

THE DISASTER AFTER THE DISASTER

Revealing postcolonial relations between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands



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Image front page: picture of Cay Hill, June 2019. Taken by Suzanne van Herwijnen

“It is a misconception of the disaster itself. It is the disaster after the disaster. It’s not just the storm. It’s the natural disaster that impacts human lives.”

- (RES_03), July 29, 2019.

Abstract

This ethnographic case study focusses on post-colonial relations between Sint Maarten and its (former) Dutch metropole that are revealed by the disaster of hurricane Irma of 2017. The design of this research is based on the Gioia methodology, using both a deductive and an inductive approach. The interviews focused on the preparation, aftermath, and recovery of Irma. I conclude that the preparation for hurricane Irma slipped up because of a lack of communication from the government. Moreover, the natural hazard became a real disaster because the country was not resilient enough to recover on its own. I argue that Sint Maarten is trapped within post-colonialism. Insight in disaster management and recovery showed that although Sint Maarten has an autonomous government, it is still dependent on the Netherlands. The Dutch government has a protective power over the island. It wants to protect the aid and citizens of Sint Maarten for their corrupt government. I recommend that Sint Maarten and the Netherlands should improve their relationship and transform their protective power relationship to a cooperative power relationship.

List of Abbreviations

APAP	Association of Psychologists and Allied Professionals St. Maarten
CDT	Caribbean Dependency Thought
COPI	Command Place Incident
EDF	European Development Fund
EOC	Emergency Operation Centre
ESF	Emergency Support Forum
EU	European Union
HPK	Hurricane Preparation Kit
NGO	non-governmental organization
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
SXM	Sint Maarten
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VOC	Verenigde Oost-indische Compagnie (United East-Indian Company)
WIC	West-Indische Compagnie (West-Indian Company)
WW2	Second World War

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Preface

Before you lies my master thesis 'The Disaster after the Disaster: revealing post-colonial relations between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands'. For this research, I did a research internship at the K1 Britannia Foundation in Philipsburg, Sint Maarten. I conducted ethnographic research in which I interviewed citizens of Sint Maarten about their experiences with hurricane Irma, in 2017, and its aftermath till 2 years after the hurricane.

I wrote this as part of my master's Human Geography at Radboud University Nijmegen. As a teenager, I was always interested in both natural disasters and societal issues. Therefore, it is no wonder that I wrote my master thesis on the situation of Sint Maarten. Before I started my master education, I completed my bachelor in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University.

I would like to express my great appreciation for my supervisor Dr. O.T. Kramsch for his patient guidance, encouragement, and progressive feedback, and A. Kolar MSc for her support as a substitute supervisor during Dr. O.T. Kramsch's absence. Also, I would like to thank L. Coppel MSc, a fellow student who introduced me to Sint Maarten, and for helping me prepare my fieldwork. Moreover, I wish to thank the K1 Britannia Foundation, in particular Ms. Hakkens, for providing me the opportunity of doing a research internship. Besides, I am utterly grateful for the unconditional support provided by my partner, family, and friends.

Suzanne van Herwijnen

Nijmegen, March 5, 2020

1. Introduction: Reality of Climate Change

After two centuries of excessive environmental pollution through greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel combustion in energy generation, deforestation, intensive agriculture, transport and industry, climate change is no longer a problem of the future. It has become an inevitable phenomenon that is damaging the planet at an alarming rate (Kais & Islam, 2016). Climate change is intensively unsettling ecological, physical and social systems and communities. Although climate change has been part of the earth's history from the beginning of time, the current strain of global climate change is rather unique (Paton & Johnston, 2017). Current climate change is not only man-made, but also happening much faster than any time before in the last fifty million years (Kais & Islam, 2016). In a short period of time, climate change will be affecting all of humankind, however, climate change is already affecting varied populations in the world. In fact, the last five years have been the warmest years recorded by NASA (2019). If climate change continues on current speed and if continue temperatures rising, the earth might become an unlivable planet for many animals and human beings.

Humans and nature have always been interdependently intertwined (Paton & Johnston, 2017). Sometimes humans and nature live together in harmony, other times the relationship between them is afflicted by hazards. All hazard events include human decisions and actions that are significant in the process of regaining harmony, for harmony creates balance, union, synthesis, calm, tranquility, and peacefulness (Paton & Johnston, 2017). With the rapid climate changes, natural disasters (e.g., floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, hurricanes, and earthquakes) occur more frequently and with greater intensity and are expected to increase soon (Kim & Marcouiller, 2016). The Caribbean is one of the areas that has already experienced the effects of climate change. The effects of climate change in the Caribbean include increasing hurricane and flooding intensity and serious threats to maritime life. One of the visible results of climate change threatening humans is the increase of frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as hurricanes. A great example of this is the Atlantic hurricane season of 2017. The hurricane season was one of the most extreme and damaging seasons recorded, including 10 hurricanes of which 6 were categorized as major (NOAA, 2017). Sint Maarten is one of the countries that was hit by hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria in

September 2017. With Irma leaving the most destruction, the damage on the island was immense and it even cost the lives of 11 people (Ahmed, 2017). The devastation was not just physical destruction and reconstructing bills, but also on a social level; people lost their jobs, houses, relatives and were left with severe stress or even traumas.

Recovering after such a catastrophic event takes a lot of time, energy and resources. Therefore, so-called disaster management comes into effect to help the recovery process. Besides recovery, disaster management also focuses on reducing risk, decreasing vulnerabilities and mitigating the damages (Marchezini, 2015). Governments, communities and humanitarian aid organizations play a role in this process and an understandable question might be who is responsible for the delivery of disaster relief. Responsibility aside, it is far more important to make sure the disaster relief is provided in an efficient and relevant manner. When governments, communities and humanitarian aid organizations do not cooperate, it might become a messy situation in which good intentions do not live up to the desired results.

1.1 Research Objective

This research investigates the case of hurricane Irma on Saint Martin and how the event resulted in not only a natural disaster but also a social disaster. The focus lies on the event and the aftermath of the hurricane, in particular on the Dutch side of the island; Sint Maarten. The research is conducted in cooperation with the K1 Britannia Foundation. The foundation was established on Sint. Maarten in 2014 and focusses on varied projects from foster care, maritime programs, at-risk vulnerable and troubled youth to volunteerism. After hurricane Irma, disaster relief became another a strong focus of the foundation. This research is aimed at the experiences and opinions of local residents of Sint Maarten on hurricane Irma and its aftermath. The leading research question in this research is: *'Did hurricane Irma reveal post-colonial relations between Sint Maarten and its former Dutch Metropole?'*. The research consists of semi-structured interviews with local residents who experienced hurricane Irma. The target group is working-class people, both male and female, between the ages 25 and 65,

of both Dutch and Caribbean ethnicity. In order to make the research also beneficial for K1 Britannia Foundation, the research asked when and where local people felt that the aid they were given either failed or succeed. In order to achieve the goal, it is necessary to know in what ways humanitarian aid was given during and after the hurricane and whether the provided aid was effective and relevant. By knowing this, aid providers know where they lacked and how they could improve their disaster management for future occasions. Reflecting on this past event can help humanitarian organizations such as K1 Britannia to become more efficient.

To back up the research question, the research aims to answer the following sub-questions:

1. *In what ways were hurricane seasons prepared before and after hurricane Irma?*
2. *How did the local population of Sint Maarten experience hurricane Irma's aftermath?*
3. *How is the recovery experienced by the local population of Sint Maarten?*

With the answers to these questions, we cannot only answer the research question, but we can also use the information to get an insight into the vulnerability and resilience of certain communities of Sint Maarten. By interviewing people of different genders, religions, ethnicities and in a wide age range, the analysis could show whether some people feel neglected or privileged, or whether the aid is given equally over the population of the Dutch part of the island.

1.2 Academic Relevance

In this fast changing world where climate change is threatening all of earth's population, and has led and will lead to more catastrophic events, the aid of humanitarian organizations is required. In this time, where humanitarian aid is wanted and needed in several places in the world but is extremely criticized at the same time, research on the experiences of aid receivers is advantageous. This research adds first of all to the academic debate on natural disasters and disaster management. It contributes to the theory Sun and Faas (2018) that disasters are

socially produced and not by nature. Also, it tests Marchezini's (2018) theory on disaster response and invisible disasters. Furthermore, postcolonial debates on white savior complex and recolonization are mentioned. It is a common thing that former colonies receive aid from their former 'white' Metropoles. Although the initiative might arise from good intentions, it could also lead to some disturbing issues. The Maurantonio's (2017) 'white savior complex' is a paradigm in which white people appoint non-white people as victims in need of saving and help to make themselves feel good, like real 'saviors'. Since Sint Maarten has been colonized for centuries, it is possible that the 'white savior complex' is also visible on the island. Furthermore, colonial history offers an opportunity to look into the recolonization debate of the Caribbean that has already been introduced by Tandon (1994) and Oostindie (2011). The research will test the idea of recolonization and add new insights into the debate. Lastly, research on the effects of more frequently occurring hurricanes remains relevant. The effects of climate change emerge in a wide field of research topics. Not just environmental disciplines, but also in sociology, anthropology, economics, engineering, and politics. In varied disciplines, climate change and its consequences are a hot topic and are often studied by scholars. Because of its applicability in many disciplines, this research adds valuable knowledge to different academic debates. I selected three debates that I find important and interesting. The debates on natural disasters, the white savior complex, and recolonization of the Caribbean are more extensive elaborated in the theoretical framework chapter.

1.3 Societal Relevance

This research is of societal relevance because of the severity of the situation. Unfortunately, situations like that of Sint Maarten after hurricane Irma are not rare. On the contrary, it has happened many times before and the prospect is that it will happen more frequently in the future. It is important to know the experiences of local, ordinary people with natural disaster and emergency aid to know how to avoid a natural hazard to become a disaster. As Marchezini (2015) said; disasters are social products. A hazard does not necessarily have to become a disaster. It is the way people respond to the event that makes it a disaster or not. When there is not acted upon reducing vulnerabilities or decreasing social inequalities, it can lead to a

disaster within a social dimension. We can learn lessons from natural hazards of the past and be more educated and prepared when a new one hits. Also, for local populations, it is important to feel like they are being heard and to have a possibility to narrate their own story, instead of having their story being told by Western media. Research like this allows people to tell their own experiences and narrate a story of what is really happening in the aftermath of the hurricanes according to them.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that multiple humanitarian aid organizations have been under fire in the past years. Non-governmental organizations received a lot of critique and trust of society in these organizations has reduced over the years (Tatham & Kovacs, 2010). With stories told by the media about corruption and fraud in non-profit organizations, they gained a negative reputation (Cordery & Baskerville, 2011). In case of emergencies, humanitarian aid organizations often use the assistance of political and military forces to reach people in need and to be able to help them (DeTorrente, 2013). If the aid reaches the people in need, the question remains whether the aid is relevant and effective. Ordinary people who were once in the position of critical need and experienced humanitarian help are the best people to reflect on it and contribute to the improvement of humanitarian help in emergencies. Recognizing the shortcomings of aid provisions is the best to learn and improve. As well as recognizing the strengths of aid provisions.

Moreover, another reason why this research is important, is that it opens up an opportunity to once again highlight the seriousness of climate change. Unfortunately, climate change is often still seen as a dull topic. Although the process and effects of climate change are scientifically proven, not enough people are really bothered by or interested in climate change, and many people still deny it (De Pryck & Gemenne, 2017). Even the president of the United States, one of the most influential individuals nowadays, Donald Trump, does not think that serious action has to be taking to stop climate change and even pulled the USA out of the Paris Agreement; an initiative of the UN in which 196 states pledged to fight climate change. However, it looks like climate change is here to stay, and it will only get worse. The increasing amount of natural disasters is, therefore, a valid expectation. More research on the effects of

climate change could lead to more attention and perhaps provoke action by politicians and communities.

1.4 Research Structure

The research has both an inductive as a deductive approach. This means that the theoretical chapter exists of a theory that is used during the fieldwork as a theory that resulted from the fieldwork. The theoretical framework elaborates on the post-colonial lens that is used in this research to approach the research questions and is followed by a commentary of important academic debates and a clarification of the position of this research within the debate. Important concepts that are used in this research will be explained in this chapter as well. The following chapter is the methodology chapter, which will describe the methodologies that were used. Then, the context of the research will be explained. The context of the research, including a historical overview of Sint Maarten, and important information about the islands climate, population, and political structures are crucial for the research results. Research results should always be analyzed with an awareness of the context, for context could explain the outcomes and its seriousness. Therefore, the chapter following the context is about research results. In this chapter, the research analysis and results are written and explained. After the results, there is a chapter of the conclusion with the answers to the research- and sub-questions. Probably the most important chapter, since it directly answers the objective of the research. Succeeding the conclusion, a discussion follows. In the discussion, important questions and recommendations are made, regarding the outcomes of the research. Important to know is that all chapters are closed with a recap and the complete references can be found in the bibliography.

1.5 Recap

In short, with the fast occurring climate change, and the more frequently occurring natural disasters that result from it, it is relevant to start researching the effects natural disasters have

on the human population. This research focusses on the recovery of Sint Maarten in the aftermath of hurricane Irma. Because of Sint Maarten's colonial history, and only recent independence, It is approached through a post-colonial lens. The main research question is: 'Did hurricane Irma reveal post-colonial relations between Sint Maarten and its former Dutch Metropole?'. The research question is further divided into three sub-questions; '1. In what ways were hurricane seasons prepared before and after hurricane Irma?; .2 How did the local population of Sint Maarten experience hurricane Irma's aftermath?; 3. How is the recovery experienced by the local population of Sint Maarten?'. This thesis also includes a methodology chapter, context chapter, research results chapter and at the end a conclusion and discussion.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains the theoretical theories and concepts that are used to approach the research question. The chapter begins with elaborating on the post-colonial lens that is used as a perspective to the research objective, followed by relevant academic debates. Furthermore, the theoretical concepts that function as analytical tools are explained.

2.1 Post-colonial lens

Post-colonialism is a field of research that emerged strongly in the 1970s-80s and discusses debates about the on-going imperial rule in former colonies (Barnet, 2015). Post-colonialism believes that the legacies of colonial occupation and the imperial rule continue to resonate after the end of colonial occupation (Barnet, 2015). Strongly intertwined is the notion of decolonization. According to Chen (1997), the decolonization movement began with Marxism, because it presented an alternative thought and the desire for a different world. Marxist revolutionary theory injected hope into the decolonization forces in the capitalist world and offered the anti-colonial movement in the colonies an alternative to capitalism (Chen, 1997). The movement of decolonization does not only aim for national independence but also to abolish any form of colonization operating through thoughts, cultural forms of expression, social institutions and global political-economic structures (Chen, 1997). Examples of important provoking works of post-colonial studies are *Orientalism* by Edward Said, and *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon. In the latter, Fanon (1961) identifies the problem of nationalism and how it leads to racism, which is the basis of colonialism. Rethinking cultural legacies of colonialism through vocabularies is an important strand of postcolonial theory (Barnet, 2015). Fanon (1961) argues that the wealth, culture and civilization of the so-called First World are built through the exploitation of non-Europeans. In addition to Fanon, Said (1978) states that western identity, culture, and civilization are also built upon the projection of the non-west, which he called 'Other'. To explain the power of cultural representations for colonial dominations, Said used Michel Foucault's notion of discourse. Together, Fanon and Said were the inspiration of many post-colonial studies. Modern post-colonial studies recently took a turn on the connection between post-colonialism and climate change, such as

globalization, the politics of knowledge and the relationships between nature, religion and the meanings of contested landscapes in post-colonial societies (Barnet, 2015). Hurricane Irma, being part of the climate change process, has, therefore, a perfect fit within the post-colonial research field. The disaster and hurricane also got the attention of the country's former metropole, the Netherlands, and is included in the recovery process.

The Netherlands has played its role in the history of colonialism. The notion post-colonialism indicates an era after colonialism, meaning it came to an end. To understand post-colonialism, it is important to clearly define colonialism first. Colonialism is the domination of a population by the colonizers from the metropole, also called 'motherland'. It involves political subordination, economic exploitation, and cultural repression. For centuries the Dutch sailed the seas with their companies VOC and WIC; *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (1602-1798, United East-Indian Company) and the *West-Indische Compagnie* (1621-1792, East-Indian Company). These companies have been celebrated in Dutch history as successful multinationals. Many sailors of these companies are named heroes of the 'Golden Age' of Dutch history. Streets are named after them and there are many statues of heroes such as Michiel de Ruyter, Piet Hein, and Witte de With. As Oostindie (2011) states it, the Dutch have long ignored the wrong deeds of the VOC and WIC. But with the end of the companies, the colonization did not end. With the end of WW2, Indonesia became independent of the Netherlands. However, the Netherlands Antilles remained dependent and it took till the 1970s before the conversation of decolonization even started. The plantations, suppression of native inhabitants and slave trade was silenced for a very long time. It was only in the mid-twentieth century when decolonization got going that colonization became a topic. Not as much by the Dutch themselves, since politicians found it irrelevant and many civilians did not even know these dark pages of history, but by migrants from (former) colonies, who moved to the metropole and started the conversation (Oostindie, 2011). The acknowledgment of the cruel deeds of the Dutch in their past was monumentalized in 2002 with a memorial statue of slavery in the Dutch capital, Amsterdam. The same year as the celebration of 400 years since the VOC. This contrast shows that the perspectives on the history of colonialism are still divided.

In the twentieth century, before decolonization, the interest of the rule of the colonies shifted. No longer in the benefit of the metropole, but to a 'debt of honor', meaning '*the new 'ethical politics' saw as its task the elevation of the natives and bringing economic development to the colony*' (Oostindie, 2011: 135). So the Netherlands made it their duty to modernize the colonies Suriname and the Antilles. According to Barnet (2015), modernization was a new way of colonization. Modernization forced the discourse of modernity and traditionality in the colonies, which is a common dichotomy by the 'West'. The discourse displays the Western ways as modern and therefore superior to the 'backward' traditional ways of colonies. Then, in the second half of the twentieth century, the Netherlands began to decolonize Suriname and the Antilles. Decolonization is the process of dismantling colonialist power in all forms (Ashcroft et al., 2007). After political independence, metropolises can still exercise power through institutional and cultural forces. This means that after political independence, a country is not necessarily decolonized yet.

The field of post-colonialism is important for the case of Sint Maarten since the island was colonized for centuries and is still part of the Dutch Kingdom. It is common that colonial powers brought different languages, religions and governmental systems to colonies (Oostindie, 2006). Sint Maarten is no exception. Colonial heritage is still present on the island. In 2000 a referendum was held on Sint Maarten, which concluded that 69% of the population longed for autonomy within the Kingdom (Oostindie & Klinkers, 2012). So on October 10, 2010, Sint Maarten finally received autonomy. Although Sint Maarten has an autonomous government, it still has to deal regularly with legacies of colonial rule. For example, Sint Maarten still shares two ministries with the Netherlands and many Dutch are still living in Sint Maarten. What was remarkable, is that before 10/10/2010, newspapers already mentioned fear for recolonization by the Netherlands (Oostindie & Klinkers, 2012). Ten years later, recolonization is still frequently mentioned in media, however, the question is; was Sint Maarten fully decolonized in the first place?

2.2 Academic Debate

This research contributes to several academic debates. Three of the potentially relevant debates that I find highly interesting and most appealing are elaborated in this chapter. I believe this research gives an innovative addition to the debate on natural disasters. Furthermore, the post-colonial debates on the white savior complex and the recolonization of the Caribbean compelling debates.

2.2.1 Natural Disaster

Disasters were once thought of and presented as “natural occurrences, accidents, bad luck, and acts of God”, but contributions to disaster research of social sciences such as from anthropology, challenged this assumption, with important theoretical developments leading to the distinction between natural hazards and disasters (Hsu et al., 2015). According to Sun and Faas (2018) disasters do not automatically result from hazards. Natural hazards are only the trigger events of the disaster, with natural hazards being consequences of natural factors and occurrences. Hsu et al. (2015) state that disasters are the result of socioeconomic factors. Green (2012) displays natural disasters as the sum of a natural hazard with vulnerabilities that are generated by social, economic, and political inequality and injustice. Therefore, a disaster is a society’s failure to sustainably adapt to environmental changes, politics, power, and adaptability (Hsu et al., 2015). Most scholars agree that disasters result from human action. Sun and Faas (2018) add another distinction to the origin of disaster studies. They argue that there is a distinction between social production and social construction of disasters. Both refer to the notion that disasters are products of human practices, rooting from social structure and social process, however, the two are complex and slightly different. Social constructionism refers to the idea that we know the world through concepts we produce. This means that what we take for reality has been historically produced in complex social interactions. The contrasting theory of realism argues that we can perceive nature and objects in the world as they are, independent of history and our conceptual framework. Sun and Faas (2018) call realism naive and disagree with the idea of realism. Meanwhile, the social production of disasters is defined by Sun and Faas (2018) as a theory in which disasters are produced by society. The social production of disasters stresses that the political and economic forces operating at a local, regional and international level, contribute to disaster vulnerability.

Sociologist Victor Marchezini (2015) argues that disasters have a biopolitical dimension. When a catastrophic event occurs, agencies created by national governments are supposed to manage risk and crisis. According to Marchezini (2015), these institutions deal with human populations as if they were a political, scientific and biological problem. This approach agrees with the notion of biopolitics from Michel Foucault. In one of Marchezini's researches about the biopolitics of a disaster in Brazil, he emphasizes that when governmental agencies focus on the biopolitical aspects of the disaster, it can have unintended and unacknowledged effects of devaluing social lives and abandoning disaster-affected populations (Marchezini, 2015). It is not just governmental organizations that are involved in disaster governance. Disaster governance is a somewhat new concept in academic literature. According to Tierney (2012), governance is a more inclusive concept than disaster management or disaster risk reduction because disaster management and risk-reduction activities take place in the context of and are enabled by both societal and disaster-specific governance frameworks whereas disaster governance is not. Tierney (2012) states that disaster governance is a form of collaborative governance with multiple organizations to solve problems that extend beyond the domain of a single organization. The biopolitical discourse that governments use in disaster management considers local and traditional cultures irrelevant or irrational. Marchezini (2015) assures that state organizations must respect, comprehend and incorporate local cultures into disaster response and recovery. Local survivors are not only affected by the disaster but also subject to their culture and coping strategies. In catastrophic situations, higher agencies, such as military officers or governments, appoint certain groups of people as 'victims', certain neighborhoods as 'risk areas' and the media narrates a catchy story for attention. Instead of the local population, only target groups are subject to disaster recovery. Those who are not included in the target group lost their voice and are unable to define their future. This often leads to other 'invisible disasters', as Marchezini (2018) likes to call it. These invisible disasters are devaluations of social life. This could mean neglect, abandonment, unemployment, or increasing social inequalities. What differentiates invisible disasters from others is that it is socially produced. The disaster was created because of the agencies failed to incorporate social dimensions into their disaster management. To prevent such invisible disasters, Marchezini (2018) underlines the importance of localism in disaster governance. From the perspective of localism, citizens should have the right and ability to challenge their political and economic leaders about the decentralization of power.

Without saying that some ideas and theories of disaster are true or false, in this research disaster will be used as a result of society's failure to sustainably adapt and that is triggered by natural hazards. The failure to adapt is influenced by both socioeconomic as political factors. I also acknowledge the difference of social construction and the social production of disaster, as elaborated by Sun and Faas (2018), and believe that a disaster can be a social construct and a social product at the same time. History does influence our perceptions of the world and therefore interfere in social interaction. At the same time, a disaster is also a product of how political and economic forces deal with certain events at local, regional and international levels. Moreover, the way political and economic forces deal with events is also based on the historical context. Therefore social construction influences the social production of disasters.

2.2.2 White Savior Complex

The debate on the white savior complex traditionally takes place in the film industry. However, combined with 'colonial guilt', it could take an interesting turn toward post-colonial studies. The concept of white savior emerged in the late twentieth century in the United States. It is a cultural narrative with historic roots. The white savior is typically a male character "*whose innate sense of justice drives tales of racial cooperation, non-white uplift, and white redemption*" (Maurantonio, 2017; 1131). Maurantonio (2017) describes the white savior complex as deeds by white people to help non-white people in hope for redemption of the unjust that has been done to non-white people. In that case, the white savior is not as heroic as it sounds. In the film industry, it acts upon a colorblind ideology, inclusive victimhood and a colonizing force (Maurantonio, 2017). Although it raises attention in the late twentieth century, the complex dates back to at least the nineteenth century. A famous example is a poem called 'The White Man's Burden', see figure 1. The poem implicates that it is the moral duty of white people to bring modernization, prosperity, and development to non-whites. It symbolizes colonialism, racism and white supremacy (Maurantonio, 2017). In the same year, Dutch politics called it a '*debt of honor*' to assist former colonies in achieving development, with that statement, Dutch politicians changed their colonial politics to 'ethical imperialism'

(Kruijtenbrouwer, 1996). They believed that after years of exploitation, imperialism could be justified by economic, cultural, political development. In many cases, colonial relations transitioned to development cooperation (Kothari, 2006). In modern-day guilt is still often mentioned as a reason for development aid. Swim and Miller (1999) believe that 'white guilt' derives from strong feelings of guilt for colonial history and being privileged in society. The guilt is accompanied by embarrassment and shame. These feelings can only be replaced by feelings of pride and excitement, that could be achieved through charity (Swim and Miller, 1999). The consequence of this guilt is that it generates self-occupation and diminishes concern for others (Swim and Miller, 1999). Like the myth of the white savior, aid evolved from guilt is not as heroic as well.



Figure 1 Cartoon that represents Kipling's poem 'The White Man's Burden'. Source: Judge, April 1, 1899.

In the case of Sint Maarten, the cause of aid was the disaster of hurricane Irma. Often, post-disaster reconstruction relies on and is shaped by, the good intentions of governments, NGO's, and sponsors. However, these intentions are inevitably framed by cultural values historical circumstances (Hsu et al., 2015). Good intentions do not automatically lead to good outcomes.

Hsu et al. (2015) argue that poorly conceptualized, planned, and executed disaster responses have significant and lasting effects on marginalized communities. Prejudice, injustice, and disadvantages of pre-disaster settings can be reinforced in post-disaster development (Hsu et al., 2015). Attentiveness to the aspirations and processes of local communities generates opportunities for decreasing vulnerability to the extraordinary and the everyday disasters that communities confront (Hsu et al., 2015). An aid providing institution does not always know what an aid receiving community needs. When the aid provider happens to be a metropole, assisting a former colony in post-disaster development, this could lead to tensions. As DeTorrente (2013) states, critical help to people affected by natural disasters is most often provided by their direct environment; family, community and local institutions and authorities. The immediate environment knows their vital needs best after all. External aid of 'strangers', like those of overseas countries or humanitarian organizations, might be overwhelming.

The fact that Sint Maarten and the Netherlands have a colonial history makes the development aid cooperation interesting for post-colonial studies. In earlier studies, it showed that development cooperation does not always have a relation with neo-colonialism (Kothari, 2006). However, in some cases, cooperation is merely an extension of colonial power. In some cases, colonial guilt aims to keep the power structure intact by maintaining the victimhood hierarchy (Habashi, 2012). What makes this study interesting for the debate, is that it tests the 'myth' of the white savior in practice, and, whether post-disaster development could have a relation with neo-colonialism as well.

2.2.3 Recolonization of the Caribbean

"Recolonization can mean only one thing. It can only mean that after a certain period of decolonization, during which the West lost a measure of control over its subject peoples, the process has reversed itself."; said Yash Tandon (1994: 173). With this quote, Tandon implies that after some time the Metropole regains imperial control over the former colonies. This phenomenon of recolonization intensified after the Cold War (Tandon, 1994). This kind of

recolonization is different than the classical colonization, Tandon (1994) explains. It is not so many physical settlements but about control in economic, political, social and cultural systems of society. This definition of recolonization is exactly what is feared for in the Netherlands Antilles (Oostindie, 2011). After a period of decolonization, Western countries complain that former colonies abuse their newly regained power, indulged in corruption, established dictatorships, committed large-scale violations of human rights, wasted all the 'aid' from the West and ruined their economies (Tandon, 1994). According to Tandon (1994), these accusations are more or less true. Ironically, the afflictions are based on the so-called 'free enterprise systems' and 'socialist systems' brought by Western powers. The West feels the need to discipline these subject people, e.g. by imposing sanctions and setting conditions to receive aid (Tandon, 1994). Tandon's research left him with the question of whether recolonization is necessarily a bad development for the colonized. An answer to this question depends on who you ask, and to keep in mind that terms as 'good' and 'bad' are subjective instead of objective. Kothari (2006) argues that development is often a justified form of colonialism, however, not always. She claims that we cannot understand development as having a single focus on power and control. The continuities and divergences between colonialism and development are dependent on personal experiences and encounters. Also, the development profession stretches beyond government institutions, to NGOs, incorporations, and individuals (Kothari, 2006). According to Brigg (2002), the World Bank is currently the leading development institution. He elaborates on the World Bank as an agent of economic and cultural imperialism working for the global elite (Brigg, 2002). In Sint Maarten's case, the Netherlands supported the recovery development of Sint Maarten with aid through the World Bank. However, the given aid was accompanied by a list of conditions. Which on the one hand is reasonable, since they spent a lot of money on the development and do not want it to be wasted. Whereas on the other hand, it adds to the question of whether it is a form of recolonization and whether that is a bad development or not.

2.3 Concepts:

Theoretical concepts are needed as analytical tools for the analysis. I consider resilience and vulnerability as important concepts for the analysis, as well as power and dependency.

2.3.1 Resilience

One of the major concepts in disaster studies is resilience. In disaster management, the notion of disaster resilience has stressed the idea of “bouncing back” and returning to a pre-shock state (Hsu et al., 2015). The concepts are often used and turned into a real buzz word. Although some scholars argue that the concept should not be used because of the buzz word reputation, as a concept it is very useful. There are many theories and ideas about the meaning of resilience and how to approach resilience. Klein et al. (2003) approach resilience by distinguishing resilience between reactive resilience and proactive resilience. Reactive resilience focusses on strengthening the current system to become more resistant to change, whereas proactive resilience accepts that change is inevitable and tries to create a system that is capable of adapting to new conditions and imperatives. These two types of resilience have both very different ways of approaching. Another way to distinguish the concept of resilience is by differentiating hard resilience from soft resilience. Miao et al. (2013) define hard resilience as robustness and redundancy, and soft resilience as flexibility and agility. Hard resilience systems are characterized as predictable, constant, controllable and efficient, where in contrast soft resilience systems are rather vague, normative, flexible and abstract (Kais & Islam, 2016). Examples of hard resilience systems are engineering and ecological systems. Soft resilience systems are systems such as communities and economic systems. According to Burton (2015) resilience occurs in different fields and can be split up in different dimension; social/community resilience, economic resilience, institutional resilience, physical resilience, and environmental resilience (see figure 2)

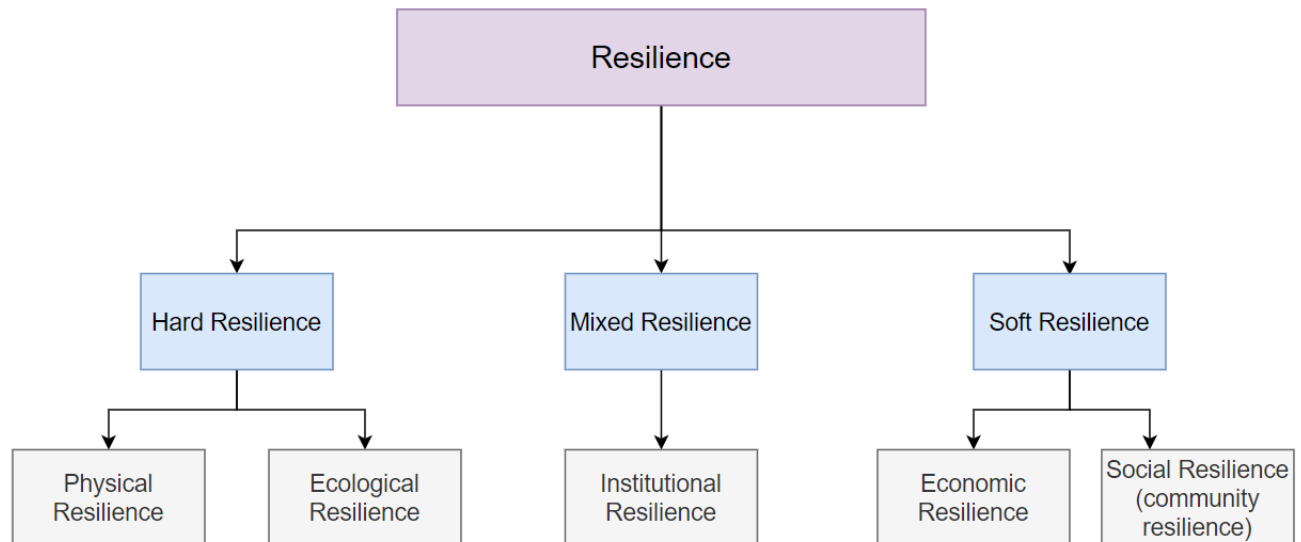


Figure 2 Resilience model

Hard resilience

Hard resilience exists out of at least two types of resilience; physical and ecological resilience. Physical resilience is the ability of constructions and property to protect or the vulnerability of economic losses (Shah et al., 2018). For households, the area of the house and building materials are important. For example, living near the water in flood risk areas diminishes physical resilience. As well as houses that are made of mud instead of bricks and concrete (Shah et al., 2018). Aside from physical resilience, there is also ecological resilience. This type of resilience focusses on natural systems and their ability to bounce back after a sudden change. Kelley defines it as *“the capacity of an ecosystem or natural population to resist or recover from major changes in structure and function following natural or human-caused disturbances, without undergoing a shift to a vastly different regime that is undesirable and very difficult to reverse from a human perspective”* (Kelley, 2013: 30). When there is high ecological resilience, the ecosystem or natural population can return to a natural previous condition. According to Kelley (2013), human construction and interference has in many cases a bad influence and diminish nature’s capacity to reform itself. Therefore, it seems that physical and ecological factors impact each other and the two types of resilience correlate.

Mixed resilience

Institutional resilience is an example of both hard and soft resilience. Institutional resilience refers to the existence of zoning and building code standards and the access that households have to aid facilities, such as hazard reduction programs, flood warnings, credit, humanitarian assistance, first aid training, water and sanitation (Shah et al., 2018). Shah et al. (2018) argue that these facilities are important since they are considered effective in preparedness and mitigation of risks. Communities with high institutional resilience are more likely to adopt a proactive approach and to take preventive measures before disasters than communities with low institutional resilience (Shah et al., 2018). Shah et al. (2018) argue that most of these facilities are the responsibility of the government. Therefore, it highlights the relevance of the role of the government in disaster management and their contribution to saving human lives.

Soft resilience

Two examples of soft resilience are economic and social resilience. Social resilience is also called community resilience. Duval and Vogel (2008) define economic resilience as the ability to maintain output close to potential in the aftermath of shocks. Hence, it contains at least two dimensions: the extent to which shocks are dampened and the speed with which economies revert to normal following a shock (Duval and Vogel, 2008). Simply said, economic resilience implies the resistance an economy can stand towards a sudden change. Whether it can prevent market collapses or stock market crashes. Several factors build up to economic resilience. Shah et al. (2018) write about household resilient and include the factors employment, homeownership and having multiple livelihood sources. Having multiple livelihood sources causes more economic stability, which causes families to have more financial resources and adoption options to safeguard their livelihoods from disaster risks (Shah et al., 2018). Employment is an important factor because it reduces poverty and therefore increases the economic capacity to invest in disaster-resilient structures. It increases the chances of quick recovery and rehabilitation (Shah et al., 2018). Duval and Vogel's (2008) research is based on a national scale and concluded that not all countries have the same economic resilience. Their study revealed that the countries are seen as more resilient also appear to be the ones that have made the most progress on structural reform over the past two decades.

Another soft resilience type is community resilience. This type joins the concepts of community and resilience together. This aggregation has resulted in multiple definitions in different disciplines (Madsen & O'Mullan, 2016). According to Kais and Islam (2016) community can be viewed as a unit of collective action, a common feeling of identity belonging, and a network of relations. Resilience is understood in academics as the degree of elasticity in a system, its ability to rebound or bounce back after experiencing a certain shock or stress and incorporates the idea of self-organization (Kais and Islam, 2016). When putting together, the resilience of a community can broadly be understood as a combination of resistance to frequent and severe disturbances, capacity for recovery and self-organization, and the ability to adapt to new conditions (Kais and Islam, 2016). The concept of community resilience is a tool to determine how well communities are able to respond to adversity without losing identity and function (Madsen & O'Mullan, 2016).

As said before, community resilience can be understood in several different ways. Norris et al. (2008) created a model of community resilience. Their model is based on understanding community resilience as a set of networked adaptive capacities, highlighting information and communication, economic development, social capital, and community competence as key concepts of community resilience (Norris et al., 2008). Also, Bourgon (2010) adds that community resilience is dependent on the capacity to learn and adapts. She highlights that resilience needs active citizenry and solid social networks to be achieved. Similar to Bourgon's statement, Berkes and Ross (2012) affirm that self-organization and agency are key to be resilient. Magis (2010) summarizes this all together as existence, development, and engagement of the community to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise. She states that there are eight dimensions of community resilience: community resources; active agents; collective action; strategic action; equity; impact; resource engagement; and resource development (Magis, 2010: 402).

Community resilience is tested during times of adversity, such as those times when communities are affected by natural disasters. (Madsen & O'Mullen, 2016). During events as natural disasters, it is also the time that humanitarian organization provides aid. In the

aftermath of a natural disaster, it is the right time to test the efficiency and necessity of the aid that is provided. Plenty of research has been done on the efficiency of humanitarian aid in many different kinds of situations. In the disaster management discipline, the concept of resilience has become a key driver of reform and underpins how governments and organizations understand risk, uncertainty, and disaster (Kais & Islam, 2016).

2.3.2 Vulnerability

The concept of resilience is accompanied by the concept of vulnerability. Gaillard (2010) defines vulnerability as the susceptibility to suffer damage in a potentially dangerous event, either natural, economic or political. *“Vulnerability thus stresses the condition of a society which makes it possible for a hazard to become a disaster”* (Gaillard, 2010: 219). Klein et al. (2003) explain how resilience can be seen as a component of vulnerability, together with components exposure and resistance. However, more often, resilience is seen as the ‘flip side’ of vulnerability. Scholars like Klein et al. reason that enhancing resilience is equal to reducing vulnerability, because, *‘a system is vulnerable because it is not resilient; it is not resilient because it is vulnerable’* (Klein et al. 2003: 40). Personally, I disagree with this reasoning. For this research, I understand vulnerability as a way to measure a system’s fragility concerning environmental and other threats, like the way Kais and Islam (2016) defined it. In my perspective, a system can be vulnerable and resilient at the same time. For vulnerability being a risk, the threat of external factors that can cause harm and distress, and resilience is the ability to react to the impact of these harmful factors. However, I agree with the statement of Shah et al. (2018) that in an ideal situation, there should be a high level of resilience and a low level of vulnerability. As vulnerability is often to be found in a present or future context, Bankoff (2003) argues that vulnerability is a product of the past. A historical perspective is needed to understand the contexts and roots of disaster causality (Bankoff, 2003).

Mwangi and Mutua (2014) created a multifactor approach on how to measure vulnerability, see figure 3. Their model exists of the components exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. The component exposure is also called physical vulnerability by Safi et al. (2016). Both Mwangi and Mutua (2014) as Safi et al. (2016) explain the component as the exposure

to disaster risks or impacts, for example, heavy weather circumstances. The other two components represent more the socioeconomic aspect of vulnerability. Sensitivity is the measure of the extent to which a system can be harmed due to a hazard, e.g. floods (Safi et al., 2016). The last component, adaptive capacity, refers to an adjustment in natural or human systems in response to hazards and their effects that moderate, harm or exploit beneficial opportunities (Mwangi & Mutua, 2014). The adaptive capacity could be diminished by poverty or illiteracy (Mwangi & Mutua, 2014). The interaction of the three components gives an insight into the vulnerability of a situation.

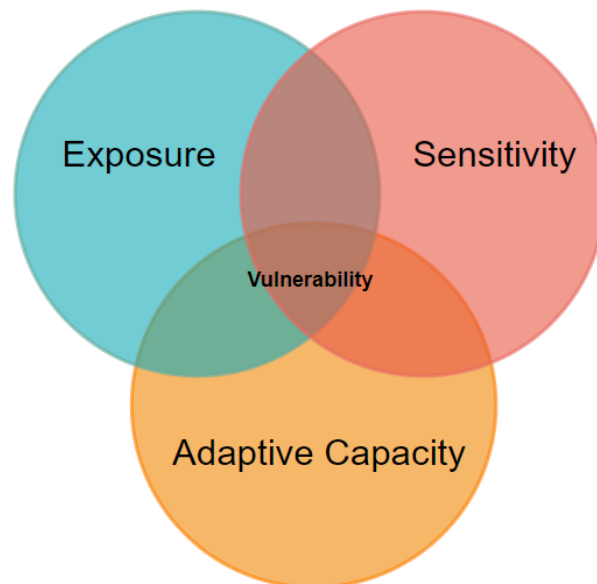


Figure 3. Model of Vulnerability as explained by Mwangi and Mutua (2014).

2.3.3 Power

The concept of power is often used in the social sciences, yet, there is little consensus on what power actually is and how it operates, this is due to the chance that power exposes a more systematic social relationship of inequality, discrimination or exclusion (Tew, 2006). However, Tew (2006) critiques Max Weber's definition of 'power as the capacity of an individual to realize his will even against the opposition of other people' as not valid outside the dominant

Western masculine perspective. Outside that perspective, Talcott Parsons definition of power as 'generalized capacity of a social system to get things done in the interest of collective goals' as more fitting (Tew, 2006: 35). In Parson's definition, power appears to lie within the authority. However, both theories neglect the positions of people within unequal social orders. This is where Michel Foucault enters the debate. Foucault argues that power is not between two parties but naturally exists in social practices, and steer the acts of individuals (Tew, 2006) In other words, *'although people may subjectively experience some sense of 'will' from within, they are never totally controlled by each self'* (Tew, 2006: 35). Heller's (1996) interpretation of Foucault's theory is that power relations are both intentionally as non-subjective. According to Heller (1996), individuals are always both undergoing as exercising power. Also, power is inevitable and everyone is caught in the network of power (Heller, 1996).

In certain situations, power is seen as an entity to possess and to exercise over others. This position of superiority deploys processes of othering, in which the dominant group label groups that seem slightly different as others, and in this way create a division between 'them' versus 'us' (Tew, 2006). This process is accompanied by oppression, wherein the dominant group benefits from their subordination of others, for example through economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence (Tew, 2006). In some cases, the dominant group is not aware of any conscious intention to oppress, just as the subordinate group is not necessarily aware of their oppression (Tew, 2006). Tew (2006) created a matrix to understand power, see figure 4. In his matrix, he distinguishes power into being either productive or limiting, and either to have power over others or to have power together. According to Tew (2006), power modes may shift over time into another mode.

	Power over	Power together
Productive modes of power	Protective power Deploying power in order to safeguard vulnerable people and their possibilities for advancement	Co-operative power Collective action, sharing, mutual support and challenge – through valuing commonality <i>and</i> difference
Limiting modes of power	Oppressive power Exploiting differences to enhance own position and resources at the expense of others	Collusive power Banding together to exclude or suppress ‘otherness’ whether internal or external

Figure 4 Matrix of power relations by Tew (2006)

Disaster case studies appear to be a good way to research power relations. In Marchezini’s (2015) research, he focused on disaster recovery as an expression of power relations, because it turns out that ‘*disaster narratives tend to reinforce hegemonic forces of society, so discourse about disaster becomes discourse about the politics of disaster*’ (Marchezini, 2015: 365). In this process, politics and power influence the perception of the disaster. The disaster is then narrated by people in power, often external agencies. These power relations are between different social actors, including journalists, volunteers, aid providers and tourists on the one hand, and locals on the other (Marchezini, 2015). External agencies frame locals as helpless victims who need to be rescued by external heroes, this practice is called *victimization* (Marchezini, 2015). Victimization often leads locals losing their capacity to speak for themselves and define their future, because the framing of the disaster it influences policymaking (Marchezini, 2018). According to Marchezini (2015), victimization is equal to the devaluation of life and therefore an invisible disaster.

Power relations always offer the possibility of resistance. In some cases, people experience powerlessness, feeling like they are victimized, helpless or disempowered by others (Tew, 2006). The process of people who manage to rise out of helplessness and reclaim control over

their lives is called empowerment (Tew, 2006). Empowerment can be seen as mutual support and collective action that is undertaken by marginalized groups (Tew, 2006). The concept of empowerment offers a productive possibility of power (Tew, 2006). Important is, that empowerment is taken by the marginalized themselves, because *'Doing 'empowerment' for people may involve discourses and practices that are framed in ways that suggest to people what their needs are and what they should aspire to'*, Tew (2006: 34). In other words, empowerment for others is not about marginalized people taking power for themselves, but for themselves to set their own agenda or to take power. To conclude the concept of power, it is a transformative capacity (Heller, 1996). Better to be understood as a social relation, rather than a thing (Tew, 2006). It is a relationship that operates both top-down as bottom-up (Tew, 2006).

2.3.4 Dependency

The concept of dependence stimulated an active academic controversy; some view it as helpful in explaining the distribution of power in the world, while others criticize it as a "misleading" analytical category (Baldwin, 1980). The dependency theory established in the 1950s in response to the modernization theory (Farny, 2016). The theory does not criticize only criticizes the modernization theory but also explains global inequalities. The rise of the dependency theory came together with the post-colonial theory. Dependency in post-colonial studies implies that former colonies have problems with their development in economic, cultural and political spheres and still depend on the metropolitan world for progression (Girvan, 2011). In other words, dependency reveals the post-colonial forms of dominance in international relations (Namkoong, 1999). After colonies gained their independence, the dependency relationship on the metropole remained, often unwillingly (Ramrattan and Szenberg, 2010). The theory of dependency offered an explanation of how the structures of underdevelopment came about, however, the largest critique is that the theory cannot explain how to change structures of underdevelopment (Doherty, 1983). According to Ferraro (2008), dependency even explains the present underdevelopment state of many nations by examining the interactions with other nations. Dependency includes a distinction between the 'core' and 'periphery' countries, in which the peripheral countries rely on the core (Farny, 2016). The term 'world system' is used as a unit for the core and periphery, with capitalism

explaining the underdevelopment and backwardness of the periphery (Farny, 2016). Originally, the dependency theory argued that to exit the dependency trap and end global inequality, was to separate the periphery from the core, but in reality, the post-Cold-War era led to further integration rather than separation (Farny, 2016). However, some countries have shown to get out of the dependency trap through their own economic growth (Farny, 2016).

The dependency theory entered Caribbean academic debates in the early post-colonial time of the 1960s and 1970s (Girvan, 2011). It diminished but recently started to flourish again (Girvan, 2011). In Caribbean social science, dependency implies an asymmetry in power relations, or imbalances of powers (Girvan, 2011). Girvan (2011) strongly emphasizes the decolonization of the mind. He argues that the way of thinking of many people in the Caribbean is still dependent on Western theories and thoughts. Girvan (2011) writes that the dependency theory's purpose is to raise awareness in order to decolonize their way of thinking. To underscore this, he compares dependency of the mind to 'mental slavery', as he quote's Bob Marley's famous song 'redemption song' (Girvan, 2011). According to Girvan (2011), the Caribbean dependency thought (CDT) is a clear manifestation of resistance in the behavioral, religious and philosophical spheres.

2.4 Recap

At first glance, a disaster case study seems unrelated to post-colonial studies. However, connecting the debates and concepts, the connection starts to make sense. Approaching the recovery of hurricane Irma in Sint Maarten through a post-colonial lens offers the possibility to investigate relations with former metropole the Netherlands. Diving into the debates of natural disasters, white savior complex and recolonization might reveal these relations. The debate on natural disaster states that a disaster is mainly generated by risk and vulnerability in a social spectrum. Strong disaster governance is needed to prevent, mitigate and adapt to the disaster. Governmental relations with the Dutch government could be beneficial, because of the support and emergency aid. However, it is important to bring the situation in the light

of cultural values and historical events. Because of the colonial history between the two countries, a white savior complex could exist. A white savior generally believes that he has to bring development and prosperity to undeveloped countries. In some cases, this belief is justified through colonial guilt. Colonial guilt in Dutch history is manifested in the 'debt of honor' towards their former colonies. Although the consequences of this saving are not always desired, the intention might be good. However, sometimes the intentions are to get a new grip on economic, political, cultural or social systems of the former colony. This process is called recolonization. Recolonization is not so much about regaining physical settlements but on exercising power through other institutions. The concept of power is therefore important to use in this research. Power is a social relation that operates through the capacity to bring transformative change, despite the will of others. In some cases, power can be gained through dependency. When (former) colonies are dependent on the metropole for development or recovery aid, the metropole is able to exercise power by setting conditions and a price. Furthermore, the concepts of resilience and vulnerability seem very distanced from the post-colonial debate. However, with a closer look, the interconnection makes more sense. The vulnerability and lack of resilience for disasters may lead to the need for external assistance in the recovery process. To use vulnerability, the concept is defined as the measure of the risks that threaten and may harm a system. I recognize three different components of vulnerability; exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. Exposure is the degree to which a system is disturbed by dreadful environmental stress. Sensitivity is the extent to which a system is affected by internal and external disturbances (Shah et al. 2018). Adaptive capacity is the capacity to prepare for an event and adapt during and after an event. For the concept of resilience, I recognize the differences between hard and soft resilience and reactive and proactive resilience (see figure 1). To make resilience measurable, I used social, economic, physical and institutional dimensions that are also used and defined by Shah et al. (2018). Social resilience is the ability of individuals, households or a community to deal with risk or disturbances. Economic resilience is the total of economic activities of individuals or systems in response to disaster risk. Physical resilience is the ability to recover houses, buildings, and infrastructure. Institutional resilience is the planning and presence of programs, such as risk reduction programs, first aid training, and humanitarian aid.

3. Methodology

The methods used in this research are inspired by the Gioia methodology (Gioia, et al. 2012). The Gioia methodology is comparable to the traditional Grounded Theory in social sciences. Gioia (2012) criticizes the traditional scientific methods by arguing that traditional methods engage in progressive extensions of existing knowledge as a way of discovering new knowledge. The concern of Gioia et al. (2012) is that when people focus on what we already know, we delimit what we can know. Therefore, the Gioia methodology encourages originality in theorizing and focusses instead on capturing new concepts that are adequate at the level of meaning of the people living the experience and are adequate at the level of scientific theorizing about the experience (Gioia, et al. 2012).

3.1 Research Design

The research has an abductive design, meaning that the research consists of both deductive and inductive methods. In other words, some data was collected without prior theoretical knowledge and some data was collected based on a theory. Abductive research means that both prior theoretical knowledge and real-life observation will be used to create a hypothesis and theoretical framework and to test that hypothesis to create new knowledge. Also, the research has a case study design. This means that the research is only applicable to the situation of the Sint Maarten community after the hurricane season of 2017. A case study design is an in-depth study of a particular research problem that narrows down a very broad field into an easily researchable example. It helps to understand a complex issue through a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events. It is a very useful design for testing specific theories or models but also, to gather knowledge in situations where there is not much known about an issue or phenomenon yet. The case of the Sint Maarten community in a post-hurricane Irma period can be seen as a representative case. The case captures the circumstances and conditions of a common situation (Bryman, 2012).

3.2 Data collecting

The data for the research is collected through ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews.

3.2.1 Preparation

While preparing for the fieldwork, I put a lot of work into reading about the island Sint Maarten and its history. Also, I had online contact with my internship organization, who informed me about the activities they were doing. I found a lot of information about the island on social media like Facebook. I was able to follow pages and join groups like storm watches, activities, religious movements, LGBT+ movements, local NGO's and job markets. Through social media, I was able to make my first contact with local people and arrange interviews.

3.2.2. Fieldwork

During the first week of my fieldwork, I mainly focused on observation of Sint Maarten's daily life, media actuality and developing a social network. As I traveled around the island using public transportation, I soon noticed the sight of destruction and reconstruction, as well as the famous friendliness of the local population. Throughout the 9 weeks of fieldwork, I had many small talks with locals. The dollar busses, as the public transportation busses are called, soon turned out to be excellent places to meet new people. As many people did not feel comfortable talking about the hurricane, it was more difficult to arrange interviews. In the end, I was able to conduct 16 semi-structured interviews, varying from 30 to 75 minutes. During my fieldwork, I also did a literature study, using what was left of the public library in Philipsburg. Although many books got lost in the hurricane of 2017, there were still some books left that could tell me more about the island, its population, culture, and history. Furthermore, I was able to do some volunteering work at the Players Development Program in Philipsburg. I like to believe that the combination of these activities gave me a good overall insight into daily life in Sint Maarten. Moreover, I kept track of the local news online and on paper every day during and after the fieldwork.

3.2.3. Interviews

In the Gioia methodology, it is important for the researcher to consider the respondents as “knowledgeable agents”. This means that respondents live and construct their own realities and know what they are trying to do and are able to explain their thoughts, intentions and actions (Gioia, et al. 2012). This means that the researcher's role is to give a sufficient narration of the respondents' experience. In order not to influence the respondents, constructs or theories are not imposed on the informants during interviews. There is flexibility depending on the direction respondents lead the topic in the interviews. The semi-structured interviews all started by asking about the respondent experiences of hurricane Irma and how they prepared themselves for the hurricane season of 2017. Based on their answers the conversation continued. Throughout the interview I also asked every respondent about their damages and recovery, ending the conversation by asking what they think could have done better in disaster management. The interviews were held with 5 men and 11 women, all aged between 25 and 65 years old, see table 1. All participants were living and working, except for one who was temporarily unemployed at the moment, in the Dutch part of the island. Since the island has a ‘migration culture’ as one of the participants named it, the variety of ethnic backgrounds is diverse. All participants were living on the island during hurricane Irma in September 2017 and have had either or both mentally and physically suffered.

3.3 Data analyzing

According to the Gioia methodology, the researcher him/herself becomes a knowledgeable agent during the analysis because a researcher must be able to think at multiple levels simultaneously, such as the level of informant terms and more abstract codes on theoretical levels (Gioia, et al. 2012).

To analyze the data from the interviews I first transcribed and coded all the audio recordings of the interviews. While transcribing I got the first insight of possible patterns, similarities, and differences. After transcribing, I used the program Atlas.ti for coding. I started with open coding, using descriptive codes. I came to a total of 106 codes, based on 14 transcriptions with

a total of 16 persons. This large amount of codes made me feel kind of lost. So, I went through the transcriptions again and started to rename or merge some codes and left out some irrelevant codes. I selectively chose my final codes and came to a selection of 55 codes. While coding I profoundly used “in vivo codes”. These are emic code names that are literal quotations from respondents. To structure the data I categorized my 55 codes into 9 themed groups, see figures 5 and 6. These groups were distributed into two different dimensions; disaster management and consequences of hurricane Irma.

participant	Profession	Gender	Ethnicity	Date	Location
RES_01	School director	female	Caribbean	June 21, 2019	Little Bay
RES_02	Operation manager	female	Dutch	July 29, 2019	St Johns
RES_03	Psychologist	female	Dutch	July 29, 2019	Philipsburg
RES_04	Chef	male	Dutch	June 18, 2019	Pelican Bay
RES_05	Teacher	male	Dutch	June 18, 2019	Pelican Bay
RES_06	School Director	female	Caribbean	June 24, 2019	St Peter
RES_07	Elementary School Teacher	female	Caribbean	June 24, 2019	St Peter
RES_08	Project manager	female	Caribbean	June 7, 2019	Philipsburg
RES_09	Director	male	Dutch	July 17, 2019	Cay Hill
RES_10	Unemployed	female	Caribbean	June 11, 2019	Cay Hill
RES_11	Fire Department	male	Dutch	June 17, 2019	Little Bay
RES_12	Manager Courthouse	female	Caribbean	July 10, 2019	Philipsburg
RES_13	General manager	female	Dutch	July 24, 2019	Simpson Bay
RES_14	Community mobiliser	female	Caribbean	June 19, 2019	Philipsburg
RES_15	Sports reporter	male	American	June 17, 2019	Pond Island
RES_16	Business manager	female	Dutch	June 25, 2019	Cay Bay

Table 1 List of Respondents

Code	Theme	Dimension
procrastination preparation training / reminders same preparation as before preparation weakens by time hurricane protocol improving disaster plan	hurricane preparation	disaster management
responsibility government responsibility locals	responsibility	
recovery construction recovery mental recovery business	recovery	
disaster after the disaster vulnerable infrastructure and inevitability of storms lack local initiative complaint Netherlands complaint NGO communication issues complaint world bank still damage from Louis complaint government	what made aid unsuccessful	
compliment government compliment world bank compliment Netherlands compliment NGO government NGO cooperation	what made aid successful	
damage Media doesn't cover all looting discrimination undocumented people crime still not recovered flee after Irma	violent strain	consequences hurricane Irma
resilience new chances proud lessons learned build back better local empowerment cohesion wake-up call / encourage preparedness happy memory Irma	societal positive outcomes	
unemployment after Irma dependence tourism financial damage poverty migration island life	economic strain	
emotional damage stress fear next storm frustration trauma effects on mental health mental health assistance	mental strain	

Figure 5. Data structure

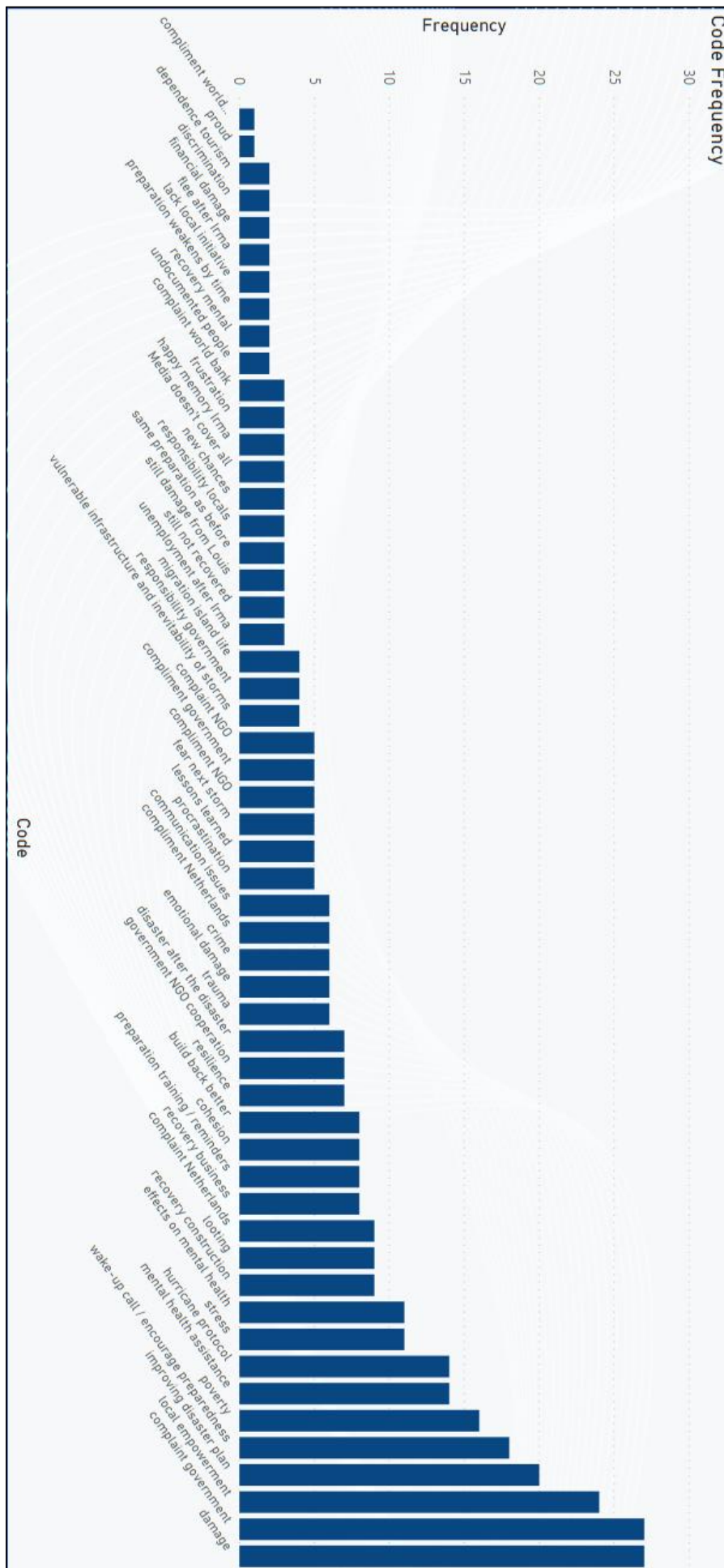


Figure 6. Codes and their frequencies of occurrence

3.4 Reflection and Ethics

It is important to take into consideration that all researches deal with bias. A researcher should be aware of his or her possible bias. In my case, being a Dutch, white woman could be influential to the final research results. For example, it could be a reason for respondents not to express their frustrations about the Dutch government towards me, or to not express their feelings about white privilege. Moreover, because of the sensitivity of the research topic, a fieldwork of 9 weeks is a bit too short. If there was more time to create a network and to build trust with the target group, it could be possible that more people would be willing to be interviewed. That would have resulted in more data and perhaps different outcomes. More time would also mean that it was possible to broaden or deepen the research questions. The sensitivity also caused that not all respondents would like to be named in the thesis. Therefore, the respondents are anonymized by codenames.

3.5 Recap

To summarize this chapter, the research has an abductive case-study design. Meaning it uses both an inductive and deductive approach and is only applicable to the situation of Sint Maarten and the aftermath of hurricane Irma from 2017 to 2019. Data for the research is collected through semi-structured interviews and literature studies. Coding the data has led to 55 codes, categorized into 9 groups and divided over two dimensions of disaster management and the consequences of hurricane Irma. As in any other research, certain biases could influence the research results. Being a white, Dutch female myself, could have influenced the outcomes of the data collection and analysis.

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4. Context: Sint Maarten

Sint Maarten is part of the Lesser Antilles island group. The island has a total surface of 87 km² and is divided by a 10 km border into the northern French part Saint-Martin and the southern Dutch part Sint Maarten, see figure 7. Although the French part is bigger, the largest part of the island's population lives on the Dutch side of the island. To get a complete insight into the case, this chapter will elaborate on some important information and context of the island of Sint Maarten.



Figure 7. Map of Sint Maarten. Retrieved from <https://guidetocaribbeanvacations.com>

4.1 Historical overview

Before the 'discovery' of Christopher Columbus, Sint Maarten was populated by American-Indians and South Americans. The first traces of settlements on the island date back to 4,000 BC (Princess Heights, 2019). The legacy of the Arawaks who lived from 800 BC till 300 BC on the island is still visible in museums, archaeologist findings, restaurant names, and tourist attractions. In the time of the Arawaks, the island was called Soualiga, meaning Salt Island. A giant salt pond is still visible in Philipsburg today. The island was first noticed by the European world after Christopher Columbus passed the island on Saint Martins day, being 11th November, in 1493. Columbus named the island after the catholic saint (St.Martin, 2019). Although the island was already discovered by the Spanish, they did not settle immediately. Allegedly the Dutch and French were first to settle on the island in the 1630s (Princess Heights, 2019). In 1648 the French and Dutch officially divided the island with the treaty of Concordia, nevertheless, together with the Spanish, they kept fighting for it until 1817.

The legend of how Saint Martin was divided says that it started as a contest between the French and Dutch. As a civilized way of dividing the territory of the island, the French and Dutch agreed to let a French and Dutch soldier race. The French soldier would start walking from the north and the Dutch soldier from the south. The meeting point would be the location of the new border. To make it culturally related, the French soldier would only bring a bottle of French red wine and the Dutch soldier a bottle of jenever, Dutch Gin. As one could imagine, gin has more impact on a person's athletic abilities. This would be the reason why the Dutch part of the island is smaller than the French part. Whether the story is true or not, it is a fact that the treaty of Concordia is the oldest international treaty that is still enforced (St.Maarten, 2019). When the Dutch West-Indian Company conquered the island in 1634, Sint Maarten was used to trade slaves and collect salt from the salt pond (IsGeschiedenis, 2019). Slavery maintained on the island until the French abolished it in 1848 and the Dutch in 1863. A reign of over 200 years of slavery marked the island. Slaves worked in sugar plantations, cotton fields and the great salt pond (Roitman, 2016).

In 1954 the island lost its colonial status but remained under Dutch autonomy until 2010. On October 10, 2010, Sint Maarten finally received its independence from the Netherlands (IsGeschiedenis, 2019). Although it is still part of the Dutch Kingdom, it gained its own autonomous government. The Netherlands still works together with the country of Sint Maarten. The interests of the cooperations are to protect the independence of the judiciary, to tackle corruption and cross-border crime, and to maintain public order. They have a joint Court of Justice and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence represent the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a whole, including the Caribbean parts (Government of Sint Maarten, 2010). Also, the Netherlands is involved in financial oversight of Sint Maarten (Government of Sint Maarten, 2010).

4.2 Climate and Pollution

Like many of the Caribbean Islands, Sint Maarten has a tropical climate with warm temperatures. The climate includes a dry and rainy season. The rain season is also called hurricane season because of the strong winds and chance of occurring hurricanes. The hurricane season officially starts on June 1st and ends on the 30th of November. It is a volcanic island with a land area of 37 km² and a maritime area of 434 km² (St. Martin, 2019). The landscapes vary from white sandy beaches to overgrown hills. It is an overall green island with a wide variety of flora and fauna (St. Martin, 2019).

Unfortunately, the island has a high pollution rate. In January 2019 the pollution was measured at a Pollution Index level of 83.48, which is considered as high (Numbeo, 2019). Both air pollution as water pollution scored very high. This is a great risk for the health of all life on the island. The extremely high water pollution mainly comes from sewage, fuel, and litter (DCNA, 2017). The island used to have a large and rich coral reef. After hurricane Irma, the reef suffered extensive damage. It was a great reminder of the importance to preserve natural buffers, such as coral reefs and mangroves, that protect the island from storm damage (DCNA, 2017). At the beginning of 2019, it was discovered that at least half of the corals had already died or been infected by a new coral disease called Stony Coral Tissue Loss disease

(Nature Today, 2019). Besides pollution and diseases, tourism also forms a threat. The rapid and continuous growth in tourist numbers has led to thoughtless landscaping that harms maritime life (DCNA, 2017).

The pollution problem continues above the sea. There is a huge landfill in Philipsburg that pollutes the air. The toxic garbage dump frequently catches fire and thence pollutes the air (GreenSXM, 2019). Hurricane Irma caused a lot of waste in the landfill to start flying around and causing damage. The clean-up of the destruction by hurricane Irma led to an enormous growth of the dump and caused new fires to start (SintMaartenGov, 2018). Irma is one of the reasons why there is now special attention to the pollution problem (GreenSXM, 2019).

4.3 Population and Economy

On June 6th, 2019 the population of Sint Maarten counted 40.913 people over a total land area of 34 km² (Worldometers, 2019). Therefore the population density is high, namely 1204 per km². The prospect for the future is that the population will only grow. The island has a high immigration rate and has, therefore, numerous nationalities. It is said that the island has around 120 different ethnicities (St.Martin, 2019). Many of the population originates from other Caribbean islands, South America, Asia, and Africa. Besides the official languages English and Dutch, the languages Spanish, Creole, Papiamentu, and French are also well-spoken (IndexMundi, 2018). The majority of the people are Christian, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. However, there are also smaller religious communities such as Hindu, Jehovah witness, Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim communities (IndexMundi, 2018).

The economy of Sint Maarten mainly depends on tourism. An estimated 73 percent of foreign exchange income comes from tourism (WorldBank, 2019). Aside from luxurious hotels and restaurants, there are also many people living in cottages. Poverty is high, mainly because minimum wages are low and living costs are extremely high on the island. In fact, they are the most expensive throughout the Dutch Kingdom (DailyHerald, 2019). The destruction after

Irma had a large negative impact on the tourism sector. This caused the unemployment rate to grow after Irma (WorldBank, 2019). Many people left the island after the storm. It is not yet known how many of them have returned or if they even will return after all.

Among the immigrants are many undocumented migrants as well. The job opportunities, the use of the US dollar and the overall high standard of living make the island attractive for immigrants in search of better lives (Fitzpatrick, 2009). Some migrants come on vacation and decide to stay, often bringing their family and friends later to the island. The undocumented migrants live without legal documents and do not have the protection of the system. The immigration problem resulted after hurricane Luis caused havoc in 1995 and was followed by a major rebuilding program that created new job opportunities (Fitzpatrick, 2009). Although it is unsure how many undocumented immigrants reside on the island, most recent estimation dates back to 2006, when Justice Minister David Dick estimated that around 20,000 undocumented immigrants were residing in Sint Maarten (Fitzpatrick, 2009).

4.4 Political structure

As of October 10, 2010, Sint Maarten is no longer part of the country Netherlands Antilles. Although remaining part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, it acquired the status of the county within the Kingdom, including its own autonomous government. Unlike the French part of the island, the Dutch part of Sint Maarten is not a member of the European Union. This is because the French part, Saint Martin, is part of the French government. According to the government of Sint Maarten, it has many advantages that the island is not a member of the European Union. Instead, they have the status of Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT). This brings advantages to the export of goods to the EU. Moreover, OCT's receive funding from the European Development Fund (EDF). The Netherlands is still represented in the new country. Sint Maarten has a Representative in the country that represents all Dutch Ministries, apart from the ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. Those ministries are the responsibilities of the Kingdom as a whole (Government of Sint Maarten, 2010). Since 10-10-'10, the government of Sint Maarten follows an organizational structure in case of emergency,

see figure 8. The disaster approach includes 10 Emergency Support forums. The 3 ESFs that are always informed during emergencies are the fire department, police and the ministry of public health, social development and labor. If found necessary by the head of disaster management, other ESFs are also informed. In case of serious disasters, the head of disaster management informs the prime minister. The prime-minister decides whether to ask the Dutch Royal Marines or a public prosecutor. This organization structure displays a co-operation of Sint Maarten and the Netherlands.

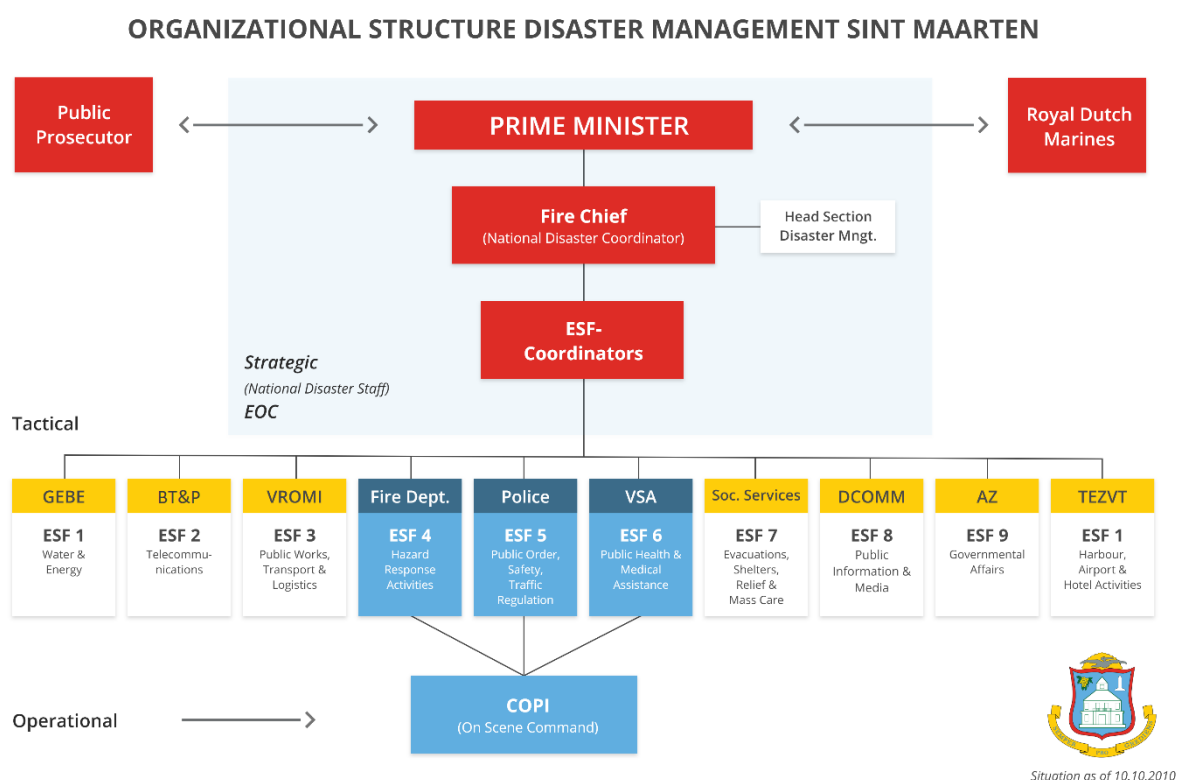


Figure 8. Organizational structure disaster management as of 2010 ¹

Since the country became independent, there has been some political upheaval. Corruption scandals occurred frequently in the media and society's trust in the government has been somewhat doubtful. After hurricane Irma, the government collapsed after Prime Minister Marlin lost two no-confidence votes. New elections were to be held. The campaign time was

¹ Retrieved from head of Disaster Management, June 2019.

paired with more scandals of bribery and fraud, including the arrest of the leader of the United St Maarten Party (Dutch News, 2018). The aid offered by the Netherlands that was rejected by Marlin was later accepted by the government. The Netherlands donated a total of €550 million to help rebuild the island. The money was paired with several conditions. The Netherlands demanded that Sint Maarten would temporarily hand over border control and that local authorities would set up an anti-corruption watchdog (Dutch News, 2018). The demands of the Netherlands caused a grown in the anti-Netherlands movement on the island. Many people were not pleased with the interference of the Netherlands in their politics. Some people even spoke of the Dutch recolonizing the island (Finies, 2018).

4.5 K1 Britannia Foundation Internship

The K1 Britannia Foundation is a local NGO established in 2014. When the K1 Britannia foundation was established, the foundation focused on various charitable projects with a strong focus on the evolving social issues faced by youth on Sint Maarten. It was only after hurricane Irma, the organization establish its disaster relief department K1 DIRECT. In the first days after the hurricane, the K1 Britannia volunteers met up and started to evaluate the livability of shelters and started clearing rubbish. In the days that followed, they also teamed up with the Koninklijke Marechaussee (Dutch Royal Military Police) and stocked and divided food supplies. K1 Britannia also teamed up with Red Cross Aruba, Red Cross St Maarten, and the Fire Department. With the help of their current and new volunteers, of which tourists who wanted to help, K1 Britannia continued evaluating shelters, and storing and distributing food and sanitation supplies. While mitigating the damage and teaming up with several organizations, K1 Britannia helped prepare tourists, foster homes and the White and Yellow Cross Foundation for hurricanes Jose and Maria and find them shelter. In almost all the conducted interviews in this research K1 Britannia was mentioned as one of the most successful aid suppliers after hurricane Irma. Therefore, it was an honor to conduct this research in cooperation with the K1 Britannia Foundation.

4.6 Recap

When conducting research and reading a thesis, it is important to know some of the case study's context. Knowing Sint Maarten's history with colonization is important to understand the political frustrations with the country of the Netherlands. The only recent independence, since 10-10-'10, cause political turbulence in the country. After hurricane Irma, the government collapsed and the Netherlands started to interfere in politics again. Not only the government but also the tourism sector collapsed. This sector is most important for the island and is the main source of income. Because of the destruction, a lot of people lost their jobs. Also, the destruction had a great impact on the water and air pollution of the island. Another thing that's important to keep in mind is the migration culture on the island. The population consists of many migrants from all parts of the world and is therefore very multicultural. Many people move to the island, but after Irma, many people also left. Not insignificant, the country copes with a large amount of undocumented migrants.

5. Results

I arrived at the island on the first day of the hurricane season of 2019. The moment I stepped out of the airport I could see the remains of hurricane Irma. As I took the public bus, the so-called 'dollar busses', to my accommodation, I heard for the first time about hurricane season preparation. The local radio station Oasis 96.3 was playing. In between the songs, there was a short notification with hurricane preparation tips. The notification mentioned that hurricane season had started and recommended to stock enough water in case a hurricane would hit. During the 9 weeks fieldwork, I learned that the Oasis 96.3 broadcasted several different hurricane tips every hour. Not only the radio warned for the hurricane season. One Sunday when I took the bus again, the driver played a recording of what seemed to be a church sermon. The preacher spoke of hurricane Irma and the destruction it left behind. Moreover, he said that the people of Sint Maarten should be afraid of another storm and be prepared in case a hurricane hits. I heard many podcasts and radio programs mentioning tips such as; to have a family plan in case of emergency; to secure your car; to stock enough money; to stock enough canned food; to stock food for pets; to stock candles, flashlights and batteries.

Dollar busses turned out to be a great data source. As the people of Sint Maarten are very friendly, I had the chance to have many small talks with people I met in the busses. Through these small talks, I learned that many people were not ready yet to speak of what happened during and after hurricane Irma. It was a sensitive topic for conversation. Some people would say they rather do not speak about it, whereas others would say they were tired of speaking about it. A respondent I interviewed called it 'Irma-moe', which is Dutch for 'Irma-fatigue'. As dollar busses only ride the main road, I often hopped off and find myself walking the rest of the route. It was in these moments that I could really see the differences between the rich and poor on the island. The most beautiful houses were standing in areas like Pelican Key and Guana Bay. You would not be able to imagine that a hurricane passed nearly two years earlier. Other days, I traveled to much less fabulous neighborhoods as Dutch Quarter, Belvedere and Cay Bay. It was in these districts that destruction was clearly visible, where the roads were dirty and where large families would live in small cottages. Now I had seen the gap between rich and poor, the saying of a friendly lady on the bus made perfect sense. She said "*Hurricane*

Irma is still in the minds of poorer people because those are the people who still haven't recovered. The middle class is physically recovered, so they suffer less. The rich often didn't suffer in the first place."

It was not only in the public sphere that I could sense the concerns for the coming hurricane season. There was a lot of activity online as well. There was a lot to find on hurricane season preparations on news platforms, social media such as Facebook and the government's website. On June 1st, the first day of the hurricane season, the government posted predictions of the hurricane season of 2019. The post stated:

*"Remember, that it takes only one major hurricane to make landfall on our island to make it an active season for us. We must also be cognizant of the fact that it does not have to be a storm or a hurricane, an active tropical wave or just 2 to 3 hours of heavy rainfall can have devastating impacts on our lives. As we begin yet another hurricane season let us learn from our past experience of hurricane Irma and do all in our power to prepare adequately and to seek credible information from the official authority in order to make timely decisions that will protect life and property."*²

The same day a 'readiness guide' for the hurricane season was published on their website.³ The guide information on preparation, disaster kits, emergency numbers, shelters, and safety. What is remarkable is that compared to the government's hurricane season post in 2017, the year of Irma, the post of this year is a lot more elaborated and has visual aids, see figures 9 and 10.⁴ Back on September 3rd, 2017, the government posted an article names 'pre-hurricane Irma preparations and notices', in which they advised to prepare a Hurricane Preparatory Kit (HPK). An HPK contains necessary supplies for the first 72 hours after a storm, such as water, non-perishable food, and medicines. The government also advised to pack a first-aid kit, cash, can opener, battery-powered radio, flashlights, and batteries. In the government's Hurricane Season Readiness Guide, the government advised preparing an HPK for 7 days for humans and at least 2 weeks for pets.

² <http://www.sintmaartengov.org/PressReleases/Pages/The-2019-Tropical-Atlantic-Hurricane-Season.aspx>

³ <http://www.sintmaartengov.org/special-campaigns/Pages/Hurricane-Campaign.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.sintmaartengov.org/PressReleases/Pages/Office-of-Disaster-Management-Are-You-Prepared-for-the-2017-Atlantic-hurricane-season.aspx>

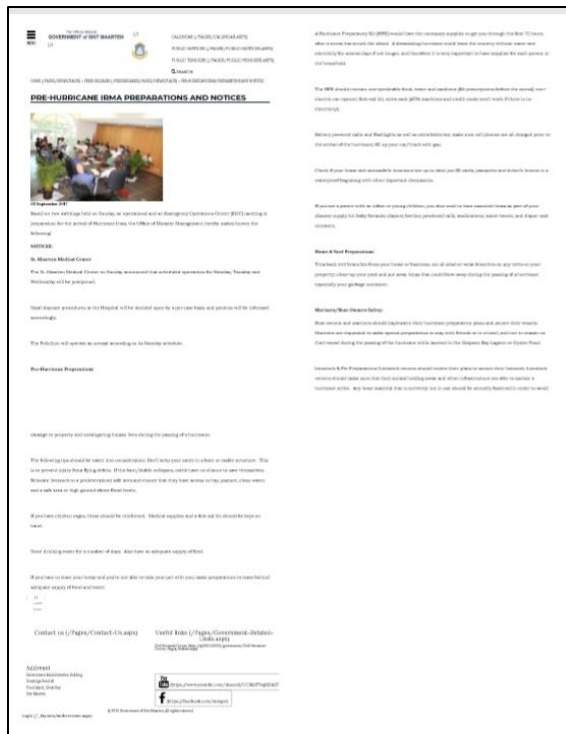


Figure 9 Government Notification 2017



Figure 10 Government Notification 2019

5.1 Preparation Hurricane Season

In what ways were hurricane seasons prepared before and after hurricane Irma?

During the interviews, I asked respondents how they prepared for hurricane Irma in 2017 and how they were preparing the hurricane season of 2019. They described procrastination as the biggest difference between 2017 and 2019. During the hurricane season of 2017, the last time many people experienced a major hurricane was 22 years earlier, or never. In those 22 years, many storms passed by the island without causing a lot of havoc, and therefore, people lost their vigilance. RES_10 said about past years: *"Most times, they [people on Sint Maarten] think 'oh yeah it's not gonna come', and even with Irma, I saw that, up to like 2 days before, people were like 'oh no, its gonna go to the north. it's not coming' you know."* Unfortunately, the hurricane did come in 2017, and this time did cause a lot of havoc. According to my respondents, many people waited until the last 2 days before the arrival of hurricane Irma to get their supplies. This caused a lot of chaos on the island. Many people were heading to the stores at the same time. One of the reasons why people waited so long is that many did not

want to spend their money on supplies when it is not certain that a hurricane will strike. That does not just count for water and food supplies, but also on making their houses hurricane-ready. It costs a lot of money to invest in a new roof or extra plywood to strengthen the house. Because it was still uncertain that the hurricane would come, and the government confirmed it only 3 days before the hurricane, many people waited until the last moment to get supplies. In 2019, more people started preparing for hurricanes at the beginning of the season. So, why did they not prepare in advance in 2017? This could be because of other priorities or the lack of money. Poverty is an issue on the island, and people just did not have the money to prepare themselves.

A remarkable result is that respondents who went through hurricane Luis claimed that they are more aware of the danger and therefore, took hurricane season preparations more serious than people who came to the island after Louis or people who could not remember Louis clearly (e.g. people who were young children during Luis). This is somewhat similar to the case of 2019. Respondents who suffered a lot during and after hurricane Irma claimed to have learned and changed their preparation plans. For example, RES_13 who was in a financially good position and recovered very quickly after the storm said she already did the best she could and did not change her approach in 2019. The respondents who did change their approaches participated in training sessions on how to deal with hurricanes and mentioned that awareness of the seriousness of preparation has gotten extra attention on the island in general. There are several types of hurricane training sessions. RES_03 argues finds it important that training sessions continue on an annual basis, in order to continue stimulating vigilance and preparedness. Moreover, she thinks it is important to have training sessions that train people on how to manage shelters and emergency situations. Furthermore, there are also special training sessions for children. RES_07 who works as a teacher explained that children receive special lectures dedicated to hurricane preparations. Overall, respondents say that they invest more time and money in preparing their houses and compile a hurricane kit with emergency supplies.

Respondents who work for either government institutions or NGO's mentioned that their preparation and disaster plans have changed after Irma. RES_11 who works for the Fire Department said that they revised the disaster plan and made slight adaptations for improvement. He said that the plan was already functioning well, but, communication was difficult. According to him, the government tried to get in touch with communities on the island after Irma to get a better insight into what had to change. However, since there are over 120 nationalities on a small island, RES_11 believes that communities do not really exist. In contrast to what RES_11 said, respondents RES_10 and RES_15 complained that the government did not get in touch and how the government does not communicate and cooperate with local civilians. This makes it quite confusing whether the government did communicate with locals, and if so, which communities or neighborhoods. As RES_10 is engaged with the Caribbean middle class and RES_15 with the poorer people, perhaps those were the groups that needed interaction with the government the most.

5.2 Irma's Aftermath

How did the local population of Sint Maarten experience hurricane Irma's aftermath?

5.2.1 Chaos

Shortly after the hurricane, there was a lot of chaos on the island and safety was a real issue. Because of the destruction, the roads were blocked and there was access for emergency services, and therefore no security or control. People went on the streets to start looting. The looting already begun in the eye of the storm and continued right after the storm. People were not just looting food, they were looting everything. From flat-screen televisions to washing machines. Looters broke into damaged shops but also broke into shops that were still intact. RES_12 who works at the courthouse said about the looting that some people were overwhelmed with emotions and got sucked into the mass hysteria. According to her, there were also other people who planned on looting. They planned it right after they discovered the coming of the hurricane. For those, it is a premeditated crime. The looting caused a lot of fear because people were scared of break-ins in their houses. The fear for looters was

accompanied by the fear for Dutch soldiers, according to RES_11. At the time, he worked with the Dutch military police who came to the island to help. The soldiers were wearing weapons with good intentions to keep control and prevent looting. However, it did scare the civilians. Further, the opinions on looting were spread. Some respondents were saying that looting could have been prevented by good preparation before the hurricane because then there would not have been a need to loot water and food. Others think that there was too little information and too little awareness of the seriousness of looting and its consequences. RES_14 gives training and information sessions that teach the new generation that it is bad to loot. These sessions for children are important because according to RES_14, many children were brought along by family members to loot. That experience seriously affected children and the campaign hopes to help them deal with their emotions and norms and values, in the hope to prevent looting in the future. For RES_14, the looting was a result of bad preparation. The government suggested to prepare and stock water and food for 3 days. *“But then 3 days passed and it was still unsure when the government would start helping,”* said RES_14. However, she blamed the looting of materials and the looting right after the storm on hysteria.

In the aftermath of Irma, looting caused a problem for police and justice enforcement too. The destruction of Irma caused prison buildings to fall into disuse and the youth detention center to close. Prisoners were flown to islands Bonaire and Curacao before the storm. Yet it was still a problem because the storms were followed by a lot of vandalism and looting. Even months and years later, there is an increasing line of crime on the island. Psychologist RES_03 links increasing line with the stress and frustration after the hurricane. She says that people are having short temper and that causes them to react more aggressively. Penal institutions did not have space for all the arrested people and therefore many of them had to wait before being incarcerated and were released early. Beyond the crime, the islanders shared a common fear for new storms. Radio or internet communication was not available and hurricane Jose was already predicted. RES_13 mentioned the nervousity and uncertainty during these times since they were not ready for another storm. Thankfully, storm Jose passed the island. However, two years later people are still afraid of a new storm. RES_15 mentions *“everybody's worried that we'll get bigger storms now because everybody's hearing climate change. They're*

teaching it in school. So the kids are hearing those words. Um, and then they're not quite sure about it, but they understand that it means it could be more storms."

5.2.2 Economical strain

The economy of the island experienced a setback after the hurricane. Many enterprises and organizations did not have a good financial year. Respondents spoke of fewer sponsors and fewer tourists. The destruction of the island caused tourists to stay away for a while. In the meantime, tourists returned to the island, but RES_10 fears that the crime that rose after the hurricane will eventually scare tourists away again. Unemployment rose after the hurricane, but by now companies are hiring again. RES_10, a Caribbean woman on the island, complains that the companies are not hiring locals but people from overseas instead. According to her, the companies are hiring non-Caribbean people for jobs that locals could do too. What disturbs her the most is that those people profit from tourist visas and do not have to pay taxes.

The living costs on the island rose high after Irma. People do not earn much, renting is expensive and so are vegetables and fruit. Therefore many people suffer from obesity and are having heart troubles. That was one of the reasons for respondents RES_04 and RES_05 to get involved in an organization that brings free food to people who need them. Many people living in poverty live in hilly areas that are hard to reach, do not own cars, do not have clean tap water and live with large families. Thereby, the country does not have good social services, there is no such thing as child benefit or rent benefit like there is in the Netherlands. Poverty has always been a problem on Sint Maarten but now living costs are rising and people still suffer financially, poverty became a larger problem. Poverty became more exposed because most slums are filled with undocumented people who have no right to recovery aid. On Pond Island, where the government building is located, is a large dump too. *"Behind that dump are about 200 families living, but they don't receive any help because they are not supposed to live there. Not from the government but also not from Red Cross"* said RES_15, who works on Pond Island. RES_10 also spoke of this issue: *"And when a disaster strikes, then you have that situation, okay, who are you gonna help? the local? or the undocumented? Okay, the*

undocumented are also human beings, so I feel they should be helped. But then, people look at it like 'oh they're only helping the foreigners'. That's how a lot of locals look at it, but sometimes the situation that they're in is even worse than the local." Not only undocumented struggle with getting help. According to RES_10, many LGBT people are less likely to ask for help from the government. She argues that many politicians are outspoken anti-LGBT on social media and therefore fear discrimination.

5.2.3 Frustrations

Multiple respondents complained about the government's communication and the ability to think in advance. The government advised people to stock enough supplies for 72 hours when in reality, it took more than that for the government to start operating again. Also, according to RES_01, the government does not communicate its recovery plans through the media. Thereby, RES_13 was frustrated by the fact that the media is not honest about the victims of the hurricane. According to RES_13, the media states the death toll on 6 people, but she believes the number is actually way higher. When asked why she thinks they conceal the real number, she explains her belief that the government does not want to mention the tourists or undocumented victims. For they do not want to scare away tourists or start a debate on undocumented inhabitants. RES_03 complained about how the media neglects the fact that people are still living without electricity. RES_14, instead, complains about NGO's not communicating well enough. RES_14 claims that *"NGO's are just looking to get pats on their backs"*. RES_10 says that the government should communicate with local communities, *"they should reach out to a lot of community-based organizations, and let them understand what their task is as government. What they can do, and what they cannot do."* Also, she complains about the government not having enough staff in times of emergency and suggests the government collects volunteers from these same communities.

The frustrations did not end there. The frustration with the government is also present on local radio stations. One of the local stations broadcasted *"The time for leading is now. No more entertaining but time for governing"* when they talked about the of the island. Respondents RES_04 and RES_05 feel like the people of Sint Maarten are easy to blame the

government, but in reality, they do not show any initiatives either. Also, they feel like the island is too small to function as a country and do not have money themselves either. RES_04 claims that the only thing the government can do is to provide services. However, not all people complained about the government. A few respondents very much appreciated the government. RES_08, who works for a local NGO, felt like the government is doing better now. She noticed that the government is improving its approach towards disasters. Besides the government, NGOs also received criticism from respondents. Although many respondents praised the NGOs, some accused NGOs of not providing the right aid or no aid at all. For example, the Red Cross foundation received many complaints by respondents, whereas Samaritan Purse and local NGO K1 Britannia were very much appreciated. When asked whose responsibility it was to deal with hurricanes, respondents had to wait a few seconds before answering. Some were real quick to say that shelters and safety are tasks for the government. Others felt like it was a community's task to take care of each other. RES_4 and RES_5 said that since the government is not doing anything, the people should take responsibility. All respondents agreed that it is a government's responsibility to warn people when a hurricane is on its way. Also, the government should encourage preparedness and ensure safety.

5.2.4 Mental strain

The combination of unrest, economic troubles and frustrations lead to a mental strain for many of the Sint Maarteners. Many people left the island after the hurricane. Some came back later, but not all of them. All respondents knew people who. Also in schools, they noticed that children left. RES_12 explained that around the hurricane many temporary guardianship changes were requested. In the early recovery, this meant that there were fewer people to do more work. While there was a lot more work to do, there was also little money to hire people, which caused unemployment and working overtime hours. This combined with electricity problems that are still present 2 years after, is an extra strain on everybody.

Hurricane Irma left a mark in the minds of the people of Sint Maarten and the consequences became a mental strain for many, and still to this day. *"The fact that so many things aren't*

recovered or rebuild causes a lot of stress for people now the hurricane season began again," said RES_05. A lot of rubbish is still laying around and the dump is packed. People are afraid that the dump will fly around and that it will hurt or kill people. When asked about the experience of the hurricane and the time after, RES_10 described it as fatigue. After the hurricane, many things have changed and a lot had to be done to pick up life again as usual. These circumstances are stressful and lead to burnouts for many. Psychologists RES_03 mentioned that many of her clients suffer from nightmares, flashbacks, and hypersensitivity. These are well-known symptoms of PTSD. RES_03 adds that mental health problems are still taboo and add more stress and pressure for clients. She reckons it is important to listen to what people actually need and to assist them in those needs. She thinks that through volunteering, a lot of healing can be done. Volunteers not only help others but also themselves, since RES_03 figures that volunteering works healing for the mind. In addition, she feels that a better-managed shelter organization would diminish traumas because there would be less chaos and hysteria. More respondents talked about trauma. RES_06 said: *"Me and hurricanes are not friends. If a hurricane might hit, then you gonna find me crawled up in a corner. Everything back away. Nobody disturb me 'cause I don't want to hear the noise."* Some of the respondents who work with children recalled that the children had their own manners of coping with the disaster. Some spoke with psychologists, others talked about it at school. They had a chance to tell their stories. Losing toys and pets was heartbreaking for some, but others were glad that their family members were to stay at their home for a while, or that they did not have to wear school uniforms for a while.

When the schools reopened there were still not enough books, desks, and chairs. Not all teachers were able to come back after the hurricane. Either they left the island or their personal circumstances would not allow them to come back. Therefore classrooms were overcrowded and the schools were understaffed. That led to extra work pressure for the teachers that stayed. They had to deal with larger groups, children with traumas, extra duties as sweeping floors because of the leakages, and of course, their own personal recovering and households. According to RES_15, these less than ideal circumstances on schools led to a higher failure rate than usual. He noticed with the children he works with that many children had worse grades than usual and less graduated the year. Not only schools suffered from extra

pressure. Many people were separated from their loved ones for a while, many had lost their job or had to work overtime. According to RES_03 people went into 'automatic pilot' and did the best they could do at that time. Which helped them recover physically, but postponed their mental recovery. The non-stop working and stress has led to serious mental issues, like depression, for many. RES_05 explained that it made it extra hard for people that almost everybody suffered from the storm since the people they would usually fall back on were already dealing with their own situation. People could not just knock on their friends' houses to ask for help, because their friends were in need of help as well.

5.3 Build Back Better

How is the recovery experienced by the local population of Sint Maarten?

The hurricane caused mass destruction on the island. Roofs blew off, cars were dragged by the wind, buildings collapsed, trees were pulled out, the electricity went off and the water left a big ravage. People and animals got hurt, some even lost their lives. This was not just the case for households. A few respondents told about the destruction of their companies they worked at or the schools they knew. RES_01 explained how the school office was completely gone, as well as the gym, greenhouse, and two classrooms. Besides the building, school equipment got lost or was destroyed too. The hurricane did not just bring destruction, chaos, and problems, but also new. The destruction gave the island the chance to build back better than before. For example, to build more resilient construction and to start new enterprises. According to RES_04 *"this island doesn't judge. If you fail, you can start over again. That wouldn't be able in the Netherlands. It's the advantage of this island."* RES_09 feels proud as he looks back to all the rebuilding that's been done. He said *"I think the resilience of the Sint Maarten private sector, the resilience of the people and the proudness, you can really see all those when you drive around. The insurances and hard work of the people really revive the island."* Although much has been repaired, people are still in recovery mode two years after hurricane Irma. The country's motto is to 'build back better' and is seen on signs all over the island, see figure 11. Also, respondents mentioned that they are still rebuilding and chose new methods to make them more resilient for future storms. Respondents mentioned bendable fences, hurricane

shutters, concrete roofs, and concrete docks. *“It’s been a wake-up call for everybody, even the government. People are more aware of what the risks are and what they are supposed to do”* said RES_08. The mistakes that were made before, during and after Irma, led to several lessons that were learned. RES_13 said that their plan looked good in theory, but now it was tested with Irma, they are able to learn and improve their plan for future storms. In addition, RES_12 said they learned their weaknesses and know things that they overlooked before. This wake-up call seems to reach everyone on the island. However, RES_10 fears that the new alertness will not stay until the next hurricane arrives. She thinks that when time passes, things will go back like they were before Irma and people will be unprepared again. Besides, RES_06 and RES_07 think that only the people who really suffered from Irma will be better prepared and more vigilant. Those who were lucky will neglect their preparations, RES_06 and RES_07 say.



Figure 11 Build Back Better logo

Economically, there were new business opportunities. RES_15 told about a few people he knew from the shelters who *‘were just tired of not being able to get a job. So they formed their own construction company.’* Of course, the construction branch was flourishing, but NGOs grew immensely too. Several NGOs delivered aid directly after Irma but also on the longer term they stayed active. Volunteers of the K1 Britannia Foundation gathered and offered help to the Red Cross and the Dutch military police. Eventually, they were handed the supply

storage and delivered to foster homes, elderly homes, and other care institutions. Since all the roads were blocked, they were handed a pass by the Dutch military police to pass to blockades. *"We divided tasks and made a list with all the things we could do to help. It was a few days after Irma that the Government started to act up. Then we came together with the government to see what their gaps were and to fill those in. Exactly 1 year after Irma we established K1 DIRECT, our disaster relief department."* said RES_08. Beside local NGO's, there came new Dutch managed NGO's too, such as the Freegan Food Foundation. When poverty got more exposed after Irma, the establishers of the Freegan Food Foundation started sharing free meals and groceries for those who needed it. They are still active nowadays and more focused on reducing food waste and fighting poverty.

In terms of new opportunities, the social communities built stronger connections too. Most respondents mentioned a sense of cohesion and a stronger connection to the island, neighborhood, and community. The interviews revealed that respondents had better relations with neighbors, co-workers, and friends. RES_03 remembers the fun memories of sharing a house with friends. While RES_13 recalls the cohesion with co-workers when cleaning up and rebuilding the workplace. In these interviews, a sense of local empowerment raised up. Locals checked up on each other, teamed up to help and clean up. However, besides these self-empowering and feelings of unity, frustration had a large share among the society too. The recovery process was and not flawless for sure. The destruction after the hurricane was great and a lot had to be recovered. However, the recovery was slow and received a lot of criticism. A member of the Association of Psychologists and Allied Professionals (APAP) critiqued the government for not including mental health in both the national recovery plan as the national disaster plan. After the storm, many people suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, with symptoms of fear, panic, and depressions. Meanwhile, physical recovery was included, but almost 2 years after the hurricane, lots had not been recovered yet, and there were still people without electricity. RES_10 blamed the slow recovery on the lack of money. Many civilians and organizations wait to save money to invest that in recovery, and then start saving again to invest again. This way it takes a long time to recover. Also, RES_01 said that the aid could have been much faster if the government did not underestimate the storm in advance or lingered the aid so much.

The same applies to organizations. Organizations with a financial buffer were quick to start recovering. Those without were dependent on aid that might or might not come. People are frustrated by the waiting, powerlessness, uncertainty. Many facilities of the government are not fixed yet. The airport still is not capable of the same capacity as before the hurricane, the Library is not fixed, and some schools are not recovered yet. RES_15 who works on the Player Development Program mentioned that schools economize on school workbooks, and he was outraged about the fact that one of the children in his program had to share a chair in class. RES_15 sees that these circumstances lead that more children fail their classes than before. Furthermore, RES_13 complains that the government's priorities are not in place. In her perspective, the government fools around and is not improving the population's situations. The parliament keeps changing, rebuilding is slow, prices are rising, schools that used to be free suddenly are not anymore. Speaking on misplaced priorities. RES_15 said *"So, there are still signs of that storm [Luis] 20 years on. So this one's going to be a while before everything gets back to normal and there doesn't seem to be a clear plan yet or if there is, the government's not talking about it. Um, I mean they're talking about getting new cars for themselves and they're talking about getting a new parliament building."*

The topic of the €550 million humanitarian assistance from the Dutch to Sint Maarten is another frustrating topic for some people. The money is gifted through the institution of the World Bank and respondents do not agree whether that was a good thing or not. RES_09, who works for the Sint Maarten Development Fund disagrees with the decision to flow humanitarian assistance money through the World Bank. He says *"They made a mountain out of a molehill. The World Bank is not specialized in emergency circumstances. They are an institution for economic development and that's the big problem. They are a real real thick bureaucracy."* RES_09 believes the aid was better off in hands when it is directly gifted to local funds or organizations. The bureaucracy delays the cash flow, which creates more frustration by people. *"You know what's bad? The same money is just lying around and no one can touch it. That's just really frustrating, and that feeling is dominating on the island right now."* said RES_13, when asked about the humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, the Dutch ministry set several conditions for Sint Maarten for them to receive the aid. RES_10 says she does not agree with the conditions but *“There’s no way that we can do this on our own, so if you want them to help, you have to suck it up and go with the conditions.”* Moreover, she is glad the money did not go directly to the Sint Maarten government since she does not trust it and fears corruption. When asked on the opinion of humanitarian aid through the World Bank, RES_11 explains that during hurricane Irma the government was very anti-Netherlands orientated. That is why they did not like the conditions set by the Netherlands. RES_15 complains about the anti-Netherlands government, he says that the government thinks that the Netherlands is undermining their authority and ability. According to RES_15, the politicians are still fighting over what money goes where and the Netherlands is really doing something. This fear of undermining is paired with post-colonial history. People do not want to be ruled by the Dutch again. Besides the humanitarian aid money, respondents were pleased with the help of Dutch soldiers on the island. RES_07 explained how soldiers were quick to help recover school buildings and organized the distribution of supplies very well. RES_15 praised the soldiers for distributing too, as well as playing baseball with the children of his program.

5.4 Recap

The interviews revealed that the hurricane preparations before and after hurricane Irma quite differ. The preparations for hurricane Irma were quite basic and were procrastinated by both the government and the citizens. Then Irma appeared to be a wake-up call for many. Preparations were taken more seriously in the hurricane season of 2019. The government communicated more information and in a cleared manner on their website, and preparation plans all over the island were improved based on experiences with Irma. The expectations on the endurance of the wake-up call vary, and it remains uncertain how long it will last. Some respondents think it will be permanent, while others believe it will already have faded at the time a new major hurricane will arrive.

Besides destruction, Irma caused more troubles for the Sint Maarteners. Directly after the storm, people started to loot. People took advantage of the fact that emergency and security services could not enter the roads and looted for both food and water, as materials possessions like refrigerators and washing machines. It did not help that the prison was partly fallen in disuse because of Irma's destruction. There was not enough place for the arrested and chaos ruled the island. When this was back in control, the crime rate was still increasing. According to a psychologist respondent, this is provoked by frustration and stress among the civilians. People were and are frustrated by their government and lack of emergency aid they received. As well as the extra work pressures and rising costs of living expenses. These circumstances have been a mental strain for many.

The country's recovery plan's motto is to 'build back better'. The rebuilding of constructions is focused on being more resilient to hurricanes. For example with bendable fences, hurricane shutters, and concrete roofs. The plan aims to be better prepared and resistant for hurricane season. Beside improving constructions and facilities, social relations have improved too. Because of the hurricane, people felt more connected to their environment; society, community, family, and friends. It is the working mentality and cohesion that partly drives the urge to recover fast. Hence, respondents mentioned their proudness of the recovery and their bond with the island and fellow islanders. The possibility to build back better also opened up changes for re-schooling, new enterprises, and NGOs. However, the recovery process is not all rainbows and sunshine. People have complaints and frustration with the slow recovery by the government, and aid flow through the World Bank. Accompanied by the lack of attention for mental health care, people suffer from PTSD and depression, which slows down motivation for further recovery. A lot is still not recovered, and people fear many things will never recover. Powerlessness and waiting for the government and World Bank are major factors that hinder the recovery process.

It is in the recovery phase, that post-colonial relations become most visible. The unrest among Sint Maarteners is not just about some frustrations with their government. It is also about the dependency on the Dutch government and the global institution of the World Bank. The issue

runs deeper than just some frustrations. The results display power dynamics and dependency between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands. Hurricane Irma created a chance to strengthen the dependency of Sint Maarten on the Dutch government. As Sint Maarten saw no other choice than to accept the humanitarian assistance and conditions and terms of the Netherlands, they strengthened protective power relations. This means that the Netherlands has, once again, power over Sint Maarten. Even though the Netherlands does not oppress the island, it remains a 'power over' power dynamic, as it did in colonial times.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The answer to the research question ‘Did hurricane Irma reveal post-colonial relations between Sint Maarten and its former Dutch Metropole?’ is yes, it did. The results of the interviews displayed Sint Maarten’s dependency on the Netherlands and the power the Dutch government has over Sint Maarten. The dependency was enforced by the event of hurricane Irma because the aftermath put Sint Maarten in a vulnerable position. The island’s vulnerability for disasters lies among other things, in the exposure of being positioned in the Caribbean hurricane belt combined with its sensitivity of poverty and lack of communication. In addition, Sint Maarten has a low adaptive capacity, because people could not rely on their social networks since they were also suffering themselves. Aside from the island’s vulnerable position, it also lacked resilience on economic, physical and institutional levels. The lack of resilience was shown in several situations. Preparation seemed to be one of the problems. Procrastination caused many residents to be unprepared for the hurricane. Some people just did not take it seriously, and for others, poverty was the reason to procrastinate, because, investing money in hurricane preparedness is a risk not everyone is able or willing to take. Moreover, respondents mentioned that the lack of communication of the government led them to procrastinate preparation measures. Remarkably, people who had previous experiences with major hurricanes were better prepared than those who did not have previous experiences. Some respondents spoke of their fear that the wakeup call after Irma will not last long and might already be forgotten when the next hurricane hits. The fear that people will loosen their preparation a few years after Irma might be valid for those who did not suffer much. It appears that respondents who suffered from hurricane Luis in 1995 still carried their experiences in their preparation for hurricane Irma. For those people, the wake-up call might last until the next hurricane. The importance of the level of affliction reflects again in the adaptations of disaster plans. Organizations and households who suffered much were more dedicated to improving their disaster plan. The suffering mainly took place in the aftermath of the hurricane. Shortly after the hurricane, there was a lot of chaos due to the damage, looting, and lack of public security. This event led to traumas for some people. However, most people got stress from economic consequences and extra work pressure. A lot of frustration about the slow recovery, emergency aid and decisions of the government became a mental strain for many to carry. Also, the tourism industry, which is Sint Maarten’s

largest source of income, extremely suffered from Irma. Citizens encountered the consequences of tourism loss when the living costs on the island increased drastically. However, community resilience was high. A sense of cohesion filled the island after hurricane Irma and citizens helped and pushed each other to make the best out of the situation. Their mentality, attitude and local initiatives impelled the recovery. The recovery so far, allowed tourists to start coming to the island again. Hence, tourism has already made a visible comeback on the island.

The research displays the role of vulnerability and resilience in the making of a disaster and the difficulties of disaster management. It also contributed to the debates of the white savior complex and the recolonization of the Caribbean. Indeed, several actors from the 'West' were quick to step up and help Sint Maarten. The complaints about foreign NGOs, the World Bank, and the Dutch government gives a sense of white savior complex. This includes, not listening to what the people really needed, setting unnecessary terms, demanding conditions and acting inefficient aiming for pats on their backs. Offering inefficient and not fitting assistance in common in the white savior complex (DeTorrente, 2013). These events point into the direction of a white savior complex. Also, according to Hoetink (1961), helping might be an amicable gesture or a product of colonial guilt. He states that former colonizers feel uneasiness and shame over their oppressive and exploitive colonial history. Replacing feelings of shame through charity is common for 'white saviors' (Swim and Miller, 1991). However, there is no proof that the Netherlands handled because of its colonial history. Besides, many respondents understood why the Netherlands would not trust aid money to the government of Sint Maarten. The government of Sint Maarten is more than once accused by media to be corrupt because of their lack of transparency and openness (Smith, 2017). Moreover, extreme weather events such as hurricanes allow corruption to exacerbate (Gerges et al., 2018). Therefore, one of the conditions of the Netherlands was to set up an anti-corruption integrity chamber. Corruption is a serious threat to aid development and therefore a good reason to set conditions for the Netherlands. This is backed-up by Bauhr et al. (2013), who claim that foreign aid can be a fuel for corruption when its purpose does not include improving governance. For some countries, corruption could be a reason to not supply aid, but it is especially those countries that are often most in need of aid (Bauhr et al, 2013). Bauhr et al

(2013) argue that countries that still help corrupt countries are motivated by either strategic or moral reasons. Strategic reasons might be to improve business relations in their own benefit. Looking at the findings of this research, that might not be the case since the terms and conditions set by the Netherlands are not connected to economic factors. More likely are the moral reasons, since the Netherlands has been having a close relationship with Sint Maarten for centuries.

Setting aside the humanitarian aid, this research proved that in this case too, empowerment is more effective. The interviews showed that the work of foreign NGOs was far less appreciated than the work of local NGOs. This supports the theory of the importance and efficiency of empowerment. Tew (2006) describes empowerment as the trajectory of people who rise out of powerlessness and helplessness to reclaim control over their lives. Local NGOs who gathered to help, such as K1 Britannia Foundation, were praised by respondents for stepping in where help was needed and for filling the gaps of the government's aid program. Shortly after the hurricane, foreign NGOs and volunteers flew in to help the islanders. While many appreciated the help of these 'saviors', others critiqued them for not providing the aid that was needed but still being convinced that they deserved pats on their backs. Bandyopadhyay (2019) questions whether foreign helpers, in general, are really flying in to help the less fortunate, or rather to have a good time. He adds that when people do not really come to help the less fortunate, they risk doing more harm than good. Another foreign aid that turned out to be less appreciated by respondents was the aid of the Dutch government. The terms and conditions that the Dutch government set for the government of Sint Maarten delayed the emergency aid after Irma. The delay and the decision to channel the money through the World Bank led to many frustrations by civilians of Sint Maarten. Respondents appreciated the World Bank but considered it unsuitable for emergency aid. Brigg (2002) also mentions the World Bank's power and influence on development in his work on Third World development. The World Bank has a lot of power when it comes to international development because they design and supervise development projects in Third World countries (Brigg, 2002). Although it is debatable whether Sint Maarten is a third world country or not, the World Bank certainly holds some power over the country. Assuming that the World Bank has good intentions for development, Brigg (2002) states that the World Bank is still an agent of

economic and cultural imperialism at the service of the global elite. Brigg's (2002) research show that the World Bank made several attempts to know and manage the countries, economies, and projects that they fund. The interviews reveal that the World Bank's bureaucracy is exasperating and delays recovery development in Sint Maarten. The development delay caused by bureaucracy shows a level of power that the World Bank has over Sint Maarten and their recovery. Following on from this, the case of Sint Maarten displays the World Bank's power. Although the presence of self-empowerment, Sint Maarten still depends on foreign aid. Despite the delay, bureaucracy and unnegotiable terms, Sint Maarten had to accept in order to move forward with their recovery. Therefore, this research supports Brigg's (2002) claim of the World Bank being an imperialistic power that controls Third World development.

The relationship between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands includes ages of colonization and years of decolonization. Recently, their relationship entered the sphere of recolonization (Oostindie & Klinkers, 2012). However, to be recolonized, a county has to be decolonized first. Before the fieldwork began, this thesis already asked whether Sint Maarten was fully decolonized or not. The most obvious aspect of decolonization is the struggle for national autonomy (Chen, 1997). Context research showed that Sint Maarten gained autonomy in 2010. Yet, Sint Maarten still had to represent their finances and share two ministries with the Dutch government and remains part of the Dutch Kingdom. Apart from autonomy, decolonization also takes through cultural forms of expression, social institutions and global political-economic structures (Chen, 1997). Chen (1998) argues that colonialism still operates on the level of cultural imagination and identification, and still covers the entire globe. Moreover, he considers globalization and neo-colonization as the continuity and extension of colonialism (Chen, 1998). Using Chen's (1997) idea of decolonization, this research shows that Sint Maarten is not decolonized at all. The Netherlands started the process by giving the island more autonomy, but it did not finish the process. Sint Maarten still does not have full autonomy, and colonialism is still present in other spheres, such as disaster management. I can conclude that the Netherlands is not re-colonizing Sint Maarten, because it never decolonized in the first place. Colonization only transformed its appearance. It transformed from physical oppression and domination to a neo-colonial relationship. It seems that Sint

Maarten is trapped in post-coloniality. Their dependency on their 'former' Metropole causes Sint Maarten to remain trapped within a colonial system. According to Davies (1998), entrapment in post-coloniality means that coloniality still defines identity and politics. Although it might seem that coloniality disappeared, the metropole still controls and influences its former colonial empire (Davies, 1998).

7. Recommendations

This post-colonial trap seems inevitable, but could there be a possible escape? The research concluded that Sint Maarten is currently under the protective power of the Netherlands. In the ideal situation, Sint Maarten would not be dependent on another country, would be financially stable and have full autonomy over their country. However, the reality is that the country's financial status is a far way from being independent. Nevertheless, I believe it is still possible for Sint Maarten to shift from 'protective power' to 'co-operative power', according to Tew's (2006) power matrix. Within the protective power mode, the dominant party has power over the subjective party to protect vulnerable people and their possibilities for advancement (Tew, 2006). Clearly, Sint Maarten is the subjective party in this case. In other words, the Dutch government holds power over Sint Maarten and uses it to safeguard and develop the island. Although this might sound like an act of heroism, it denotes inequality and closes off opportunities (Tew, 2006). Moreover, Tew (2006) warns that protective power may easily transform to oppressive power, as the tendency to rescue rather than to work together may further undermine the abilities of vulnerable people, and thereby serve to perpetuate rather than combat their experience of powerlessness (Tew, 2006). Therefore, I recommend the Dutch government and the government of Sint Maarten to discuss this matrix of power relations, and invest time and research into the possibilities of shifting 'protective power' into 'co-operative power'. I believe that a co-operative power relation is the best solution for both countries. Co-operative power would mean that Sint Maarten and the Netherlands would start valuing their commonalities and differences and act as equals (Tew, 2006). It would be a better balanced and more democratic conjunction, in which both countries act collectively, share and support each other.

In the long term, I think Sint Maarten should not lose sight of aiming for independence and continue preparing for full independence. A first good step would be working for a strong economic position, so they will not have to be largely dependent on imports and tourism. Their current economic situation caused them to become dependent on aid funds. Disasters have a major impact on tourism flow, therefore dependency on tourism creates a vulnerability. Having a strong and stable economic position would prevent this kind of

dependency in the future. Furthermore, I believe it will be good for Sint Maarten to maintain and improve their relationships with other Caribbean islands like the Dutch proverb suggests *'een goede buur is beter dan een verre vriend'*, meaning it is better to have a good neighbor than a far friend, as neighbors are more likely to be able to help each other. Moreover, the other islands in the hurricane belt have to deal with the same problems as Sint Maarten. Collaboration with other Caribbean islands opens the opportunity to learn from each other. For example from Dominica, who is reportedly already working on a plan to become the first hurricane-proof country (Gibbens, 2019).

As far as disaster management concerned, the thesis concludes that the government on Sint Maarten slipped up. The research showed that the island has a high vulnerability to disasters. The exposure of hurricanes is inevitable, however, sensitivity and adaptive capacity could be improved. Poverty and communication are the main problems. Active poverty reduction would be effective. Moreover, lack of communication or uncoordinated communication caused miscommunications and inefficient work strategy between aid providers. The lack of communication with the citizens of Sint Maarten caused people to procrastinate their preparations. Knowing that the government van Sint Maarten is already improving their communication approach, I would like to stress once more the importance of well-functioning communication.

Furthermore, I would like to recommend further research into the possibilities of changing the modes of power relations from protective power to co-operative power. As well as on possibilities on how to improve the island's economic situation. Alongside the economic situation, it would be beneficial for Sint Maarten to gain a clearer insight into their migration flows, border management, and disaster management. Some of the respondents were frustrated that European and American citizens are able to work and move to Sint Maarten so easily and avoid paying taxes. Also, the undocumented migrants of Sint Maarten have become a topic of frustration. Undocumented residents complicate disaster plans, and the distress among residents may cause chaos in cases of emergencies. Chaos is undesirable in emergency situations and may eventually lead to more stress, therefore it might be a good idea for the

government of Sint Maarten to research on how to handle the issue of undocumented migrants.

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