Half a century of civil society participation in biodiversity conservation and protected area management: A case study of Bonaire

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Acronyms

ARLG	Action Research and Learning Group
BIG	Bonaire Island Government
BNMP	Bonaire National Marine Park
BONHATA	Bonaire Hotel and Tourism Association
BVI	British Virgin Islands
CANARI	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
CSO	Civil society organisation
CURO	Council of Underwater Resort Operators (Bonaire)
DCNA	Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IUCN NL	Netherlands committee of IUCN
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MINA	*Afdeling Milieu en Natuur* (Department of Environment and Nature for the Netherlands Antilles)
MPA	Marine protected area
NA	Netherlands Antilles
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories (of the EU)
OE	Overseas Entity (of the EU)
OT	Overseas Territory (of the EU)
RCN	*Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland* (Netherlands Government delegation to the Dutch Caribbean)
STINAPA	*Stichting Nationale Parken* (National Parks Foundation)
UK	United Kingdom
UKOT	UK Overseas Territories
VBN	*Vogelbescherming Nederland* (BirdLife Netherlands)
WSNP	Washington Slagbaai National Park
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWF NL	World Wildlife Fund Netherlands

1. Why this case study?

This case study examines several aspects of civil society participation in biodiversity conservation in Bonaire that have been of particular interest to participants in the Action Research and Learning Groups (ARLGs) for the projects under which this case study is being produced[1]. They include:

- funding and institutional arrangements for civil society (co-)management of protected areas;
- the organisational and institutional structures that promote effective civil society participation in biodiversity conservation; and
- the structure and role of networks and strategic alliances in strengthening the voice of civil society organisations (CSOs) and building their capacity for biodiversity conservation.

Bonaire was selected as the focus of this case study because of its long history of civil society involvement in protected areas management and advocacy on conservation issues and because it is the headquarters of the regional network, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA). Specifically, *Stichting Nationale Parken* (STINAPA), the National Parks Foundation in Bonaire provides an interesting model of a CSO that has full responsibility for managing the island's two protected areas while DCNA is now one of the few regional CSOs that provides a collective voice for its members on conservation issues and advocates for policy changes on their behalf.

The case study therefore sets out to examine what have been the enabling factors in Bonaire, at both the institutional and organisational level, that promote effective civil society participation in biodiversity conservation. It traces the evolution of CSO involvement in protected areas management in Bonaire and its impact on the wider Dutch Caribbean. It examines the structure of both STINAPA and DCNA and how these contribute to effective stakeholder participation. The case study also

reviews some of the actual and potential challenges of the current institutional arrangements. As such, it aims to provide lessons that will be of value not only to CSOs in other Caribbean Overseas Entities (OEs) of the European Union (EU) but also to those in the wider Caribbean - as well as the organisations that support and partner with them.

The case study is complemented by other documented activities and studies under the two CANARI projects[1], such as:

- field visit to the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park in Jamaica and analysis of the institutional and power structures for co-management (CANARI 2008);
- field visit to the *Reserva Científica Ébano Verde* protected area in the Dominican Republic and analysis of the factors that facilitate management of this private park (CANARI 2009);
- field visit to the Centre Hills National Park in Montserrat and analysis of the participatory planning process that underpins the current management plan (CANARI 2011 and McIntosh 2011a);
- case study of the environmental network in the Dominican Republic, *Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano* (Buglass 2011);
- participation of ARLG members in a 2010 study tour to Bonaire to examine the operations and impacts of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) and National Parks Foundation (STINAPA), which provided the basis for this more detailed case study (CANARI 2010);
- analysis of the enabling factors for and challenges facing the regional network, the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CANARI 2011).

2. Methodology

The case study was developed through a mix of primary and desk research, including:

- a study tour to Bonaire in December 2010, led by Gillian Cooper and Keisha Sandy of CANARI, with representatives from each of the ten organisations participating in the *Building civil society capacity for conservation in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs)*" project;

- interviews with key resource persons (see Acknowledgements);

- desk-based literature review; and

- feedback from CANARI's Programme Manager for the Civil Society and Governance Programme, who participated at the DCNA's Board meeting in May 2011 at which findings from the case study were discussed.

3. Bonaire - general context and background

Figure 1: Map showing the location of the Dutch Caribbean islands. Bonaire is highlighted by the pink arrow. *Source: www.dcnanature.org*

3.1.   Geographic

Bonaire is situated in the southern Caribbean, approximately 100 km north of Venezuela (see Figure 1). It is a tiny island with a population of 15,000.

3.2.   Political

Until October 2010, Bonaire was part of the Netherlands Antilles, a political federation established in 1845. It originally comprised all six Dutch Caribbean islands but Aruba separated from the federation in 1986 to become an independent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As in the UKOTs, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba were fully autonomous in internal affairs. However, unlike the UKOTS, they were also constitutionally equal with the Netherlands, so that the

Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba were all considered as independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The political structure of the Netherlands Antilles was a parliamentary system with two levels of government. The 'central' government was located in the capital Willemstad in Curaçao, with a single Prime Minister for the entire Netherlands Antilles. The Governor of the Netherlands Antilles acted as the representative of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the head of the central Government of the Netherlands Antilles. Five island governments then dealt with local affairs.

However, on 10 October 2010, the Netherlands Antilles was dissolved. The smaller islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (referred to as 'the BES Islands')

became special municipalities (*bijzondere gemeenten*) of the Netherlands, while Curaçao and St. Maarten now share the same status as Aruba as constituent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, each with its own government, laws and power to collect taxes. None of the Dutch Caribbean islands are member states of the EU; like the UKOTs, they are considered OEs of the EU[2].

In the BES islands, the executive power rests with the governing council (*bestuurscollege*), headed by a Lieutenant Governor (*gezaghebber*). The main democratic body is the island council (*eilandsraad*). Residents of these three islands are entitled to vote in Dutch national and European elections. They are also subject to Dutch law, although there is provision for the islands to take a different standpoint on controversial issues such as abortion, euthanasia and gay marriage. There are also different provisions, for example, for social security.

Although these changes have been in preparation for about five years, at the time of the study visit, many of those interviewed were still unclear as to how the changes would affect the legal framework, institutional structures or management arrangements for nature conservation. Much of what is described below therefore relates to the arrangements that prevailed under the Netherlands Antilles. Where possible, the revised institutional structures have been outlined but these may be subject to change again in future.

3.3.   Socio-economic

The main economic activity is tourism which contributes about 84 percent of Bonaire's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (United States Department of State 2010). Dive and cruise tourism are the two main sectors, with tourists coming mainly from the Netherlands and the United States of America. Bonaire is particularly well known for the quality of its dive tourism and divers have consistently ranked it as one of the top ten dive destinations worldwide (de Meyer and Simal 2004). In 2008, Bonaire received 74,342 stay-over visitors, 57 percent of whom were divers, and 175,702 cruise visitors (Tourism Corporation Bonaire 2009[3]). Salt extraction, oil transhipment and refining of rice are the three other smaller economic activities on the island (Burke and Maidens 2004). GDP per capita for the

Netherlands Antilles was estimated to be USD 19,000 in 2007 (United States Department of State 2010), which puts it considerably higher than the CARICOM average of USD 7,337 in 2006 (CARICOM 2006).

3.4.   Bonaire's unique biodiversity

The Dutch Caribbean islands are undoubtedly the biodiversity 'hot spot' within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Bonaire, Aruba and Curaçao together are home to over 200 endemic and sub-species and the Dutch Caribbean islands provide habitat to 35 globally endangered or vulnerable species (DCNA website[4]) compared to the Netherlands where there are no endemic species at all, two endangered species and 10 vulnerable species (IUCN 2011).

Bonaire's popularity as a dive destination is not surprising since its reefs are among the best-preserved in the Caribbean as a result of effective management and the fact that they have been spared the hurricane damage experienced in much of the rest of the region over the last few decades. Coral reefs surround the entire island of Bonaire forming a narrow fringing reef, covering an estimated area of 27 km^2 (de Meyer and Simal 2004). Coral reefs are one of the most diverse ecosystems and Bonaire's reefs are home to virtually every species of hard and soft coral and more than 340 species of fish have been observed (Petit and Prudent 2008), making them the most biodiverse in the entire region (DCNA website[5]). The island has two RAMSAR sites, Klein Bonaire, an uninhabited offshore islet important for sea turtles and Lac, the largest semi enclosed bay in the Dutch Caribbean. The dense mangroves of Lac are critical habitat for juvenile reef fish, conch, birds and sea turtles.

The terrestrial environment of Bonaire is dominated by cactus and acacia forests (ibid). The island's flat, dry landscape supports a number of hyper-saline ponds that are critical foraging and breeding grounds for the endangered Caribbean flamingo. Other threatened and endemic species on Bonaire include the endemic whiptail lizard, Bonaire tree lizard, brazilwood tree, endemic sub-species of the yellow shouldered parrot and four species of sea turtles (ibid).

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2   The status of the Dutch Caribbean islands within the EU will be reviewed after a five year transitional period starting from the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles.

3   This is the latest available statistical report for tourism produced by the Tourism Corporation of Bonaire

4   http://www.dcnanature.org/nature/endangered.html

5   http://www.dcnanature.org/nature/bonaire.html

4. The evolution of conservation policy and institutions in Bonaire

Bonaire pioneered conservation efforts in the Dutch Caribbean (de Meyer pers. comm.) through enactment of nature conservation legislation and designation and management of protected areas from as early as the 1960s. This section briefly describes the important steps and events in the development of the institutional framework for biodiversity conservation in Bonaire. Box 1 summarises the key milestones and events. The extent to which civil society participation has facilitated effective conservation in Bonaire is discussed in more depth in Section 5.

4.1. 1960s – 1970s

The first nature conservation legislation was enacted in 1961 to protect turtles from capture followed by the prohibition of spear fishing in 1971. *Stichting Nationale Parken Nederlandse Antillean* (STINAPA N.A.) was founded in 1962 with funding from World Wildlife Fund Netherlands (WWF NL). Its objective was to actively protect nature on all the islands of the Netherlands Antilles. The organisation's first activities were concentrated on Bonaire and focused on safeguarding the breeding grounds of the Caribbean Flamingo and the eventual establishment in 1969 of the island's first protected area, Washington Park[6].

Dive tourism began in Bonaire in 1963 with the opening of its first dive shop by the legendary Captain Don (de Leon pers. comm.), who became a champion for conservation of the coral reefs of the island[7]. By 1979 the Bonaire Marine Park was established. This comprehensive Marine Protected Area (MPA) encircles the entire island and includes all surrounding coral reefs in Bonaire waters totalling an area of 27km². The MPA starts at the high water mark and extends to a depth of 60m (see Figure 3).

In that same year, the Washington Slagbaai National Park (WSNP) was inaugurated following the purchase of the

Figure 2: WSNP visitor centre and museum *Photo: Gillian Cooper*

neighbouring Slagbaai plantation. The WSNP is a 5,643 ha nature sanctuary located in the north-west of the island (see Figure 3) encompassing dry scrub forest, salt ponds and beaches[8].

4.2. 1980s – 1990s

The 1980s saw a period of decentralisation in the Netherlands Antilles. This led to the split up of STINAPA N.A. into separate park management CSOs on each island; on Bonaire, STINAPA Bonaire was formed. This period also saw the decentralisation and privatisation of a number of government responsibilities, one of which was the management of protected areas (Hoetjes pers. comm. and de Meyer pers. comm.). The Bonaire Island Government (BIG) realised that it did not have the capacity to manage the island's protected areas effectively and decided to cede the responsibility for management to STINAPA Bonaire. In 1991, this relationship

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6   Shortly before his death in 1969, the owner of the Washington plantation negotiated with the government to purchase the property upon his death. He did so with the express condition that it be left undeveloped, for the enjoyment of the people. As a result, on May 9th, 1969, Washington National Park opened its gates to the public.

7   http://www.bmp.org/captdonandus.html

8   The park is also rich in cultural and historic heritage, having originally been inhabited by native South Americans before becoming two of the largest and most productive plantations on the island during the colonial period.

Washington Slagbaai National Park

Rincon

Kralendijk

Klein Bonaire

Lac

STINAPA
National Parks Foundation
Headquarters

Dive Sites Bonaire

01- Boka Bartol
02- Playa Benge
03- Playa Funchi
04- Bisé Morto
05- Wayaka
06- Boka Slagbaai North
07- Nukove
08- Carel's Vision
09- Karpata
10- La Dania's Leap

Dive Sites Klein Bonaire

A- No Name beach
B- Ebo's Reef
C- Jerry's Reef
D- Just a Nice Dive
E- Nearest Point
F- Keepsake
G- Bonaventure
H- Monte's Divi
I- Rock Pile
J- Joanne's Sunchi
K- Capt. Don's Reef
L- South Bay
M- Hands off
N- Forest
O- South West Corner
P- Munk's haven
Q- Twixt
R- Sharon's Serenity
S- Vallerie's Hill
T- Mi Dushi
U- Yellow man
V- Carl's Hill
W- Ebo's Special
X- Leonora's Reef
Y- Knife
Z- Sampler

Park Rules & Regulations

- Please pay the Nature Fee before using the Bonaire National Marine Park. Your contribution provides the funds to manage the parks and guarantees our lasting success in nature protection and conservation. You can pay the entrance fee at any dive school or activity center. Having paid the entrance fee you may enter the Washington Slagbaai National Park free of charge by showing the written receipt of purchase of your tag and a picture ID. (this can be your C-card, drivers's license etc.)
- A dive orientation from your dive operator is mandatory before you can dive in the Bonaire National Marine Park.
- Spearfishing is prohibited. If you have a speargun, please leave it at the Customs office.
- It is forbidden to remove anything alive or dead from the Bonaire National Marine Park.
- The use of chemical light sticks is prohibited.

- Do not wear gloves or kneepads when diving in the Bonaire National Marine Park.
- Do not handle, torment or feed marine species.
- Do not manipulate or move marine species from their natural habitat.
- Anchoring is forbidden in the Bonaire National Marine Park. Please use the mooring buoys provided.
- For more information on rules and regulations check our website www.stinapa.org. Read our brochures or contact us.

Map Legend

Roads
Washington Slagbaai National Park bounderies
Marine reserve
Marine park

Figure 3: Bonaire's protected areas *Source: STINAPA 2011*

Box 1: Conservation milestones (at the regional and national level) that affected Bonaire

1961	Sea turtle protection legislated
1962	National Parks Foundation Netherlands Antilles (STINAPA NA) established
1969	Washington Park created
1971	Spear-fishing in Bonaire waters prohibited
1977	Slagbaai plantation purchased for conservation
1979	Bonaire marine park created
1979	Washington Slaagbaai National Park (WSNP) created
1985	Conch harvesting prohibited in Bonaire waters
1991	Management contracts for formally assigning management responsibility for BNMP and WSNP to STINAPA (see Appendix 3) put in place
1992	Dive fee (now called the 'Nature Fee') introduced under the Marine Environment Ordinance
1995	Department of Environment and Nature (MINA) established
1995/6	Consultations on developing first NA policy on environment and nature conservation hosted by MINA
1996	White paper 'Contours of Environmental and Nature Conservation Policy of the Netherlands Antilles, 1996 – 2000' issued by MINA and endorsed by the Council of Ministers of the Netherlands Antilles
1996	First Dutch Caribbean Nature Forum hosted by MINA
1998	Second regional Nature Forum hosted by MINA. Resolution made to find sustainable financing solutions for CSO park managers
1999	Bonaire Marine Park given formal National Park status as Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP)
2002	BNMP designated as an International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) Demonstration Site
2003	Study on sustainable funding for protected area management commissioned by MINA
2004	First contribution of €500,000 provided by the Dutch Postcode Lottery for protected area conservation in the Dutch Caribbean
2005	Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) legally established
2005	Ten-year grant from Dutch Ministry of Interior, with annual contributions of €1 million, secured by DCNA for its trust fund for conservation in the Dutch Caribbean
2005	Second agreement for annual contributions of €500,000 provided by the Dutch Postcode Lottery towards trust fund for conservation in the Dutch Caribbean secured
2008	Island Ordinance Nature Management adopted
2010	Nature conservation legislation revised and updated
2010	Bonaire land use plan developed and adopted
2010	Netherlands Antilles dissolved in October with Bonaire becoming a special municipality of the Netherlands

was formalised through management contracts between BIG and STINAPA for the two protected areas. Similar arrangements were put in place in the other Dutch Caribbean islands, so that all the protected areas in the Dutch Caribbean are now managed by CSOs[9].

In the early 1990s, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, Miguel Pourier, a native of Bonaire, facilitated a consultation with Bonaire residents to determine the development path for the island. Residents' preference was overwhelmingly for sustainable, environmentally conscious development and this focus was enshrined in the so-called 'Pourier Plan', which has guided Bonaire's development policy for the past 20 years (Hoetjes pers. comm. and Beukenboom pers. comm.).

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9   This process of designating MPAs is still ongoing at the time of writing. On Dec 31 2010, St Maarten officially established its first MPA managed by the St. Maarten Nature Foundation (The Daily Herald 03 Jan 2011) and the Aruba Marine Foundation is still awaiting official designation of its role as manager of the Aruba MPA.

Other key developments during the 1990s were:

- revitalisation of active management of the MPA following a period during the 1980s where lack of funding meant that the MPA became a 'paper park'. A key decision in its revitalisation was the introduction of the user fee with funds going directly to STINAPA to fund the management of the two parks;
- enactment of legislation that outlined the user fee system for the parks and wise use of the island's coral reefs, sea grass and mangroves;
- creation of the Department of Environment and Nature (MINA) within the Netherlands Antilles Ministry of Public Health and Social Development, to support natural resource management on the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles;
- development of the first Nature Policy for the Netherlands Antilles as well as a White Paper "Contours of Environmental and Nature Conservation Policy of the Netherlands Antilles, 1996-2000", which was endorsed by the Council of Ministers of the Netherlands Antilles in 1996;
- convening by MINA of two Nature Forums (1996 and 1998), bringing together 30 to 40 stakeholders from across the Dutch Caribbean to discuss nature conservation priorities and needs for the Netherlands Antilles;
- formal National Park status given to the Bonaire Marine Park in 1999 (having complied with the requirements of the Netherlands Antilles Nature Policy established by MINA), which then became the Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP).

4.3. 2000 - 2010

During this period, there was a strong focus on establishing a more secure funding base for managing the protected areas in the Dutch Caribbean. In 2003, MINA commissioned a study entitled *Sustainable Funding for Nature Parks of the Netherlands Antilles*. In addition to analysing what would be required for the parks to become financially sustainable, the study examined the feasibility of a Trust Fund as a mechanism to cover the basic running costs of one land and one marine park in each island and made recommendations for its structure (AIDEnvironment *et al*. 2005). In 2003, MINA also initiated the process, in conjunction with other stakeholders, that led to the establishment of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) in 2005, an organisation, based in Bonaire, to represent the nature conservation interests of all of the Dutch Caribbean islands in the Netherlands and internationally and to serve as the conduit for international funding for protected area management in the Dutch Caribbean. DCNA was legally established in 2005.

In 2002, BNMP was given international recognition through its designation as an International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) demonstration site showcasing effective management with the full involvement and integration of local stakeholders leading to social and economic development (ICRAN 2003).

Before the constitutional changes in October 2010, the institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire was as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire before 10 October 2010

Main stakeholders	Role/responsibility	Key legislation and policies
Netherlands		
Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	• Overall policy-making and legislative body.	• Convention on Biological Diversity and "five other conventions relating to biodiversity[10]"
Department of Agriculture and Nature	• Draft environmental policy • Implement multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).	• Biodiversity Policy Programme 2008-2011
Ministry of the Interior	• Provide funding for DCNA Trust Fund.	
Dutch Postcode Lottery	• Provide funding for DCNA Trust Fund.	
International and local CSOs, such as VBN (BirdLife Netherlands), IUCN NL and WWF NL, universities etc.	• Provide grant funding and advocacy support, mainly through DCNA.	

Table 1 (continued)**: Institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire before 10 October 2010**

Main stakeholders	Role/responsibility	Key legislation and policies
Netherlands Antilles/Dutch Caribbean		
Governor	• Acts as representative of the Netherlands government in the Netherlands Antilles (NA).	White Paper "Contours of Environmental and Nature Conservation Policy of the Netherlands Antilles, 1996-2000".
Council of Ministers of the Netherlands Antilles	• Overall responsibility for policy and legislation for NA, except in matters of defence, foreign policy and some judicial matters.	
Department of Environment and Nature of the Netherlands Antilles (MINA)	• Ensure compliance with MEAs at the NA level. • Develop conservation policy for the NA.	
Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA)	• Represent its members (from NA plus Aruba) and advocate for their interests in the Netherlands and internationally. • Provide technical and financial support to the park management CSOs in each country. • Manage the trust fund.	
Bonaire		
Bonaire Island Council	• Elected body responsible for all internal affairs of Bonaire. • Sit on Council of Ministers of Netherlands Antilles.	• Management contract between BIG and STINAPA (1991) • Island Ordinance Nature Management (2008) • Island Resolution Nature Management (2010) • Island Resolution Marine Park (2010) • Land Use plan (2010)
Dept of Legal Affairs	• Establishing and revising legislation.	
Dept of Physical Planning, Environmental Resources and Infrastructure	• Ensuring effective management of natural resources. • Land use planning.	
STINAPA	• Manage the WSNP and the BNMP. • Promote environmental awareness through educational programmes.	
Other environmental CSOs and resource users, e.g. Council of Underwater Resort Operators	• Participate in consultations on matters relating to conservation and resource use. • Advocate for policy change as needed. • Promote environmental awareness through educational programmes.	

10 http://www.proforis.nl/?Biodiversity_Priorities_for_2008-2011

4.4.   2010 - present

In October 2010, following the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, there have been some changes in the institutional arrangement for biodiversity conservation that affect Bonaire. MINA no longer exists, therefore nature conservation policy is now the responsibility of the individual island governments of St. Maarten and Curaçao (and Aruba's arrangement continues), while the Netherlands Government Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation delegation to the Dutch Caribbean deals with nature conservation policy for the BES islands. The *Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland* (Netherlands Government delegation to the Dutch Caribbean) or RCN is a service facility that provides a platform for the Netherlands Government Ministries in the BES islands.

DCNA continues to provide a network for the protected area park organisations across the Dutch Caribbean and, at the island level, STINAPA and other island-based park organisations continue to manage the national parks under the same management contracts. The structure, roles and responsibilities of STINAPA and DCNA are described in more detail in Appendices 1 and 2 and are discussed again in terms of enabling factors and challenges in Sections 5 and 6.

Although the situation is still evolving following the constitutional change, the institutional framework as at October 2011 is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire after 10 October 2010.

Main stakeholders	Role/responsibility	Key legislation and policies
Netherlands		
Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	• Signatory to multilateral environmental agreements. • Responsibility for all legislation relating to the environment in the Netherlands and BES islands.	• Convention on Biological Diversity and "five other conventions relating to biodiversity ". • Biodiversity Policy Programme 2008-2011.
Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation	• Draft environmental policy and legislation • Implement MEAs.	Nature Conservation Framework Law of the Caribbean Netherlands
Ministry of the Interior	• Provide funding for DCNA Trust Fund.	
Dutch Postcode Lottery	• Provide funding for DCNA Trust Fund.	
International and local CSOs, such as VBN, IUCN NL and WWF NL, universities etc.	• Provide grant funding and advocacy support, mainly through DCNA.	
Dutch Caribbean		
Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance	• Represent its members and advocate for their interests in the Netherlands and internationally. • Provide technical and financial support to the park management CSOs in each country. • Manage the trust fund.	

Table 2 (continued)**: Institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire after 10 October 2010**

Main stakeholders	Role/responsibility	Key legislation and policies
BES Islands		
Netherlands Government Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation delegation to the Dutch Caribbean	• Ensure implementation of MEAs signed by the Netherlands in the BES islands. • Develop five year overarching conservation policy for the BES islands.	• Nature policy being drafted
Bonaire		
Governing Council headed by a Lieutenant Governor	• Executive power.	• Island Resolution Nature Management (2010) • Island Ordinance Nature Management (2008) • Island Resolution Marine Park (2010) • Management contract between BIG and STINAPA (1991) • Land Use plan 2010
Bonaire Island Council	• Elected body responsible for nature policy, legislation conservation and preservation on Bonaire. • Transcribes Nature Conservation Framework Law of the Caribbean Netherlands (set in the Netherlands) into Bonaire legislation.	
Dept of Physical Planning, Environmental Resources and Infrastructure	• Ensuring effective management of natural resources. • Land use planning.	
STINAPA	• Manage the WSNP and the BNMP. • Promote environmental awareness through educational programmes. • Participation in nature-related decision-making outside the Parks.	
Other environmental CSOs and resource users, e.g. Council of Underwater Resort Operators	• Participate in consultations on matters relating to conservation and resource use. • Advocate for policy change as needed. • Promote environmental awareness through educational programmes.	

11 http://www.proforis.nl/?Biodiversity_Priorities_for_2008-2011

5. What facilitates effective participation of civil society in conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire?

Many factors have contributed to Bonaire's reputation as an island that has actively and effectively conserved its natural resources through innovative institutional arrangements in which civil society plays a particularly active role. This section highlights some of the most important of these and particularly those that provide useful lessons for civil society organisations - and their partners – in other Caribbean islands.

5.1.   A shared vision for the development of Bonaire and the importance of biodiversity conservation in achieving it

The 1990s consultations for the Pourier Plan confirmed that most people in Bonaire have a vision for development based on sustainable management and use of natural resources. This has provided both government and CSOs with a clear platform for their biodiversity conservation efforts and the private sector with a framework for the development of economic activities. It is difficult to single out any one driver of this consensus but the following appear to have been important contributory factors:

- a strong tradition of independent thinking and self-reliance in Bonaire because it has historically received less attention and investment from the Netherlands than its oil rich neighbours Aruba and Curaçao (which was also the capital of the Netherlands Antilles). This has given it a freedom to shape a more sustainable development policy (Hoetjes pers.comm.);
- clear understanding of the linkages between the sustainability of the main economic activities on the island and healthy ecosystems, and in particular those between dive tourism and healthy coral reefs;
- early commitment to the development of protected areas, supported by both CSOs and government; and
- the resulting alliances between civil society organisations, dive tourism operators and government agencies

to educate people about and advocate for effective conservation practices.

5.2.   Clear technical and financial strategies underpinning biodiversity conservation efforts in Bonaire (and the Dutch Caribbean as a whole)

5.2.1.   Designation of protected areas

Protected areas are recognised as one of the cornerstones of biodiversity conservation and remain an important instrument for maintaining key habitats and ecosystem integrity[12]. Since the designation of the WSNP, approximately 20 per cent of Bonaire's total land area has been protected (de Meyer and Simal 2004). In part because of the success of and lessons learned from Bonaire's protected areas, the Nature Forums concluded that if each island had one marine and one terrestrial protected area of sufficient size to conserve key species and habitat, protect ecosystem services and maintain the landscape value of the islands, this would effectively meet the minimum nature conservation needs in the Dutch Caribbean as outlined in the Nature Policy for the Netherlands Antilles. As a result, creating and sustaining protected areas managed by CSOs has been the main focus of conservation policy for many years, at both the regional and island level.

5.2.2.   Establishing a regional trust fund to cover recurrent park management expenses

The Nature Forums also recognised that biodiversity conservation and protected area management could only be effective if accompanied by a strategy for long-term sustainable financing of the protected areas. While the parks in Bonaire were able to generate about 80 per cent of their management costs from user fees (see Section 5.2.3), this would not be the case in most islands. MINA

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12 http://www.cbd.int/protected/overview/

and the CSOs therefore advocated for many years to the government of the Netherlands for the establishment of a trust fund as a strategy for resolving this financial impasse (AIDEnvironment et al 2005).

In 2005, with financial support from the Dutch Ministry of the Interior, MINA commissioned a feasibility study "*Sustainable Funding for the Nature Parks of the Netherlands Antilles: Feasibility of a Protected Areas Trust Fund*". The study examined three aspects of feasibility: context, donor potential and financial strategy; the design of the trust fund; and the fundraising and communication strategies that would be needed to support it. One of the recommendations was that the trust fund should be established within the recently-formed DCNA, rather than creating a new organisation, since DCNA 'has been designed to have the type of institutional structure recommended for conservation trust funds' (AIDEnvironment *et al*. 2005). This also means that the Fund is managed by the Secretariat and Board with a strong understanding of the needs and constraints of park management CSOs in the Dutch Caribbean.

The DCNA Trust Fund, which was established in 2005, therefore started not only with a clear blueprint for how to operate but also a commitment from the Dutch government to provide substantial funding for it. The objective of the fund is to cover the recurrent management costs of one terrestrial and one marine park on each island of the Dutch Caribbean. The goal is to raise a total of Euro 24 million (approximately USD 34.5 million) and the current capitalisation is Euro 4.8 million (USD 6.9 million). The initial seed funding of Euro 1.8 million (USD 2.6 million) came from the Dutch Postcode Lottery Special Projects Funds. Securing this seed funding was a pre-condition for the contributions from the Netherlands Ministry of the Interior, which currently contributes Euro 1 million (USD 1.4 million) annually under a ten-year contract (2007-2016). Since 2008, DCNA has also received Euro 500,000 (USD 720,000) annually from the Dutch Postcode Lottery (McIntosh 2011b).

5.2.3. Park user fees

User fees levied from visitors to the island's protected areas cover over 80 per cent of the park management costs and provide STINAPA with a high level of financial security. Under its contract with BIG, STINAPA is entitled to keep

Figure 4: Dive operator and diver preparing for a dive on the busy Kralendijk coast

all user fees to support the costs of park management. The user fee (or the "Nature Fee" as it is known) costs USD 25 for scuba divers for a year's pass, or USD 10 for a day pass for any activity other than scuba diving (e.g. swimming, snorkelling, windsurfing, boating, kayaking), which is also valid for a year[13]. The annual USD 25 Nature fee for scuba divers also covers entry to the WSNP[14]. Fees are paid at dive shops or hotel desks and collected by STINAPA on a daily basis. Dive operators play an important role in explaining the purpose of the fees and reinforcing diver responsibility to preserve the fragile marine environment (de Meyer and Simal 2004).

A proposal to levy a user fee from divers of NA guilder 1 (USD 0.56) per tank airfill was proposed to BIG in 1979, when the BNMP was established, but at the time, BIG did not support this. Dive operators also lobbied against the levy, despite having been initially supportive (Dixon *et al*. 1993). Unfortunately, in 1984, initial start up funding for the BNMP ran out, active management stopped and the marine park became a 'paper park'. Dive operators acted as the default managers by maintaining mooring buoys where possible and providing dive orientation to visitors (Beukenboom pers.comm.).

By 1990, concerns about increased diver activity and coastal development led to collective action by CSOs, WWF NL - who funded the Bonaire Marine Park's start up, and dive operators to revitalise the park. BIG commissioned an evaluation of the situation with a particular focus on finding financing mechanisms that

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13 Children under 12 years and residents of Bonaire are exempt from paying the non-scuba USD 10 Nature Fee.

14 For those who have not paid the scuba diving fee, the admission to WSNP is USD15 for one calendar year. Bonaire residents have two options, either to pay a USD3 day fee, or pay the USD 15 fee for one calendar year. For children 12 and under, there is no charge.

would guarantee long-term active management for both parks. The study recommended the introduction of a user fee system, as well as the introduction of a licensing system for commercial watersports operators and the creation of a new institutional structure that would include representation from the tourism industry (van't Hof 1990).

A willingness to pay study was conducted and found that 80 per cent of divers were willing to pay a USD 20 annual admission fee. Following exhaustive discussion with all stakeholder groups, the fee was eventually set at USD 10 and introduced in January 1992, some 13 years after the BNMP's initial establishment. The decision was not without controversy, with initial unease on the part of the dive operators and threats by a highly influential US-based dive magazine to boycott the island. However, the admission-fee system proved to be successful and found immediate and sincere support amongst visiting divers (Dixon *et al*. 1993).

Changes were made to the Marine Environment legislation to accommodate the levying of user fees. Most importantly, the new Ordinance provided for the monies generated from user fees to be retained by STINAPA solely for the upkeep and maintenance of the BNMP, for the provision of education and outreach, the conduct of research and monitoring surveys and for law enforcement activities (de Meyer and Simal 2004).

Due to the significantly higher levels of visitation to the marine park than WSNP and the structure of the user fee system, the majority of the income comes from the BNMP user fees. There are concerns about the high level of 'free' access to WSNP through the BNMP user pass (50,000 of the 85,000 visitors to the park in 2009 were 'free' visitors). So there are now discussions as to how to make the WSNP more self sufficient through changes to the user fee system (Junga pers.comm.).

5.3. Effective civil society participation in decision-making 'spaces'

Over the 50 years of conservation activism in Bonaire, a number of decision-making 'spaces' (see Box 2 for an explanation of this concept) have been created by

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Box 2: The concept of decision-making spaces

The concept of 'space' helps to highlight the linkages and relationships that exist and are built in the institutional landscape. Spaces can take a number of forms and exercise different degrees of power, formality and openness:

- **Closed spaces**, where decisions are made 'behind the scenes', sometimes with the aim of providing for people but without their participation. This characterises many state decision-making spaces where technocrats, experts or elected representatives provide services 'to the people' without the need for broader consultation.

- **Invited spaces**, where efforts are made to open up spaces by inviting people (e.g. users or beneficiaries) into the space for consultation or dialogue. Invited spaces can also take a number of forms. They can either be durable, often taking the shape of regularised institutions modelled on co-management committees or user groups. However, many invited spaces are 'moments' and therefore transient in nature, for example a policy consultation where public space is opened up for deliberation and communication 'before it is closed again as authorities return to business as usual' (Cornwall 2004)

- **Claimed** or **created spaces**, where the less powerful create their own autonomous spaces or where established groups come together to make themselves more powerful such as those created by social movements or where people gather to debate and discuss outside the institutionalised policy arenas. These spaces are also referred to as 'organic' spaces that emerge out of a set of common concerns or identifications. Claimed spaces can therefore also be very informal, where people gather to debate and discuss ideas.

- **Spaces do not remain static**. Spaces also exist in a dynamic relationship and are constantly opening and closing as a result of conflicts, changes in leadership and struggles to demonstrate legitimacy. Closed spaces may become invited spaces and claimed or created spaces may grow to be invited spaces as they aim to consolidate relationships, formalise structures or become captured by more powerful actors.

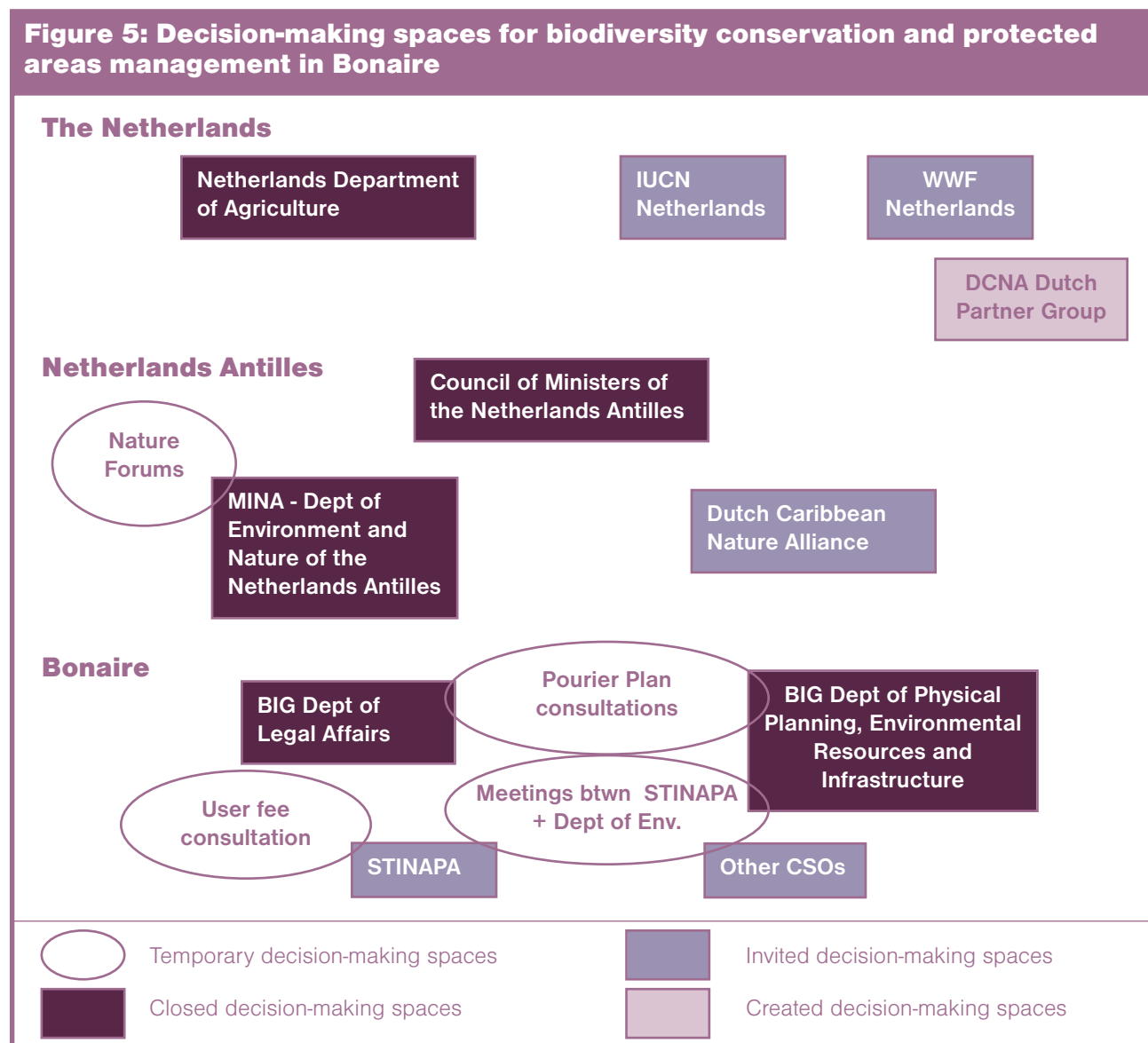*Source: Gaventa 2006, Cornwall 2004, Cornwall 2002.*

government as well as civil society at a number of levels – at an island level, regional level (within the Netherlands Antilles and Dutch Caribbean), nationally (within the Netherlands) and internationally, that have allowed for the participation of a range of different stakeholders in decision-making. STINAPA and DCNA have used these spaces effectively to establish their own good practice, to demand the right to participate, and to participate in making decisions that affect nature conservation and sustainable development on Bonaire and in the Dutch Caribbean.

There also appears to be effective interrelationships between the spaces, for example, good links existed between MINA and DCNA, between STINAPA and BIG, and exist between DCNA and its international partners.

These have provided an effective platform for CSOs to advocate and participate in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development decisions that affect Bonaire. The range of spaces, effective use of spaces and interrelationships between the spaces seem to have fostered a culture of participatory decision-making in Bonaire for nature conservation. Figure 5 illustrates the different types and levels of decision-making spaces in Bonaire's nature conservation history.

Some important decision-making spaces and moments when closed decision making spaces became invited and where spaces have been created are discussed below:

- In the 1960s and 1970s, CSOs in Bonaire, with support and funding from WWF NL, advocated for and under-

Figure 5: Decision-making spaces for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in Bonaire

took a number of biodiversity conservation projects such as the efforts to safeguard the breeding grounds for the Caribbean Flamingo, coral reef conservation and the eventual establishment of the WSNP and BNMP. This laid the foundation for CSOs to take over the management of protected areas when government decentralised management responsibilities in the 1980s. When this closed space (protected area management) was opened up (through decentralisation of government responsibilities) and CSOs were invited to participate, they were able to seize this opportunity.

• Consultations organised by the Netherlands Antilles Prime Minister on Bonaire's development path represent an important moment in Bonaire's conservation history, when a closed decision-making space was temporarily opened up. This space resulted in a critical policy decision, the 1992 'Pourier Plan', which has provided a strong and enduring focus on sustainable, environmentally-conscious development in Bonaire.

• The Nature Forums organised by MINA in 1996 and 1998 also represent temporary invited spaces which brought together key conservation stakeholders from across the Dutch Caribbean. The Forums resulted in critical decisions, key of which was the mandate for the trust fund feasibility study and the rationale for the creation of the DCNA.

• In its five-year management plan preparation, STINAPA invited the public, through public meetings and interviews, to participate in prioritising issues to be addressed over the next five years. In this space, stakeholders were also asked to assist in decision-making about the kinds of partnerships STINAPA should develop to carry out its programmes.

• STINAPA has successfully cultivated a relationship with Government to ensure that it has a voice and participates in the decision-making spaces on any issues in relation to development that might affect the parks. STINAPA sits on the Board of a number of development planning bodies within the Physical Planning and Nature Department. For example, STINAPA played a key role in contributing to the recently endorsed land use plan for Bonaire (Beukenboom pers. comm.). On an informal level, STINAPA's Director also meets regularly with key government officials to maintain good lines of communication with government.

• Both DCNA and STINAPA began as created spaces and are now 'regularised' invited spaces. Both organisations are governed by Boards (see Appendices 1 and 2) that are designed to provide spaces for representatives of all the main stakeholder groups (government, CSOs, resource users and the private sector) to have a voice. Although STINAPA has encountered some problems with getting sustained and dedicated representation from resource user groups, this decision-making space provides an important avenue through which different stakeholders can influence the policy decisions of these organisations.

• To get participation of fishers in decisions about the BNMP, STINAPA has created temporary 'invited' spaces by holding more informal, small meetings where fishers are invited to discuss plans. This was done prior to the development of no-fishing zones within the BNMP. The process of discussing, getting feedback and building fishers' support for no-fishing zones took four years of deliberation (Beukenboom pers. comm.).

5.4. Development of strategic alliances

The CSOs in the Dutch Caribbean, most recently through DCNA, have established strong strategic alliances with influential CSOs in the Netherlands, such as WWF NL, IUCN Netherlands (IUCN NL) and *Vogelbescherming Nederland* (VBN), which have provided funding, technical and advocacy support for the protected areas in the Dutch Caribbean. For example, IUCN NL, WWF NL, park management organisations and universities, together with the Dutch Department of Agriculture and Nature, played a critical role in successfully lobbying for funding from the Dutch Postcode Lottery for park conservation organisations in the Dutch Caribbean (Hoetjes pers.comm.). DCNA is also actively developing its relationship with key agencies in the government of the Netherlands.

DCNA has now established a Dutch partner group of five or six nature organisations in the Netherlands, some mentioned above, which have lobbying power in the Netherlands. This represents an important decision-making space in the Netherlands, created by DCNA to influence policy decisions that affect the Dutch Caribbean in the Netherlands. VBN has agreed to lead the partner group and to represent DCNA's interest in the Netherlands; this is an effective way, and according to

Denneman (pers. comm.), perhaps the only way at the moment, in which the Dutch Caribbean interests can have some influence in the Netherlands.

Some alliances have been institutionalised in DCNA's Board structure, which provides for representation from three international CSOs, and in its Council of Patrons, which is ostensibly advisory but also serves to raise the profile of DCNA in the Netherlands, particularly since it is the only CSO to have secured the patronage of the Queen of the Netherlands (see Appendix 2 for more details on DCNA's structure).

STINAPA has also developed strong strategic relationships, both with its natural allies, such as other environmental CSOs and the dive operators, and with potential opponents, such as certain sectors of the tourism industry, whose level of power and influence enable them to veto policy changes if they are not in agreement with them (de Meyer and Simal 2004). Again, many of these relationships are institutionalised in and maintained through STINAPA's Board structure, which includes representation from the Hotel and Tourism Association and the Council of Underwater Operators.

5.5. Institutional structure with clearly defined and complementary roles and responsibilities

The decision by BIG that the management of protected areas should be ceded to CSOs is supported by a management contract between the government and STINAPA Bonaire (see Appendix 3). This clearly identifies the conditions under which management of the parks is vested in STINAPA and defines STINAPA's governance structure (see Appendix 3). Unlike many of the management contracts between government agencies and CSOs in the Caribbean, it implies a long-term mutual commitment. The agreement is an indefinite agreement rather than one that has to be renegotiated every few years. This implies a degree of mutual trust from the outset, which is a prerequisite for effective co-management but one that has often proved difficult to achieve in the Caribbean. The contract can be annulled by either party giving three months notice or by the government if management of the sites is not in accordance with the terms, duties and responsibilities outlined in the contract.

Similarly, when DCNA was created, its by-laws clearly defined the tasks it would undertake in "supporting and assisting the protected area management organisations and nature conservation activities in the Dutch Caribbean" (see Appendix 2). It has therefore been clear

Figure 6: The centralised hub structure of DCNA. *Adapted from McConney 2007*

from the outset that it would not intervene in the day-to-day operational management by the park management CSOs in the individual islands (de Meyer, pers. comm.). Another of DCNA's policies is that it will not compete with park CSOs for funding (de Meyer pers. comm.) so it does not solicit island-based funders, concentrating instead on bringing in international funding.

DCNA is structured as a "centralised hub" network (see Figure 6), with a single secretariat, based in Bonaire. The benefits of this type of network are that there is clear leadership and a single headquarters. The network can build a critical mass of capacity in one place, which makes accountability easier and the operations more efficient and effective (adapted from McConney 2007). DCNA's objective is for its projects to benefit the park management CSOs in all the islands and it seeks to be equitable and inclusive in allocating project benefits (de Meyer pers.comm.). In many cases, projects are implemented in all islands; however, in some cases, a pilot project is implemented on one island with the intention that it will serve as a model, with the learning adapted and transferred to other islands.

STINAPA also has a clear focus on its core business of managing the protected areas. STINAPA does not engage in any income generating activity (such as tour-guiding) other than collection of user fees and it sub-contracts ancillary functions such as managing the WSNP gift shop.

5.6. CSOs with strong management skills and systems

Both organisations have set out to be a model for others. STINAPA staff recognise their role as managers of a model MPA for the Caribbean and DCNA aims to provide a model in its governance and approach for all Dutch Caribbean nature conservation organisations. This outlook has inspired strong leadership and management approaches such as regular planning and performance reviews, effective communication systems both internally and externally, organisational policies, investment in human resources and capacity building including a rigorous training programme for staff.

When the Netherlands Government agreed to fund protected area management in the Netherlands Antilles, one of its major concerns was the standard of financial reporting to account for funds spent. To address this critical shortcoming in management, DCNA hired a financial consultant so that good quality financial reports are provided to the Netherlands government. DCNA has therefore been able to develop its reporting skills (and those of its members) and, as a result, has built up a good level of trust from the Netherlands Government (Wolfs pers. comm.).

6. Actual or potential challenges

Although Bonaire's experience of civil society engagement in biodiversity conservation has been very positive, a number of current and potential challenges were identified, which can also provide useful insights and lessons for conservation CSOs and their partners.

6.1. Maintaining member support for DCNA

DCNA derives its legitimacy from the support of the park management organisations that it is intended to benefit. However, the park management CSOs have different perceptions of what they need from DCNA, based on their differing levels of capacity and financial strength. Fulfilling the range of needs is a challenging task for DCNA but crucial for maintaining member support.

STINAPA, for example, is comparatively financially self sufficient and believes in the longer term goals of capitalising the trust fund in order to reap operational funding when it matures. As an organisation with strong capacity, it can also see the value in capacity building to develop stronger organisations in the long-term. However, tensions are emerging between the financially weaker park management CSOs and the DCNA Secretariat because they feel that DCNA should prioritise their short-term needs for day-to-day survival and that additional funding is warranted to address these operational needs.

This tension is not uncommon in networks but means that DCNA will need to work hard to overcome the inherent disadvantages of a centralised hub network, where concentration of power may cause conflicts and the structure can be perceived by members as inequitable (McConney 2007). In particular, it will be important to identify and manage conflicts before they escalate. DCNA needs to listen to and communicate with its members and the wider stakeholder group on a regular basis to ensure that it is addressing their needs and that the network is adding value to the membership. Specifically, the criteria and process for allocating funds to the different member organisations needs to be transparent and may need to be reviewed periodically to ensure all members see benefits.

6.2. Influencing island governments' conservation policies

When DCNA was established, it was agreed that it would not intervene or establish direct relationships with the individual island governments, which would remain the prerogative of the park management CSOs. At DCNA's most recent Board meeting, it was agreed that this agreement should be retained in spite of the constitutional changes.

Before the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, DCNA dealt directly with MINA as its link to central government, with which it had an excellent relationship. Nature conservation on the BES islands will continue to be addressed collectively through the RCN, which is represented on DCNA's Board by the Policy Coordinator for Nature Conservation. There is also continuity between MINA's work and that of the RCN because the same person who was the DCNA MINA representative now represents RCN.

However, St. Maarten, Curaçao and Aruba have separate island governments with which DCNA has no relationship. If the DCNA Secretariat were to strengthen its relationship with these governments, DCNA could help to advocate for improved nature conservation policy in those islands adding 'weight' to the efforts of the island-based park CSOs – much like the role of the Dutch partner group in the Netherlands on behalf of DCNA and the Dutch Caribbean. This would also help to fill the decision-making space left after MINA's dissolution. On the other hand, an enhanced DCNA relationship with island governments might be perceived as 'stepping on the toes' of the park CSOs and negate the need for island governments to develop good relationships with their island-based CSO. In addition, DCNA's hands-off approach to island governments does not prevent DCNA

from influencing decision-making, since in the past it has successfully mobilised its international network to put pressure on island governments, as was done in 2010 to address environmental concerns relating to NuStar Energy L.P.'s oil transhipment and storage activities in St. Eustatius.

6.3. Capitalising the trust fund

The task of capitalising the trust fund is a big one. While there is a large sum coming to the trust fund from the Netherlands Government and the Postcode Lottery, DCNA still needs substantial additional funds to achieve the target of Euro 24 million by 2015 at which point the interest would be used for operational funding (the fund currently stands at Euro 4.8 million.). Although there is a Trust Fund Committee, this group advises on management of the fund but does not fundraise. So far, the DCNA Secretariat has not secured any large additional contributions to the trust fund, largely because it is fully occupied with its communications, capacity building and project fundraising. Management of its large structure (see Figures 10 and 11, Appendix 2) and preparation of six-monthly Board meetings also takes a great deal of effort from a small staff. A fundraising committee or additional staff may therefore be needed to ensure this important task is given adequate attention.

6.4. Succession

Since the early phase of DCNA's establishment, the organisation has evolved rapidly and successfully due mainly to the drive and vision of DCNA's Director. Links with international organisations and funding agencies to the Dutch Caribbean have been significantly enhanced but are now concentrated in the DCNA Secretariat and mainly with the DCNA Director. As has been identified in network structures of this type, if the hub fails then all investment and relationships are at risk (McConney 2008). DCNA may need to invest some efforts in succession planning to try to overcome such a threat.

6.5. Fostering equitable participation of all resource users in Bonaire

Analysis of decision-making spaces examines not only the nature of the space (i.e. closed, invited or created) but also the dynamics of power that shape the inclusiveness of participation within them. Even though stakeholders may be invited to participate, power in a space can work to put

boundaries on participation, and to include or exclude certain actors or views in decisions (Gaventa 2006).

STINAPA's Board provides for representation of farmers and fishers but this has been difficult to achieve in practice. This is not uncommon as cultural barriers, fear, dependency and lack of self confidence can all conspire to make it difficult for some groups to find a voice (Cornwall 2004). Indeed, STINAPA's Director attributes the low interest of these user groups in participating to their lack of a "meeting and sitting down culture" which is required as part of a Board (Beukenboom pers.comm.). However, while STINAPA has sought to address the problem by organising individual, informal meetings with farmers and fishers, it is unclear whether attempts have been made to alter the procedures for discussion and decision-making at Board meetings to better suit these Board members. Options could include changing the location and times of Board meetings to one that suits them better, being less reliant on written documents and ensuring that the language used in meetings is easily understood by all. More might also be done to orient all Board members to the Board culture of STINAPA when they join.

Another potential barrier to effective participation of resource users is that unorganised groups, for example, of fishers or farmers often struggle to be able to establish a collective presence that can enable them to participate effectively in representative bodies (Moore and Putzel 2000). STINAPA might therefore consider providing capacity building to user groups to help them establish stronger organisations and processes that facilitate the development of collective positions on important issues.

6.6. In the Caribbean but not engaged in regional processes

While the establishment of DCNA has improved networking and strategic alliances within the Dutch Caribbean and between the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands, CSOs and their government partners are largely excluded from other regional groupings, such as CARICOM and OECS. Yet exchanges with CSOs in other Caribbean islands can be extremely valuable. For example, in its controversial establishment of no-fishing zones within the BNMP, STINAPA conducted an exchange visit of fishers to the Soufriere Marine Management Area in Saint Lucia where no fishing-zones had been successfully established. Similarly, the Action Research and Learning Group meetings under CANARI projects have also been a useful way of creating linkages

between CSOs with similar interests and challenges. DCNA has expressed interest in being involved in Caribbean-wide activities but would need to ensure that it has the capacity for institutional collaboration and exchanges of this kind and may need to set aside funding to develop this aspect if decided.

6.7. Additional impacts of the constitutional changes

It is very likely that the constitutional changes will affect relationships between the islands making DCNA's role in fostering the regional linkages even more important – also potentially more challenging. Recent research has shown that where EU OEs have strong links to the EU Member State, as will be the case for BES islands as special municipalities of the Netherlands, regional cooperation becomes less of a priority (Cooper 2010). For example, the French *départements* of Guadeloupe and Martinique are far more integrated with France than they are with their Caribbean neighbours.

In addition, one of the main drivers for the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles was dissatisfaction from other islands about the dominance of Curaçao within the federation. Similar concerns are starting to emerge about the potential dominance of Bonaire within the BES (Denneman pers.comm.). To date, all RCN institutions for the BES have been established on Bonaire.

7. In conclusion

Islands like Bonaire, which are OEs of the EU, face many of the same socio-economic and environmental issues as the independent Caribbean islands. Their small size, geographical isolation, coastal infrastructure and dependence on natural resources for livelihoods mean that they are over dependent on one main economic driver and disproportionately vulnerable to extrinsic economic shocks as well as natural disturbances such as habitat change, invasive species and climate change (Forster *et al*. 2010, UN Mauritius Strategy 2005).

However, OEs also face specific challenges as a result of their political status. In most cases, they are excluded from the funding mechanisms for multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Programme and EU African, Caribbean, Pacific funds afforded to sovereign States, because they are considered part of Europe (Benzaken and Renard 2010). Although many OEs have good environmental conservation competencies, decision-making bodies, particularly those established under the United Nations, involve OEs through their Member State and they are generally not required to participate thereby excluding input on their distinct realities (Cooper 2010). As a result of distance and their limited resources, it is also difficult for them to engage with and influence national and regional policymaking in Europe. Consequently, the funding that many Caribbean OEs receive for conservation does not adequately reflect the extent of their biodiversity, which in most cases far exceeds that of the EU Member States of which they are entities (Benzaken and Renard 2010).

The Bonaire case study therefore provides many useful lessons that will be of particular interest to conservation stakeholders in other Caribbean OEs. CSOs in the UKOTs, for example, have no regular mechanism for networking, either for exchange of information and skills or to increase their voice in the UK and Europe. Without the 150 year history of political federation that exists in the Netherlands Antilles, the process of developing such a network would be more complex and probably take longer to build mutual trust. However, the benefits could make the effort worthwhile, particularly if the network also developed alliances with other conservation NGOs in the UK and EU to negotiate for increased funding and access to a wider range of funding sources, such as the UK National Lottery.

But the Bonaire case study should also be of wider interest as the extent to which government has shared power with civil society in protected area management, as well as the high-level of CSO involvement in policy making and sustainable development decision-making, is currently unmatched elsewhere in the islands of the Caribbean. Other countries in the region have delegated management of protected areas to CSOs, but it has tended to be only a portion rather than all the country's protected areas[15]. In comparable park management arrangements in the Caribbean, such as in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) where the non-governmental BVI National Parks Trust collects user fees in the 20 sites it manages, the government retains the power to determine who sits on the Board.

As a result of the sharing of power, a level of trust has developed between government and CSOs in Bonaire. A culture of dialogue has been institutionalised and a collaborative working relationship has developed. This does not mean the relationship between government and CSOs is not without its challenges. The tension between economic development decisions based on short-term gains and a longer-term vision for nature conservation still exists, as in other countries of the region, but spaces are made available for dialogue and CSOs have the

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15 Other countries in the region where protected areas have been delegated to CSOs are Anguilla, where the Anguilla National Trust oversees the management of five protected areas; British Virgin Islands (BVI), where the BVI National Parks Trust is responsible for 20 sites; Jamaica, where the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park is managed by the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust; Saint Lucia where the Soufriere Marine Management Area is managed by the Soufriere Marine Management Authority; St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where the Tobago Cays Marine Park is managed by the Tobago Cays Marine Park Board, and Turks and Caicos, where the Turks and Caicos National Trust is responsible for several sites).

opportunity to influence. STINAPA's Director referred to their relationship with BIG as 'challenging' at times but not 'in conflict' (Beukenboom pers.comm.).

In addition, many good practices in Bonaire would seem to lend themselves to being adopted in or adapted to other contexts. The case study demonstrates that CSOs can be highly effective protected area managers when there is:

- a straightforward management agreement, bolstered by mutual trust between the government and CSO, underpinned by comprehensive, up-to-date legislation;

- analysis of and strategies for the financial sustainability of park management, such as user fees applied directly towards management activities and a trust fund with sufficient start-up capital to generate interest to cover operating costs over the long term. The approach adopted for user fees validates earlier research findings that all the MPAs in the region that are regarded as having a high level of management have functional user fee systems in place that cover management costs (Geoghegan *et al.* 2001);

- creation of new and opening of closed decision-making spaces where critical policies and practices are shaped; and,

- capacity to participate in decision-making and management in terms of skills and resources. This is already in place in Bonaire and DCNA is now focusing on building these capacities in the other islands.

The evolution of Bonaire's conservation institutions also demonstrates that over its long history of biodiversity conservation, the skills and experience gained by key individuals in one space have effectively influenced new spaces at different levels and times. For example, the current founding Director of DCNA was previously the Park Manager of the BNMP and the founding BNMP park manager was responsible for the establishment of the MPA in Saba. DCNA's Board structure was heavily influenced by STINAPA's experience of its governing body (de Meyer pers. comm.) and most STINAPA and DCNA Board members also sit on the decision-making bodies of more than one organisation, thereby affecting several different but interrelated spaces.

The case study also illustrates some of the inherent challenges of networks. For example, at different times or from different viewpoints, DCNA has variously been seen as adding value to the work of the park management CSOs on each island or as 'treading on their toes'. Negotiating these tensions requires constant effort on the part of the Secretariat to build mutual trust by communicating regularly and allocating benefits transparently and equitably. With the changes in the political structures, further areas of conflict may emerge and will need to be identified and negotiated.

Nevertheless, the DCNA example demonstrates that networks can work effectively in a multi-lingual context, which has often proved a challenge in other regional processes. Within the Dutch Caribbean, some islands are more comfortable in Papiamento, some in Dutch and others in English, yet DCNA has overcome these challenges (de Meyer pers. comm.). This would suggest that cultural and geopolitical ties have been more important in facilitating the working relationship between DCNA members than language. Since similar ties also exist at many different levels between people and institutions in other islands of the region, there may be scope to exploit this within formal or informal networks to foster improved ecosystem based sustainable development throughout the islands of the Caribbean.

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A bit of history

Stichting Nationale Parken (National Parks Foundation) Nederlandse Antillean (STINAPA NA) was a non-governmental, non-profit organisation founded in 1962. The objective was to have a foundation actively protecting nature on all the islands of the Netherlands Antilles. Its first activities were concentrated on Bonaire and focused on safeguarding the breeding grounds of the Caribbean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*) and the creation in 1969 of the Washington Park, the first sanctuary in the Netherlands Antilles. This was subsequently expanded through the purchase of the Slagbaai plantation in 1979 to form the current Washington Slagbaai National Park, the same year that the Bonaire Marine Park was founded.

Initially, each island had a commission of STINAPA NA but, by the end of the 1980s, each island had turned its commission into an independent foundation. Bonaire founded Stichting Nationale Parken (STINAPA) Bonaire (STINAPA website[16]).
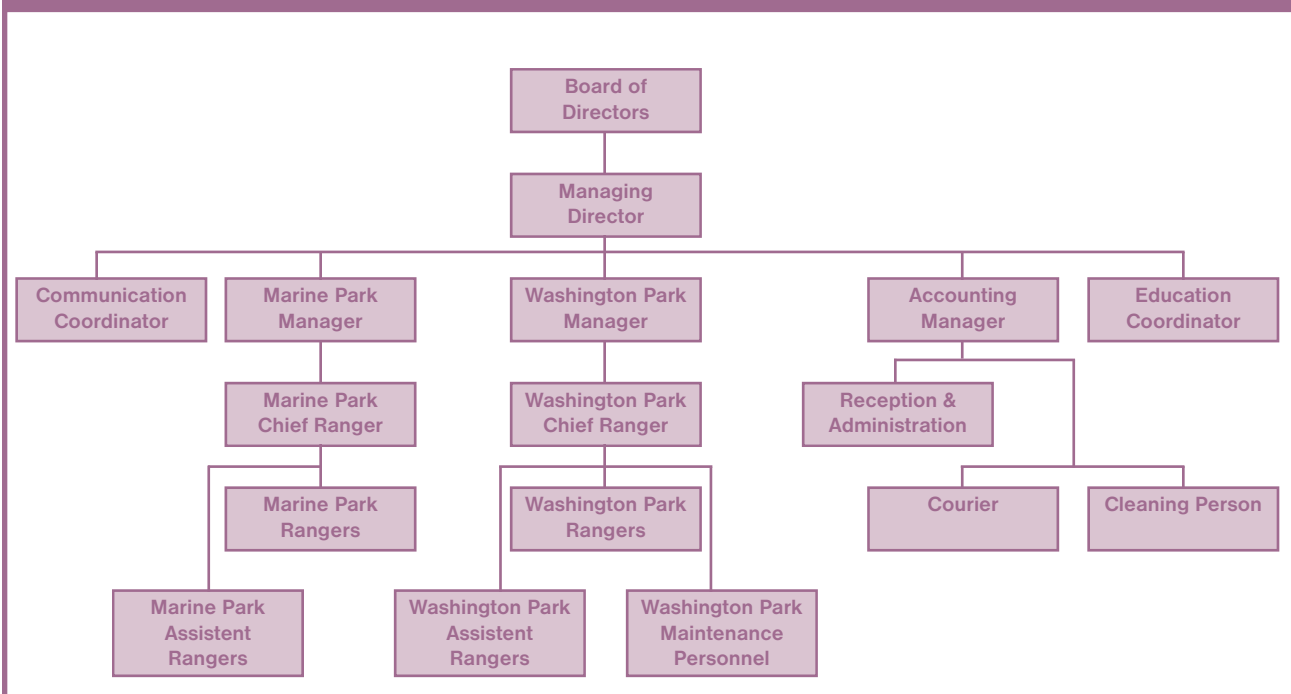
In 1991, after the passing of the revised Marine Environment Ordinance, management of the BNMP and WSNP was assigned to STINAPA under a management contract and the structure of the governance committee, as it exists today, was created (Dixon *et al.* 1993). The management contract is appended at Appendix 3.

What does STINAPA Bonaire do?

STINAPA Bonaire's mission is to conserve Bonaire's natural and historical heritage through the sustainable use of its resources. It lists its goals as:

- to protect, conserve and restore all the natural resources, including, but not limited to, the native flora and fauna of Bonaire for future generations;

- to ensure that the conservation of these natural resources is given the highest priority in all public decision making processes;

Figure 7: Structure of STINAPA Bonaire

- to ensure that the residents of, and visitors to, Bonaire receive quality education and information about the protection of nature and the environment; and

- to ensure that the natural and historical resources of Bonaire are used in a sustainable manner. (http://www.stinapa.org/index.html)

The main mechanisms by which it achieves its goals are:

- management of Bonaire's two protected areas, The Washington Slagbaai National Park (WSNP) and the Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP), which includes research, monitoring, enforcement of regulations and collection of user fees;

- training of park operators to maintain sustainable use standards; and

- communications, including public education and awareness raising.

Structure

Figure 7 outlines the structure of STINAPA Bonaire. STINAPA's Board comprises up to 11 people, with seven seats reserved for "groups that have a vested interest in the park systems":

- Tourism Corporation Bonaire

- Bonaire Hotel and Tourism Association

- Council of Underwater Resort Organizations

- *Koperativa di Kriadonan di Bestia Boneiriano* (representing the farmers)

- The fisherfolk

- Two seats for the Bonaire Island Council (http://www.stinapa.org/boardofdirectors.html)

Although each of the representatives is selected by their interest group, STINAPA's Board, in consultation with the management team, has the final say as to whether it accepts or rejects the nominated person. This right has been exercised in the past with STINAPA requesting that somebody with more relevant skills and experience be nominated.

Each park has its own park manager, chief ranger and two to three additional rangers. The BNMP park manager and chief ranger are vested under the Marine Environment Ordinance with the power to issue summary fines to deal with offences within the park. A further eight to ten

Figure 8: Mooring buoy maintenance status chart

people provide administrative, management and education/communications support to both parks.

Funding

While the Washington Park and subsequently the Washington Slagbaai National Park were established through acquisition of land by the government, the BNMP was established by STINAPA with grant funding from WWF NL and support from BIG and the government of the Netherlands (de Meyer and Simal 2004) under a three year USD 319,000 pilot project aimed at meeting the recreational and scientific management needs of the area (Dixon *et al.* 1993).

STINAPA currently operates with an annual budget of about NA Guilders 1 million (USD 560,000) of which NA Guilders 850,000 (USD 476,000) – or approximately 85% of the budget – is generated by user fees (as of 2010). The balance of the funding comes from individual project funding and BIG funding for an education coordinator's post.

A bit of history

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) was conceptualised as a mechanism to address many of the challenges identified during the 1996 and 1998 Nature Forums, and particularly those relating to the funding and lack of regional and international voice. DCNA was eventually established in 2005 as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, with its Secretariat in Bonaire. Although Curaçao, as the capital of the Netherlands Antilles, might have seemed the more obvious choice, Bonaire was selected to symbolise the organisation's intention to treat all islands equally (de Meyer pers. comm.). DCNA is legally registered in St. Maarten and Bonaire, and has 501(c)3 charitable status in the USA.

What does DCNA do?

DCNA's objective is "to safeguard the biodiversity and promote the sustainable management of the natural resources of the islands of the Dutch Caribbean, both on land and in the water, for the benefit of present and future generations, by supporting and assisting the protected area management organizations and nature conservation activities in the Dutch Caribbean. Specifically, this means that DCNA's tasks include:

• fundraising and securing long term sources of financing for nature conservation;

• promoting and representing the goals and activities of Dutch Caribbean nature conservation nationally and internationally;

• providing a central repository for information relating to biodiversity and protected areas, and encouraging communication exchange of such information between organizations within and without the Dutch Caribbean;

• promoting institutional capacity building, training, partnership-building and, where necessary and efficient, technical resource sharing;

• promoting educational outreach and public awareness." (DCNA 2007)

DCNA aims not to complete with the individual park management CSOs for local funding so it concentrates its efforts on fundraising in the Netherlands and

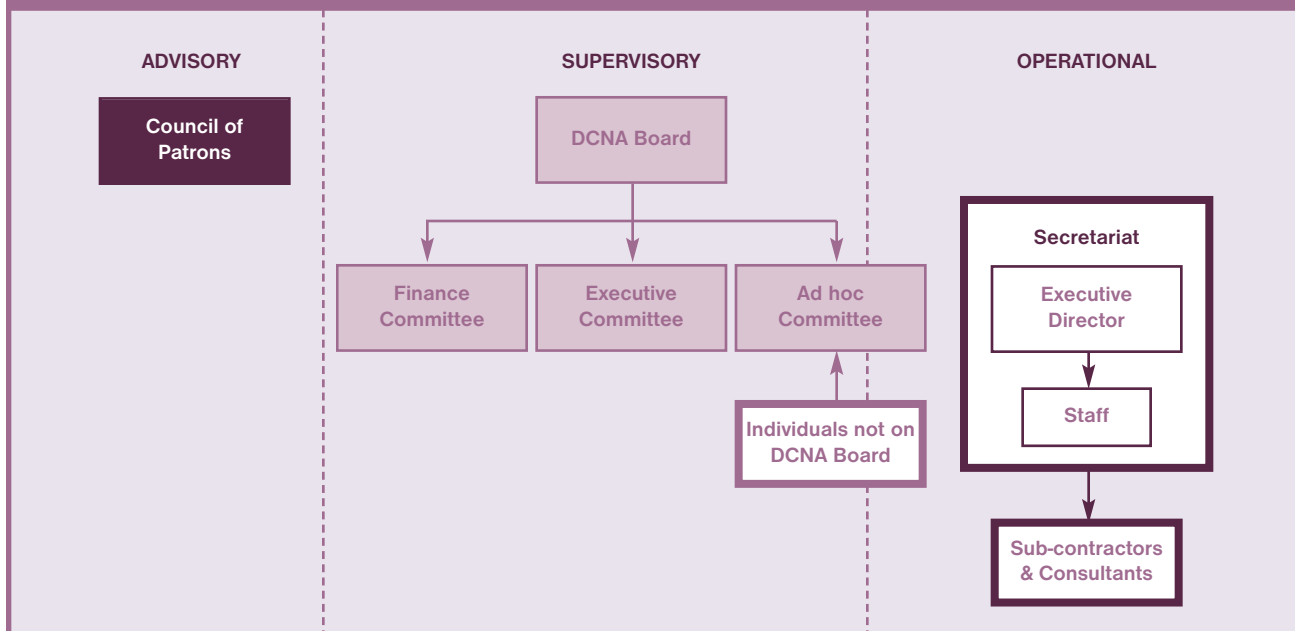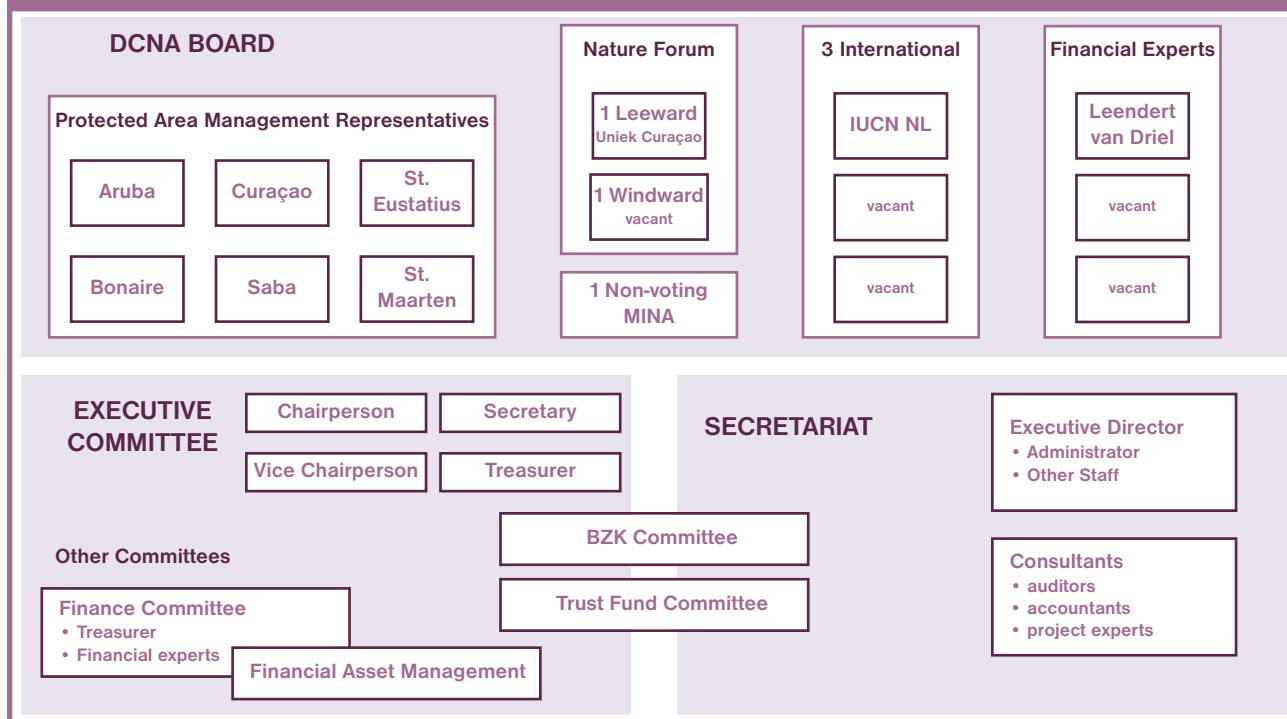**Figure 9: DCNA structure.** *Source: DCNA 2008*

Figure 10: Structure of DCNA *Source www.dcnanature.org*

internationally. The focus to date has been mainly on capitalising the Trust Fund although DCNA also applies for other grant funding.

DCNA is also promoting and building capacity for standardised procedures across the various park management CSOs as a means of demonstrating their management impacts within the parks and effective use of funding. It is working on standardising the types of data and methods of data collection to establish comparable baseline data in all islands and lay the building blocks for a common monitoring and evaluation system. In addition, standardised management plans for all protected areas have been developed to support effective park management.

Structure

Figure 9 outlines the overall structure of DCNA.

The Council of Patrons is made up of influential members of Dutch and Dutch Caribbean society. The Queen of the Netherlands recently agreed to become a Patron. This was an unprecedented achievement as DCNA is the only organisation for which she is a patron. Other Patrons include the former Governor of the Netherlands Antilles, a Bonaire native, and a Netherlands-based environmental

legislation analyst who established MINA during the 1990s. All former Governors of the Netherlands Antilles are also honorary Patrons.

The Board of DCNA (see Figure 10) has three levels of membership:

a) **Core voting members** who represent the legally designated non-governmental protected area management organisations in each of the participating islands, currently:
 • Aruba: Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok

 • Bonaire: STINAPA Bonaire

 • Curaçao: Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity (CARMABI)

 • Saba: Saba Conservation Foundatio

 • St. Eustatius: St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA)

 • St. Maarten: Nature Foundation St. Maarten

b) **Additional voting members** who may be nominated by the Nature Forum; by international NGOs which have given significant support to DCNA; or on the basis of their financial expertise (DCNA 2007).

As shown in Figure 11, current members in this category are:

- two representatives of non-governmental conservation organisations, one representing CSOs in the Leeward islands and the other those in the Windward islands;

- a representative of IUCN Netherlands, a key strategic partner of DCNA; and

- one financial expert.

c) **One non-voting seat** held by the Department of the Environment and Nature Conservation of the Netherlands Antilles (MINA) now held by the Netherlands Government Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation delegation to the Dutch Caribbean (RCN).

The DCNA Secretariat in Bonaire is responsible for all management functions, communications and accounting. The Secretariat currently has a staff of four persons which it supplements with consultants and sub-contractors as needed.

Funding

As noted earlier, DCNA manages a trust fund, which is designed to cover the recurrent management costs of one terrestrial and one marine park on each island of the Dutch Caribbean. The goal is to raise a total of Euro 24 million (approximately USD 34.5) and the current capitalisation is Euro 4.8 million (USD 6.9 million). The initial seed funding (Euros 1.8 million or USD 2.6 million) came from Special Projects Funds from the Dutch Postcode Lottery. Securing this seed funding was a pre-condition for the contributions from the Netherlands Ministry of the Interior, which currently contributes Euro 1 million (USD 1.4 million annually based on a ten-year contract (2007-2016). Since 2008, DCNA has also received Euro 500,000 (USD 720,000) annually from the Dutch Postcode Lottery (McIntosh 2011).

The organisation currently works on an annual budget of Euro 1.7 million (USD 2.4 million). Human resource costs are Euro 150,000 (USD 216,000) per year.

DCNA also receives funds from private foundations to provide small grants to the park management CSOs for outreach materials, equipment and other project-based materials such as publications and communication materials. WWF NL continues to provide periodic support to conservation projects through DCNA.

(Summarised translation)

Art. 1 Bonaire Government transfers the daily management of the Marine Park to the management organization (STINAPA-Bonaire) for nothing. Article also describes the boundaries of the park management area.

Art. 2   Management transfer by contract for an undefined period.

Art. 3 (1) All income for the benefit of the marine park generated by the management organization has to be spent towards the conservation goals as described in Bonaire's marine environment directive art. 2.a.
(2) All costs related to the daily management and use of the marine park are at the expenses of the management organization.

Art. 4 The management organization will administer its duties according to the responsibilities as described in articles 5,6,7,8 & 11 of this contract.

Art. 5 (1) Financial management is the full responsibility of the management organization, including budget planning, accounting, reporting and human resource management.
(2) for accounting and reporting an external accountant will be involved.

Art. 6 (1) The management organization will raise a committee to decide about policy issues in daily management. The committee will coach the park manager.
(2) The committee (STINAPA Board) has 6 members: 2 appointed by government, 2 appointed by the management organization and 2 representatives from the Council of Underwater Resort Operators (CURO) / Bonaire Hotel and Tourist Service (BONHATA).
(3) Members appointed by Bonaire Government cannot be related to the Management organization nor to CURO or BONHATA; preferably these representatives are members of the Council for the Marine Environment.
(4) Chairperson rotates on an annual basis.

Art. 7 (1) The Committee (STINAPA Board) is in charge of the annual budget proposal for the year to come. The management organization decides the annual budget.
(2)The management organization is responsible for managing its annual budget.

Art. 8 (1 & 2) The committee meets at least 2 times a year (and other operational directives for the Committee).

Art. 9 The management organization is obliged to inform every park visitor about the rules set for the marine park.

Art. 10 The park manager produces annual reports on the duties undertaken in the year before and on the conservation status of the marine park. Reports are to be addressed to the management organization and the Committee.

Art .11 (1) The management organization produces annual reports on the finances, duties undertaken and conservation status of the park to Bonaire Government and the Committee.
(2) On request, internal or external accountants on behalf of Bonaire Government will be permitted in order to check the finances.

Art. 12 The management organization can ask the government to assign park staff as "exceptional police officers".

Art. 13 The contract will be annulled if:

(1)   A. Within 3 months after one of the parties involved asks to annul the contract.

B. In case the daily management by the management organization is not according to the terms, duties and responsibilities as described in this contract.

(2& 3). A. Several administrative and legal terms on annulling the contract (informing about reasons, option for defense by management organization if 1.B applies, final decision making by Island Council).

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation, which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for over 20 years.

Our mission is to promote and facilitate equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building and fostering partnerships.

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