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Linde, S. van der; Mans, J.L.J.A.

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# Visualising Values in the Caribbean: A Creative Approach to Value Assessment

SJOERD VAN DER LINDE AND JIMMY MANS

*Leiden University, The Netherlands*

In this article, a creative heritage value assessment that was developed on the island of St Christopher (St Kitts), West Indies is discussed and evaluated. A synergetic approach emerged out of a collaboration between local heritage managers and policy officials with foreign heritage researchers and archaeologists. Together, they developed a transdisciplinary and practice-oriented approach based upon capturing values with audiovisual methods, which effectively integrated archaeological-historical research as well as outreach and dissemination activities in the value-assessment process. This effectively brought valorisation as well as the contested and multivocal nature of heritage to the heart of a transparent heritage management process. The practicalities and rationale of this approach are discussed, as well as its potential benefits for the combined three fields of local heritage management, archaeological-historical research, and public outreach.

**KEYWORDS** value-based assessments, local heritage management, archaeological-historical research, visual outreach, transdisciplinary research, co-creation.

## Introduction

The rich histories of the Caribbean have formed the islands, over the past millennia and centuries, into a highly varied, complex, and contested heritage arena (Siegel & Richter, 2011; Siegel et al., 2013). The most tangible of Caribbean heritage sites seem entangled in dark colonial histories in which its present-day populations are unavoidably rooted. The young Caribbean nations are in need of forming national identities and seek new historical narratives, largely intangible in nature, to support these formations. Although the wish for renegotiating narratives is present on most islands it seems more prioritized on some islands than on others. Local heritage managers of tangible sites face many interrelated challenges, such as a local lack of historical awareness and/or interest, looting, environmental hazards to the sites, economic pressures, increasing heritage demand

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of the tourist industry (which strongly influences the local heritage agenda), and the problem of how to embed both academic research as well as local interest in intangible heritage into the places they manage.

Heritage researchers add another stakeholder to the Caribbean heritage pool. The European ERC NEXUS-1492 Synergy Project is situated in the context of the Caribbean heritage reality sketched above. In this EU project, researchers from both Europe (including the authors) and the Caribbean are conducting archaeological and heritage research which focuses on the archaeological, indigenous histories of the islands and how these transform, blend, and change across the historical divide with African, European (and Asian) elements, ultimately constituting unique heritage panoramas for each of these young Caribbean nations. The specific aim of the archaeological project within NEXUS-1492 is to increase our understanding of the indigenous transformations that occurred between 1000 AD and 1800 AD (Hofman, 2014). The focus of the heritage project is to address the views on and uses of the Caribbean past as cultural heritage in the present, and to critically assist in developing local heritage practices and policies.

In the Caribbean heritage setting, and within the confines of the abovementioned NEXUS-1492 project, a pilot study was formulated for the island of St Kitts to simultaneously identify, assess, and communicate heritage values as part of heritage management, archaeological research, and public outreach strategy. We will explain the practical and methodological need for a renegotiation of this heritage significance assessment, describe our synergetic approach in St Kitts, evaluate and discuss its outcome, and conclude with some conceptual project policy recommendations.

## The concept of value

The assignment of value to material heritage is, in the end, seen at all stages of a project: value prefigures the kinds of research questions being asked, the choices made in what is conserved and what is destroyed (whether for development or research programmes), how we categorise the heritage, how we manage it and mitigate impacts, and whether the material is deemed heritage at all. However, while the assignment of significance is a singular step within the process of determining how to manage a specific material heritage, it nevertheless affects and dominates the whole process (Lafrenz Samuels, 2008: 72–73).

Over the last few decades, the concept of ‘value’ has become a central instrumental element in the assessment, management, and research of archaeological sites.<sup>1</sup> Most noticeably, the concept of value has become a fundamental concern in the practice and theory of heritage management in terms of assessing the ‘significance’ of archaeological heritage resources, primarily in the USA, Australia, and the European continent. Value-based significance assessments (such as propagated for instance by the Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Burra Charter (1999) and adopted either explicitly or implicitly by, for example, ICOMOS, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Council of Europe) in this sense often determine what should be investigated, excavated, developed, preserved, restored, or presented. Indeed, it has been argued by some that values shape almost every decision in the heritage field (see head quote). We see two challenges emerging with the assessment of these values. The first is that these value assessments seem predominantly

restricted to the domain of heritage management; and the second, that they often seem to be a sequentially ordered paper exercise and policy.

Elaborating the first challenge, one could say that despite its wide use and implementation, the process of assessing values — as a first step within heritage management practices — is only rarely discussed from a practical multidisciplinary perspective. Many value-based assessments are undertaken by heritage professionals in cultural resource management (CRM) contexts whereby there is often too little overlap with archaeological-historical research practice — despite the fact that ethnographic archaeological approaches to heritage management can offer valuable insights into the multivocal and subaltern attitudes and discourses towards the concept of heritage, and thereby to informing decisions about selection, management, and conservation (Castañeda & Matthews, 2008; Geurds, 2007; Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulis, 2009; van der Linde, 2012). Whilst the call for including multivocality as deriving from critical and ethnographic research within heritage management is widely acknowledged in our field, there is, to our knowledge, little guidance or best practices on how to actually do this, especially not within contexts of international collaborative research projects.

Related to this is the issue that the contested, constructed and subjective notion of heritage (whilst being acknowledged as a crucial theoretical and practical issue in the decolonization of our heritage practice) remains difficult to include within the linear, instrumental and processual state-informed approaches to value-based management models and policies. How to include, capture, and assess the contested and multivocal nature of heritage, and related competing stakeholder values attributed to archaeological sites, is however of the utmost importance when trying to implement sustainable and ethical heritage management practices — especially so when faced with intercultural and international projects (van der Linde, 2012).

The second challenge is therefore related to the first in the sense that discussions about values have mostly focused on providing instrumental guidance and comparisons on the pros and cons of different national and international value-based models, or the deeper theoretical underpinnings of the concept of value as an epistemological or analytical tool within heritage discourses (Lafrenz Samuels, 2008; Smith, 2006; van der Linde, 2012). The process of value assessments as a first and foremost step in the management of archaeological sites is however faced with several challenges in practice, whose implementation in reality seems often rather far away from the instrumental or theoretical discussions. In addition, the process of value assessment is often seen as a sequential element that precedes activities in the sphere of outreach, dissemination, and valorisation thereby effectively postponing dissemination and valorisation activities (and the allocation of resources) to the last phases of a project (van der Linde, 2012). This perception is strongly grounded within dominant and authorized heritage discourses (cf. Smith, 2006) that see public benefit and engagement as a last step within the heritage processes.

In a recent workshop undertaken in October 2012 in Oslo by the Heritage Values Network (a Joint Program Initiative funded by Horizon 2020) the postponing of dissemination activities was seen by the European heritage professionals present as a major obstacle to overcome for improving future value assessments, because it was felt that an earlier adoption of valorisation and dissemination activities in the value-assessment process could lead to more effective ways to convey the significance of an archaeological site, and thereby raise awareness and support from public and political actors. In addition,

the current ‘textual nature’ of value assessments and statements of significance was seen as hindering the effective communication of the diverse and immaterial nature of values attributed by stakeholders to a site.<sup>2</sup>

Taking these two major challenges into account, we believe it fair to state that present-day value-based assessments should be more practice-oriented and effectively integrated with archaeological-historical and ethnographic research, as well as with outreach and dissemination activities — thereby effectively bringing valorisation as well as the contested and multivocal nature of heritage to the heart of a transparent value-based heritage management process.

## A creative approach to value assessment

This paper sets out a framework for a synergetic and creative approach towards value assessments that tries to tackle the abovementioned challenges, and goes on to provide a description and discussion of a pilot study on St Kitts whereby the approach has been implemented within the framework of the ERC Synergy NEXUS-1492 Project. The framework is based foremost upon the idea that the concept of value can form a binding element in linking heritage management, archaeological research as well as critical outreach activities, as long as archaeological sites are regarded as multispatial, multitemporal and multivocal sites of knowledge production (van der Linde, 2012); and as long as heritage is seen as a concept socially constructed within discourse (e.g. Ashworth et al., 2007; Duineveld, 2006). Central to this argument is the idea that archaeological research practice and heritage management are part of the same process in terms of their interaction with archaeological resources, and that they are both intertwined with processes in which actors identify and produce value (Lafrenz Samuels, 2008), and thereby ‘heritage’.

The concept of value is here understood as it was brought forward by scholars related to the Getty Conservation Institute (e.g. Avrami et al., 2000; Mason, 2002; Mason & Avrami, 2002), as those qualities that are ascribed by actors to archaeological materials and sites (Mason & Avrami, 2002: 15–16). Value in this perspective is closely related to its eponymous verb in the sense of valuing archaeological projects, materials and sites, which in turn points to the subjective, conflictive, contextual and dynamic nature of values, because they are inherently linked to the motivations, opinions, and goals that actors bring to the archaeological process. It has been argued in this respect that values have a means-to-an-end character (Darvill, 1994; Darvill, 2005); people put a value on something, because they ‘desire’ to do something with it (Darvill 1994, 53). What this means, ultimately, is that values can transfer, or translate things into heritage.

Such an idea of values by default has to start at the grassroots level and be practice-oriented. A constructive starting point would logically be one that combines the three strands of local heritage management, archaeological-historical research, and public outreach together into one single approach. In this combined approach the concept of value is instrumentalised into one tool which simultaneously delivers for each of the constituent strands: (1) to identify the contested and multivocal nature of heritage within archaeological-historical research; (2) to assess the different stakeholder needs for practical site management purposes; and (3) to communicate and create public and political awareness of the significance of sites as well as to highlight the subjective and contested notion of

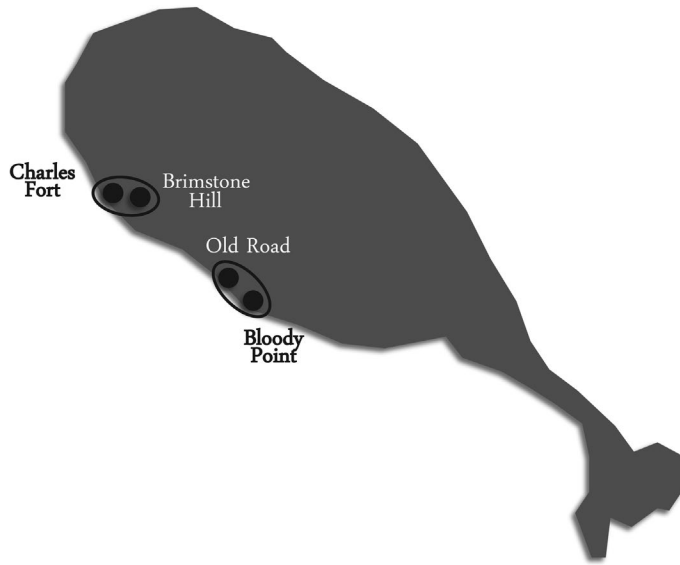


FIGURE 1 Map of St Kitts, showing the two main research areas and including the key four heritage sites under investigation. (Figure by Jimmy Mans)



FIGURE 2 Brimstone Hill (left), with Charles Fort on the coast (right). (Photograph by Jimmy Mans)

heritage (an important educational message in outreach, especially in the context of the Caribbean in which our work is currently situated).

### Three strands meet

The approach outlined in this article has been incrementally developed within a pilot study on St Kitts, an English-speaking Leeward Caribbean island and independent nation belonging to the Commonwealth. The island was inhabited by the *Kalinago* (indigenous population) allegedly up to the late 1620s when they were said to have been chased off the island by the



English and French colonial powers who had established themselves on the island since 1623. The island is testimony to several Amerindian sites along the coast (Figure 1), including Old Road and Bloody Point, and a range of early European forts such as Charles Fort and the nearby World Heritage Site of Brimstone Hill, a range of colonial and industrial heritage sites such as Romney Manor and the Sugar Factory, as well as important intangible heritage in the form of dance, cuisine, music and tradition, an important highlight of which is the carnival.

The pilot study described here was part of research undertaken within the ERC NEXUS-1492 Project that seeks to investigate the indigenous and colonial encounters in collaboration with St Christopher National Trust, Brimstone Hill Society and Department of Culture during 2014–15.<sup>3</sup> The pilot study on St Kitts sought to bridge the three separate strands of archaeological historical research, public outreach and heritage management. As aforementioned these strands are normatively connected in a sequential manner, here an attempt was given to bring these together into one simultaneous synergetic approach.

The first strand and setting of research that was brought together in the synergy is that of local heritage management. Local Kittitian heritage managers and organizations, in particular represented by Cameron Gill (Managing Director of Brimstone Hill Society) and Marlene Phillips (Cultural Officer from the Department of Culture) emphasized the importance of including and understanding local values within the management of several heritage sites on the island. Brimstone Hill Society for example, expressed a wish to gain insight into the perspectives and values of local stakeholders relating to the heritage sites of Brimstone Hill and Charles Fort so as to inform future management (plans) of these two sites. At a similar level, the Department of Culture, as well as the St Christopher National Trust, were interested in raising public and political support for heritage management efforts on the island, and specifically to bring momentum to the conservation and touristic development of important sites such as Bloody Point (Figure 2).

The second strand that was brought together in the synergy is that of archaeological-historical research undertaken by archaeologists from Leiden University, as part of two separate European research projects (ESF-HERA-CARIB and ERC NEXUS-1492) that set out to investigate the earliest colonial encounters in the Caribbean. The main research goal of these two projects is to investigate the indigenous-Caribbean transformations across the historical divide (historical texts in the Caribbean arrive with Columbus in 1492) in the period between AD 1000 and AD 1800 (Hofman 2014). The basic premise of both projects is to approach the arguably first global encounter from a long-term indigenous archaeological perspective in order to scrutinize and complement the historical narratives with other lines of evidence and archaeological narratives (in essence, Caribbean historiography starts with the colonial chroniclers and not with its much deeper indigenous history). Moreover, on the other side of the historical divide, the researchers aim to contextualize and deconstruct the indigenous extinction narrative as it exists in historical records. In this line of thought, St Kitts was selected as the island where one of the first Lesser Antillean battles took place between the *Kalinago* and the English and French colonizers in the early seventeenth century at the sites of Old Road and Bloody Point. The aim of this research strand is to investigate what is known about these events from historical sources, both written and oral, and what can be retrieved archaeologically. In addition, this research strand wishes to investigate in what way the indigenous past is currently experienced on the island, and to what degree local communities identify with the places and stories of the indigenous past.



The third strand is that of public outreach. Archaeologists and heritage specialists from Leiden University, as part of the abovementioned ERC NEXUS-1492 Project, came to St Kitts to work together with local partners. Their specific research aim was to critically address the views on and uses of the past as cultural heritage in the present, as one of the research challenges in Caribbean heritage projects is a perceived lack of social embedding and indigenous heritage awareness, and a deficiency of legal implementation and technical tools. The challenge to be addressed is to put postcolonial theory into practice by means of constructing — and deconstructing — inclusive participatory heritage approaches. Together with local partners, a research approach was therefore developed in which Kittitian communities can be engaged in a collaborative study and outreach of indigenous and other Kittitian heritage, whilst simultaneously, through action research, reflecting upon the social impact and discursive workings of such intercultural and international collaborations.

### Three strands focus

Researchers of these three strands of expertise met in several fieldwork periods on the island of St Kitts in the years 2014 and 2015. An archaeologist (Mans), heritage researchers (Sjoerd van der Linde and Eloise Stancioff), and a local heritage manager (Cameron Gill) conducted several interviews along the leeward side of the island, both together and independently. The leeward side of the island was chosen specifically because it was mainly this side of the island that features in the earliest historical encounters, and therefore provided a suitable starting point within the remit of the archaeological-historical research perspective. From these interviews two clear points came to the fore. The first was that not many explicit references in oral histories were made to indigenous forebears on the island. The majority of what was known on the island was based upon basic textbook knowledge that people had learned either at school or via tourist channels. The indigenous past was generally seen as part of the island's history (most people pointed out the petroglyphs of Old Road and Stone Fort River) but not as a heritage that most interviewees personally related too. However, in the village of Challengers, near Bloody River — believed to be the setting for the last battle between the indigenous Kittitians and the European colonizers in 1626 — local people were very engaged with the indigenous topic, and showed a certain degree of identification with indigenous affiliations to that place. The second point that came to the fore was that Brimstone Hill Fort and Charles Fort were perceived to be significant features in the cultural heritage landscape of St Kitts deemed worthy of management and support, especially in the western leeward side of the island. Both forts were valued by local stakeholders as important features of national Kittitian heritage, but not so much as personal heritage due to its contested colonial history. Value attributions to the forts were situated much more in recent memories and stories, in recreational and employment connections, identification of place and the wish for educational, touristic, and economic development of the site.

Soon after conducting the oral history interviews as well as several initial interviews as part of an envisaged stakeholder assessment for management plans of Charles Fort and Brimstone Hill, it became clear that as a mutual next step we could focus explicitly on two specific locations/landscapes or *lieux de memoires* that have their origin in the earliest colonial encounters but have since been ascribed new values up to the present



FIGURE 3 Visualizing heritage values in practice at Bloody Point; interview with Mr Perry Peats. (Photograph by Sjoerd van der Linde)

day. We decided to focus on two localities: (1) the petroglyphs and Bloody River as a location imbued with indigenous significance; and (2) the forts of Brimstone Hill and Charles Fort as tangible hallmarks of early Euro- and Afro-Kittitian significance in the wider Caribbean region.

### Three strands synergize

After these geographical focus points were set, the project team (consisting of researchers from the ERC project as well as representatives of local governmental organisations (GOs) and nongovernmental organizations) created a project approach that would benefit the needs and wishes of all partners and research strands. The identified goals were: (1) to document, assess, and present the different perspectives on the multivariied and complex heritage of St Kitts by trying to effectively capture the values of local stakeholders; (2) to inform local heritage management practices; (3) to inform oral history research; (4) to raise public awareness and support for local heritage; as well as (5) to create increased collaboration between implementing partners. It was soon decided that the best way forward would be to use audiovisual interviews as the preferred medium, as these would potentially be able to better capture and convey the multivocality and significance of these two heritage landscapes. The project team then set out to tie together the research goals with the specific research aims, goals, and questions of the three different strands of research into a single set of semi-structured interview questions to be captured and presented by video. It was also decided that the resulting envisaged products (consisting of a documentary, an audiovisual archive, a series of stakeholder interview movie clips as well as a value assessment for four heritage sites) should not be seen as end products, but rather as



FIGURE 4 Mock-up of the Heritage Perspectives Platform, showing stills from the interview video clips.

mid-term research and outreach deliverables that relocate valorisation at the heart of an ongoing heritage management process.

The subsequent challenge was to find an apt approach for these audiovisual interviews, to set target groups, and to find a suitable platform (Figure 3). The project team sat down with Marlene Philips, an official at the Department of Culture, and Vida Rawlins, a local filmmaker, who both had experience with audiovisual outreach as the preferred Kittitian means of conveying cultural issues in the island, who soon after became our logical partners. The team then worked together on identifying appropriate stakeholders surrounding each of the four sites (Charles Fort and Brimstone Hill on the one hand, and Bloody Point and Old Road on the other) that would cover a broad range of attributed values and perspectives, mirroring the complex multicultural society. For every site around fifteen stakeholders were identified on the basis of earlier fieldwork, ranging from researchers, government officials, farmers, property owners, taxi drivers, tourists, local shop owners, to teachers, and tourism operators.

The questions to be asked in the semi-structured interviews were based upon the goals of all three research strands in the following way: (1) What do you know about the history of the site of Bloody Point/Charles Fort/Brimstone Hill? (2) Do you feel personally connected to the site? (3) Is this site important to you? (4) What do you think should happen to the site in the future? These four questions functioned as a guideline for assessing values, and helped identify oral histories and heritage identifications as well as ideas on significance and future management. The resulting interviews, by which respondents were interviewed under a Creative Commons 3 copyright licence, were then

edited into five to ten minute video clips and made available on the YouTube channel of the Department of Culture, and subsequently integrated on the websites of the NEXUS-1492 Project, Brimstone Hill Society, and the National Trust, and potentially within a searchable and publicly accessible online database of the NEXUS Project (Figure 4). In addition, the video interviews have been strengthened and contextualized by digitizing and archiving existing video material about these heritage sites from the Department of Culture, and by shooting further 'roaming' video footage during the interviews. All material combined has then been transformed into a dedicated television documentary about the different perspectives and value of the cultural heritage of St Kitts, specifically in the context of raising public and political awareness about the value and history of Bloody Point and Charles Fort in the context of their nomination for the list of potential World Heritage Sites of St Kitts.

## Reflections

The creation and adoption of a value-based assessment approach led to a fruitful platform along which the different partners (local heritage managers, archaeologists, and heritage researchers) could align their research needs and aspirations. This was facilitated first and foremost by the mutual understanding of heritage sites as multivocal and constructed places and concepts, and instrumentalising the binding concept of value into a tool to capture and present the views, perspectives, aspirations, and desires of stakeholders. The focus on transdisciplinary research practice was strengthened by working together in the field and by subsequently bringing our research strands and goals together in a single set of semi-structured questions to guide the video interviews. We believe that the resulting synergetic visual assessment identifies, assesses, and communicates heritage values, and holds several potential benefits for the combined three strands of simultaneous research.

First of all, the integration of heritage values identification led to a broadening of the archaeological-historical research in terms of expanding its focus to stories about an indigenous past and to present-day identifications of actors with that past. The approach brought a novel way of documenting, archiving and presenting this type of research, especially important in light of the regional need for new postcolonial practices and approaches. The archiving of existing video material and oral history research available within the St Kitts Department of Culture can also be seen in this light. In addition, the identification of local people's perspectives and understandings of indigenous and colonial heritage sites led to a better understanding of the hiatus in knowledge and narratives to be potentially provided for or challenged, thereby informing future archaeological research and outreach on the island. Moreover, by including an archaeological-historical strand in the synergy, the heritage managers gained a deeper understanding of the way local people valued the indigenous and colonial past, and how this understanding differed from the academic line.

Second, the benefit of the synergetic creative approach to heritage management lies in effectively capturing the stories, values and diversity of stakeholders' perspectives towards heritage sites. By using audiovisual methods, our experience was that stakeholders felt more engaged and heard, but also because audiovisual methods better allowed for capturing and understanding emotional connections and experiential, intangible practices surrounding heritage sites. In addition, capturing values and stakeholder opinions by

video also allowed the team to document expressed commitment by politicians and government officials, important in creating political support in advance of the management of the heritage sites under investigation.

This brings us, thirdly, to the value of the method in terms of public outreach and creating awareness. Capturing and presenting stakeholder values by video allowed us to better visualize the significance of the heritage locales from a multivocal perspective; in effect, the trailer of the ‘heritage perspectives’ documentary functioned as a ‘visual statement of significance’, which hopefully proves useful for our local partners in communicating heritage concerns to key stakeholders. Presenting the diversity of stakeholders values and perspectives surrounding sites in need of management is also useful in trying to convey not only the historical connections of these Kittitian heritage places, but also the crucial message that all heritage is multivocal and sometimes contested; and second, that heritage places are not solely important for their archaeological and scientific value, but for all attributed values. Both these two messages are, in our opinion, of key importance when wanting to create support for — and benefits deriving from — heritage places that might have no direct link to the heritage identification and prioritization of local people, such as is the case with precolonial and colonial heritage in St Kitts.

This brings us to a potential point of critique relating to the selection of heritage locales and stakeholders within our research, which focused on tangible rather monumental sites of precolonial and colonial importance as opposed to the intangible heritage forms which one could argue to be of relatively higher importance and relevance to the Kittitian people. The selection was however based upon a locally expressed desire by the National Trust and Brimstone Hills Society to start work on the sites of Charles Fort and Bloody Point, and upon the expertise, research wishes and funding remit of our own work. Nevertheless, we accept that the synergy products only include value assessments of several elements of Kittitian heritage, and not Kittitian heritage as a whole. Our research is, in that respect, complemented by the work of two PhD candidates Eloise Stancioff and Habiba Habiba who collaborated with the Department of Culture in capturing local heritage values and prioritization through bottom-up crowdsourcing.<sup>4</sup>

Taking the above-described rationale, implementation, and reflections into account, we believe it fair to conclude that a creative and practice-oriented mindset offers substantial potential for improving heritage value assessments, especially within the remit of international, transdisciplinary heritage research projects. Although further data needs to be collected on the actual impact and implications of this approach, we are confident in stating that capturing values with audiovisual methods based upon shared research goals is useful in not only facilitating the assessment of different stakeholder needs for practical site management purposes, but also in analysing the contested and multivocal nature of heritage within archaeological historical research, and as an outreach tool to create public and political awareness of the significance of sites as well as to highlight the subjective and contested notion of heritage.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This section draws upon earlier work published by the first author (see van der Linde, 2012: 25–44; van der Linde, 2014: 1–3).

<sup>2</sup> See < <http://www.heritage-values.net> > [accessed July 2015] for a workshop report of the Oslo meeting.

<sup>3</sup> This collaboration took place in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Leiden University (Faculty of Archaeology), the Ministry of

Culture and Ministry of Education of the Government of St Christopher and Nevis, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, and the St Christopher National Trust in 2010.

<sup>4</sup> A crowdsource Web-platform has been constructed for this purpose: see < <http://www.culturesnaps.kn> > [accessed July 2015].

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## Notes on contributors

Sjoerd van der Linde is assistant professor in international heritage management at the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, where he obtained a PhD on critical international heritage management (2012). He is currently the director of Foundation CommonSites.

Correspondence to: Sjoerd van der Linde. Email: [sjoerd@commonsites.net](mailto:sjoerd@commonsites.net)

Jimmy Mans is a postdoctoral researcher in the Caribbean Research Group, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University. His research interests include indigenous histories of the Caribbean and the Guianas, contemporary and historical indigenous archaeologies, and collaborative heritage projects. Correspondence to: Jimmy Mans. Email: [j.l.j.a.mans@arch.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.l.j.a.mans@arch.leidenuniv.nl)

\*Corresponding author. Email: [sjoerd@commonsites.net](mailto:sjoerd@commonsites.net)