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Notes on the Making of a Nation within a Kingdom:

Conceptual Clarity on Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Culture
as it relates to Sint Maarten



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For Gerd Baumann, a structuralist with a poststructuralist temperament





Notes on the Making of a Nation within a Kingdom:

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Under the theme ‘Building A Nation”, the government of St. Maarten embarked on the realization of a National Development Plan for our country.

After all, as a new country within the Dutch Kingdom, we are now more than ever called upon to take up the responsibilities that come with the status of country, looking after our own affairs and taking decisions based on common goals and aspirations. Deeper than the constitutional status we enjoy, is however the forming of the new St. Maarten **NATION**. A nation of people connected through their history, commonalities, shared values and future aspirations.

A critical success factor in the realization of this National Development Plan is the participatory involvement of the entire community. Much thought went into designing the process to ensure this involvement, as there can be “no NDP without bush-tea”, signifying the bottom-up approach the government has in mind for this process.

To solicit the participation of the community at large, a group of persons have been prepped to take the NDP to the districts to discuss and receive feedback island wide.

This preparation was necessary as the cultural aspects of St. Maarten are quite dynamic and our people quite unique.

A good understanding of these dynamics are a prerequisite for any participatory dialogue process.

We are fortunate that this handbook is complemented with the writings of our own Dr. Francio Guadeloupe, giving insights into the complex cultural dimensions of St. Maarten and its people, and proposing possible strategies going forward to strengthen the nation building process.

As we formulate our NDP, the road to such that includes elements of nation building, is an indispensable part of the process. Hence the tools to ensure the successful contribution to building our nation are vital.

Insight into who we are, where we stand today and where we envision ourselves in the future is necessary to embark on the trajectory of participatory dialogue.

I encourage the nation to participate actively in the process and I wish the dialogue leaders much wisdom and strength.

The NDP must truly be the national vision of St. Maarten people for ourselves and future generations of our Soualiga land.

Prime Minister Sarah A. Wescot-Williams

Introductory remarks: It is time to construct the Sint Maarteners

Sint Maarten is approaching a new dawn. After 10-10-10, there is an urgent task ahead: to construct a sense of national unity, an open sense of oneness based upon the recognition of the ever-changing pluriversality of the island's population. As participants who will go into the community to promote nation building these notes will help to clarify an understanding of three (loaded) terms: 1) nationalism, 2) ethnicity, and 3) culture. It is time to construct the Sint Maarteners.

Explanation of terminology

A vital first step in this reading exercise is to make sure that we all are on the same frequency. If you reread the first paragraph you will realize that the verb 'construct' was employed twice. The verb 'make' in the title also bears a resemblance to the verb 'construct'. It is not a case of poetic license, but speaks to the epistemology, theory of knowledge, that grounds our approach to the matter of a social phenomenon such as nation building. The epistemological line that we take in these notes is that all knowledge of social phenomena is based upon description; hence knowledge by description.

Let us think further about these two new important terms, 'social phenomena' and 'knowledge by description' next to the verb 'construct'. When we state that nationalism and—for that matter, ethnicity and culture—are social phenomena, we mean that they are effects of the behaviors of individuals and groups that are mutually influencing each other. When behaviors have more enduring and unforeseen consequences than the acts and intentions of any individual or group, they *seem* to take on a life of their own. They become social phenomena. Now here comes the rather tricky part. We only know these social phenomena through how they are described. In the act of description there is also the naming of the inter-stimulations, i.e. the mutually influencing behavior of individuals



and groups. Some of these social phenomena we name and describe as nationalism; others, as society; and others again, as ethnicity or culture. These terms are the common names, for in the world of Wo/Man, the world of countries and communities and transnational organizations, in other words the international community, we have made general agreements on what names are valid for what descriptions as to avoid confusion. We need these names to communicate with each other and enact binding international laws based on human rights and regulations that hold for all the citizens within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Is it clear that all knowledge of social phenomena—in this case, nationalism, ethnicity, culture—is knowledge by description? If not, you are advised to reread this paragraph.

Now back to the verb ‘construct’. In the first paragraph we employed it in conjunction with the terms ‘national unity’ and ‘Sint Maarteners’. We wrote: ‘it is time to construct the Sint Maarteners’! We mean it quite literally, for

acquiring a sense of being a Sint Maartener is an expression of nationalism and as such a social phenomenon. So too is the realization of national unity: the synchronized labor of policy makers, schoolteachers, intellectuals, cultural artists, politicians, businessmen, clergy, and yourself, respectful of needs and wishes of everyday people. Individuals mutually influencing each other through their behaviors, verbal and actional.

To reiterate, nationalism, ethnicity, and culture, do not transcend this work of men and women even though they may seem to do so. Take a note that seem was the only word italicized in the third paragraph and the entire introduction. All social phenomena are constructions. It is time to construct the Sint Maarteners. This is about the making of a nation within the Kingdom. First, however, we need to understand the common descriptions of nationalism and its relation to the extended statehood that is the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The nation as an imagined community

The easiest way to understand a particular social phenomenon is to contrast it with one that it resembles. In this section we will do so in relation to nationalism. If you were asked to explain the difference between a nation and a community what would be your answer?

Do you recognize the trick?

You have been asked to compare two phenomena which are not comparable. Why not? Well, because community is the encompassing unit and a nation is a particular kind of community! As an individual you can belong to a religious community, an ethnic community, a national community and a village community, to name but a few examples. Hopefully this triggers you to ask: what kind of a community is a nation? This is a very important question, but one needs to answer a preliminary one, namely, what is a community? The word community is usually

imagined in romantic ways. Warmth, security, solidarity, etc, come to mind. All of us can attest that this is not real, there is always conflict, there is always something amiss. All communities we know of are places of loyalty as well as treachery, kindness and coercion. Moreover, community can be employed a very devious tool of management, as when dominant groups call upon leaders of so-called minority groups to handle criminal youths within their community. To avoid the romantic and the cynical overtones the term community evokes, it is best to understand it as a collective. In doing so it is important to keep in mind that community is a shorthand for different kinds of collectivities that individuals willingly participate in to further their aims and to self-realize their potentials. To reiterate, community is not a uniform static entity that breeds likeminded humans who lack a sense of themselves as beings who live particular lives.

If this is clear, then we can proceed.

Now let us get back to the question: what kind of a community is a nation? Let us tie this question to how we began this section, namely, that particular social phenomena are best appreciated by contrasting them with those that they resemble. What is the difference between a national community and village community? A simple answer would refer to size. That answer contains more than a grain of truth. It is actually a portal to deeper understanding and this is why the contrast was chosen. A village is usually a face-to-face community. People know each other and meet on a regular basis. Daily contact is not exceptional. In fact it is usually the rule. This is not the case with a nation. Here we must speak about an imagined collectivity/group of people. The answer to the question of what kind of a community is a nation, is that we are dealing here with an imagined community.

We call the nation an imagined community because it consists of persons who will never meet each other, or who will never have intimate contact,



but who do still feel a strong sense of connection. There is also horizontal solidarity; we are all equal as part of the nation. If two individuals from Sint Maarten meet in Denmark and find out that they hail from the same island, they will usually have a sense that they have something in common. This is an ice-breaker and allows for conversation. How does this magic work?

They speak the same language of course!

One important tool in forging a nation is language. In fact, it is not far off to claim that without a standardized national language, there is no nation. This is the case as this language, usually dubbed the official tongue, is the transmitter of shared understandings of what the nation is; what it stands for and where it is heading. This is done in the arts, in school curriculums, in legislation, and in policy documents. Through language a sense of nationhood, of belonging to this imagined community is constructed by the use of carefully chosen national symbols: notable historical figures, events, flags, anthems, passports, flora and fauna. All persons who come to see themselves as owners of these symbols consider themselves



united and equals. Again, without a standardized national language there is no nation.

Here however we must enter a word of caution for nations need not have only one language; one official mother tongue. Belgium, where there are three standardized national languages, Switzerland, where there are four, and South Africa, where there are eleven, are examples. Other arrangements are also possible whereby a country may have one official language and several regional languages that enjoy official status as well. Last but not least, there may be lingua franca, unofficial and usually non-codified tongues, which everyone in the nation speaks but that is not the language of government policy. This brings us to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Nationalism and the Kingdom of the Netherlands

On Sint Maarten, the official language is Dutch. English, however, as the regional language, has been awarded an official status. Then there is the

Sint Maarten English, which is the lingua franca. All three convey different imaginations of the nation. Dutch reminds Sint Maarteners that they are part of an extended state headed by a monarch that is trans-Atlantic in scope. The Netherlands, with its newly acquired Caribbean municipalities (Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius), Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten, are separate countries within this federation. The constitutions of these respective countries are subordinate to the regulations of the Statuut: the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Also being the largest country, the Netherlands has been commissioned to handle foreign affairs, defense, and the safeguarding of human rights. This is the case, as everyone in the Kingdom of the Netherlands carries one and the same passport. Sint Maarteners as well as people living in The Hague are Dutch citizens. Hopefully, you will recognize that this means that Sint Maarten is one of the nations within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We are dealing here with an extended state consisting of multiple nations. In the ideal case, every nation ought to cherish both their national symbols and to be respectful, even if critical, of those of their co-constituents/partners in the Kingdom. Knowing these other national symbols is already a sign of the kind of respect that can foster critical dialogues that enhance all the countries of this Trans-Atlantic Kingdom. This has implications for how you go about concretely making the nation; constructing the Sint Maarteners.

Within the making of the nation you will be paying close attention to an appreciation of Sint Maarten as an English speaking island. Here we get a construction of Sint Maarteners that is carefully aligned to the constitution and to the government of the country Sint Maarten. Here more local national symbols maintain. Here too a vision needs to be developed that safeguards and improves the welfare, economic prosperity, and democratic governance of those who live on the island. Born or otherwise. Born to be here, home is where heart is.

So what do we do with the lingua franca? Let us proceed wisely ...with

prudence. Sint Maarten English can both be conceived of as a national symbol and a facilitator of an 'everyday nationalism'. In other words it can be framed as 1) something that belongs to all Sint Maarten citizens carrying a Dutch passport, and 2) as symbolic of an everyday nationalism that is more inclusive than having the passport, residence permit, or ancestry. Because it is not codified, it is democratic and open enough to be inclusive. History is replete with examples of attempts of governments seeking to own and to colonize the everyday with her lingua franca. The results were disastrous. Liberal democracies have learnt from these past mistakes and have recognized that between the state, political society, economic society, civil society, and the family, individuals need to meet in a space that does not belong to a particular faction. This is the everyday, and this is the domain of the lingua franca; of Sint Maarten English as vehicle for safeguarding that the nation we are making remains humane. Be respectful of this.

Ethnicity explained

Schematically speaking, ethnic communities occupy a space between national communities and village communities. Like the imagined community of the nation, members of ethnic groups do not necessarily have to know each other. If the nation is understood as a supra-ethnos, ethnicity is the name academics, policy makers and activists give smaller units within that larger collective.

Reading the above does not necessarily furnish you with enough clues for you to understand what ethnic communities are. You are still left with having to figure out what ethnicity means. There is a lot of misinformation on the topic. We present you the status quo on the matter, the general consensus that applies when doing policy and informing folk.

The word ethnicity is derived from ancient Greek, and literally means "a group of people who are accustomed to living together". The collection

of individuals accustomed to living together, which are referred to as an ethnic community, need not think of themselves as sharing one ethos. Ethos is just a sophisticated word, again Greek in origin, for a moral character. Ethnicity and ethos are not automatically correlated. In fact, ethnic communities are usually characterized by contending ethos and worldviews. The ancient Greeks who invented both words knew this, and you/we should know this too. It is important to do so or you might make mistakes in the vital work of nation building that you will be performing. The safest assumption you should entertain is that ethnicities are culturally diverse, power-ridden and hierarchical affairs; in short they are like every other community.

This is not however the way prominent members of ethnic communities represent their collective. Gatekeepers, activists and spokespersons, often embellish reality. In their talks, written testaments, theatrical plays, and films, ethnicity and ethos are represented as a seamless whole. The reason they do so, and often get away with it, is their coy appeal to a primordial ideology; as in, “we used to live in a paradise that is now being lost”.

Such ideologies are powerful as many liberal democratic governments are implicitly respectful of genesis stories. Liberal democracies are 19th century outcomes of brutal political-economic-technological-industrial revolutions and therefore cannot appeal to a primordial myth of having come into being in a simple, tranquil time. One could say that there is a kind of collective fantasy operative in liberal democracies that induces officials to an unwarranted awe for civil society actors who present themselves in ancient paradisiac garb.

The question is why?

Regardless of how fair liberal democracies try to be or claim to be on paper, in practice, there will always be individuals and groups who will enjoy

more privilege than others. So too will there be a plethora of individuals and groups who are sidelined (or feel sidelined). You may refer to this as the embarrassment of political liberalism.

The inhabitants of liberal polities whose unequal treatment is unjust will necessarily rebel, and seek modes of redress. Individuals do so by appealing to civil political rights. Groups who have firmly established civil rights and civil organizations make their case in terms of socioeconomic and developmental group rights. To do so, they have to take on a collective identity. Since the disagreement is about status and economic wealth, and the aggrieved group consist of men and women, their options are those of class, religion, or ethnicity. Nowadays the latter option is increasingly being chosen as it has a primordial ring to it. And as was mentioned before liberal democracies are susceptible to these. In presenting their grievances in ethnic garb aggrieved groups have an advantage.

Yet clear thinking is necessary here.

Ethnicity bears a family resemblance to such terms as tribes and indigenous groups. "We were here first, we have pedigree, we should be given special privileges". These phrases sound convincing. But remember that the terms "tribe" and "indigenous" has to do with settler colonies: countries where groups who lived there prior to Western Imperialism (think of the Amerindians) have suffered structural discrimination at the hands of settlers. When the label indigenous is stretched, as in the case of maroons in Suriname and Brazil, this is because there were earlier provisions with the colonial state that granted maroons separate semi-autonomous lands. The decolonized states inherited these and therefore the Inter-American court ruled that they be treated as if they were indigenous groups. Ethnicity is a whole other ball game. It might resemble indigenusness, but it surely is another kind of fish.



Why?

When it comes to ethnicity, the civil and political rights of the aggrieved are usually well established. Also there is no earlier colonial precedent. This means that liberal democracies need to recognize aggrieved groups presenting themselves ethnically as specific social movements. If they wish to be addressed as ethnic groups, then the proper term is political ethnicities. As such they are never as encompassing as an ethnic community, which always contain a plethora ethos and cultural groups. We now turn to the question of “culture”.

The Democratic Impulse of Culture

The social life of culture is fascinating. In the course of its existence it has taken on so many different meanings. The word originated as an abbreviation of agriculture: agri-culture. Culture is about the human cultivation, and thus modification, of what exists naturally. We often deem cultivated products superior as we have more control in modifying them to suit our purposes. Since it began with agriculture let us start there. Take the simple example of mangoes. We see them all over and think nothing much of them. Caribbean mangoes however are an effect of human cultivation. Mangoes were originally a creation of nature, indigenous to Asia. Nowadays, through our ingenuity, we have combined different soils and different techniques, and in that process grafted a plethora of different kinds of mangoes. Today the Caribbean boasts cultivated mangoes that taste somewhat different from those in Asia. From the cultivation of the land (1. agriculture), we began to cherish the cultivation of the mind (2. culture).

Let us turn to the second form of cultivation.

In mastering the art of working upon what is given naturally, we created hierarchies between the two forms of cultivation that are still with us

today. Many of us think a farmer to be less cultivated than say a priest or a schoolteacher. The reason for this common sense is complicated. To simplify, we can attribute it to the division of labor that emerged within the earliest human communities that engaged in the intense cultivation of the land and the keeping of livestock. While most farmed, a smaller group trained themselves in the art of warfare. They cultivated their muscles and created weapons. They did this out of fear of being raided by other communities. They of course also used their skills and weaponry to raid the cultivated products of other peoples. We know this group by the term warriors. Today we refer to them as soldiers and generals. The nobility, the kings and queens and chiefs, emerged out of this warrior caste. They were the warriors who employed force and intellect to claim the best lands. The last specialists that deserve mention are those that chiefly employed their intellect to claim knowledge of the future. We know them as the priests who were the early scientists and artists. They claimed to know the wishes of God or the Gods and Goddesses and also to have an understanding of the elemental forces that needed to be taken into account to have a good harvest; in many instances when they did some agriculture, they were the healers.

Notice the visceral hierarchy involved here. Those who directly use their hands to cultivate the land are considered less than those who cultivate their bodies and their minds. The priest and the noble come first, followed and served by the warrior that engages in direct combat, and at the bottom of the pyramid we encounter the farmer feeding those above him or her. The products and ways of behaving and reasoning of those at the top of the pyramid receive more appreciation. They have culture, the others are supposedly uncultured. Let us just mention as an important aside that the trans-Atlantic slavery was grafted upon this early division of labor. So too was patriarchy.

The elements of that early model are still with us today. When many of us

say a person or an object is “cultured”—in the sense of calling a woman of standing, or a Rembrandt, culture—we are engaging in two acts. We are employing the older model in which some have culture and others don’t. We are also enacting what is called the democratization of culture, since everyone can learn to be cultured in this way. In addition, nowadays we think of culture in the plural: the ways of life cultivated by communities and groups and individuals.

Many of us have no problem admitting that farmers and the rest of the workers have their own culture (think here of Caribbean Carnival, creole food, Calypso, Salsa Antilliana; some lovers of these expressions rank them the highest form of culture). We can readily accept that their judgment is as valid as those who are tears after hearing an opera. What we cannot do however is accept the unconditional equality of cultures. We accept the ongoing democratization of culture pragmatically, which is the wisest thing to do.

Why?

In modern liberal democracies we have enshrined the ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity and plurality. We start with plurality. We accept it as a given. All national communities contain an ever emerging plurality of cultures, as they consist of a plurality of ethnic groups that in turn are made up of a plurality of classes. In practice this means that the so-called fraternity that ethnic groups or nations claim is always full of friction and contestations. As this is the case, liberal democracies build upon the primacy of the liberty of the individual. His or her wishes and life ideals come prior to the group he or she is affiliated to. This is trumped however by the equality principle. All are constitutionally equal in a democracy. In the end the culture that matters most is individual culture tolerant and open to others. So again we are back to plurality: the democratic impulse of culture.

By way of a conclusion and a prelude to the keynote

We trust that the notes you have just read will help you in your worthy effort of constructing the Sint Maarten nation. They are but notes. Keep your eyes open and employ your practical sense.

At the end of it all, let us confess that the notes were devised with three major concerns in mind.

1) The Question of Purpose: like all other countries in the overdeveloped North Atlantic, Sint Maarten is riddled with anger and anxiety. It has to do with the loss of purpose. This generation will be the first since the end of World War II who will not have it as good or better than their parents. They need a new purpose and value system.

2) The Multicultural Question: the enormous diversity asks of us, in thinking about creating a new purpose, to also address the question of how to deal with difference.

3) The Question of the Sacred: we need to ask ourselves again, what is of ultimate concern. Once we know this, we can translate it into a collective purpose.

The keynote that follows seeks to entice you to think about these three questions in the tonality of the marvelous-real (a different dance from that logical outline you just read).







The Divine Territory and the Map: Keynotes on the Sint Maarten Nation

When we think about being a nation, we think too often about flags and anthems. We think too often about ownership of a piece of rock. We think too often about being a chosen people. We think too often about being different from other human beings, who are equally imagined as belonging to other nations. We think also too often in terms of a reactive narrative to the imperial narrations of history stemming from the centers of misinformation in Europe (If they claimed that they civilized us, we will show that they were barbarians; if they claim we are ugly, we will proclaim that black is beautiful, etc). To employ the terms of the Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter, we mistake the map for the divine territory of what it means to be a nation.

If we plan to be successful in the project of creating a national vision for Sint Maarten, we will have to dwell attentively in the divine territory that we have been given and given to, and not just relate to the common sense maps we habitually employ to describe ourselves (so not just in terms of the

flag, anthem, passport, language issue, and debates concerning who has more ancestry, etc). In this all too brief keynote, a note that truly seeks to be a key to wisdom and insight, I would like you to appreciate that being part of the Sint Maarten nation, dwelling in this divine territory, is cultivating a particular sensitivity and attentiveness. I call this a supra-sensual feeling in which you are the island walking, talking, breathing, working, and dancing. In this suprasensual state you will have no need to own the island, for you are it and it is you. It is given and You are given to it. You will be responsible. If you cultivate this feeling well and induce others to do the same, You (the singular/plural You) will be an example to the rest of the Dutch Caribbean, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the wider Caribbean, and the planet. You (the singular/plural You) will finally live up to the name Sint Maarten.

The rogues who colonized this piece of rock, and robbed men and women and children from their native homelands to work the saltpans and plantations, named her after one of the most outstanding Catholic saints: Sint Maarten. Here is a supreme form of irony that I welcome you to ponder. Who was Sint Maarten? When you call yourself a Sint Maartener, whose name are you honoring?

Sint Maarten was a kindhearted Catholic bishop born in the year 315 in what is today known as Hungary. He is best known for sharing his cloak with a freezing beggar, who later in a dream revealed himself as Jesus Christ. From the bishop Sint Maarten we learn the importance of seeing the divine in the face of the downtrodden. Could it be coincidence that this island, scarred by the ignoble institution of trans-Atlantic slavery, is today known as the friendly island where thousands undocumented workers from the wider Caribbean and elsewhere earn a living without being excessively harassed by those who arrived earlier?

Moreover, is it simply by chance that like the bishop Sint Maarten who made no distinctions and washed the feet of nobility, seeing in their faces a trace of the divine too, that we welcome wealthy tourists to our shores? Many of

these men and women descend from those who profited most from the colonial adventures. How are we emulating the life of Sint Maarten of Tours when, in serving them, we implicitly teach them and ourselves a divine inspired conception of equality; equiliberty (equality and liberty) without remorse?

Is there a mysterious working through, and working out of history, involved here? Are we—who were given to/given this island—being summoned to recognize the divine territory? If this is the case, why do we not recognize it?

Perhaps it is because we are too exclusively wedded to common sense maps. Even then, many of us do not know these maps well enough. For what exactly is Sint Maarten when we think exclusively in terms of maps (not in terms of the divine territory of which I was just speaking)?

Sint Maarten is not an autonomous country. It is an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is an extended state which consists today of four constitutionally recognized internally autonomous countries. This is the case since the Statuut, the Charter of the Kingdom, was redesigned on the 10th of October 2010. These internally autonomous countries are the Netherlands, Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten.

In their role of presiding and supervising internal affairs, leaders of these four countries are allowed to set up nation building projects in an effort to strengthen social cohesion. These nation building projects, and the imagined communities that emerge out of these, must not be mistaken for their nationality. All citizens of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have but one nationality, namely Dutch. They carry the same passport, have the same foreign policy, the same defense force, and are represented by one monarch: King Willem Alexander.



Also, over and above the four governments, there is the Kingdom government, which consists of the parliament in The Hague and the minister plenipotentiary of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. This arrangement, called a democratic deficit, whereby The Hague as a disproportionate amount of say, is a remnant of colonialism that can be remedied. With visionary leadership, less economic dependence from tax payers in the Netherlands, and an educated citizenry, the leaders of these other governments from Sint Maarten, Curaçao, and Aruba can push for further reforms within the Kingdom Charter.

To this constitutionally daunting, extended statehood to which we belong, we need to add the European Union layer that is at our doorstep. As we speak, there is a project underway to federalize Europe (on the mainland as well as in the Indian and Atlantic Ocean, which means You too). There is lots of contestation about this extra layer, but few believe that the developments of a common market, court of justice, central bank, and a council charged with influencing "the general political directions and



priorities" of all the nation-states, can be totally halted without a major fallout.

These are the maps that the people on this island have to know. This knowledge needs to be disseminated in schools and other civic organizations. Sint Maarteners need to appreciate the constitutional webs of which they are part and act proactively.

But the maps that I have just explicated are not the territory. They are not, to repeat myself, the divine territory that we have been given and given to. To explain what I mean by "given" and "given to" we need to leave behind common sense and enter into super sense.

Common sense is informed by history and fossilized geography. With history the past is fixed and understood as a fact that curtails your choices. From a historical frame of mind, you can't change the past, you can't change your past, and you can't change the colonial past of this island; totally

breaking ties with the Netherlands and leaving the Kingdom would not undo the fact that in the past the island was a colony. Also, geographically, the island is and remains in the Caribbean Sea.

Super sense is informed by a living sense of myth grounded in a geography that dances. The past is an endless resource, infinitely amendable to our interpretations: our stories about ourselves and others. This island, like our existence, can then be conceived as a gift. It is given to us by a mystery many on this island call God. In this we too are given to the island. In this double sense of being given (given and given to) there is no sense of ownership. There is a sense of having to return the gift: of sharing our mantle with the needy and washing the feet of nobility like the bishop of Tours, Sint Maarten, did! We see in the Other, in each other, the face of the divine. We appreciate then that being part of the Sint Maarten nation, dwelling in this divine territory, is cultivating a supra-sensual feeling in which we are the island walking, talking, breathing, working, and dancing. We as a nation, as the island, become a dancing geography in the carnival of the earth that touches all other participants (living on islands and countries named after legends) respectfully.



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"This clearly written essay provides a thought provoking contribution to the conscious move of nation building by Sint Maarteners. The author explicates key concepts such as nationalism, ethnicity, and culture, which are very essential in understanding this process of building a common sense of shared responsibility and purpose as well as a collective concern of belonging."

Dr. Rose Mary Allen, cultural anthropologist, Lecturer University of Curaçao

Well crafted, Francio Guadeloupe cuts to the heart of our contemporary concerns with nationalism, ethnicity and culture. In the spirit of the intellectual legacy of Gerd Baumann, he speaks and writes provocatively and incisively about nation-ness and what it means to be a Sint Maartener.

Dr. Ir. Yvon van der Pijl, coordinator of the M.A. program 'Cultural Anthropology: multiculturalism in comparative perspective' Utrecht University, the Netherlands.