supplied for those people who can prove they have a job. However, the great need for employees made the visa control more flexible, as Edna explained to me:

When you come in, normally you have a job already. You’re supposed to come in with a landing permit, that says, look I have a job already, I have my papers, which means you’re not supposed to be on the island before your papers are processed. You’re not supposed to be on the island before your papers are processed the first time. However, that doesn’t happen, because someone probably comes in from let’s say Haiti, and he says ‘I want to be a gardener, I want to be a construction worker’, okay, I know somebody, let me set you up. You employ the person immediately, and afterwards you do the permits, and some employers don’t even bother to do it. Because it’s tedious, it’s boring, it’s bureaucratic.

There are also many people who come in on temporary visas and stay on the island while there residence permit is expired, as Clyde knows: ‘[…] if someone wants to come here to work, let them come, but it should be more registered. Because people come here on vacation and never leave.’ The control on these visas is minimal and random: when I was staying on the island, a police corps form Curacao came over to do some raids to catch illegals, and left again after a week or two. Priscilla confessed that these raids made her really frustrated:

Why don’t they seek the trouble makers, why do they always have to do immigration raids in Simpson Bay, put everybody in jail, all those kids, all these restaurants out of employees, so that they have to close for a few days. I think that’s the problem. There are people in the getto’s selling drugs, who are breaking into houses, who pulling guns against people’s heads you know. The police are not gonna deal with it because they treat their lives, but it’s a problem. It’s frustrating.

And also Jane shared her frustration about the regulations with me. According to her, the immigration policy is inhuman and does not stimulate people to invest in the island:
Many people expressed their frustration about the government regulation to me, however, they never blamed the illegal people themselves. Coming to Sint Maarten, searching for a better place, is an act they all understand and often have experienced themselves. The problem is thus the way those people are treated and excluded. Their children cannot go to school, which created the existence of illegal, uncontrolled schools. Their employers are not controlled, which makes it possible for them to pay whatever they want – often less than the minimum wage. There are also no good working conditions, and for the concurrence is large, they threaten their employees with redundancy.

So, although all informants reject those immigrants who don’t work or participate in society, or those who get involved in criminal activities, they respect the people who work and participate in the economy. They know how hard they work and they show respect for that. I will not pretend as if legal and illegal inhabitants are completely equal, for stigmatizations are made and differences in possibilities, chances and welfare are clearly visible, however, illegal citizens are not excluded from Sint Maarten society. This inclusion is a result of the perception of citizenship as scattered, thus as comprising more than the legal aspect. This perception of scattered citizenship is true to the event of decolonization that took place and looks forward to an equal society where every individual, with or without passport, is recognized.

Although my informants all valued their Dutch passport high, this was according to them not for symbolical reasons (nationalism), but for the possibilities this passport gives to them: it means freedom, access to education all over the world, easy travelling, study financing, etcetera. The illegal citizens of Sint Maarten are still excluded from those benefits, however, the Sint Maarten government was during my stay working on a project of

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24 What I think is, well, funny is not the right word…but they stop those people who are on their way to work. You know, that’s the wrong procedure. Go to people who are hanging around on the streets, who are not working, ask them, can I see your ID card, can I see your papers. But not the people who are just working here. Their employer probably paid taxes for them, insurance. That’s not… But I also know, here, if you want to register whatever, for the papers, that takes years. And every year you have to renew the papers. That is not right. Where I used to work, at the Taloula Mango’s, we have a group from Dominican Republic, from Haiti, from Trinidad, from everywhere. All of them had papers. But every year, already four months before the old ones expire, they have to request for new papers, pay for it, wait until they are confirmed. You know, you can’t live like that. You cannot live like that. A friend of mine, also from Dominican Republic, she has three kids here, and every year she has to request and pay for the papers for herself and the three children. I mean, that’s not, if you’re not even sure if you can stay here the next year, how do you have to settle yourself and invest in the country? That doesn’t work, I think.
complementary education for all children residing on the island: also for those without valid papers. I think this can be seen as a first step in a policy of inclusive and humane citizenship. To reach this, every person’s individual capacities have to be recognized. On Sint Maarten, those capacities are usually measured in economic productivity: the dollar.

4.2.2 The dollar as the glue: economic belonging

‘I’ve seen Sint Maarten come and go’, Carlson Velasquez told me sadly. We were sitting under a big mango tree in his yard, just passed the French border – one of the few quiet places on the island. With his 71 years he remembers Sint Maarten ‘before Wathey’ still very well: in those times he used to hunt in the mountains for all the butchers on the island. Nowadays, hunting is no longer possible: ‘It is too dangerous; there are people and houses everywhere’. For Velasquez, Sint Maarten has unrecognizable changed, and not in a good way. He thought the island to be wasted, doomed to be lost:

The problem is they Sint Maarten government they can’t make no plans. They don’t look forward. Dutch government, the Dutch know how to do that, with the dammen and the sweet water lakes you know. The Sint Maarten people, they just look at the money.

And maybe Velasquez caught one of the pillars of Sint Maarten society with this: the economy. As we have seen in chapter 2, Claude Wathey brought tourism to the island in the 1950’s. Before that time, Sint Maarten was a quiet fishing village, but after the change to a tourist economy the money started flowing. Many people saw possibilities for a better life on this small island and from places all over the world they started to migrate to Sweet Sint Maarten’s Land. From the 60’s on, tourism is the main economical pillar and more than 90% of the population is employed in this sector. Sint Maarten has changed from a community-based society where barter was not uncommon, to a million-dollar tourist destination. This rapid change definitely had an influence on the Sint Maarten population and therefore on the perception of citizenship.

A large part of the Sint Maarten people resides on the island only since the start of the tourism boom, or even later. The main reason why they came to the island was thus the economic possibilities – they were driven by ‘the dollar’. Their family lines lie on other islands or in other countries, and –at least, part of- their feelings of belonging as well. Sint Maarten is for them, according to some informants, just a stop to make some quick money. However, they are dependent on the Sint Maarten economy for their own and their family’s lives. It would be too easy to say that the island does not mean anything to them. Furthermore, you might even say that the Caribbean has a history of immigration, which has always been based on economical chances. Cassandra underscored this:

And you know, I’m not against immigration or so, my family did it too. My mother came to Sint Maarten from Aruba, my grandfather went to Aruba from St. Vincent. People have done that through the times, you know. They are always looking for a better place, to better their lives you know.

Before the tourist boom, many native Sint Maarteners exchanged their island for Curacao or Aruba, also for economical reasons. On these islands oil refineries were established, which created much employment. When the refineries were closed, people had to find something new: as well the Sint Maarten migrants as many people from other islands. In the course of time, different places have been economically vibrant and thus important for the Caribbean area. Nowadays, Sint Maarten can be seen as a top economic location, and therefore it has become, as I quoted Lacena earlier, the largest employment agency of the Caribbean:
Tourism is the first source of employment on the island, before tourism people went to other islands to work there; now other people come to Sint Maarten to work. Economic migration can thus be seen as part of Caribbean, and therefore Sint Maarten, culture. Due to the extreme rapid growth, Sint Maarten is kind of an extreme case with regards to migration numbers, however a diverse and changing population can be found on many other islands. I think it can be said that it is generally accepted to move to the place with the most economical chances. As is also visible in Appendix III, most families are characterized by different backgrounds and thus different influences. Since many years already Caribbean people had to live with people from different backgrounds and descent, and find a way to deal with those differences. The general acceptance of migration forms a basis for a kind of belonging that is not based on common ancestry, history or traditions, but that is based on common being: being on the same place, in the same time. The Sint Maarten economy, which belongs to everybody who takes part in it, then becomes the glue that binds people together.

4.2.3 Island life: geographic belonging

Next to the dollar, there is something else that unites the Sint Maarten people: actually living together on the island. This might sound a bit obvious, but I think both the ecological being and the geographical situation of Sint Maarten play a major role in the sense of belonging of its inhabitants. Being a small island in the Caribbean is in my opinion one of the most influential aspects of why its society can be called a new society and its citizens Cosmopolitans.

Although Sint Maarten is, as we have seen, not a political entity itself, and there is politically speaking no such thing as a Sint Maarten citizenship, the simple fact that the place is an island with clear-cut borders, makes it easy to create an ‘us’ and a ‘them’; ‘we’ are all the people on this island, ‘they’ are all the people who are nót on this island.25 Due to its small size, my informant Linda sarcastically calls the island ‘the rock’. I think also this small size makes it easy for the population to feel united. Although in comparison with 30 years ago the island is very crowded, still you often meet the same people on the streets, in the bars and on the beach. Anderson states that a nation is based on an imagined feeling of belonging, for you can never know everybody. Of course even on Sint Maarten it is not possible to know everybody, but the small size makes it easier to meet at least a large part of the population. Even though there are some so-called shanty-towns that are avoided by the majority, most places on the island are accessible for everybody. Prejudices people have about others will therefore quickly be invalidated, for everybody has contact with everybody. The size of the island makes it more difficult to form socially isolated groups.

This became very clear during my fieldwork: there are some stereotype opinions people reproduce about social groups, such as the Dominicanos, the Haitians or the Dutch, which can be recognized as the dominant discourse. In everyday life however, they turned out to have a relationship with someone from Dominican descent for example, or to have neighbors who came from Haiti. The stereotypical statements never counted for those people, just as the stigmatizations about the Dutch did not count for me. The demotic discourse thus carries out a message of inclusiveness and sameness.

As a result of the small size and the everyone-knows-each-other culture, in combination with the large amount of nationalities and different backgrounds, something that literally can be called a global village originates. The island is like a microcosm, and a

25 As mentioned before, the island exists of a Dutch side and a French side. In this research, when I speak about ‘the island’, I mean only the Dutch side.
microcosm has (micro)Cosmopolitan citizens. The emergence of such a microcosm is not only due to its size and ecological being however, but also to the, one might say, strategic geographical location Sint Maarten has.

4.2.4 Peas on a tin plate

Let Walcott help us first to draw a picture of the Caribbean area:

Open the map. More islands there, man,
than peas on a tin plate, all different size,
one thousand in the Bahamas alone,
from mountains to low scrub with coral keys,
and from this bowsprit, I bless every town.
*Derek Walcott, The Schooner Flight*

The large amount of small islands that are located relatively close to each other makes the migration streams between the islands easy. From Sint Maarten, the islands of Anguilla, St. Barths and Saba can be reached easily by ferry-boat. Small airplanes fly between almost all islands every day, and even the smallest islands have landing places. Traffic between the islands is, and has been for a long time, the order of the day.

The large exchange of people, labor and (trade) commodities make that the islands form a larger being together. Although all islands have their own specific characteristics, different nationalities and even different colonial pasts, there is something like an overarching identity that binds them together and makes all people living on the islands in a way connected to each other: living in the Caribbean and therefore being a kind of Caribbean citizen. For most people being a Caribbean man or woman is something self-evident, almost naturally. Tallulah tried to explain to me how she felt about this:

Caribbean.. Yeah you know.. Caribbean culture. For instance what we eat, what we do, where we go to, the soca, the zouk. It’s Caribbean you know. Not really the mentality, it’s like a source of belonging. I can’t really explain it, ja, a Caribbean culture.

Especially the fact that there is no such thing as politically being Caribbean, makes it something that is not really loaded: people are not ashamed to be Caribbean. I asked my informants if they felt Caribbean citizens as well, and all of them confirmed the feeling. Although this Caribbean citizenship is only emotive, it can be very important in everyday life. Being Caribbean stands for the good things of living in this particular geographical area: sunshine, friendly people, music, a relaxed mentality and Carnival. John underscored this:

*And Caribbean citizen.. Do you think there is something like a Caribbean culture, that binds the islands together?*
Yeah there is a Caribbean culture. For instance, most people travel to different islands. With carnival for instance. Or jazz festivals, for those people who like jazz. It is very accepted that you are Caribbean.

Within the Caribbean, bundles of islands can be pointed out that display a greater similarity. In the case of Sint Maarten, neighboring islands Anguilla, St. Barth, Saba and ‘Statia’, St. Eustatius, are considered equals. The exchange among these islands is even larger than with others, and the inhabitants recognize each other as similar. Percy emphasized this:

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26 See also Map 1: the Caribbean area.
Those bundles were thus formed naturally, as a result of the geographic location, and not politically as is the case with the Antilles and Aruba. My informants do not place any question marks by ‘being Caribbean’, something that many definitely do by the term ‘Antillean’. John became a bit annoyed when I asked him if he felt connected to the people of the other Antillean islands and Aruba:

I wouldn’t say there is an Antillean culture. I’d say there is a Bovenwindse en Benedenwindse culture. It’s like miles apart, it’s a total different culture. I think we all understand, we are Antilleans, but I don’t think we feel that common.. if a Sint Maartener look at an Anguillian they say okay, we’re one people. But not look at a Bonairian and say we’re one people.

Also Cassandra was really clear about this:

You’re from an island, you are at home there, and that’s what makes you who you are. The people raised you. So once again, I always say the Antilles is an onzinterm, judge me for who I am, on my history and nothing else.

I think this aversion towards the term Antilles or Antillean, which many of the people I spoke to expressed, is linked with the political meanings attached to it. There is no real antagonism towards the Curacoalaneans or the Arubans for example, but the term is too much linked with the stigmatizations and even discrimination in the Netherlands. Therefore people might have negative associations with it.

Cassandra’s quote shows that she wants to disassociate herself from ‘the Antilleans’: she clearly does not want to be linked to those people who she probably values negatively as well. Actually, none of the people I spoke to denied that there are problems both in the Netherlands and on the Antillean islands and Aruba with certain people. However, they emphasize the difference between ‘them’ and ‘us’, between the people who cause the trouble and the people who go to the Netherlands to study and achieve something. I think mainly due to the many negative associations that accompany the term Antilleans – for example corruption, crime, rudeness – people started to dislike the term and search for an alternative: Caribbean, Sint Maarten or, in the end, ‘just me’. Grace summarizes this for me: it is not the roots, the birth place or the passport what makes you who you are, it is for everybody a combination of this where you, as an individual, comes from and chooses your identity from.
4.3 With Obama on the road to a new Sint Maarten

Scattered citizenship as I defined it can be linked to an ideology of equality for all people, to a society where all citizens, no matter what their background is, or their mother tongue or their skin colour, count as equal individuals. In a society based on scattered citizenship everybody can then be, as Cassandra and many others are willing to, ‘just me’. The many different influences people have to deal with, in their own roots and routes and in those of others, make it hard to determine what is ‘real’, or when someone is a ‘real citizen’. Scattered citizenship makes it possible for everyone to be an individual citizen, with his or her own story, but at the same time belong to others – far away and nearby.

The ideology of being yourself and being one at the same time is also expressed by American president Obama. When I was on the island for my fieldwork, the US elections had just taken place. With many of my informants I spoke about this charismatic person and they all saw his election as a very important happening in their lives as well. It seemed as if the whole island was Obama supporter: Obama T-shirts, Obama songs, free SMS service on the Inauguration Day and large screens to follow this inauguration on the 20th of January 2009. Although the popularity of this president can be explained by several factors, for example the large influence of the USA on Sint Maarten, I think that his message to a large extent corresponds with the idea of a new society. Let’s have a look at his already famous speech, which has been used in, among others, a song from the American hiphop band the Black Eyed Peas.

There is something happening when people vote not just for the party they belong to but the hopes they hold in common – that whether we are rich or poor, black or white, Latino or Asian, whether we hail from Iowa or New Hampshire, Nevada or South Carolina, we are ready to take this country in a fundamentally new direction. That is what’s happening in America right now. Change is what’s happening in America. […]

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation.
Yes we can.
It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail toward freedom.
Yes we can.
It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness.
Yes we can.
It was the call of workers who organized; women who reached for the ballots; a President who chose the moon as our new frontier; and a King who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the Promised Land.
Yes we can to justice and equality.
Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.
Yes we can heal this nation.
Yes we can repair this world.
Yes we can.

Fragments of the speech of 44th President of the United States Barack Obama held in New Hampshire29

That’s hard to answer. Because my roots are as well in Surinam, here, my grandfather is from here, my mother comes from Curacao, she was born and raised there. And I, I’m born in the Netherlands, my umbilical cord lies there, but… I’ve lived there…I used the facilities that were offered… but a Dutchman…well, what is that? No, I’d say, I’m just Charlene. Yes. I’m a darkskinned girl, my history lies here in the Caribbean and that’s all I can say about it.

29 http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/08/remarks_of_sensor_barack_obam_82.php
This speech, and the song – which was even more popular on the island –, express a feeling that something has to change to reach the ideology of equality and sameness. Obama as a matter of fact is with his words true to the event of decolonization and looks forward to a more equal world where we are all linked together as family. Obama in a way thus expresses the demotic discourses of equality and leaves behind the old notions of black and white, colonizer and colonized. His popularity shows that the Sint Maarten people are searching for this new society, and are willing to leave the past behind. His manifest call for ‘change’ is something the Sint Maarten people long for as well, either in the form of status aparte or in a more abstract form by leaving behind the colonial notions. Obama gives them a grip to exchange the dominant discourse of colonialism and inequality for the demotic discourse of decolonization and partnership in which we are all one family inhabiting this planet.

This of course is, at least in this stadium, still an utopia, however the dream does not per se erase the real: the supermulticultural society of Sint Maarten is in my opinion an example of a step towards a more equal world. In the next chapter I will look at the multicultural question that has always existed but has become more important in our globalizing world: how can people live together in difference? This question is extremely important for one’s notion of citizenship and I state that scattered citizenship can be a part of the answer to this question.
5 Diversity in the cultural – the immigrant society

So, tell me now:
What you goin’ do with dem so who stay
Kit and kin
Laboring
Their’s our children too
Borning here
Rearing here
Illegal here
Naturalizing here
Some outta school here
When all should be in class
Learning to walk erect the tracks of Caribbean features
Without the lose of sight from whence all come
Talking all kind ah languages
Forging all the ores found into one clay breath
To fashion stain-glass looks like familial kente
Beauty&bold like generous you&i&we&all
Into this being of a chance to raise a new Jerusalem
This nation in transition … ?

_Lasana M. Sekou, Caribbean Road Work in St. Martin_
5.1 Cultural fluidity: the reality on Sint Maarten

It was already time to go home for the last year’s students of Milton Peter’s College, MPC, but still I found myself in the middle of an energetic debate with the main theme: what is a real Sint Maartener? I asked this question to the students to find out how they thought about the many immigrants that are living on the island: did they see them as part of the Sint Maarten people, as I did, or did they still consider them outsiders? To trigger their consciousness, I asked them some questions about their own surroundings: where do your parents come from, where were your best friends born? One girl, who actually had some clear cut opinions about what a Sint Maartener was, suddenly shouted out: ‘Oh my God, this is embarrassing, none of my friends actually is from Sint Maarten!’

It was as if this girl was only at this moment confronted with the multicultural realities of the island. When we were talking about what a real Sint Maartener was, many people stated that you should have been born on the island to be one. However, when talking about it a little longer and when looking at everyone’s own situation, it turned out that in that case, almost no one in class was a real Sint Maartener – while they did feel like one. In this class, we finally came to the conclusion that everybody can be a real Sint Maartener, no matter what you look like or where you are born. Again, a very inclusive view on Sint Maarten citizenship.

Also with my other informants I spoke about this ‘real Sint Maartener’ and how you can become one. It was a popular topic, not only among the people I spoke to, but also in the newspaper and on the radio stations. It became soon clear to me that the Sint Maarten people are everyday confronted with what Stuart Hall (Yuval-Davis 2006, 6) calls ‘the Multicultural Question’: how can people live together in difference?

The event of decolonization in a way made this question come up for discussion. The – at least, on paper – acknowledgement of all people as equal beings asked for new insights on how to live together with all the differences taken into account. The globalization that emerged out of these developments has made this multicultural question one of the most important questions of our time.

5.2 The multicultural question: how to deal with all those differences?

I raised this multicultural question to my informants many times and they gave me some interesting insights in Sint Maarten society. In the second chapter, I showed that many informants describe Sint Maarten as a society without culture, or at least, without authentic culture. The many different influences Sint Maarten has to deal with, make it hard for the Sint Maarten people to find something of their own. The website of the Sint Maarten government uses the political situation of the island - being part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands - proudly to attract more tourists with the one-liner ‘A little European, a lot of Caribbean’. But not only the influence from the Netherlands, but also that of the other Antillean islands and Aruba, of the thousands of immigrants from neighboring islands and places further away who bring their own habits and traditions and of the millions of tourists from all over the world make it difficult to find something typical Sint Maarten.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, to fully understand the Sint Maarten culture, we need to let go of the authentic culture idea and use a Creole definition of the notion. Although the Sint Maarten people do not explicitly describe their culture in a Creole way – for this is something only social scientists with their conceptual vocabulary do -, the characteristics of this new

30 www.st-maarten.com/facts
notion of culture shine through their remarks. Look for example at Priscilla’s opinion, the Canadian-Dutch girl who spent almost her whole life on the island:

I don’t think, we don’t have much culture now. But maybe that’s part of it, the transit, the transit population is part of our culture? People say, there are so many people from all over the world here. You meet people from Sweden, Brasil, South Africa. We got 80 nationalities on 60 square miles.

Indeed, the extremely diverse population of the island produces a culture that might not be easy to catch in words, but is even more visible in real life. If you try to put aside your own traditional notions of culture, you see something more vivid, more moving and more exciting than any other form of culture you might have seen before. When talking about their lives on the island, my informants always mention the freedom they experience, everyday again. The diversity of the population produces a certain Sint Maarten mentality that is not easy to describe – the great variety of people makes it easier to respect difference, and to acknowledge difference. As a result, you can be yourself on Sint Maarten. As a Sint Maarten citizen you thus do not have to belong to a specific group, a specific colour or ethnicity, to belong to the island. Roberto describes this proudly to me:


For Laura this was something she missed very much when she was in the Netherlands for her studies:

En ik merkte dat er… Er [in Nederland, JS] is een groter verschil tussen mensen, je behoort er echt tot een groep. En dat miste ik er heel erg, ik miste echt de interactie met verschillende leeftijden. Je wordt, toen ik aankwam als student daar, je werd echt in een groep geplaatst. Oke, je bent 18 of 19 en je hoort naar die groep te gaan want daar zijn alle andere.. daar horen.. je hoort die dingen te doen zo. Je hoort verder niet maar te zeggen wat je.. hier is het anders, ik heb vrienden van alle leeftijden.

This freedom of being yourself without belonging to a certain group is an important characteristic of scattered citizenship. You can live on the island and belong to the people, no matter how you look, which religion you practice or even which language you speak.

Next to the official languages Dutch and English, many other languages are spoken. A growing majority of the population speaks Spanish, for many immigrants come from the Dominican Republic or South America. Sint Maarten people anticipate on this: people can learn Spanish in school, and many businessmen – who are often from Indian descent - take courses in Spanish to broaden their customer circle, Clyde thinks:

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31 On Sint Maarten, you can be yourself. You don’t have to fit a certain box, you can choose. I like that. You can be yourself and that is Sint Maarten. And there are so many different people, nobody is special. Also the rich people, the moviestars, if they come here they think, why doesn’t anybody come towards me? But we think, you are not special. I would not want anything else.

32 And I noticed that… There [in the Netherlands, JS] is a greater difference between people, you really belong to a group there. And I really missed that, I missed the interaction with different ages. You become, when I came there as a student, you were really placed into a certain group. Okay, you are 18 or 19 and you should go to that group, because there are all the other.. there belong.. you’re supposed to do those certain things you know. You’re not supposed to say whatever. here it’s different, I’ve got friends of all ages here.
Last week I went into a store, and the shop owner, he looked like an Indian, and he started speaking Spanish! But I think nowadays if you are in this business, there are so many Spanish people here. And then another language is a plus. Every other language is a plus.

Clyde’s example shows the openness to outside influences of the Sint Maarten people. I think this openness is not in the first place something people have consciously; however, it is just the result of those large amounts of ‘Others’ of whom they have no choice but to live with.

When reading the Daily Herald, one of the island’s newspapers, I realized that also the media is aimed at those different groups. There is space for news from all area’s; surrounding islands, like Jamaica or Hispaniola, but also about the Netherlands and the other Antillean islands. Edna, journalist at this newspaper, explains to me that this is a conscious choice: the Herald wants to be a newspaper for all people on the island and thus wants to provide information that might be interesting for a broad group of people: there is something interesting for everybody.

According to Milton, a teacher who spent more than twenty years of his life in the Netherlands, Sint Maarten’s secret is that there is a sort of reversed integration: the island adjusts itself to the people that are coming in, instead of the other way around. It can thus be said that Sint Maarten has a culture of transit, as Priscilla describes it, and openness. This kind of culture is open for all influences and thus for change: it is a Creole conception of culture in which Appiah’s superdiversity, coming into being as the result of globalization, is central. But does the Sint Maarten society expect something from its newcomers?

5.3 Who is a real Sint Maartener?

People I spoke to often had difficulties describing a real Sint Maartener: there is no such thing. A Sint Maartener can be either black or white or everything in between. He or she can be born on Anguilla, Jamaica or Sint Maarten itself, it does not really matter. The person might speak Sint Maarten English, but even that is a bit outdated. Of course there are some stereotypical images of what a Sint Maarten man (for this typical image never belongs to a woman) looks like, as Laura tells me laughing:

Hmm [while looking around, JS]… De Sint Maartenaar ehm.. spreekt Engels, maar kan Nederlands. Maar liever niet. Rijdt in een grote auto als ze het zouden kunnen. Ehmm.. voelt zich erg belangrijk.33

In every discussion I had about this topic, we finally came to the conclusion that everybody can be a real Sint Maartener. In the first place, stereotypical images as Laura’s came to the fore, but my informants, although feeling a real Sint Maartener themselves, never fitted their own image. Like Yi Ling, a Sint Maarten girl from Chinese descent:

It’s difficult. Because like I’m here since ‘78, but there are people that are new and if they see me, they won’t say you’re a Sint Maartener. Maybe if they hear me speak… But I’m not sure.

So in the end we usually concluded that being a Sint Maartener is not something static, as looks or birthright, but something you can achieve.

33 Hmm… The Sint Maartener ehh… speaks English, but can speak Dutch. But he prefers not to. He drives a big car, if they could afford it. Ehmmm… he feels himself very important.
What most people find most important is that people participate in society and contribute to the island, in whatever way possible, but mainly in financial terms. Like we have seen in the previous chapter, participating in the economy is one of the main pillars of Sint Maarten citizenship. Also participation in cultural events like Carnival or Sint Maarten’s Day are said to be important. Linda emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness: you have to understand where things come from, know the language, the cultural icons and the history. By knowing the local habits, how you greet each other, how you deal with each other. Those things can be learnt, but only by being on the island for a certain amount of years. It then does not matter at all where you come from, thus also a Haitian can become a Sint Maartener.

I think Linda catches the essence of Sint Maarten emotive citizenship: as soon as you can ‘go with the flow’, live your life together with the rest of the island, you are part of it. Being a Sint Maartener is located in your attitude, as Cassandra mentions:

What you have to do.. I think it’s your way of thinking, having the best, ehh, het beste voor hebben, for the island. Wanting to contribute, make it a better place, a safer place. Willing to invest, from a financial perspective. Contributing to the labour force, you know. Something, contribute. Not only wanting to take and move on. [...] it’s during the time you are on that whatever place you have chosen to take residence, what’s your perspective, what do you do to give back to the place that takes you. And everyone who comes to Sint Maarten and wants to call it home, they have to give something back.

Jane summarizes this for me:

Nee, als jij gewoon weet, het eiland respecteert, met respect omgaat met alles en weet ik woon op een super-eiland, en ik wil daartoe bijdragen. Dan vind ik, dan ben je gewoon een Sint Maartenaar. 34

This attitude towards newcomers is in my opinion clearly different from the attitude in the Netherlands. Also this part of the Kingdom has to deal with its multicultural present, although maybe to a lesser extent than Sint Maarten. I asked my informants how they, as newcomers in the Dutch society, experienced this.

5.4 Multicultural issues in the Kingdom

The Netherlands has, just like Sint Maarten, to cope with an increasing amount of cultural differentiation in its population. It has to accommodate many different people, not only the Caribbean Dutch, but also people hailing from Morocco, Turkey, Eastern Europe and many other countries. While on Sint Maarten, as we have seen, people from many different backgrounds live together without major problems, in the Netherlands this situation causes friction and public debate.

Within the multicultural debate, migrants are often considered problematic for, according to some politicians such as Geert Wilders and Rita Verdonk, their cultures are not easily compatible with Dutch culture. A Creole conception of culture is missing. A division is made between Dutch and non-Dutch, and more expansively Western and non-Western. The Caribbean Dutch are in this debate aligned with the non-Dutch. Officially they are, of course, Dutch citizens and this division is thus rather based on for example (racial) appearance than on legal status.

34 No, if you just know, respect the island, respect everything and you know, I live on a super island and I want to contribute to that. Than I think, than you just are a Sint Maartener.
My informants, who studied and therefore lived in the Netherlands for sometimes over ten years, experienced this attitude sometimes as rejecting. Although they spoke mainly in positive terms about their time in Holland – maybe they were also afraid to offend me – unease about the stigmatizing attitudes towards ‘the Antilleans’ often came to the fore, and all of them had to deal with discrimination issues, either with friends or with themselves. For example Clyde, who was not able to rent a room for some Sint Maarten friends:

Me and a friend was keeping a party for Sint Maarten’s Day and we wanted to bring a band from Sint Maarten to play at the party and in Rotterdam the hotel said they didn’t rent to Antilleans. Because there was such a negative name around Antilleans that time, they said they didn’t rent to Antilleans.

It can thus be said that citizenship in the Netherlands is scattered as well, for carrying a Dutch passport is not enough to be included in Dutch society. However, the structural level in which reification of certain characteristics of citizenship takes place is in such a way exclusive that the rim-land Dutch cannot fit in. In other words, the dominant discourse, which defines Dutch citizenship as something reserved for white people from Dutch descent, does not leave room for the scattered citizenship of individuals. It does not leave room for a stoic cosmopolitan attitude, recognizing one’s beginning yet being open to growth and the Other. In my opinion, the Dutch population is in comparison with the Sint Maarten population too afraid for change as a result of globalization. An influential opinion propagated by political pundits is that globalization and thus more influence from the outside world destroys the ‘real’ Dutch culture. The question on being able to live with difference, the newcomers, is answered negatively. This dominant discourse makes it impossible to live together in difference and is therefore absolutely not a credible answer to the multicultural question.

On Sint Maarten however, it can be said that the next step in answering the multicultural question is taken. It is no longer the question if the newcomers can live on the island, but more how the government should deal with them. It is not questioned if they belong to Sint Maarten society, which they do, but how this unity should be regulated in terms of among others education, language, and scholarships. People value the differences in Sint Maarten society instead of rejecting them. Look for example at Stephanie’s announcement:

Mensen zijn het gewoon gewend. Vooral in het hoogseizoen, weet je.. op zich gaat het prima hier. We zijn de laatste tien jaar gewoon niets anders meer gewend dat er hier 1000 verschillende koppen rondlopen. Maar daarom is het hier ook zo fijn eigenlijk. 35

Although the people I spoke to do recognize the problems that accompany the extremely fluid society, they emphasize the positive effects of so much difference. Several times informants called Sint Maarten ‘Little New York’, a term which has apparently been released by a radio DJ. For example Edna, who, as must be said, had written text for tourism information books:

It’s also a very cosmopolitan place. You could, you know, compare it to New York City. You get the great culinary experiences, you’ve got the …. you even have some of the frustrations of living in a big city. And ehm, you have… you get all of the benefits of living in a big city, but still at a small town fare. So… […] Some people might not agree with it, but if you look at it from the perspective of economics and tourism, Sint Maarten’s uniqueness is the fact that there are so many different nationalities living here. There is a plethora of restaurants where you can eat Moroccan breakfast, and French for

35 People are just used to it here. Especially in high season, you know… In general everything goes allright here. We just haven’t seen anything else the last ten years, than that a 1000 different heads walk around here. But that’s one of the reason’s why it is so nice here.
lunch, and have something completely Dutch for dinner. So our culture comes out all those things.

But also Clyde describes the island to me in this way:

This island… you can find everything. So much life, you know. I heard it on the radio; someone actually called it Little New York. No matter what time you go on the road, you find people.

Archeologist Jay Haviser stresses however that, according to him, Sint Maarten is not a melting pot. Many informants used this term, but I think Haviser has a point by stating that the Sint Maarten multicultural society looks more like a shifting mosaic with porous boundaries, where everybody is allowed to live his or her own life, with own habits, religion, music and clothing, but at the same time is glued to each other through, as we have seen in the previous chapters, economics, geographical and ecological situation and history.

According to Jane and Percy, brother and sister from Surinam descent, but for now settled on Sint Maarten, the Dutch multicultural society just needs more time to establish itself. Also on Sint Maarten this needed time, but a critical point has been passed and this mixed society has become a fact:

Maar misschien… volgens mij is het hier wel zo ver dat je geen groepen meer kan afschermen, het is nu gewoon, in de laatste 30 jaar zijn er zoveel mensen van verschillende eilanden hier naartoe gekomen en hun kinderen zijn allemaal hier geboren, dus je hebt allemaal rassen en nationaliteiten die hier onder één nationaliteit vallen. Maar je hebt ook niet zoals in Nederland you know een Turkse wijk, of een Marokkaanse wijk.36

It looks like the Sint Maarten people have decided to be true to not only decolonization, but also to globalization and the multicultural present that results from this. They realize that in the end, we are all just small parts, together creating this world, just as this world is just one star in the universe:

As many islands as the stars at night  
like falling fruit around the schooner Flight.  
But things must fall, and so it always was,  
on one hand Venus, on the other Mars;  
fall, and are one, just as this earth is one  
island in archipelagos of stars.  

*Derek Walcott, The Schooner Flight*

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36 But maybe… I think, we are as far that it is no longer possible to protect certain groups, now it’s just, the last 30 years so many people came from different islands and their children are all born here, thus you have all those races and nationalities that belong to one nationality here. But you don’t have things, like in the Netherlands, as you know, a Turkish barrio, or a Moroccan barrio.
Conclusion

Onandi, Felicia and Robert introduced us to some of the complex, intriguing and multiple realities of the Sint Maarten society. They made me aware of the influence of history and the difficult relationship with the Netherlands and the other islands. They pointed me towards some specific ways of belonging that surpass the legal citizenship rules. And they made me realize that a multicultural society is a reality we cannot neglect anymore and that we have to acknowledge this reality to be able to move on.

Those three findings functioned as the basis for this thesis, in which I tried to answer my research question: How do Dutch citizens from Sint Maarten who studied in the Netherlands and remigrated to the island perceive and interpret their citizenship within the context of the highly multicultural society of Sint Maarten and the upcoming constitutional changes within the Kingdom of the Netherlands?

In the different chapters, separate aspects of this question have been dealt with. Let us now have another, last look at them and bring them together to answer this main question, which will give us the grips to work towards a better future for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and eventually for the whole world – which is as a matter of fact no longer easily cleavable into isolated, separate nation-states.

The Kingdom: its history and future

In chapter 2 we looked at the history of the Kingdom, the Caribbean area and Sint Maarten through the eyes of my informants. As Walcott told us with his poem *The Almond Trees*, the Caribbean area has almost no visible history. With the old notions of culture, many state that the Caribbean, and thus Sint Maarten, therefore have no own culture.

Indeed, in these static conceptualizations of culture, where it is considered something tangible and unchangeable, Sint Maarten has no culture. However, the fluidity and openness of the Caribbean region makes that the area needs a different way of conceptualizing culture, which Hannerz (1987) calls a Creole way: cultures are then systems of meaning that are forever changing.

When using this Creole concept of culture, the Sint Maarten society is better describable: it is namely a very open, moving society, which is and has been under constant influence of among others the Netherlands, the other Antillean islands and Aruba, the other Caribbean islands and the United States. Moreover, it has been a forage harbor during colonial times, which made the population constantly changing. All those factors influenced Sint Maarten in their own way, however, in the end, the Sint Maarten people create their own society out of the large influx of opinions, rules, ideas and people.

The different stories of my informants show that everybody interprets the past in his or her own way. The diverse backgrounds of for example Onandi, Felicia and Robert make that they all have their own view on history – as have all the other inhabitants of the island. This diversity of stories reduces the influence of one general story, for example that of slavery or colonization. Moreover, the more recent history of fast economic development plays a role in this as well. Those two aspects, diverse population and quick economic growth, have given Sint Maarten a special place within the Kingdom.

Although the island is a part of the Netherlands Antilles, Sint Maarten has always been a bit of an outsider. This feeling of ‘being different’ has converted itself into a need for change, which eventually led to the choice for a status aparte, a so-called status of being an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This status aparte is a popular topic of debate both on the radio, in the newspaper and on the streets. My informants were often skeptical about the changes, although all of them confirmed that ‘something’ has to change.
My informants, although aware of the differences between Dutch and Sint Maarten culture, did not think independence to be a good solution. As we could see in chapter 3, most of them consider the Kingdom a family, with the Netherlands as the mother figure. This family metaphor shows that they see the bond between the different parts of the Kingdom as something natural and inevitable: once you are a mother, you are a mother forever. Breaking this bond is thus not an option, although they think the ‘family relations’ can be improved.

This improvement can, in my opinion, be found in what Badiou (Ingram 2005) calls ‘being true to the event’. As we have seen in the theoretical chapter, this event can in this case be found in decolonization. Although officially the different parts of the Kingdom are equal partners, as says Het Statuut, too often the Netherlands is still considered – and considers herself – as the colonial ruler, whereas the island perceive themselves as the colonial oppressed and act like this as well. In everyday speech and practice, my informants leave this past behind them and are indeed true to the event. In politics and media however, this – what I call – colonial discourse is still present and it impedes the Kingdom from progress.

In Gerd Baumann’s (1996) terms, this colonial discourse can be seen as part of the dominant discourses, while the everyday practice and speech of my informants is part of the demotic discourses. If the Kingdom really wants to make progress and improve its mutual relationships, all parties have to let go of this dominant colonial discourse and recognize the underlying, demotic discourses which are true to the event of decolonization and offer possibilities to form an international alliance based on equal partnerships. In this future perspective, the Kingdom will no longer serve as a colonial structure but as a post-national entity. To do this, it has to let go of the old notions of nation-state and citizen and acknowledge a community based on what I call scattered citizenship.

**Sint Maarten citizenship: emotive and inclusive**

As we have seen in chapter 2 and chapter 3, Sint Maarten is no political entity an sich. However, when I spoke to the Sint Maarten people, they identified themselves in the first place as Sint Maarteners or Sint Maarten citizens and not, for example, as Antillean or Dutch citizens. There is thus something that unites the Sint Maarten people and makes them feel connected to everybody living in their Sweet Sint Maarten’s Land which is not only linked to the possession of a certain passport or a certain place of birth.

This extralegal kind of citizenship brought me to the conception of the term as scattered citizenship: citizenship as something fragmented and as something in which the owner of this citizenship has an active role in creating it. Scattered citizenship includes those feelings of belonging to a place whereas you do not possess a passport. It can be multiple: someone can be a scattered citizen of two or more nations at the same time. Thus, having a Dutch passport, feeling Sint Maartener and having Surinam roots become easily connectable.

I found out that this scattered form of citizenship which I found on Sint Maarten is defined by a couple of specific characteristics. In the first place, the political in-betweeness in combination with the large economic growth and the history of changing population composition. The political situation, belonging to the Antilles and the Kingdom and being not yet an autonomous country, makes Sint Maarten citizenship something that cannot be perceived through legal terms but only through emotive terms. The ever-changing population, which is extremely intensified as a result of the tourist boom, has made the significance of legal papers or passport even smaller. Sint Maarten citizenship is therefore also defined by what you do and how you behave. Participation in economy and respect for the island were the two indicators for Sint Maarten citizenship I heard most. By responding positively to those indicators, every person can become a Sint Maarten citizen: Sint Maarten citizenship is thus an inclusive kind of citizenship.
What might sound obvious but should not be neglected is the ecological and geographical situation of Sint Maarten: being an island in the Caribbean makes the place easily definable (if you are on the island, you belong to the island, if you are not on the island, you do not belong to it). Furthermore, the location in between thousands of other small islands, with a history of mutual exchange, influences the attitude towards newcomers. Since migration is such a normal thing, and almost every family has migrated through history, newcomers are easily accepted – if, as said before, they participate actively in society.

The multicultural question and scattered citizenship

The perception of citizenship as scattered and the consequences this has for the general tolerance towards migrants is in my opinion the basis of the mostly successful multicultural society on Sint Maarten. As the case of Sint Maarten shows us, especially in comparison with the Netherlands, to live together in difference, we need this new conceptualization of citizenship. A multicultural society can only function if its citizens are Cosmopolitan citizens, who, as Appiah states, pay attention to both the specific and the wider community, without generalizing them as being completely homogeneous (2006, 111). People do no longer feel themselves (only) connected to others who live in the same area or who share the same habits or language, but to people from all kind of backgrounds, with different languages and different looks.

Sint Maarten’s openness thus goes together with a respect for difference. In the superdiverse society of Sint Maarten, there is a place for everyone regardless of things like appearance, language or passport. As my informants call it, on Sint Maarten you can be yourself, whoever that self is. People anticipate on each other, by learning each other’s languages and listening to different kinds of music. One informant called it a reversed integration policy, however, this might sound a bit negative. Sint Maarten society is open for outside influence and thus for change; it does not try to force its inhabitants into a certain profile.

On the basis of this idea of scattered citizenship lies the recognition of the individual. As a result of the many different influences the Sint Maarten people have to deal with, both in their own lives (migration, studying abroad, friends and family in other countries) and in Sint Maarten society (many different nationalities living together, constantly being confronted with the Other), the only stable part of someone’s identity is ‘just yourself’. Many of my informants declared to me that, however they felt as belonging to both Sint Maarten and the Netherlands, or to Dominican Republic as well as Surinam, in the end, they were ‘just themselves’. There is thus a significant attention for the individual in this perception of citizenship, and the agent has quite a lot of power in deciding and creating what his or her own citizenship comprises. Important in this view on structure and agency, is that the agents all together create the structure. As we have seen in the theoretical chapter, the larger structure of citizenship, thus how citizenship is perceived in general, is influenced by multiple aspects. The economy is one of the aspects that highly influences Sint Maarten citizenship, but there are numerous other aspects as well, for example technology – easy traveling between islands and other countries - , ideology – the Kingdom as a family – and media – often reproducing the colonial discourse -. 

On the balconies again…

If we combine all those findings, we can conclude that scattered citizenship encapsulates the perception of Dutch citizenship of those people who lived on Sint Maarten, studied in the Netherlands and returned to the island, and maybe also of many other people living on the island. The extremely multicultural society, where everybody has to deal with on a daily basis, makes an inclusive view on citizenship inevitable for a successful society. The
upcoming constitutional changes within the Kingdom can be a step away from the colonial structure, where the Netherlands was the ruler and the islands the followers. With on the basis the idea of a family, the road is free to work towards a post-national configuration based on equal partnership. Recognizing all citizens of this Kingdom as scattered citizens would be a first step on this road.

In the first part of this thesis, Onandi, Felicia and Robert introduced us to the complex realities of this small island, Sint Maarten. Spending three months on that island made me realize that these people are at the same time very different from each other and very much the same. And they made me recognize that that is in a way the basis of societies all over the world: we are all very different, but in a way also very much the same.

Globalization creates, according to Appiah (2006), a superdiversity in the world instead of more homogeneity. As a result of this superdiversity, every person can, and should be able to, express his or her own individuality while on the same time belong to a greater whole. As Davids and Van Driel stated, as the result of globalization processes, people are in the processes of giving new cultural meanings to the surrounding world. Scattered citizenship is an example of this. This approach on citizenship recognizes the particularity of every inhabitant of a country or other entity while on the same time acknowledging the equality of all of them.

In this thesis, I showed – with the help of all the Sint Maarten people – that such citizenship is both possible and desirable, for the societies of the future will have to deal with more and more differences while at the same time have to find a way to bring all those different people together. The new conceptualization of terms such as nation-state and culture make it possible to approach societies – and thus give meaning to - in a new way that suits the reality of multiculturalism, globalization and decolonization. While I started this thesis on the balconies of the beautiful island Sint Maarten, I would like to conclude on the balconies of the future, looking towards a world full of those new societies, where every individual has a chance to express his or her individuality whereas at the same time this person feels united with his or her fellow Cosmopolitan citizens. It might still be a dream, however, as I said before, this dream does not have to erase the real and a beautiful future might indeed be visible.
Recommendations

Three months on this vivid little island in the Caribbean sea turned out to provide me with way too little time to collect all the information I wanted, to understand all layers of society and to meet all different people living on Sint Maarten. Those three months gave me the opportunity to prick through the outside layers of tourism, colonialism and macho behaviour. What I found is presented in this thesis. However, many more layers are still covered and ready to be exposed to the outside world. Sint Maarten is so much more than beach and sun, or than slavery and plantations. In this thesis I tried to give a first view on the possibilities this peculiar island has to offer, and on the example function it can fulfill for many other societies – among others the Netherlands. More research would be necessary however to get a more integral image of the Sint Maarten multicultural society, especially among those people who do not carry a Dutch passport and did not get the possibility to study in the Netherlands. Although I tried to encapsulate this part of the population in the thesis as well, I spoke mainly to those people who do carry a passport and, as I explained in the introduction, who followed higher education in the Netherlands. Also research among the large illegal population would be necessary to complete one’s understanding of Sint Maarten and it’s society.

Moreover, next to the factors I attended to in chapter 4, Sint Maarten citizenship can be influenced by many more aspects, for example religion – how do people with different religious backgrounds perceive Sint Maarten citizenship? – and gender – is there a difference in the perception of citizenship of men and women? -, to name but a few.

In this thesis I made choices, for there was no possibility to discuss all topics involved in the perception of citizenship of the Sint Maarten people. The great diversity of those people, which we have looked at several times, makes it difficult to give a general view. I tried to encapsulate all social groups under the name of scattered citizenship, for this concept makes all equal with respect to difference. However, research among the different social groups can still be useful in deepening one’s filling in of scattered citizenship. Furthermore, it would be very interesting to research how the perception of citizenship of the Sint Maarteners has developed after the constitutional changes have taken place.

Ultimately, I think it would be very interesting to do similar research on other places: other Caribbean islands with different European partners such as Martinique, or on independent islands such as Dominican Republic or St. Lucia. But also on completely different places; after all, all people in all countries have to deal with their perception of citizenship and it would be interesting to see if the conception of citizenship as scattered can be useful in those countries as well. Since all societies have to deal with the growing globalization, such new conceptualizations can be highly useful.
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Appendix I: Sint Maarten and the Caribbean Area

### Appendix II: Nationalities on Sint Maarten

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