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**Life in "Paradise" a social psychological and anthropological study of nature conservation in the Caribbean Netherlands**

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## **Why do you Protect the Environment?**

**A Qualitative Analysis of the Social  
Psychological Drivers of Residents  
in the Caribbean Netherlands to  
Protect the Natural Environment.**



## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Human behavior is responsible for causing most environmental problems we encounter today (Oskamp, 2000; Clayton et al., 2016), which would also seem to imply that humans can also reverse or prevent this damage. Hence, it is important to understand the human-environment relationship. I use a case study of conservation actors in the Caribbean Netherlands to get at my larger questions. In the current chapter, my aim is to understand the motives and behavior of residents of the Caribbean Netherlands who actively and publicly make an effort to protect the islands' threatened natural environment. I do this by an in-depth analysis and discussion of the results of semi-structured interviews I held with residents of the Caribbean Netherlands who engaged in conservation activities (Section 2.2). This current chapter focuses on the qualitative results, while the next chapter (Chapter 3) is thematic. The thematic analysis allows for interpretation of the underlying patterns and theoretically informed interpretation of meaning, providing a richer description of the interview data. In short, a thematic analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the answers provided by the interviewees, which can, in turn, provide for a more accurate understanding of how the informants' experiences are informed by their societal context.

My study was unique in that it focused on public or outward behaviors rather than private ones. It was also innovative in that it is focused not on the Global North, as most such studies do but, rather, on the Caribbean, usually defined as being part of the Global South. As the Caribbean, in particular, and the Global South, in general, are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, it is vital that we have a better understanding of how and why (or, equally important, why not) people engage in pro-environmental behaviors. As I will show in the following chapter, the actors' sense of belonging and identification with the places and spaces in which they lived had an impact on how, why, or if they engaged in conservation activities. Identifying oneself, or being identified by others as, a local, or, conversely, feeling that one was an outsider and needed to behave in certain ways in order to belong, were of great importance to conservation actors' behaviors.

### 2.1.1 Drivers of Pro-environmental Behavior

Environmental psychology is one of the scientific disciplines focused on understanding the human-environment relationship. Over the years, the discipline has defined, categorized, and classified a broad range of drivers, defined as factors that influence individuals' choice to engage in certain behavior, along with a diverse set of theories and conceptual frameworks for pro-environmental behavior.

Many studies focused on predicting various forms of environmental behavior or explaining the differences between individuals and the extent to which they engage in pro-environmental practices. The most dominant theories or theoretical frameworks used include the theory of planned behavior (TPB, Staats, 2003; Stern, 2000), the

norm-activation theory (Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 2007; Schwartz & Howard, 1981), and the value-beliefs-norms model (VBN; e.g., Kolmus & Agyeman, 2002). The self-determination theory (SDT, Pelletier et al., 1998) and the goal-framing Theory (GFT; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Steg, Bolderdijk, Keizer & Perlaviciute, 2014) are also repeatedly used.

In addition to these frameworks, many other socio-psychological factors have been identified in explaining pro-environmental behavior, including: environmental concern; environmental knowledge or problem awareness (Bamberg & Moser, 2007; Kollmus & Agyemen, 2002; Marquart-Pyatt, 2012); place attachment (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014); (self) identity (Staats, 2003); feelings of guilt, a felt responsibility, and/or past or childhood experiences (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014); habit (Staats, 2003; Steg & Vlek, 2009); sense of urgency (Kollmus & Agyemen, 2002); affect (Steg & Vlek, 2009); and demographic variables such as gender and age. These variables are usually added to the frameworks mentioned above to explain higher levels of behavioral variance. More extensive, all-encompassing models also include so-called external factors such as infrastructure e.g., the availability of recycling facilities or solar energy, social and cultural factors, including religion, social class, proximity to problem sites, but also political and economic factors (Bamberg & Moser, 2007; Kollmus & Agyeman, 2002).

A paper by Gifford and Nilsson (2014) integrates much of the research described above and provides a comprehensive overview of the various drivers that can influence a person's pro-environmental concerns and subsequent behavior, and I base my work on this framework. The authors distinguish between personal (or internal) factors and social (or external) factors. The personal factors reflect the differences between people that may impact their level of concern or response to environmental problems. The social or external factors reflect the context in which people live their daily lives (see Appendix A for a complete overview).

### **2.1.2 Drivers of Public Sphere Conservation Behavior in the Caribbean Netherlands**

While these studies present a fair number of variables that affect pro-environmental behavior, there is still reason to keep exploring the underlying drivers of environmental engagement. For one, most of these models and studies have focused on pro-environmental behaviors in the private sphere and less on behaviors in the public arena or environmental activism (Hertwich, 2005; Hertwich & Peters, 2009; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Tukker & Jansen, 2006). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the focus of my work innovatively lies in examining pro-environmental behaviors expressed (collectively) in public spheres (conservation actions), with an emphasis on behavior directed towards protecting and conserving the environment in ways clearly visible to others (Figure 13). This includes active involvement in environmental organizations, active kinds of environmental citizenship, and support or acceptance of public policies (Stern, 2000). Thus, instead of focusing on energy or water-saving behavior or other consumption

behaviors, my focus lies on active participation in clean-up events, protesting against environmentally destructive industries, participating in nature-awareness campaigns, volunteering during reforestation events, etc. I made these choices because I hypothesize that the unique context of the Dutch Caribbean, including the smallness and insularity of the spaces themselves, as well as the particular framework of administrative authority and governance emerging from a complicated colonial history, will be especially evident in the how's and why's of public conservation behavior.

To get at this hypothesis, I needed to build on, yet go beyond, the existing literature. Most of these studies aiming to understand pro-environmental behavior, particularly within the discipline of environmental psychology, are conducted in the Global North (Baptiste, 2018; Thomas & Baptiste, 2018). Very few studies have examined environmental psychological variables in the Caribbean, which belong to the places most vulnerable to environmental threats such as climate change. Studies that have explored environmental behavior beyond these borders have found that the cultural and political context indeed accounts for motivational differences. Examining the underlying motives of people engaging in publicly visible forms of pro-environmental behavior in the Caribbean Netherlands may contribute to the still meagre environmental psychological literature on the Caribbean. The research question addressed in the current chapter is, then, is *“What are the socio-psychological drivers of conservation actors in the Caribbean Netherlands to actively and publicly protect their island’s natural environment?”*.



**Figure 13.** Example of collective conservation actions in the public sphere: a group of volunteers participating at an organized beach clean-up on Bonaire.

## 2.2 METHOD

As this is an explorative study, I opted for a qualitative research approach because it can reveal new or less common experiences of residents of the Caribbean islands related to nature conservation and, thereby, add to the variables already known in environmental psychology. I conducted semi-structured interviews with island residents who engage in environmental conservation actions so that I might gain insights into their motives for environmental protection. I chose a semi-structured interview approach to ensure that all informants were asked similar questions but were also allowed the flexibility to discuss issues that were not yet predetermined.

### 2.2.1 Informants and Recruitment

I initially recruited informants through snowball sampling (Patton, 2002), starting with my personal and professional Caribbean Netherlands island network, followed by asking my network to refer me to any other island resident who met the research selection criteria. My selection criteria were that the informant had to be publicly and visibly engaged in conservation behaviors on their island of residence. This refers to the activities a person does (alone or in a group) that are clearly visible to other people to help preserve, protect or repair and restore the natural environment (e.g., participating in, or organizing events such as clean up events or restoration of coral reefs, attending meetings on, or educating others about, the preservation of the natural environment, leading recycling campaigns, protesting against environmentally destructive activities). Also, I directly contacted nature conservation-oriented organizations, informed them about the study, and asked if one or more of their representatives or employees would be willing to participate in the study. I asked informants to pass on information about my research and introduce me to their professional and personal contacts, social groups, and networks.

Originally, my aim in conducting interviews with the informants was to build a network among nature-oriented people and to create goodwill among them in order for them to complete an online survey that I was, at the time, still developing. This resulted in many organizations and individuals being contacted and informed about the research and I held quite a few informal conversations. However, the in-depth, semi-structured interviews were only conducted with a selection of individuals who were willing and able to participate during my fieldwork period. Consequently, the individuals interviewed are not an exhaustive list of “nature activists” residing on the three Dutch Caribbean islands. While this sample does not represent the entire population of the Caribbean Netherlands, the informants represent individuals with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. They, therefore, cover a considerable spectrum of views, perspectives, and experiences. In total, nineteen residents of Bonaire, seven Saba residents, and nine people residing on Sint Eustatius, who can be classified as conservationists ( $N = 35$ ), participated in this study (Appendix B). Their ages varied from 20 to 75 years, and informants represented people from a range of different ethnic and

cultural backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> This broad range provided different perspectives and enabled me to draw inferences about how social pressures affect conservationists of different ages and backgrounds. Informants were predominantly middle and upper class and obtained some advanced level of education. Sixteen informants were male and eighteen were female.

In addition to gender, the island of residence, age, and organizational affiliation, I made a local versus non-local classification of the informants (see Appendix B). It should be noted that this distinction between the informants being local, non-local, or semi-local is somewhat arbitrary as there is no evident way to make this distinction. “Being local”, as I described for my own situation in the Prologue is influenced by a combination of many factors, including race, language, family history, place of birth, years of residence, and, to some degree, also love for or attachment to the island (Allen, 2010; De Jong, 2006; Cain, 2017; Boer, 2011; Razak, 1995; Guadeloupe, 2009). While it is hard to “measure” if a person is local or not, residents constantly refer to this classification and seem to have an intuitive sense of when a person can be considered local or not. Generally, locals are the residents who were born and raised on the island, preferably from a family that has lived there for multiple generations. This is particularly clear when the resident has a certain family name belonging to a family that is considered one of the founding families of the islands (Johnson or Hassel on Saba; Spanner or Berkel on Sint Eustatius; Abraham or Emerenciana on Bonaire). Next, some people would be considered somewhat or partially local. For example, people who have ties to the Caribbean region (either other Dutch Caribbean islands or the broader Caribbean or Central American region) are considered less foreign than Europeans or North Americans. For example, I, myself, would often be labeled as a “semi-local” by my informants, as they referred to my roots in the region, my knowledge of the culture, and our shared history. Lastly, (Dutch) Europeans or North Americans, particularly the newly immigrated group, but often no matter the number of years they are residing on the islands, are commonly considered outsiders or non-locals within the community. Based on these interactions and experiences, I classified the conservation actors I interviewed as locals, semi-locals, and non-locals. I made this classification based on the information I received from the informants (name and history on the island). Thus, my classification does not represent informants’ accounts of whether they consider themselves local, or the extent to which they believe others consider them local or not within the island communities.

### 2.2.2 Interview Procedure

I constructed my interview questions based on a review of the relevant literature concerning the intersection of (motivations for) nature conservation, place, and belonging (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Clary et al 1998; Lewicka, 2011). It included general questions on how informants engaged in environmentally protective actions, their

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7 Because of the initial underlying reason the interviews were conducted, certain basic demographic information (i.e., age, income level, highest completed level of education) was not consistently collected.



motives, and how their social environments influenced their behaviors and motivations. While the interview framework guided the conversation, informants were encouraged to speak freely. Topics included ways informants engaged in conservation actions, for whom they engaged in such actions, what they hoped to achieve, their motives, and support received from, or approval of, the community for their efforts. Also, we discussed the struggles and successes they experienced when engaging in conservation actions. The interviews were conducted in a location chosen by the informant and lasted between 20 and 100 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, and informants gave verbal consent for their participation in the research and the recording and use of the interview.

### 2.2.3 Procedure of Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service or by me. All the transcripts were checked against the tapes for accuracy and allowed for familiarization with the data. After carefully reading and rereading the transcripts, initial complete “open” coding created the first series of conceptual labels. Complete coding means that anything and everything relevant to the research questions within the entire dataset was coded. It was fruitful and productive to adhere to a descriptive, semi-quantified, deductive content analysis. The paper by Gifford and Nilsson (2014) discussed in the Introduction was used as a general guideline to identify conservation actors’ socio-psychological motives to protect the natural environment (see Appendix A). This overview was used as the main guide for the analysis of the interviews of the current study. Insights from other socio-psychological research identifying motives for pro-environmental behavior (Bamberg & Moser, 2007; Kollmus & Agyemen, 2002) were applied as well. The informants’ different socio-psychological drivers were quantified according to the frequency with which the driver was mentioned across the interviews. This is presented in percentages in Table 5. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the different generic motives identified.

## 2.3 RESULTS

In Table 5, I present the summary of identified socio-psychological drivers of conservation actors to protect the Caribbean Netherlands’ environment. As discussed in the Introduction to this chapter, there are many ways to classify or categorize motives for engaging in nature conservation activities. During the analysis, it became clear that people reflected on their motives in two ways. They were both thinking about antecedent factors influencing their behavior and thinking about desired behavioral outcomes or goals. For example, interviewees shared a lot about how certain childhood or past experiences triggered their interest in and love for the environment. These experiences can be seen as antecedent factors that lead to engagement in conservation actions. When I asked the respondents why they made an effort to conserve the environment, they would give answers like “to prevent further environmental destruction from happening”

or “to get people back in touch with nature” and “make the community beautiful and healthy”. These motives represent outcomes respondents hoped to achieve through their conservation efforts.

It is important to note that multiple drivers can simultaneously play a role and thus influence each other in terms of their effect on certain behavior. Nevertheless, this distinction between the different motives provides structure for understanding the conservation actors’ reasons for protecting the environment. For example, the informants’ narratives revealed that often their past experiences triggered the desire for a certain behavioral outcome. For example, as reflected by this respondent:

*P31: When I grew up in this place... this island used to be, shall I say, densely forested. Today, more than 60% of the trees that used to be, they’re gone. And they’re all gone in the name of so-called progress. But progress that’s killing us. When I was a boy in this island, [...] there were two kids with asthma. [...] I grow to see that within the last thirty, thirty-five years, it looked like all the kids are born with respiratory problems, these things. And that’s the price of progress. All kinds of development, all kinds of pollution. So [...] to preserve life, the mission was to plant a thousand trees.*

This excerpt illustrates that mentioning childhood or past experiences at times would simultaneously lead to reflections on the changing environment experienced or witnessed throughout the years. Both experiences triggered a concern for the environment and thus the perceived necessity to act to protect it.

### **2.3.1 Anterior: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Drivers Influencing Conservation Actors**

The anterior motives include both intrinsic or personal and extrinsic or social factors that influence conservation behavior.

#### *Personal Beliefs, Values, and Interests*

Firstly, 85% of informants explicitly expressed personal beliefs, values, and interests as a reason for their involvement in environmental protection actions. These factors are proven to be important indicators for the likelihood that people will also engage in more conservation actions (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Aygeman, 2010). Informants shared various values and beliefs explaining their efforts to protect the environment, for instance:

*P19: Because we... we think that we are doing the right thing... That’s why, you know.*

Informants also shared how their personal interests affected their behavior. At times, this even seemed to be rooted in their sense of identification with the natural environment or with other groups who share the same interests and values, findings that align with the existing body of research on social and environmental identities (e.g., Clayton, 2003). As shown

in the examples below, informants made references to their personal interests (not to be confused with self-interest), the behavior being part of their belief system, and their identity:

*P12: Because that's what I'm interested in.*

*P25: It's just like; it's in you, you know, that that's what you have to do.*

*P32: I have a passion for nature. So when I see a diver touching something... It's in your blood. You couldn't accept that.*

### Place Attachment

Place attachment was a reoccurring motive for almost all informants (85%) for their efforts, among both locals and non-locals. Many studies have shown that place attachment affects pro-environmental behavior. This is particularly the case when people are positively attached to the physical aspects of a place (Scannell & Gifford, 2017). Informants would express that they made an effort to protect the environment because of their love of, and attachment to, the island:

*P27: Because this is my island and I like to see better for it.*

Place attachment seemed to be both an initiator and an outcome of informants' efforts to protect the environment. Some informants decided to engage in conservation actions and make it their profession because of their attachment (or love) for the island, for instance:

*P18: I first visited in 2007, and I came with my husband and we actually absolutely fell in love with the island and decided that we would do what we could to come live here [...] I looked at the nature organizations and felt that [NGO] was the right one for me and then the rest is history as they say.*

### Social Norms

Social norms are a proven driver for pro-environmental behavior (Farrow, Grolleau & Ibanez, 2017). Among the informants, both the influence of descriptive norms (i.e., conforming to behavior expressed by others in your direct environment) and injunctive norms (i.e., acting to conform to perceptions of what behavior is typically approved) was visible. The influence of social norms on conservation behavior was identified among 41% of the informants and was especially visible among residents of Saba and Bonaire. Locals, non-locals, and semi-locals alike referred to social norms as a driver for their behavior. Here informants would refer to social norms that exist on an island-wide level.

*P24: Yeah, we called her [the island] the Unspoiled Queen [...]. We should focus on keeping it that way.*

*P18: Yeah, it is a few different environments and it is not perfect but really I think Bonaire, Bonaireans, people that come to Bonaire and people who live on Bonaire, they value the nature of Bonaire, they value that and we are all singing of the same sheet, if you like.*

In other cases, informants linked social norms and place attachment, expressed as a sense of pride. For example, one conservation actor expressed her sense of pride while simultaneously referring to the social norms that exist on the island:

*P25: I think once you come here, you see there is no dirt on the road. You know, you see how hard they work, the streets sweepers. {laughs}. So before you flick out that wrapper or something out of your window while you're driving, you keep it in the car. And it's just pride in where you live.*

### **Knowledge and Education**

Several informants made an explicit reference to their educational background as a reason for protecting the environment of the island, for instance:

*P11: My strengths are that, that's what my background is more in. My master's degree is in Environmental Studies, with a focus on Management and Engaging Communities.*

Overall, 82% of respondents did not explicitly make references to their academic degrees. Nevertheless, it was clear the actor possessed substantial knowledge about the environment:

*P31: But like the mission was to be able to replace the oxygen, the oxygen supply, because you know, um just as an example, if we take away all the trees from this Earth, we'll surely die in a short period. No oxygen we produce, and we producing carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, which poisoning us. And so you look at a balance where the trees that you and your cars put out carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and the trees swallow eat up and give you fresh oxygen. That was the mission.*

The only differences between locals, semi-locals, and non-locals was that locals tended to make more references to knowledge they acquired through experiences in nature, usually from their (grand)parents.

### **Past Experiences**

In total, 82% of the conservation actors referred to things they experienced that inspired or triggered their conservation actions today. The conservation actors expressed several types of past experiences. Twenty-nine percent of the informants, locals in particular, shared childhood experiences that impacted their behavior today. In this example, below, one can again see a link between past experiences and the creation and adherence to social norms:

*P27: When I was growing up there was a campaign called “Saba is green, keep it clean”. I can remember there was a pretty picture of the island, there was shower and then a little brush, and that stood out to a lot of people. And I think that really, I remember as a young person, that was something that we all were proud of. Don’t throw litter, if you saw friends doing it you would say no no no you can’t do that go pick it up.*

Other references to childhood experiences were more nostalgic and showed the link with the factor of exposure to nature as leading to greater levels of pro-environmental engagement (Asah, Bengston, Westphal, & Gowan, 2018):

*P14: I was born in nature. Perhaps it sounds strange, but I think that is important. [...] We’re a family who loved nature. And right in that sentiment, during the time I was born, then was also the time when nature was everything [...] Now, we have tablets and all those kinds of things, but during that time we didn’t have a lot of those things. So we would walk, we would walk everywhere and we would do everything in nature. We would pick kenepa [lychee-type fruit], we would pick shimaruku [cherry fruit], we would go swimming, we would go fishing. [...] We lived right next to the border of Rincon, right in the nature you know. So I think that stays in you.*

Respondents also referred to behaviors they engaged in in the past or in other places that they now transferred to the island they currently reside on:

*P20: That’s actually kind of rooted in me, too. At the time a social internship in the Dutch schools was compulsory [...] We don’t do that [here]. Actually, that’s what I think, you know, that’s part of a school. To do that.*

### Proximity to Problem Sites

Related to past experiences, over half of the informants (53%), both non-locals and (semi)locals, referred to their experiences with witnessing environmental decay in other places. For example, environmental changes taking place over time where they lived or on neighboring islands pushed them into action so that they might prevent the same from happening to their specific island. These references can be clustered under the factor “proximity to problem sites”, which is a common motivation for people to engage in conservation behaviors, for instance:

*P27: If you look at other islands in the region, particularly St. Maarten where you have a mountain for landfill, you don’t want that to happen here.*

Other informants shared how they witnessed the environment change over time and how their frustration in negative changes to the natural environment played a role in them getting more actively involved in conservation actions, for example:

*P5: I mean, yes, the way the reef was 27 years ago, you can't compare that anymore. Sure, I mean, they [the corals] are still there, but it's no longer comparable [...] Coral bleaching, algae growth, yes it's really, really, [...] where you see the difference, you shouldn't think about that too much.*

### **Sense of Responsibility**

Lastly, all conservation actors expressed a strong sense of responsibility for protecting the natural environment. The origin of the perceived responsibility expressed by the conservation actors varied. Some conservationists referred to their profession and that the organization they work for has the (legal) responsibility to try to conserve the environment:

*P9: Uhm, I mainly do the bit of nature, so I'm a policy advisor on nature. Um, that's obviously not 100% policy making. We're actually dealing with everything you can come up with around nature, from research on uh, flora fauna, to being concerned with water quality. Uhm. International treaties, you name it, what has to do with nature, illegal logging, licensing sideways, that kind of thing, well, we have to deal with it. [...] It's all changing and it's also our fault that things are not going so well within nature, so we're also responsible for tackling it.*

Others were vocal about their personal responsibility regardless of their function or position:

*P5: I was like, you know, change the world, start with yourself.*

*P30: You ask why I keep doing this? It's not for the pay for sure, but you know it's, if I don't do it really, will go to hell so somebody has to keep mopping with the faucet open. Otherwise we're swimming.*

Furthermore, the sense of responsibility among the conservation actors was strongly affected by the local context, which is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

### **2.3.2 Posterior Drivers: Desired Behavioral Outcomes of Conservation Actors**

In addition to the already discussed anterior factors as drivers of conservation actions, all informants spoke about the desired outcome they hope to achieve with their efforts (posterior drivers). Like the anterior drivers, the desired behavioral outcomes are often interlinked.

#### **For the Environment**

Unsurprisingly, safeguarding the environment was the ultimate goal for all conservation actors e.g., *P18: We consider ourselves advocates for the environment.* In addition to saving

the environment, informants expressed several other desired behavioral outcomes. These are discussed below.

### *For the Community*

All conservation actors asserted that they protect the environment for the community. Some actors mentioned that they wanted to give back to the community, for instance:

*P31: But for me, the real, my real mission was and is to preserve humanity. Um because if you look at the way the world is going, we are already over-industrialized.*

Others referred to specific members of the community with whom they have a closer relationship:

*P12: And that's what you strive for – ultimately a better living environment for yourself, your children and for your family.*

### *For Future Generations*

Seventy-nine percent of the conservation actors explicitly mentioned they try to protect the environment in order to safeguard the environment for future generations, with specific issues related to this such as the health of the community:

*P31: [...] my priority would be to leave a place where people can live 50, 60, 70 years from now, that people can live and do this.*

Their personal legacy:

*P1: If I would have kids and I would bring them back in fifty years, I can say deep down in my heart together with [name] and [name], we are responsible for them still being in the wild.*

Or, alternatively, the fear that the future generations, in particular their own children or grandchildren, would not get to experience the environment as it used to be:

*P25: And then you tell your kids and then, year whatever cause it is the same that day we were cleaning up, you try to instill it on them. Cause when we go, we don't want them to end up with a big old rubbish island.*

Non-locals tended to state that they wanted to safeguard the environment for their own future generations, specifically their (grand)children, whereas locals tended to be more concerned with the well-being of the island community in its entirety.



**Figure 14.** Signage with a nature conservation message made by children on St. Eustatius, placed in Oranjestad invoking the reading to protect the natural environment.

### *For Health Reasons*

Related to safeguarding the environment for future generations, 21% of the informants mentioned the desire for improved health as a behavioral outcome they pursued with their conservation efforts. This was a particular concern among locals. Gifford & Nilsson (2014) classified health as a motive under the category “Honeybees”, meaning that the main reason for engaging in certain behaviors comes from a desire to improve one’s personal health and that this behavior is coincidentally and unintentionally also beneficial for the environment (e.g., choosing to eat less meat and more vegetables for health reasons or having a fear of flying and therefore decreasing your CO2 footprint). However, this was not the case among the conservation actors in this study. In my research I found that conservation actors deliberately protected the environment with the goal of improved health in mind. This desire was often linked to the anterior motive “experiences with or proximity to degrading environments”, for example:

*P31: And I ain't the kind of man who would just plant trees. We plant trees that go to produce food.*

### *For Personal Career or Business*

For 65% of the informants, particularly among non-locals and semi-locals, their career, or the success of their business served as critical drivers for their behavior. For some, the decision to work on these issues was related to their educational background, which therefore presented opportunities to grow in their career:



*P11: I was at a point in my work in the States where I was no longer happy with my job.*

*And finding it challenging to choose non-profits. And so, by being able to come to an organization [on Bonaire] I was already familiar with and being able to come to a higher-level position, which was unrealistic in the States, I thought it was a nice opportunity for me to see how I could develop my career and my professionalism in non-profit work.*

Most of the informants made references to the importance of their efforts for maintaining their own tourism-related business or just the tourism sector, in general:

*P3: Well, I mean, our whole business is having a healthy underwater environment. Because the whole reason why people come and pay us money, is to go and enjoy the Marine Park.*

### For Enjoyment

Whether or not informants also protect the environment because of the enjoyment or pleasure they gain from it depends a lot on the types of actions they took. Fifty-three percent of the conservation actors, non-locals especially, shared how much they enjoyed their efforts. For some, this was linked to the exact type of effort they made, for instance, the informant who gets to enjoy the environment daily:

*P18: Well, I think the advantage of working on Bonaire is that it is a beautiful place to be. I think I have the best job in the world because my office is very rarely here within these walls. Usually, my office is Klein Bonaire beach [...] so that is a phenomenal advantage.*

Others derived pleasure from the effects of their efforts, for example:

*P6: The satisfaction is the greatest benefit. Because it's my passion [...] When I talk with people or when I'm sitting here, and I see someone pick up some trash off the floor I become totally happy. [...] The passion is very important and that enriches me.*

*P12: And that, I really like that, and also because you work with people. I like to learn from the people and that they have to tell me what's going on within them and you have to take that with you.*

Lastly, it was common that informants referred to their efforts as being part of a reduction in their personal feelings of guilt for environmental issues, which ultimately makes them feel better. For example, the informant quoted below who explained how she would save up and reuse plastic bottles instead of throwing them away because recycling was not yet possible on the island. Instead of throwing them away, she would use the bottles for activities in the kids-program of the nature conservation foundation.

*P25: It took a while before the recycling campaign to begin. So it seems like for years people felt very really guilty, just throwing away their plastic bottles. [...] So we end up saving a whole bunch of them [...] So yeah they tried and yeah you do feel guilty. If you know better.*

Table 5. Overview of drivers expressed by Conservation Actors in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Motive	Type	Definition / Description	Occurrence	Typical quote
<b>Past experiences (childhood experiences)</b>	Anterior motive: personal	Certain childhood experiences, for example, the number of outdoor experiences or nature films watched, are strong predictors for environmental concern and behavior.	82% (29%, explicitly mentioning Childhood experiences)	<i>P27: When I was growing up there was a campaign called Saba's green, keep it clean. I can remember there was a pretty picture of the island, there was a shower and then a little brush, and that stood out to a lot of people. And I think that really, I remember as a young person, that was something that we all were proud of. Don't throw litter; if you saw friends doing it, you would say no no no, you can't do that go pick it up.</i>
<b>Felt responsibility</b>	Anterior motive: personal	Feeling responsible for what happens to or with the environmental effects once the level of environmental concern.	76%	<i>P25: Cause you have to! You know you just Have to! You can't just, the litter it not going to clean up itself. You know and if you just let it get out of control. It's just like; it's in you, you know, that that's what you have to do. And then you tell your kinds and then, yeah whatever cause, it's the same that they we were cleaning up, you try to instill it on them. Right, cause when we go, we don't want them to end up with a big old rubbish island, so yeah. It's in you, its inside of you, regardless.</i>
<b>Concern</b>	Anterior motive: personal	There are many ways in which environmental concern can be defined, however, here we refer to a broad and inclusive definition which reflects a general worldview people maintain (i.e., worrying about the state of the environment, the livability of the planet for humans, the level of responsibility and control humans have over the environment).	100%	<i>P29: But even the environment itself, for me you see we have a lot of cars and um how should I say, let's take a regulation that you will have in Europe, how much oil leakage you have and what have you. Now we have places where you gonna check your oil where you go in. But we don't have that yet. Some oil get on the ground, you don't see the danger right now, but in the long run. And then like I saying that, that little bit of oil it might, yeah.</i>
<b>Knowledge &amp; Education</b>	Anterior motive: personal	Having knowledge about environmental problems and higher levels of education tend to lead to higher levels of environmental concern and behaviors.	74%	<i>P6: Nature is my profession. I studied management and was the director of [NGO] for twelve years. That is also where my passion for nature stems from.</i>
<b>Personal beliefs &amp; interest</b>	Anterior motive: personal	Certain personality factors (openness, agreeableness, conscientious), having a personal relationship with the environment and the manner in which people relate with others (interdependence or interconnectedness) tend to lead to higher levels of environmental concern and behaviors	85%	<i>P1: I think it...just for us in your heart, you know you're doing the right thing. That's the most...better than being recognized or you know getting good feedback. It's just you know in your heart... if I would have kids and I would bring them back in fifty years, I can say deep down in my heart together with [name] and [name], we are responsible for them still being in the wild.</i>

Table 5. Continued

Motive	Type	Definition / Description	Occurrence	Typical quote
<b>Place Attachment</b>	Anterior motive: personal	The manner in which people are attached to a place affects pro-environmental behaviors in that place. Especially natural place attachment in relation to pro-environmental behaviors.	94%	P27: <i>Because, this is my island and I like to see better for it.</i>
<b>Experiencing changing environment</b>	Anterior motive: social	The closer people live to problem sites or the more they believe their well-being is threatened by environmental issues, the more likely they are to be concerned about that particular issue.	26%	P29: <i>I've seen nature disappear everywhere. But take Sint Maarten and Sint Croix. In principle I see all the ponds disappear, all the wetlands going, being replaced with concrete and garbage.</i>
<b>Social norms</b>	Anterior motive: social	Norms, also known as the things we believe are the usual or appropriate thing to do, affect our behaviors. Hence, if one believes recycling is the normal thing to do, the likelihood of doing so is large. The effect of norms is especially strong if the different types of norms (personal, social, injunctive, descriptive, local) are aligned.	41%	P27: <i>It's also, like I said the immigrants come from other places. And I think that's really, I remember one day I gave someone a ride and she just while we were driving, she took a bottle and threw it out of the window. And I stopped and I got really, I just screamed at her "Don't ever do that again". I might have used a few other words, but I was just so shocked that somebody could do that.</i>
<b>For career/business</b>	Desired outcome	This motive reflects the benefits a person's engagement in conservation actions might have for their career or business.	65%	P3: <i>Well, I mean, the ... our whole business has a healthy underwater environment. Because the whole reason why people come and pay us money is to go and enjoy the Marine Park. So, the company, -- even before I started working here -- they were doing clean-up dives</i>
<b>Create awareness /behavior change</b>	Desired outcome	The desire to change behavior through awareness is a commonly expressed motive, stemming from the knowledge that it is the responsibility of people to ensure no harm is caused to the environment.	91%	P20: <i>The sad part is that people do not realize on what kind of island they live on and that they treat it very badly. That is the reason to create awareness.</i>
<b>Enjoyment; makes me feel good</b>	Desired outcome	This motive reflects more egoistic or self-centered rationales and reflects the enjoyment people experience when interacting with or being out in nature.	53%	P30: <i>It's what I love; it's what I love to do. I love nature.</i>

Table 5. Continued

Motive	Type	Definition / Description	Occurrence	Typical quote
<b>For the environment</b>	Desired outcome	This motive is altruistic in nature and reflects the desire of a person to preserve the environment for the sake of the environment with few ulterior motives. It also reflects the inherent need to protect the environment, for the sake of the planet and all that occupy the planet (especially humankind).	100%	<i>P18: We consider ourselves advocates for the environment, so not just sea turtles, but also advocates for keeping the reefs healthy for the sea turtles to live as a charismatic species and a key species in the Caribbean and around Bonaire. But we also recognize and are increasingly recognizing that nature and sea turtles cannot be considered just distinct from the economy and the cultural side of Bonaire, the welfare of Bonaire. We need healthy people, healthy populations in order to have healthy reefs.</i>
<b>Health</b>	Desired outcome	This motive reflects the need to protect the environment in order to improve or safeguard one's own health or the health of other people within their community.	21%	<i>P31: I grow (trees) to see that within the last thirty, thirty-five years, it looked like all the kids are born with respiratory problems, these things. And that's the price of progress. All kind of development, all kind of pollution. So as they start with our [...] to preserve life, the mission was to plant a thousand trees.</i>
<b>To contribute to the community (for future generations)</b>	Desired outcome	This motive reflects the desire of a person to conserve the environment not only for him/herself, but for other people within his/her community as well. It also reflects the desire that future generations can enjoy or have the same experiences and interactions with nature as the person has now.	100% (79% explicitly referring to the benefit of future generations)	<i>P16: We got the chance to live on a farm and then we decided that if we live on a farm we can also contribute more to the island. We came here, from the Netherlands, we are intruding here on the island. Let's also mean something to the island then.</i>

## 2.4 DISCUSSION

Overall, my research showed that the motives of the conservation actors in the Caribbean Netherlands are aligned with motives that previous studies had identified for pro-environmental behaviors. Specifically, conservation actors indicated their behavior is driven both by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including childhood and other (past) experiences with the environment, their knowledge of, and concern for, the environment, a sense of place attachment, personal values and beliefs, as well as the social norms of the island communities. The conservation actors also expressed the goals they desire to achieve with their efforts, ranging from more altruistic (the direct benefits that can be achieved for the environment) to more self-centered drivers (personal enjoyment or their career). It should be noted that the informants reflected on their motives for different types of conservation behavior, and there were often various combinations of rationales for why they made their choices. However, it was not my intention to identify patterns in or “predictors” for a single form or type of conservation behavior such as just planting trees or only participating in clean-up events. Thus, while I acknowledge the significance of the relationship between motives and specific types of behavior, this relationship was not extensively considered throughout my analysis. Instead, I identified the previously mentioned behavioral motives, regardless of the kind of conservation action informants referred to or engaged in.

While my research has demonstrated that conservation actors in the Caribbean Netherlands do not significantly differ in the reasons for their pro-environmental behaviors from actors in other spaces and places, there were some noteworthy findings that are of particular importance for understanding the Dutch Caribbean context. The analysis of my interviews showed that:

- 1) Locals more often referred to traditional ways of knowing about the environment, often rooted in childhood experiences;
- 2) Locals were more focused on health-related concerns and the community as a whole;
- 3) Non-locals were more likely to mention their careers or business as a driver for their activities;
- 4) There were no real differences between the actors on the various islands, especially Saba and Sint Eustatius.

Throughout the analysis, I also paid attention to possible differences in drivers between locals, semi-locals, and non-locals. Overall, the differences appeared to be minimal, but there were a few noteworthy differences, as I listed above. While these differences are interesting, it is important to point out that, according to my classification, the group of conservation actors who participated in this study are predominantly non-locals. Moreover, as this distinction made between locals, semi-locals, and non-locals is somewhat arbitrary, it is hard to draw a solid conclusion as to whether locals truly have different motives compared to non-locals. Despite this classification’s arbitrary nature,

it seems to be a significant factor to consider when examining the motives and behavior of conservation actors in the Caribbean Netherlands. Ultimately, both locals and non-locals are concerned with the environment and protect it as they see fit.

Lastly and self-evidently, each informant's motives and behavior are affected by a combination of factors, which are also influenced by the three islands' specific context. While these motives are not necessarily unique for the Caribbean Netherlands as they have been identified in a substantial body of research, the conservation actors' motives and behavior on the Caribbean islands are affected by the three islands' contexts. There were two notable observations regarding the motives of the conservation actors that are suggestive of the context's influence on the (differences between the) drivers of conservation actors.

The first is the differences between the social norms' occurrence as a factor influencing conservation actors to protect the environment. Specifically, it seemed that this was most prominent on Saba. All conservation actors mentioned that people on Saba have a strong historical and cultural tendency to live in harmony with nature. Known as "the Unspoiled Queen", Saba and its residents have a longstanding reputation as being environmentally conscious, and this is expressed with pride by the community. On the other hand, on Sint Eustatius, several informants mentioned that people are no longer in touch with the environment, which had led to harmful practices such as littering. This apparent difference between environmental social norms on the islands is reflected in the informants' drivers. Instead of abiding by existing local norms, conservation actors on Sint Eustatius were more likely to express a need for existing social norms to change.

The second indication was in the finding that non-locals mentioned that their engagement in conservation actions for a local NGO on the islands was driven by the opportunity to occupy a leading position, which was unique and beneficial for their career. This is illustrative of the small scale of the islands, which creates a small local capacity pool for specific expertise, such as in the arena of environmental management, and thus opens up opportunities for foreigners to occupy these positions. Whereas these positions are perhaps hard to come by in larger countries and demand years of experience, the dearth of qualified local applicants creates the possibility for less experienced but educated foreigners willing to migrate to a small island to fill these positions. The implications of the context will be explored more in-depth in Chapter 3.

Why do you protect the environment?