Caribbean diasporas, metropolitan policies, and cultural heritage

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Caribbean popular arts, and cultural heritage writ large, emerged in unique processes of creolisation marked by, but in many ways also side-stepping and overcoming, the oppressive realities of colonialism, racism, and particularly slavery. Migratory flows to the region were central to this process, but with inter-regional migration and sojourns out of the Caribbean to Europe and elsewhere in the Americas, Caribbean communities became more transnational, and so did their cultural heritage. In this chapter, we will discuss the divergent patterns of Caribbean migrations, cultural orientations, and the popular arts, with a focus on the Dutch Caribbean islands and their Diaspora in the Netherlands. In addition, we will explore the contents and consequences of the British, Dutch, and French cultural policies. In the final section, we discuss one specific and vibrant field of culture, music, as a case study of whether and how transnationalism and metropolitan policies matter.

The Caribbean: A Region Marked by Transnationality and Migration

Immigration may be the dominant characteristic of post-World War II Caribbean history, but the intraregional migrations that emerged after the abolition of slavery and indenture, followed in the twentieth century by migrations from the wider world, continue to play a major role today. As we will see, this is particularly the case for the Dutch Caribbean islands.[1] Today, 70 percent of the population on Sint Maarten are of recent immigrant stock, and the other Dutch islands are following suit. The percentage of immigrants in Aruba in 2005 was 34 percent, with the latest prognoses of the Central Bureau of Statistics indicating that soon at least half of the 115,000 people residing on the island will be migrants. On Bonaire this is already the case, as in 2017 only seven thousand of the nineteen thousand inhabitants were born on the island.[2] The tourist economy's need for cheap labour, the relative affluence and investment opportunities in comparison to the wider Caribbean basin, and the de facto laissez-faire policies in issuing permits and controlling the border are all contributing factors, even in comparison to the wider region's remarkable demographics.[3]

A further factor is the fact that many of the more settled Arubans and Curaçaoans are also of immigrant stock, arriving on the island in the 1920s to work in the Shell and Lago Oil refineries, then the largest and most productive of their kind.[4] Some of the offspring of these migrants to Aruba and Curaçao have gone on to occupy influential positions in government and industry. With their Saban and Sint Maarten roots, former prime ministers of the Curaçao-based Netherlands Antilles government Leo Chance and Maria Liberia Peters are examples, as are others such as the Aruban born Grenadian former Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. This only demonstrates that transnationality is a way of appreciating the Dutch Caribbean.[5] Exogamy, meaning marriage outside of one's ethnic group, also defies any neat statistical delineation between "true belongers" to the island and persons hailing from elsewhere.[6]

We mention these peculiarities of demographics and migration in the Dutch Caribbean islands because it is of consequence in appreciating the input and participation of the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora in the vibrant cultural scene in the Netherlands. As transnationality and creolisation characterised their social life on the islands, it is unsurprising this is manifested in their cultural life in the Netherlands as well. The Dutch Caribbean Diaspora—and actually all Caribbean Diasporas residing in North Atlantic polities—urge us to critically rethink cultural heritage in the sense of popular arts, or simply popular culture, as a strictly insular or national affair.

Thus while our focus is on the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora in the Netherlands, the aim of this chapter is also comparative in the sense that we bear in mind the migratory dynamics of peoples of Caribbean extraction residing in Western Europe, the US, and Canada. We therefore begin by presenting some general patterns of outmigration. It is evident that over the past half-century or so, most migration out of the Caribbean was directed towards the US, and to a much lesser degree Canada. This certainly is the case for the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, where Puerto Ricans had the unrestricted right of abode because of their US passport, where Cubans after the revolution could count on privileged access, and where also millions of Dominicans were able to secure entry, a green card, and in many cases citizenship. The combined number of people of Spanish Caribbean background in North America is nearing ten million and dwarfs the Spanish Caribbean community in Spain. Much the same goes for Haitian migration, with well over one million Haitian Americans and over one hundred thousand Haitian Canadians as against probably no more than seventy thousand in the former colonising state, France. As US passport holders, the peoples of the US Virgin Islands exhibit the same tendency as Puerto Ricans. Migration for the former British West Indies in contrast has long been characterised by its bifurcation, both towards the United Kingdom and North America. As access to the UK has been virtually blocked since the early 1960s, the

Christina Ravel & family in 1960, born in Suriname, raised in Curaçao, migrated to Rotterdam, the Netherlands

growth of the Commonwealth Caribbean community was most pronounced in the US and Canada (well over 1.5 million), as against over half a million in the UK.

Emigration from the non-sovereign Caribbean, in contrast, continues to be heavily directed towards the respective metropolitan states. This is the case for Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, but equally for the French overseas departments, the Dutch Caribbean islands, and the few remaining British overseas territories. In spite of the fact that all of these territories have higher standards of living than the rest of the Caribbean, leading to inward migration, which we accentuated above for the Dutch Caribbean, figures for outmigration from primarily the "oldcomers" of these islands have been and continue to be high. Numbers are

difficult to establish as none of these communities, by now in their second, third, or subsequent generations, have remained endogamous. Nevertheless, the estimates are telling. The Puerto Rican community in the US outnumbers the insular population. The total number of inhabitants of the French Caribbean departments is about one million, and the Caribbean community in France is not that much smaller. The number of Antilleans living in the Netherlands is about 160,000, as against 300,000 on the islands. The number of citizens originating from the non-sovereign British Caribbean is much lower, also because free entry was only re-established two decades ago; but then again, the total number of inhabitants of the British Overseas territories in the Caribbean is a little over one hundred thousand.

With these emigrations came new cultural orientations. But to complicate matters, substantial intraregional migrations have also affected the demography and social fabric of many Caribbean societies, with additional consequences for cultural outlook. Going back as far as the migrations of recently emancipated people from the British West Indies to new sugar frontiers such as British Guiana and Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century, Haitians working in the Dominican sugar industry in the twentieth century, the tens of thousands of Caribbean labourers toiling on the construction of the Panama Canal and later in the oil industries of Aruba, Curaçao, and Trinidad, this trend has continued up to the present. In recent decades, the tourism industry has become the prime pull factor, drawing tens of thousands of labour migrants from the poorer parts of the Caribbean to booming places elsewhere in the region. These migratory trends have had a deep impact at the receiving end—and the Dutch Caribbean islands are a major case in point, to the effect that as we mentioned earlier first and second generation immigrants now make up from one-third to over two-thirds of the population of these places.

Cultural Orientations of the Caribbean Diaspora

What does all of this mean for cultural orientations? It is a truism that throughout the colonial period, the dominant standard of civilisation was European—even if citizenship and real access to this allegedly superior culture was negated to all but a few. Equally a truism is that the process of emancipating from the colonial mindset and redefining national identities took a long time, far longer than the formal process of decolonisation. This is, of course, not unique for the Caribbean case. But perhaps no colonised region in the world was so deeply reshaped as the Caribbean, and one may argue that contemporary cultural frames of reference continue to reflect the webs spun in the colonial era.[7]

We can see some different patterns here. Spanish Caribbean cultures both in the Caribbean and the Diaspora seem to have a broader *Latino* identification

that serves to differentiate them from both other Caribbean nations and from North American culture. Sociological and statistical studies, however, show that this pan-ethnic label, whether it be Latino, Latinx, Latino/a or Hispanic, is not the preferred form of self-identification for most Americans of Caribbean Spanish descent. In addition, with the second and third generations, the idea of a pan-ethnic Hispanic commonality fades significantly. It only exists somewhat in the realm of music, such as urban salsa and reggaeton, but even here islandic specificities continue to matter. Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans exemplify the mismatch between self-identification and the categories that the US census and policy papers produce to manage its diversity.[8]

The terms that self-identified Hispanics use to describe themselves can provide a direct look at their views of identity and the link to their countries of birth or family origin. Among all Hispanic adults, for example, half say they most often describe themselves by their family's country of origin or heritage, using terms such as Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Salvadoran. Another 23 percent say they most often call themselves American. And another 23 percent most often describe themselves as "Hispanic" or "Latino," the pan-ethnic terms used to describe this group in the US, according to the survey of self-identified Hispanics.[9]

The Haitian Diaspora exemplifies a similar complexity. Because of their specific historical trajectory and their French-based Creole, Diasporic Haitians seem to be a case apart. In Canada 83 percent reside in Québec, whereas most of the Caribbean Diaspora from the former British West Indies live in Toronto. In Francophone Canada, however, Diasporic Haitians are one of the ethnic groups that binds the two linguistic Canadas, as they are proficient in both French and English. In the US the same holds, as Haitian Kreyol is merged with American English, creating a Haitian-American identity in New York and especially Miami. In the world of culture, hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean represents one side of the spectrum, while Carimi exemplifies the other side, with kompa music interlaced with American English and swing marking transnationality.

After Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, Haiti is the largest source country of Caribbean migration to the US.[10] Despite the internal class differences, in comparison with other Caribbean Diasporas, Haitian-Americans are faring relatively well. In the Caribbean the Haitian Kreyol only has parallels in the French departments and *collectivités* and some former British colonies such as Dominica Saint Lucia, and Grenada where it is a second tongue. As full-fledged French citizens, Guadeloupeans, Martinicans, Saint Martinois, Guyanais, and Barthélemois, continue to be critically oriented towards France—if only because the entire educational system points to the Hexagon as the shining example. Studies show that like their Spanish-speaking Caribbean peers, the French Caribbean Diaspora is increasingly orienting itself to France without losing sight of island specificities.[11]

With the shifting migratory patterns, the former British West Indies have increasingly traded the colonial orientation towards British culture in exchange for North American culture. Political stalwarts such as Colin Powell and Kamala Harris exemplify this, but the same goes for the great number of artists with a West Indian background. To give just this one example, it is impossible to fathom the emergence of American hip-hop without the input of the British Caribbean Diaspora. Most recently this has been overtly acknowledged in the acclaimed documentary, "Founding Fathers: The Untold Stories of Hip Hop." The recognised pioneers of hip-hop such as DJ Kool Herc and King Charles (Jamaica), the Amazing Bert and Luke Skyyywalker (Bahamas), Grandmaster Flash, Dough E. Fresh (Barbados), and Afrika Bambaata (Jamaica/Barbados) attest to the importance of British West Indians in the making of American hip-hop in the 1970s.

In the world of hip-hop, the Caribbean presence—predominantly British West Indian, but also rappers with Spanish and Haitian roots—remains very visible. The predecessors of the aforementioned West Indian legends sell millions of albums, therewith conquering billboard charts and global fame. Some examples are: Will.i.am, Busta Rhymes, Sean Kingston, Tyga, Swizz Beatz, and Biggie Smalls (Jamaica); LL Cool J, A$AP Rocky, and Rihanna (Barbados); Foxy Brown and Nicki Minaj (Trinidad and Tobago); Cardi B and Fabolous (Dominican Republic); Fat Joe and Jennifer Lopez (Puerto Rico); Kodak Black, Wyclef Jean, and Jason Derulo (Haiti). By consequence, parallel to the force of its Diaspora in the realm of popular culture, US cultural influence matters in the wider Caribbean basin.

Marked by its transnational constitution, the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora presents us with a truly pan-Caribbean outlook of *diversities* when one focuses on their cultural works in the Netherlands. Salsa, soca, zouk, bachata, kompa, hip-hop, and EDM are as much authentically Dutch Caribbean as the *mazurka, tambú,* and *kaha di orgel* that cultural heritage specialists delineate as the "real culture" of the Dutch Antilles. These traditional forms of heritage, beloved by middle-class elites, are also marked by transnational flows, as they emerged from earlier migrants' inputs. The same holds for the Simadan, the Ponum Dance, and other such respectable Afro-oriented cultural practices, far removed from what is most popular on the islands.

Cultural heritage specialists' delineation and defence of "real" versus "imported" Dutch Caribbean culture is in line with a wider politics of ethnic absolutism among some sectors of the Diaspora. Ethnic-oriented politics of identity instrumentally employs the "real" culture of the islands, thereby constructing a "real" people of the islands, in their politics of recognition. The line between many cultural heritage specialists belonging to the Diaspora and these ethnic-oriented politics of identity is blurred.

Government funding mechanisms for culture in the metropole that favour ethnic tradition also partly explain why cultural heritage specialists focus on

authenticity. A grant for reggae as authentic Curaçaoan culture is a hard sell to state agencies. Conversely, it pays to promote *tambú* in the arena of official culture—museums, galleries, and theatres—where few would be interested in an expensive ticket to enjoy an evening of Aruban breakdance.

There is also the influence of ideologies of cultural exclusivity hailing from the islands. Notwithstanding the polyethnic and heterocultural reality on the islands, ethnonationalists, many of whom hold political office or occupy positions of authority in the civil corps, symbolically privilege "oldcomers": Dutch Caribbean islanders who trace back their ancestry to the island in colonial times. What this group of citizens deems culturally important is considered more legitimate than the views of those deemed "newcomers." Hence the "authentic" cultural heritage of the islands in policy papers, laws, official ceremonies, and transnational organisations such as UNESCO is connected almost exclusively to the privileging of what oldcomers deem bona fide. Cultural heritage specialists in the Diaspora engaging with their counterparts on the islands, and the aforementioned realities in the Netherlands, virtually neglect the thriving popular culture that refuses the neat boundaries of ethnic absolutism.

Blackness as a Unifier of the Popular?

We now turn to those practices marked by the vernacular and hyper creolised *Presence Africaine.* In discussions of culture heritage, popular culture, and the Caribbean Diaspora, pride of place should be given to the powerful concept of a "Black Atlantic" first coined by Paul Gilroy in his seminal 1993 book bearing that name.[12] This interpretation seeks to restore and strengthen the links between Black people on both sides of the Atlantic who have all gone through the ordeal of the slave trade, slavery, the broken promises of emancipation, and ongoing civil rights movements.

With the exception of Brazil, no other region of the Americas received as many sub-Saharan Africans during the transatlantic slave trade as the Caribbean. Focusing on that history of Black subordination, activists have contributed to presenting Blackness and Caribbeanness as synonyms. However, the ethnic diversity of the region—if you take the British, French, Dutch, and Spanish Caribbean as a conglomerate—does not fare well in these types of analyses. In personal conversations Gilroy explained that his concept of the Black Atlantic was not intended to contribute to this obfuscation, aware as he was of Caribbean diversity not the least occasioned by Stuart Hall's theorising of identity in the region.[13]

It is important to recognise that Gilroy's Black Atlantic is part of a transdisciplinary paradigm producing social theory that interrogates how race is made. As such, Gilroy and others like him, such as David Scott, Katherine McKittrick, Christine

Chivallon, and Edouard Glissant, do not posit or presuppose an essential Black subject, let alone the Caribbean as an exclusively Black region.[14] In fact "Black" in this body of work points on the one hand to an operation in which *le devenir nègre* of Africans—the sale of primarily wartime captives and undesirables to Europeans by rogues and potentates ruling Africa, the Middle Passage, slavery in the Americas, and racial science—was coterminous with the making of the Atlantic world and by extension globalisation.[15] On the other hand, however, what makes this paradigm appealing is the recognition of the critical gaps of signification between the names and treatment meted out to these oppressed populations and the names and cultural expressions they gave themselves and the world.

Nègre, *Nèg*, *neger*, "Negro," *neger*, "nigga," *nikker*, "nigger," *zwart*, *swart*, *preto*, *skur*, *neger*, "negro," *Negão*, *noir*, *renois*, *blaka*, "Black," and "black" all refer to contestations about further downgrading or conversely asserting the humanity of the formerly enslaved and their descendants. Location, local histories, contingencies, and interventions seeking to exorcise colonial traces are of utmost concern. For instance, the term *Nèg* in Haitian Kreyol is a resignification of the French word *nègre*, enslaved African, into a generic term for a human being undone of racial categorisations. *Nègre* in turn in the French urban context is giving way to the *verlan* term *renois* (for *noirs*), as the former is considered by many youths as too tied to the experience of slavery and not deemed representative of all peoples of sub-Saharan descent. Interestingly, even the same term can be resignified, as in Aimé Césaire choosing to call himself a *Nègre* and coining *Négritude* as a term of pride. At times subtle resignifications in changing a few letters and intonation make a world of difference: in hip-hop circles "nigga," a term for those who have a cool demeanour, is not to be confused with "nigger," which is a derogatory term employed by white racists.[16]

In analysing the Dutch—including Dutch Caribbean—world, such caution and eye for detail is of consequence. It would be a mistake to think that any translation of, say, US significations of Black identity into *zwarte mensen* or *hende koló skur*, the terminology used by Afro-Antilleans from the ABC islands in the Dutch world, happens without remainders—without, in other words, missing something crucial. For one, *hende koló skur* is usually employed as a less expansive category than the US term Black often beholden to the one-drop rule. Blue-eyed Walter White of the NAACP would not be considered a *hende koló skur*, for the latter is not referring to a political identity but to physiognomy.

The Black Atlantic, Gilroy's conceptualisation, is alive to such subtleties. Instead of conceiving the Black Atlantic as an identity for all Caribbean people descended from the enslaved (which he never claimed it to be), it is best understood as a heuristic device pointing to the ongoing encounters, travels, letters, and contingent solidarities in the Atlantic space that makes translations such as Black into *zwart*

temporarily cogent. We do well to remember the poignant phrasing of Stuart Hall: "their histories [meaning the descendants of those who survived transatlantic slavery] are in the past, inscribed in their skins. But it is not because of their skins that they are Black in their heads."[17]

The way they get Black in their heads, Gilroy avers, is through cultural and artistic expressions. He terms this a politics of transfiguration that he argues "exists on a lower frequency where it is played, danced, and acted, as well as sung." In line with earlier work of Caribbean scholars such as Rex Nettleford, and the aforementioned Stuart Hall, Gilroy points to the work of culture that from the inception of slavery and colonisation has worked against racial scripts that posited Black subordination.[18]

Particularly significant for the theme of this chapter, Gilroy gives us clues with which to appreciate the success of the Black Lives Matter movement, with its stunning chain reactions reverberating from the US to Europe, Latin America, and indeed the Caribbean. While BLM is foremost a political call against enduring racism and White privilege, we may also observe that the movement is transmitted, negotiated, and thus transfigured by a variety of musical genres first developed in Black communities on both sides of the Atlantic. This is unsurprising, as aesthetics is politics in the Black Atlantic paradigm. Yet not all politics can be defined as promoting transfiguration that is open to nonracialism. Popular Black Atlantic music aesthetically induces members of the Diaspora facing anti-black racism to become Black in the head politically, rather than in terms of essence, as they join many ethnic (gendered and sexual) others in BLM campaigns.

Stuart Hall reminds us that Blackness as a political identity came about to undo racism and racial lore. This is where Paul Gilroy identifies a particular politicisation of Blackness emerging through and in popular culture. We have here, following Gilroy, an identity formation that is never static, always becoming. Given that most of the Caribbean Diaspora in England, and the Netherlands too, dance, play, and sing with members of other ethnic groups as they struggle against racism, a politics of transfiguration takes place: the identities of all who participate are constantly being modified and transformed in ongoing aesthetic exchanges. Herein politicised Black identities become less susceptible to racial lore.

However, not all who become politicised and promote a political Black identity are fully immersed in popular culture. Next to a politics of transfiguration, there is also what Gilroy terms a politics of fulfilment. This is a politics wedded to an essential understanding of Blackness, thereby re-signifying Blackness from the ciphers of ugliness, ignorance, and laziness, into symbols of endearment, excellence, and even racial superiority.

Activists of Dutch Caribbean extraction who are into a politics of fulfilment are usually university educated professionals whose politics boils down to pushing The

Hague and municipalities to fulfill the liberal ideals the Kingdom of the Netherlands is legally committed to: nondiscrimination, diversity and inclusion, and other civil and political rights. Theirs is a form of interest group activism hardened into a race-based identity politics that seeks a racial settlement: a politics of multiracialism grafted on the ideal of multiculturalism. It is all about representation and countering statistical disparities between the Caribbean Dutch and middle-class native Dutch.

In its politics of multiracialism as multiculturalism is where this group of activists meet the cultural heritage specialists promoting the "real" culture of the islands. Both racialise and essentialise culture. It is in fact a small step for them to articulate the "Afro" in Afro-Curaçaoan culture to the "Afro" in Afro-Surinamese culture, re-signifying both as African and part of an abstract racial category of Black African world heritage.

This politics of "race" through culture is far removed from what most of the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora is busy with. We cannot forget that a politics of transfiguration next to a politics of fulfilment characterises the Europe that the Caribbean Diaspora is comaking. The unruly multicultural mixing in the Netherlands resembles the polyethnic and heterocultural reality of the Dutch Caribbean islands.

Dutch Caribbean Cultures

But first let us briefly return to the Dutch Caribbean islands. Every Caribbean island is a place of its own, and yet it is conventional to think of the entire region in subsets, referring in the first place to the legacies of colonial history and especially the languages introduced by European states—hence the commonsensical categorisation of the British, French, and Spanish Caribbean. The Dutch Caribbean has never fit well into this mold. Throughout the period of slavery, hence up to 1863, Dutch was a marginal language both in the Guianas and the Caribbean islands. The lingua franca in Suriname was Sranantongo, an English-based Creole; in the three southern Caribbean islands Papiamentu, a mainly Portuguese-based Creole; whereas a creolised English was the vernacular in the three northern islands. For a variety of reasons, and in an increasingly idiosyncratic variant, the Dutch language did replace Sranantongo in twentieth-century Suriname as the nation's first language. In contrast, Dutch never became the first language of the six islands and local language became a central element in the rhetoric and practices of insular nation-building.

A geographical distance of eight hundred kilometres separates the three northern Caribbean Dutch islands from the three to the south, just off the Venezuelan coast. It has become a bit of a commonplace to state that apart from a shared coloniser, these two groups of islands have little in common. This is too crass a generalisation, particularly because with the establishment of the oil refineries in the

1920s and the start of the tourist industry in the 1960s, internal labour migrations have brought the insular populations closer to one another than ever before—and this is an ongoing process. But one cannot escape the fact of a real divide, exacerbated by the political decision enforced by the islands themselves to break up their shared constitutional status as a six-island non-sovereign state, in 2010. The one place where it makes most sense today to speak of "Antilleans" as an entity rather than Arubans, Statians, and so on is in the Netherlands—though in reality three-quarters of the Antillean community in the metropolis hails from Curaçao.

When asked to define their local culture, inhabitants of all six islands are usually quick to invoke their language, alongside a colonial history and pride of place as defining traits. Asked about places they relate to most, inhabitants of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao will refer mainly to the other two southern Caribbean islands, not to Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, or Saba, and the same holds the other way around. Even the identification with the faraway Netherlands is deemed more important—but tellingly this identification is not often invoked, and this has not even changed now that a significant proportion of all Antilleans have taken up residence there.[19] So much for a shared Dutch Caribbean identity, one may conclude. And this fragmentation is only compounded by a tradition to emphasise internal differences rather than similarities. This tendency lies at the root of insular rivalries and in the end also caused the dismantlement of the six-island Antilles.

In each of these islands, those engaged in debates about local identities have to deal with two challenges. For one, there is the lure of nostalgia, obviously not for slavery and colonialism, but for romanticised old times. So all islands consider agrarian and fishery traditions as typical, as well as oral traditions going back to the times of slavery. But the contemporary meaning of this cultural heritage is not evident. What is, just to give this example, the meaning of agrarian traditions such as harvest celebrations on islands that for generations now have imported all of their foodstuffs? More appealing are elements of heritage that refer to resistance to slavery and colonialism, and here of course the Black Atlantic is of evident relevance.

At the same time, significant changes in insular demographics complicate the question of what local identity really means. Migrations have dramatically impacted local populations. On all islands, one-third to over three-quarters of the local population was born elsewhere. Curaçao may be the most complicated case. Over one-third of the insular population has settled in the Netherlands since the 1990s, yet after a temporary decline, the current number of inhabitants is roughly the same again, also because of circular migration between the island and the Netherlands. As immigrants mainly from Colombia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean moved in, their share rose, if we take the first and second generations together, and this proportion continues to rise particularly because of illegal migration from Venezuela. Aruba and the other islands witnessed far less migration to the

Netherlands, but did experience rapid demographic growth mainly because of regional immigration, in some cases also from the Netherlands (Bonaire) or the US (the northern Dutch Caribbean islands).

Cultural heritage depends on perceptions of the past, but whose past is this, who can lay legitimate claims?[20] Throughout the colonial period, Dutch officials and local elites defined what was valuable. It is not particularly surprising that this framing departed from the promotion of white Dutch culture and resulted in a denigration of most things local, particularly Afro-Caribbean heritage. It may be more remarkable that in spite of this mindset, local elites in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao did not part with Papiamentu even if they, other than the majority of the population, also spoke Dutch and other European languages. The virtual unconditional praise for this Creole language as central to local identities, however, dates only from the last half century or so, and may more recently be seen as a form of protest against Dutch "recolonisation."

Looking back, Aruba was the first island to develop identity politics, as early as the 1930s, and its separatist rhetoric had a clear ethnic, supposedly mestizo frame, both antagonistic to "Black" Curaçao and exclusionary towards the local, recently established Afro-Caribbean community. Curaçao, in contrast, started developing identity discourses from the late 1960s onwards in which Black heritage predominated. The dynamics of nation-building have not stagnated since, and we may observe that contemporary definitions of cultural heritage have become more inclusive. But at the same time, a certain unease persists when it comes to accepting the cultural consequences of more recent migrations, particularly immigration from the region, and outmigration to the Netherlands. Thus when asked to define the cultural heritage of their islands, experts in both islands do mention the impact of recent migrations, but nonetheless tend to heavily focus on older local traditions.[21]

The same observation may probably be made for the other islands. Precisely the challenge of having to cope with recent, rather massive migrations tends to elicit a certain nostalgia for local traditions. This is certainly the case in Bonaire, where this approach is undoubtedly also a reaction against "recolonisation." Unfortunately, we have not done extensive research on this issue in the northern Dutch Caribbean islands, but impressionistic evidence points to the same slightly chauvinistic mechanism—"typical" heritage goes a long way back and has local roots, and what outsiders add takes decades to become accepted as, well, local too.

While much of this discussion is about what new immigrants add to the insular cultures, another elephant in the room is the significance of the seventh Antillean island in the Netherlands. This is particularly relevant for Curaçao, but increasingly for the other islands as well. Antilleans in the Netherlands change, increasingly so with the passing of generations. How does the decision of so many Antilleans to leave impact insular identities in the first place? What does the increasingly

transnational character of the Antillean community, backed up not only by the migratory process itself but also by the new social media, mean for insular identities and the definition of heritage? There is not much public debate about this—yet as we will see in the section on music, these are increasingly central questions.

Do Constitutional Models and Metropolitan Policies Matter?

Colonialism left different legacies in the Caribbean, and these were compounded by widely divergent trajectories and outcomes of decolonisation. As a result, while most former colonies opted for independence, a minority of some fifteen percent of all inhabitants of the region still live in non-sovereign jurisdictions. Within the latter category, there is a range of constitutional arrangements, ranging from near complete integration (the French departments and after 2010 also the Dutch municipalities, including Bonaire) to some sort of conditional autonomy (Puerto Rico, and also Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten). The costs and benefits of sovereignty have been much debated, and equally the issue of which arrangement of non-sovereignty is optimal for whom. We will leave this debate aside, and will focus on one specific question instead: do differences in constitutional models impact practices of nation-building and heritage formation?

There is no obvious answer to this question. If we first focus on the contrast between sovereign and non-sovereign states, it seems clear that nation-building in the former category is in a sense an easier project, with independence as a cathartic break with an oppressive colonial past. All Caribbean states modelled their national narratives on this sequence and hence also in opposition to the former colonial oppressor. This is a more complicated project in non-sovereign states. They may share a similar colonial history and may therefore also nurture a strong oppositional, anticolonial element in nation-building. But this somehow sits uneasily with the refusal to break away. The alternative then becomes the demand for "true equality," or similar such desires, within some sort of postcolonial arrangement—but this remains a far more ambiguous message.[22]

Nation-building is not built on anticolonial struggles alone, and here sovereign and Caribbean states face very similar challenges. For one, there is the uneasy fact that large proportions of nearly all Caribbean populations, whether sovereign or not, decided to move elsewhere, an implicit expression of a shared predicament. The transnational character of nearly all Caribbean communities may be hailed as the creative force it indeed is—but then we should ask where the centre of cultural gravity is today in the Caribbean or rather in North America or Western Europe?

More to the core of our present concern is the question of how various models of non-sovereignty impacted Caribbean heritage, and what role transnational

Caribbean communities play in this process. Perhaps the most important observation in this regard is that there is a sharp contrast when it comes to linguistic divides, and that this does not reflect recent policies but rather a much older colonial history. The languages spoken in the French Caribbean departments, the US Virgin Islands, and the UK Overseas Territories are clearly creolised, Caribbean variants of French and English, respectively, but the fit with the metropolitan language is clear. This is absolutely not the case in Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico nor in the Dutch Caribbean islands, where Papiamentu and English are the first languages. Neither 120 years of American nor four centuries of Dutch (neo)colonialism made the metropolitan vernacular the lingua franca in these territories.

So much for the argument that colonialism effectively destroys all things local, one might conclude. The more relevant observation may be that the survival of these local languages testifies to a strong local resistance to conforming with metropolitan models, and that under the present constitutional arrangements, it is not up to Washington, D.C., or The Hague to decide which language is the vernacular in their Caribbean jurisdictions. The challenge to the preferred local language may actually come from elsewhere, from the Diaspora. For over half a century now, *neorriqueño* or Nuyorican culture evolved in the Big Apple and increasingly all over the US, and today the continental Puerto Rican community outnumbers the insular population. This, of course, makes it increasingly problematic to think of one single diasporic community using the same language and nurturing the same ideas about issues such as cultural heritage. Instead, there is growing differentiation.

The Puerto Rican case suggests vexing parallel dilemmas for the Dutch Caribbean and particularly Curaçaoan transnational communities. There is no doubt that the Antillean community in the Netherlands greatly values its cultural heritage, and particularly Papiamentu. At the same time—and this is a significant contrast with Spanish in the US—their mother tongue has no resonance outside of their own, in the end, small community. This does not bode well for the survival of Papiamentu in the Netherlands, particularly with the passing of generations, as is evident from the diminishing use of Sranantongo in the Surinamese community in the Netherlands. And this, in turn, raises all sorts of questions about the long-term prospects of a shared diasporic Antillean community. What seems to transpire already is that Dutch citizens of Antillean background become activists for struggles that speak to broader race-related issues instead—think slavery, Zwarte Piet, Black Lives Matter.

Finally, did and do cultural policies matter, particularly for the non-sovereign Caribbean? For the Dutch Caribbean, again, Puerto Rico seems to be the closest fit. Cultural policies are a local rather than metropolitan responsibility, so whatever direction is taken, whatever support is given to, or withheld from, local initiatives in cultural heritage is decided primarily on the islands. The flipside is that local

finance is restricted, which obviously limits the room for an actual active cultural policy. Where the metropolis does step in, both in Puerto Rico and in the Dutch Caribbean, this is mainly in the sphere of restoration of colonial architecture and terrestrial and maritime landscapes, not precisely the things that local activists in cultural heritage would define as central to local identities.

One may wonder about the effects of the opposite, French departmental model. No doubt, the French tradition is heavily centralised and top-down in all matters, cultural policies included. Yet the mere fact that in the French model there is far more budget available for cultural policy has enabled more generous funding for all kinds of local cultural projects in recent decades—one may only think of the ways Aimé Césaire, as mayor of Fort-de-France, stimulated French Caribbean art in Martinique. Likewise, the 2015 establishment of the monumental slavery museum Mémorial ACTe in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, was only possible thanks to substantial French funding. In this respect, the contrast with the situation in the Dutch Caribbean islands is clear. There is no dearth of local initiatives, but only very limited local budgets, while metropolitan cofounding has been notably meagre. In this sense, Dutch Caribbean autonomy has not paid off well.

Postcolonial Melancholia: A Politics of Fulfilment and Conviviality

While we may deplore this lack of funding, we may also take an altogether different perspective and ask ourselves to what extent this really matters. Much of the local cultural heritage survives anyway—think only of Papiamentu—and in spite of everything there is no dearth of debate and practice in most of the islands. Perhaps an equally important question is to what extent these debates are really relevant to contemporary realities, particularly if we bring diasporic dynamics back into the discussion. So let us return now more explicitly to the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora in the Netherlands. Despite structural barriers, most of the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora who reside primarily in the metropolitan cities of the Netherlands—The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Tilburg—are integrating relatively successfully with the rest of Dutch society, in spite of a range of obstacles including racism.[23] This holds for both genders. Unfortunately, however, this success story is rarely acknowledged due to a combination of heuristic and negativity bias, meaning our panhuman psychological predilection to store negative experiences that elicit a stronger neural impulse in readily available areas of our cognition when conceiving reality.[24] The sensationalism and spectacle of the *agents d'éclat*, mass media, and its social offshoots produce an epistemic violence whereby Dutch Caribbean people disproportionally receive a bad press: poverty, criminality, school dropouts, and dangerous minorities.

Unwillingly, activist voices among the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora, who themselves have achieved a solid middle-class status and present themselves as the cultural vanguard, contribute to this obfuscation, even if their aim is a politics of fulfilment, a concrete liberalism predicated on racial justice. Activists with an insular Dutch Caribbean background such as Quinsy Gario, Kunta Rincho, and Naomi Pieter are household names, winning awards, grants, and fixtures on national TV. Many are united in the Kick Out Zwarte Piet and Black Queer and Trans Resistance social movements. The general picture of the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora faring fairly well is questioned by these activists. Visibly descended from the enslaved Africans brought to the Caribbean, they emphasise that they have witnessed or personally experienced discrimination, and as such they are rightfully seeking to fully rid the Netherlands of racism.

The Black Lives Matter protests in the Netherlands were spearheaded by this group, building on their earlier work against the Blackface tradition/Zwarte Piet in the Netherlands. The latter refers to the traditional Dutch celebration on December 5 when a Catholic Saint Nicholas, helped by his helpers, Zwarte Pieten played by pinkish-skinned Dutch painting their faces black, bring gifts and sweets for children who have behaved throughout the year. For obvious reasons, the blackface, the fact that those playing Zwarte Piet try to emulate a stereotypical Surinamese accent, and historical works showing the character's relation to transatlantic slavery, raised the ire of Black activists.[25] Today Kickout Zwarte Piet (KOZP), the organisation they helped found, is a household name and many white Dutch are beginning to grudgingly accept that Zwarte Piet has to be reformed. In many cities Zwarte Piet is being replaced by helpers with some soot on their face. Even the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who at first would have nothing of the likening of Zwarte Piet to blackfacing, has made an about turn and, after the BLM movement invited KOZP for a meeting, stated that he too stands for a country with zero tolerance for racism.[26]

In their activist work, many of the leaders of Kickout Zwarte Piet take on a Black identity, and create the impression that generic Blackness undone of ethnic particularity is on the rise in the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora. No study, however, corroborates this idea, and more than likely Blackness, like the Latino or LatinX identity, is but one of the contextual ways the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora identify. The cause of having the ideals of liberalism be fulfilled for all in the Netherlands is perfectly justified, but the one-to-one link to Blackness is another question.[27]

Perhaps this flirtation appeals due to the fact that a discussion of "postcolonial melancholia" in the Netherlands is missing. The term, borrowed again from Paul Gilroy, speaks to how in most Western polities work has not been done to decolonise the minds of the "oldcomers."[28] The lure of autochthony, ethno-racial chauvinism under the guise of nativism, and the implicit idea of being a European colonial

Black Lives Matter protests in the Netherlands 2020 (photo Melvi Lando)

power remains potent.[29] Edifying, however, is the fact that the BLM protests in the Netherlands were polyethnic events. Caribbean Diaspora stood hand in hand with white Dutch ("oldcomers"), Moroccan, Turkish, Somali, Kurdish, Jewish, and every other imaginable ethnic group in the Netherlands protesting the continuing existence of anti-Black racism. The multicultural conviviality in the Netherlands,

the fact that in public institutions and quotidian life ethnic difference is a habitual fact for many, the reality of transfiguration, was in plain sight during these protests.

Here we return to the question of Black Atlantic music cultures in the Netherlands. In the 1980s, after the oil refineries on Aruba and Curaçao closed, there was a mass exodus to the Netherlands. In the working class neighbourhoods of cities such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Nijmegen, Heerlen, and Groningen, Caribbean Dutch citizens fell into an emerging urban popular culture based on Black Atlantic aesthetics. From sports to music to dance to fashion to visual culture, a new conception of Dutchness was being born that was heavily indebted to the creolised art that was the miraculous outcome of slavery, genocide, and bondage. This new Dutchness marked by Blackness was from its inception a convivial transculture. Dutch citizens of Surinamese, Moroccan, Indonesian, Moluccan, Turkish, Cape Verdean, Somali, Iranian, Ghanaian, Antillean, and native extraction were all part of its coming into existence.

In this sense, the first Dutch hip-hop album produced by D.A.M.N. (Don't Accept Mass Notion) reflected this polyethnic constitution. Rapper L-Rock, fresh out of Aruba after the Lago refinery closed, teamed up with DJ Bass, who had spent his teenage years as a pink-skinned son of native Dutch emulating the turntable skills of New York rap groups. This Caribbean and native Dutch duo were accompanied by a crew consisting of Surinamese-Dutch dancers and Indo-Dutch mixers and rappers. D.A.M.N. and the other pioneering hip-hop group 24K were quite explicit that it was about the embrace of the multicultural conviviality and not an exclusive Black identity politics. In a recent interview L-Rock continues to promote conviviality. "We Have no Enemies," the first professional hip-hop video by 24K, another first involving an artist born with roots in the Dutch Caribbean isles, made clear that racism and the lure of racial difference had to be transcended.

ENB, one of the lead rappers of the band, was actually born in New York from Aruban parents. He explained that while 24K, D.A.M.N., Osdorp Posse (the third pioneering group during the 1980s and 1990s), and others were fans of Public Enemy, NWA, and LL Cool J, there was no way that they were enticed by American racial politics. ENB said he knew from first-hand experience how extremely different the racial politics of the US and the Netherlands were, even while 24K was clearly and explicitly critiquing global racism in their music and public performances. Theirs was a politics of transfiguration.

In fact, most Dutch hip-hop has evolved in a genre that dominates the Dutch charts. Eight of the ten most downloaded songs in the Netherlands in 2018 were performed by Dutch rappers.[30] Many of the artists are actually part of a European tribe whereby collaborations between Dutch rappers with their peers in England, France, Germany, and Turkey are not rare. Dutch hip-hop concerts are always packed. The Rotterdam hip-hop group BroederLiefde, consisting of youngsters

with Cape Verdean, Curaçaoan, and Dominican roots, have broken various records, including when in 2016 the group's album remained number one in the Dutch Album 100 charts for fourteen consecutive weeks.[31]

In the summer months a similar tale can be told about the world of festivals. There too Black Atlantic music styles dominate. A pan-European network of salsa, bachata, zouk, kizomba, and soca dance venues and concerts exists, with the Netherlands as an important node. Here again the Dutch Caribbean Diaspora play important roles, with XX and the Bonairean born Ir-Sais belonging to the kizomba elite.[32] Noteworthy is also the soca vs. dancehall parties and events organised by the Aruban duo DJ Bryan D'Soca Lyon and his wife Saira Koolman. D'Soca Lyon and his wife have gathered a set of soca and dancehall DJs and promoters from across Europe, enabling them to co-organise parties in England, France, Germany, Spain, Poland, and the Netherlands. Every summer a "soca train" of soca and dancehall lovers tours by bus across the Netherlands, but also across Europe to attend such festivals as the Antilliaanse Feesten in Hoogstraten (Belgium), Carnaval Tropical in Paris (France), Karneval der Kulturen in Berlin (Germany), and the Notting Hill Carnival in London (England).

A high point in the series of soca and dancehall parties coincides with Rotterdam Unlimited, which is the annual Rotterdam Summer Carnival (23–27 July). A transplantation of Caribbean Carnival in order to meet and merge with the Carnivals of Cape Verde, Brazil, and Bolivia, Rotterdam Summer Carnival is the largest one-day festival in the Netherlands, attracting one million visitors and broadcast live on national television. D'Soca Lyon and Koolman personally knew the deceased Marlon Brown, the Aruban-born founder of the Rotterdam Summer Carnival.[33] For them he was an inspiration, who chose to highlight unity rather than national exclusivity. Marlon was the embodiment of a creole cosmopolitanism in the sense that his Aruban belonging was easily articulated relative to belonging of those hailing from the other Dutch islands, the wider Caribbean, and the Netherlands. He had lived in the Caribbean, the US and the Netherlands, and travelled widely, which enabled him to experience the commonalities between cultures. Marlon's openness to cultural influences from outside the region infused Carnival, making it more appealing to a wider audience. This often put him at odds with Dutch Caribbean Diasporic organisations who sought to police the boundaries of culture. He saw such attempts at restriction as extensions of the Dutch state and avatars of Antillean elites that had not represented the rights of struggling Caribbean people.

Equally telling is that most of the producers and promoters of urban popular culture in the Netherlands emerged at arm's length from the Dutch state, its Antillean counterparts, and diasporic group politics. Neither Marlon, L-Rock, ENB, or Ir-Sais had any strong ties to activist groups or politicians claiming to represent the Diaspora. As expressions of what Paul Gilroy theorised as the Black Atlantic, in

this Dutch/Dutch Caribbean case, too, urban popular culture was and is transnational, and in many ways a mirror of the polycultural reality on the islands and in the metropole that is obfuscated by talk of nationally exclusive cultural heritage.

To conclude, the articulation and equation of cultural heritage with nationalism, folklore, and cataloguing the past is a recipe for autochthony and exclusion. Such a focus in the hands of nativist cultural heritage specialists begets ethnic absolutism and an obfuscation of the ongoing creolisation on the islands and the Netherlands. Cultural heritage that neglects popular culture is too restrictive.

The solution is not to be found in employing newfangled terms in diversity and inclusion. It is not about including popular culture in the study of traditional cultural heritage and adding some urban expressions in selected (highbrow) folklore presentations favoured by those with a taste for "authenticity." At their best, these are noble efforts that seek to present a more truthful account of Dutch Caribbean nations or the Netherlands. As enticing as this solution may seem, it is reminiscent of the creole national model highlighting the "many in the one" that every scholar of the Caribbean knows was shot through with power differences and a hardening of ethnic boundaries.

Popular culture cannot be added to the ethnonational imaginary of the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean. Popular culture and how it signals ongoing creolisation and transnational flows is a rather permanent negation of ethnonational stasis. Popular culture reminds us that the only form of national imaginary that does not easily succumb to the ideology of those who belong more and those who belong less is a civic nationalism that has no need for a culturally proper heritage.

Perhaps it is time to rethink cultural heritage free of ethnic ownership and racial particularity. Might this not be what popular cultures produced by the people inhabiting the Dutch Caribbean isles and the Diaspora in the Netherlands are inviting us to consider? Not diversity and inclusion, not a reinvented politics of multiculturalism as respect for multiracialism, but a recognition of creolisation in the continuing quest for justice.