**toxic landscapes: slow violence and colonial inhabitation in lagun, bonaire**

**Afbeelding met buitenshuis, hemel, water, natuur

Door AI gegenereerde inhoud is mogelijk onjuist.**

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Master thesis Anthropology and Development Studies

Radboud University Nijmegen

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*In the picture on the previous page, a piece of land that is part of the landfill is visible. The smoke comes from unsorted waste that is burning. The picture is courtesy of Martin – shared with his permission*

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**Abstract**

In Lagun, Bonaire lies a mismanaged landfill that has, over the span of more than thirty years, slowly turned into an environmental disaster which has thus far been ignored. The landfill poses an environmental and health risk for people living near it, as it forces a form of slow violence on the environment and its inhabitants. This study examines the lived experiences of inhabitants of Lagun and how the landfill affects them. This is done by drawing on Malcolm Ferdinand’s framework of the double fracture and colonial inhabitation. By doing so, the framework expands beyond its original focus on the French Caribbean and is enriched to also address the Dutch Caribbean context. In doing so, this research not only documents the overlooked experiences of Lagun residents but also aims to contribute to a theoretical framework to better understand environmental and social justice in the Dutch Caribbean.

**List of Abbreviations**

ABC-islands Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao

APL Asosiashon ProLagun

BES-islands Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba

ILT Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (translated from the Dutch *Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport*)

PEB Public Entity of Bonaire

RIVM National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (translated from the Dutch *Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu*)

SSS-islands St. Martin, St Eustatius and Saba

WIC West Indies Company

WUR Wageningen University & Research

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# Introduction

In the Caribbean Leeward Antilles lies the small island of Bonaire, part of the Dutch Caribbean and a special municipality of the Netherlands. Once part of the Dutch colonial empire, for which the functioned as a salt hub and penal colony, nowadays Bonaire is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity with pristine coral reefs and is often framed as a tropical ‘diver’s paradise’ (Misiedjan 2023; Boneriano 2024). The western coast of Bonaire indeed looks like a slice of paradise; white beaches, turquoise waters and a calm sea create the perfect tropical island feel. However, this is not all that Bonaire has to offer. The paradise of the west is juxtaposed by the more rugged eastern coast of the island, where the rough Atlantic Ocean winds push the wild sea against a rocky cliff. It takes a mere 10 minutes to drive from the west to the east coast of the island along the Kaminda Lagun, a winding road sprinkled with the occasional pothole and a variety of cacti nestled alongside the it. Unfortunately, whereas this road once bridged the tropical paradise of the western coast with the ruggedness of the east, things have changed in recent years. The Kaminda Lagun now leads towards a devastating sight: a mountainous landfill containing over 30 years’ worth of trash and a defiled lagoon filled with plastic and other waste.

In May and November 2024, several large fires erupted on the Lagun landfill, resulting in colons of smoke towering over the island and toxic ashes dropping down as far as on the other side of the island. People affected by the smoke of the fires were forced to evacuate (Drayer 2024). The impact of the fires of 2024 was unprecedented, which led to political and media attention for the landfill. However, the fires are a symptom of a larger, structural problem. Rapid population growth and a booming tourism sector on Bonaire have led to a disproportionate amount of waste on the island. There is no proper waste management and as the current infrastructure cannot keep up with the pressure of economic growth and tourism, waste management issues have piled up (ILT 2024). A report of the *Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate* notes that the landfill in Lagun lacks the necessary permits, does not have a fence, and waste is dumped regularly without oversight (ILT 2024, 17). The same report states that *‘*the situation at the Lagun site is concerning, complex, and urgent […] it is a potential risk for the environment’ (ILT 2024, 3).

Bonaire is not the only island facing issues with waste management: on Caribbean islands fully developed waste systems are often lacking (Singh et al. 2023, 3; Brooks, Jambeck, and Mozo-Reyes 2020, 6-7). It stands out that the Caribbean islands have a significantly higher waste footprint than mainland countries. They often struggle with waste management issues, mainly due to their limited physical space, high operational costs, lack of finances and lack of knowledge on what waste system would be best for the island (Singh et al. 2023, 2; Brooks, Jambeck, and Mozo-Reyes 2020, 12). Research has shown that a lack of proper waste management structures have resulted in environmental pollution and health risks on a variety of mismanaged landfills on several Caribbean islands, such as on Haiti, Aruba, St Martin, Jamaica and Guadeloupe (Riquelme, Méndez, and Smith 2016; Mathieu 2022; Albarus et al. 2024; Bhakkan-Mambir, Luce, and Deloumeaux 2025). Although the landfill on Bonaire is known to be mismanaged, at the time of writing this thesis no research has yet been done (/published) on the effects of the landfill on the environment and health of the population on Bonaire.

The issues that mismanaged landfills can lead to are most acutely felt by people living in close vicinity of a landfill, as is also the case in Lagun, Bonaire. For more than thirty years, inhabitants of Lagun have been living with the consequences of the landfill. They have been raising concerns about the landfill’s health and environmental risks, but their voices have been consistently ignored. This happened despite the fact that mismanaged landfills are known to lead to environmental pollution (Siddiqua, Hahladakis, and Al‑Attiya 2022). What complicates their position is that, unlike the 2024 fires, the forms of harm the landfill inflicts on inhabitants of Lagun are not always clearly visible, making it difficult to recognise and address. This more invisible form of harm that takes place over a long period of time brings to mind Nixon’s concept of *slow violence,* which is *‘*a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all’ (Nixon 2011, 2). Knowing the risks posed by long-term mismanaged landfills, demands examining if slow violence is taking place in Lagun, Bonaire.

Thus far, no research has been done on how this particular environmental disaster in Bonaire is affecting people, why the people living with it could have been ignored for so long, or if/how the island’s colonial history may be relevant. A number of researchers emphasise that there is a huge research gap when it comes to the Dutch Caribbean[[1]](#footnote-1) (Allen et al. 2024, 7; Stipriaan, Alofs, and Guadeloupe 2023, 12). Calls for research in this area – specifically research on environmental justice - have grown more frequent (Baptiste and Robinson 2023; Misiedjan 2023; Donald and Ferdinand 2023; Robinson 2018). Baptiste and Robison (2023) specifically state that a framework for understanding environmental issues – and how these relate to social issues – in the context of the Caribbean is necessary. With this research I aim to fill part of this gap. In this thesis, I explore how inhabitants of Lagun experience and live with the presence of the landfill and how their experiences can be understood in the post-colonial context of Bonaire.

Because the landfill on Bonaire is an environmental risk that is taking place on a post-colonial island in the Caribbean, it is relevant to make use of Malcom Ferdinand’s (2022) framework *the* *double fracture* in this research. In his book *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, Ferdinand explains the double fracture as the observation that environmental issues and social issues are often discussed separately, while they should be understood as deeply intertwined (Ferdinand 2022, 8). He posits that at the root of the double fracture lies *colonial inhabitation*, which he describes as a way of inhabiting the world that causes both environmental and social injustices (2022, 35). With the double fracture, Ferdinand argues one has to reflect on legacy of colonial regimes when discussing environmental issues, and vice versa. He posits that the double fracture, with colonial inhabitation at its core, should be seen a central problem of the ecological crisis, because only when social and environmental justice are brought together can the ecological crisis truly be addressed accordingly (Ferdinand 2022, 4).

In this thesis, I use Ferdinand’s framework as a lens through which I conduct my research. Although there are more scholars that combine environmental issues with social issues (Albarus et al. 2024; Nixon 2011), Ferdinand’s framework is relevant for this research because it is grounded in Caribbean thought, Ferdinand being a Caribbean scholar himself. Using this framework to understand environmental and social issues in Caribbean context is thus fitting, especially given Ferdinand’s argument that the double fracture itself originated in the Caribbean (2022, 12).

Although I uphold Ferdinand’s notion of the double fracture and colonial inhabitation as essential for understanding ecological crises in the Caribbean context, I do feel that it is necessary to expand upon his framework. Ferdinand focusses mainly on the French Caribbean. He sketches an image of Caribbean islands as large scale plantations focussed on extraction or production (2022, 110). The Dutch Caribbean, specifically Bonaire, do not adhere to this standardised form of viewing the Caribbean islands, as I will elaborate on in the context. Furthermore, although political, ecological and social issues related to poor waste management cause complex problems on Caribbean islands, Ferdinand does not address this in his concept, nor is his concept already fully fit to address these. For this reason, I critically engage with Ferdinand’s framework, considering this research an opportunity to explore how his framework may be relevant for the Dutch Caribbean. I discuss why Ferdinand’s theory is relevant and useful when discussing the problems regarding the landfill on Bonaire and in the process expand upon Ferdinand’s concepts, showing how this expansion leads to an enrichment of his theory that is better suited for waste problems in the wider Caribbean.

The main question guiding this research is: *‘How do the people of Lagun, Bonaire, experience living next to a mismanaged landfill and (how) can these experiences be understood through Ferdinand’s concepts of the double fracture and colonial inhabitation?’* The sub-questions, which incorporate the previously announced key concepts, are as follows:

* How does living with (the results of) waste from the landfill influence the daily lives of the inhabitants of Lagun, Bonaire?
* (How) is slow violence taking place in Lagun, Bonaire?
* (How) does the colonial history of Bonaire become relevant when trying to explain the environmental crisis caused by the landfill in Lagun, Bonaire?

To answer these questions, I conducted fieldwork on Bonaire from January 9th until and February 27th in 2025 and continued my research online in the Netherlands until May 29th 2025. On Bonaire I attended a ProLagun gathering and held interviews with 33 participants. This group consists mainly of people living near the landfill, accompanied by interviews with researchers and people in political positions on either Bonaire or in the Netherlands. Furthermore, I hosted a focus group and used several other methods, which I discuss more in-depth in the methodological chapter. The data is analysed according to Yin’s five analytic phases of qualitative data (Yin 2016, 185)

Following this introduction, the rest of the thesis is divided into six chapters. In the context I give an overview of Bonaire’s history and share information relevant to understand the setting in which the research took place (chapter 2). In chapter 3 I show the theoretical framework I will work with; I discuss Ferdinand’s theories so that I can apply these ideas later on, and discuss other relevant theories. In chapter 4, the methodological chapter, I explain how my research has been conducted. Next, I present two empirical chapters in which I present and analyse my data through the lens of the framework as established in chapter 3. The first empirical chapter focusses mainly on the phenomenological experiences of living with the landfill, which I connect to slow violence (chapter 5). The second empirical chapter (chapter 6) discusses different viewpoints on how the problems with the landfill originated – and why this cannot be understood without taking the island’s colonial history into account. Based on the empirical data I critically analyse the framework I work with, suggesting alterations where necessary. In chapter 7, the concluding chapter, I discuss my findings and expand them with new perspectives.

# Context / Setting

In this chapter, I share the background information that is necessary to understand my research. This chapter consists of three parts, each focussing on sketching a different context. In 2.1, I give a general introduction to Bonaire. In subchapter 2.2 I highlight historical events that I deem important to understand Bonaire’s present, specifically the events that can give context to our understanding of current political and environmental problems regarding the Lagun landfill. When discussing the island’s history, I will first address the wider Caribbean and then zoom-in on the ABC-island, specifically on Bonaire. Emphasising the difference between the Dutch Caribbean and the wider Caribbean is relevant for the discussion regarding if and how Ferdinand’s double fracture can be relevant for the Dutch Caribbean. In subchapter 2.3 I give essential background information on the Lagun landfill.

## 2.1 General introduction to Bonaire

Bonaire is one of six islands in the Caribbean that together with the Netherlands form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Located near the Venezuelan coast, the Leeward Antilles include the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, commonly referred to as the ABC-islands. The other three islands, St Maarten, St Eustatius and Saba, are situated roughly 900 km north of the Leeward Antilles and are referred to as the SSS-islands. Together these six islands make up the Dutch Caribbean (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 7). Three of these Dutch Caribbean islands, Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba, became special municipalities of the Netherlands on October 10th 2010; something I will expand upon in subchapter 2.2.1. The other three islands, Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten are autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (ibid.).

Bonaire hosts a multicultural society that, in colonial times, consisted mainly of Afro-Caribbean people and a small group of Dutch and Spanish people (Stipriaan, Alofs, and Guadeloupe 2023, 17). In recent years there has been a significant shift in the multicultural composition of the island, following a rapid population growth that can be partially explained by Bonaire becoming a Dutch municipality, opening the island for Dutch people. Although legally Bonairians are Dutch citizens, in this thesis I make the distinction between ‘Bonairians’ for islanders and ‘Dutch’ for the European Dutch population. Since 2010, the population of Bonaire has grown from roughly 15.000 people to over 25.000 (CBS 2024a). Not only Dutch people are moving to Bonaire; people from the United States and Latin America also increasingly find their way to Bonaire (ibid.). Besides massive population growth, tourism has also expanded exponentially (CBS 2024b). The rapid population growth and booming tourism sector are a significant cause for the disproportionate amount of waste on Bonaire.

## 2.2 A history of Bonaire

The Dutch Caribbean – as well as Suriname (which became independent in 1975) – has been connected to the Netherlands since the mid-17th century, when the Dutch seized control over the islands from the Spanish. This marked the beginning of Dutch colonialism and slavery on these islands, the marks of which are still felt today. Cocari II, the cultural heritage foundation of Bonaire, emphasises the lasting impact on Bonaire: ‘*Colonialism has had such a profound effect on the history of Bonaire that one could argue that almost all developments since colonial rule are more or less rooted in colonialism’* (Boneriano 2024, 7). Since an understanding of the island’s colonial history is essential to grasp present-day issues that the island is struggling with, I present in this subchapter a general overview of Bonaire’s past in the context of the Caribbean. This overview is by no means exhaustive as it is beyond the scope of this research to provide a detailed historical overview. For readers interested in a more in-depth historical understanding, I recommend the following works: *The Caribbean: Origin of the Modern World* by Orovio et al. (2019), *The Dutch Moment* by Wim Klooster (2016) and for Dutch readers, *Ongemak: Zes Caribische eilanden en Nederland* by Oostindie and Veenendaal (2022).

### 2.2.1 Bonaire – a penal colony

After Columbus first laid eyes on the ‘New World’ in 1492, a conquest for the islands in the Caribbean regio started (Orovio 2019, 17). Over the next century, colonial powers such as the Spanish, English and Dutch realised the climate and soil in the wider Caribbean were perfect for growing cash crops such as sugar and coffee. This, combined with the Caribbean being strategically located for trade, led to the establishment of many plantations in the Caribbean. This development made the Caribbean the centre for the triangular trade, driven by the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade connecting Europe, Africa and the ‘New World’, that is, the Americas (Orovio 2019, 257-258). The Dutch WIC (West-Indies Company) played a significant part in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, something that has deeply affected and shaped the Caribbean (Boneriano 2024; Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022; Orovio 2019, 135).

When the Dutch WIC conquered the islands from the Spanish in the early 17th century, they immediately integrated the islands into the triangular trade. Although it was common for Caribbean islands to be forcibly transformed into cash crop plantations, this did not happen in the Dutch Caribbean. On the ABC-islands it was the dry climate and relatively infertile soils that made these type of plantations unfeasible; on the SSS-islands the small scale of the islands prevented the imposition of large-scale cash crop plantations (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 21; Boneriano 2024, 43). However, that there were no coffee or sugar plantations on the ABC-islands did not mean that there were no other kinds of plantations or that slavery was somehow less cruel: Curaçao became a prominent trading hub of enslaved people, Aruba had several small cattle plantations, Bonaire became a penal colony for enslaved people. The enslaved people on Bonaire were forced to work on the salt planes to dig out the salt necessary for the WIC’s long sea voyages, or on agricultural plantations to feed the neighbouring islands (Boneriano 2024, 43-46; 57). The Dutch enslavement of Africans on the Dutch Caribbean lasted over 200 years. In total, an estimated 440.000 enslaved Africans were shipped to the Dutch Caribbean (Orovio 2019, 135).

The Dutch empire officially abolished slavery in 1863 (which was quite late, compared to other colonial powers) (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 28). In Bonaire, formerly enslaved people were given small plots of land to grow food on, called *kunukus*. Although officially people were given their freedom, in reality most families were hardly given the means to sustain these plots and had to keep working on agricultural plantations, in exchange for food coupons (Boneriano 2024, 12). Social inequality thus remained embedded on the island: power was held by elite families with a European heritage who were the owners of the plantations. The majority of Bonaire’s population consisted of Afro-Caribbean people, who worked on the plantations. As the years went on, the formerly enslaved people were able to sustain themselves by growing food on their kunukus, which led to their cultural significance and appreciation (Boneriano 2024, 68, 228; Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 28).

### 2.2.2 Politics: the imposition of the Dutch political system on Bonaire

The islands remained Dutch colonies until 1954, when the process of decolonisation started. In contrast to that other Dutch colony on the other side of the globe (Indonesia), which had fought itself free after World War II, The Dutch government ‘allowed’ the Dutch Caribbean islands to begin managing some of their own affairs. However, this did not imply full independence: the islands would be granted autonomy in internal affairs, but ultimately the Dutch remained in power (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 35). The Dutch came to regret this decision: from the 1970s onwards, the Dutch government began to view the islands as a financial burden and repeatedly tried to convince them to become independent. The islands, however, were not interested in becoming completely independent because of their economic reliance on Dutch support (ibid., 39).

At the start of the decolonisation process, the Dutch imposed a democracy on the islands. The Dutch political system was copied to the Dutch Caribbean and parties were locally established for people to vote on. In hindsight, the direct copying of the Dutch democracy on the island can be considered an odd decision: the local rule of the islands had thus far always been in hands of some elite families and there was no experience with democracy yet. In fact, after the implementation of a democratic system, it was (and partially still is) only the elite families that ventured into politics and held positions of power. Furthermore, the small island context was not at all taken into consideration when this form of politics was imposed upon them (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 37).

After more than fifty years of mutual searching for what the relationship between the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands should look like, on October 10, 2010 (popularly referred to as 10-10-10) a new constitutional structure was established. Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba (the BES-islands) became special municipalities of the Netherlands. Curaçao and St Maarten became autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Aruba already had a *status aparte* since 1986). From then on, the BES-islands were public bodies with a local political government. On Bonaire this is the Public Entity of Bonaire (PEB) (Translated from the Dutch *Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire)*, which is in charge of the daily government of the island (Bijleveld-Schouten 2009). The position of Kingdom Representative was also brought into existence. The Kingdom Representative would act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the Dutch government in the Dutch Caribbean (ILT 2023, 26). Caribbean politicians have disliked the function of the Kingdom Representative from the very beginning, considering it a form of neocolonialism (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 130). This sentiment peaked just last year, when the PEB officially accused the current Kingdom Representative of neocolonial practices (I will elaborate on this in empirical chapter 6).

Inhabitants of Bonaire hoped that the new constitutional structure would change their position for the better, but thus far it has not brought the change that Bonairians generally wished for. Bonairians hoped to obtain a more equal status by becoming a Dutch special municipality, but they are still not always given the same benefits as inhabitants of the European Netherlands, despite Bonaire being a special Dutch municipality (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022; Haringsma 2022). An example of the unequal position of Bonairians as compared to people of the European Netherlands becomes evident when examining the difference in minimum wage regulations. The minimum wage on Bonaire is two-thirds of the minimum wage in the European Netherlands, yet the cost of living on the island is at least 30% higher. Social benefits provided by the Dutch government are also significantly lower on Bonaire than in the European Netherlands (Thodé et al. 2023; Haringsma 2022). This reinforces the perception among Bonairians that they are treated as second-class citizens within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 224).

Since 10-10-10, the relationship between the Dutch and Bonairian government has faced further complications. A Dutch system was imposed on Bonaire and the help offered by the Dutch government is not always the form of help the island needs; in fact, local politicians on the islands consider the growing Dutch influence as a form of neocolonisation (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 223). The new constitutional structure of 10-10-10 should have been a starting point for a better relationship between the islands and the European Netherlands, but thus far the relationship seems to have worsened instead (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022; Haringsma 2022).

## 2.3 A description of (the area near) the landfill

Due to a lack of written records on Bonaire, the following information is based largely on empirically gathered data. Specifically, I received this information from the spokesman of ProLagun Jan Verbeek, the former Lieutenant Governor of Bonaire and a member of the fire department, as well as from several people who live near the landfill. I combined the information they shared with my own observations and tried to find scientific and governmental documents to check their data.

### 2.3.1 Lagun landfill

On the east side of the island lies Lagun, more a collection of houses than a village, which is accompanied by the landfill. Facilities are utterly lacking on this part of Bonaire, except for the 25-meter-high landfill rising out of the landscape. The landfill is owned and operated by Selibon. Selibon is a government-owned company that is owned for hundred percent by the Bonaire Holding Company, a holding company of the PEB. Selibon is tasked with the collection of waste on the island (Jansen and Szabo 2024, 2).

There are no known demographic numbers on this part of Bonaire, only an estimation: directly bordering the landfill live roughly 50 people, spread out over roughly 22 kunukus (Boneriano 2024, 98). The majority of the people living right next to the landfill are of Afro-Caribbean descent and have lived there for a long time. Neighbourhoods with a majority of marginalised communities have in the past often been considered strategic locations for dumps and toxic waste sites (Auyero and Swistun 2008; Davies 2019; Albarus et al. 2024), as is also the case in Lagun, Bonaire. It must be noted that initially, only Afro-Caribbean families living on their kunukus were affected by the landfill, but increased migration from the Netherlands and the United States has brought more people into proximity with the site, changing the region’s demographics. The houses directly opposite the landfill nearly all belong to Afro-Caribbean people, but over the past ten years, Dutch and American families have settled within a radius of roughly two to four kilometres of the landfill.

There are multiple stories of how the landfill came to be, depending on who you ask. The most told story is the following: the area once belonged to an individual who, in exchange for a sum of money, allowed waste to be dumped on his kunuku sometime in the early 1960s-70s. The government at that time considered the land ‘empty and barren’ and decided to make the location the permanent main landfill of Bonaire. The landfill location was chosen without engaging with the local community and an official permit was not obtained. This reflects how the island was governed at that time: the local government was not accustomed to the Dutch method of working with permits and instead approached the establishment of the landfill in an informal, unregulated manner. The kunuku in general had no regulation, no fence and no enforcement. This story of the landfill’s origins is in line with the situation as it is known today. Research done by the *Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate* confirms the lack of enforcement, a fence and care for the landfill (ILT 2024). Furthermore, the ILT also confirms that the landfill is estimated to be established in the 1960s-70s without a valid permit (2024, 9).

In 1994, Selibon obtained a permit to have a landfill in the Lagun area. Since then, Selibon has brought multiple facilities to the site, such as a waste incinerator, an installation for glass-waste, a small toxic-waste facility and storage tanks for oil waste (ILT 2023). Unfortunately, these items were obtained without a lack of know-how on how to work with them. Furthermore, some of the acquired facilities lack the necessary permits (ILT 2024, 16).

Since the early 1990s, several people living in the vicinity of the landfill have protested against its presence. After nearly two decades of advocating for their rights, a small group of Bonairians established the grassroots initiative of *Asosiashon ProLagun* in the hope this would amplify their protest. This effort did not lead to a change in their situation. Following the fires in 2024, a group of Bonairian, Dutch and American people directly affected by the landfill came together and decided to put all their efforts into changing their situation and demand that they, too, could live in a safe and healthy environment. They gathered themselves and reorganised under the banner of *Foundation ProLagun*, using the media attention for the fires to raise public awareness and push for meaningful change of their situation.

# Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in the introduction, a framework that combines social and environmental issues in the context of the Dutch Caribbean is necessary yet currently lacking (Baptiste and Robinson 2023; Ferdinand 2022). Ferdinand’s (2022) framework is curated from a French Caribbean perspective and can be a valuable starting point. Before I can critically engage with Ferdinand’s framework in the empirical chapters, an understanding of the concepts he uses is necessary. In this chapter, I discuss these concepts. Given the relevance of slow violence in the case of the landfill in Lagun, I also critically engage with this idea. In doing so, I help bring my empirical materials in position. In 3.1 I explain Ferdinand’s theories of the double fracture and colonial inhabitation, establishing an understanding of these concepts and emphasising their relevance for the Caribbean. In 3.2 I discuss the concept of slow violence.

## 3.1 The double fracture and colonial inhabitation: a framework for the Caribbean

In Malcom Ferdinand’s book *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, he argues that the colonial history of the Caribbean is separated from its environmental history, a separation he has dubbed the *double fracture (of modernity)* (Ferdinand 2022, 3). Ferdinand poses that thedouble fracture consists of the *environmental fracture* and the *colonial fracture*, stating that these fractures are not usuallybrought together in our thinking about modern-world problems(Ferdinand 2022, 8). He argues that it is necessary to bridge thinking about environmental destruction with considering the effects of colonial history; two interlinked phenomena that have hitherto been disconnected.

The first fracture, the environmental fracture, is caused by the idea of ‘Man’ as separate from and superior to nature (Ferdinand 2022, 4). The separation of humans and nature is more commonly known as the human-nature dichotomy and has permeated Western ways of knowing since the Enlightenment (Plumwood 1993, 4). This worldview, in which humans have assumed a superior position and can therefore claim mastery over nature, lies at the root of modernity. It has been critised as being a root cause of environmental decline because it allows for nature to be seen solely as something to be exploited (Patel and Moore 2018, 209; Plumwood 1993). Ferdinand argues that movements resisting this way of inhabiting the world focus on combating ecological decline, but fail to acknowledge the colonial histories that caused this destruction, thereby perpetuating this fracture (Ferdinand 2022, 5-6).

The second fracture, the colonial fracture, is grounded in unjust social hierarchies, placing the ‘White, Western, Christian man’ above all others, thereby marginalising racialised, non-Christian men and women (Ferdinand 2022, 5). The colonial fracture maintains a Eurocentric worldview in which other ways of knowing and being are devalued. Ferdinand argues that although social injustices that stem from this worldview have been embattled since its existence, its ecological consequences have received hardly any attention (ibid., 8). The double fracture is an overarching concept that identifies these two fractures and ties them together.

The idea that environmental issues and social issues are related to each other is not new. Researchers generally agree that marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by pollution, toxic contamination and other environmental injustices (Nixon 2011; Davies 2019; Albarus et al. 2024). Furthermore, other (Caribbean) thinkers also mention the necessity of taking the colonial past into account when discussing environmental issues on Caribbean islands, and how these issues can affect certain social groups more than others. Sultana (2022, 3) writes that ‘the spatialisation of colonialism’s racism and environmental destruction go hand in hand’. Baptiste and Robinson (2023, 555) write of the necessity of establishing an environmental justice theory specifically foccused on the Caribbean, arguing that core elements of this theory should be the themes of coloniality, sovereignty and resistance.

What sets Ferdinand’s theory apart is that he takes it one step further and offers a framework that shows both social and environmental crises in the Caribbean as being inherently intertwined and rooted in the legacies of colonisation and oppression. He argues social and environmental crises are consequences of destructive and exploitative ways of ‘inhabiting the Earth’; a way of being on Earth that he has dubbed *colonial inhabitation* (Ferdinand 2022, 26).

Colonial inhabitation is positioned on two fundamental ideas. First, Ferdinand (2022, 38) argues that colonial inhabitation is the imposition of only one kind of worldview – a Eurocentric worldview – on the Caribbean; groups who do not adhere to this worldview are marginalised (ibid.). It is premised on Quijano’s (2000) concepts of the *coloniality of power* and the *coloniality of knowledge* and Maldonado-Torres’s (2007) *coloniality of being*. These concepts state that colonialism was not only a matter of territorial occupation and exploitation, but also of imposing hierarchies of power and knowledge. Coloniality encompasses the effects of colonialism on social structures and knowledge systems and how they continue to shape societies and individuals even after the official colonial rule has ended, marginalising non-Eurocentric ways of being in the process (Quijano 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ferdinand 2022). Colonial inhabitation can thus be understood as to be undergirded by epistemic violence, which is a form of violence in which groups of people and their ways of knowing are devalued (Sultana 2022, 3).

The second fundamental idea underlying Ferdinand’s concept of colonial inhabitation is ‘the commercial exploitation of the land. [..] extracting products for the purposes of enrichment’ (Ferdinand 2022, 28). It is a way of being on the land where humans, non-humans, and even entire landscapes are exploited and reduced to resources in an extractive system of domination (ibid., 35). Ferdinand notes that the human-nature dichotomy is conditional for colonial inhabitation to take place (ibid.).

Ferdinand argues that colonial inhabitation lies at the root of both coloniality and ecological destruction and uses the term as a conceptual bridge through which to understand environmental and social issues as intrinsically linked. Addressing one issue, requires addressing the other. Suggesting a method for how to do this, Ferdinand coined the term *decolonial ecology*. A decolonial ecology is ‘a matter of challenging the colonial ways of inhabiting the Earth and living together’ (Ferdinand 2022, 175). In other words, once the colonial inhabitation of the Earth is lifted, social and environmental issues can be transformed, and a path is formed towards more sustainable ways of living together.

It is important to emphasise that Ferdinand (2022, 26) explicitly constructs his notion of colonial inhabitation – and the decolonial ecology that aims to negate this – in the French Caribbean setting. As I wrote in the context, the colonisation of the French Caribbean differed from the Dutch Caribbean. Thus, to make use of Ferdinand’s concept for the Dutch Caribbean, it first needs to become apparent how colonial inhabitation is taking place in the Dutch Caribbean. In the empirical chapters I apply Ferdinand’s concept where possible, laying the groundwork for showing the theoretical alterations I deem necessary for this framework to be of use in the Dutch Caribbean.

## 3.2 Slow violence, a matter of epistemic violence

As mentioned in the introduction, environmental pollution from waste can be connected to Nixon’s (2011) concept of slow violence (Davies 2019; Auyero and Swistun 2008). Furthermore, slow violence can be seen as a logical consequence of colonial inhabitation; Ferdinand himself suggests this (2022, 109-110). Considering the relevance of this concept in the case of Lagun’s landfill, an understanding of slow violence is necessary.

Robert Nixon’s introduced *slow violence* as ‘a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all’ (Nixon 2011, 2). Slow violence is a form of environmental harm that is neither sudden nor necessarily visible and accumulates over time, both in the environment and in the bodies of people. Because slow violence unfolds gradually over extended periods of time, it is not immediately visible which makes it harder to recognise. It is often tied to environmental degradation or pollution that is disproportionately affecting marginalised communities (Nixon 2011; Lugo-Vivas 2024, 412). Furthermore, slow violence lets go of the idea that violence knows clear boundaries. Instead, slow violence seeps through lives and territories; for example through the slow, unknown exposure to toxic materials to either the human body or the land (Nixon 2011, 35).

The fact that long-term environmental degradation is commonly ‘not recognised as violence at all’ leans on the notion that slow violence stretches out in time, making it difficult to grasp as a violence (Nixon 2011, 2-3). That it can take decades for slow violence to lead to environmental degradation also underlines the way in which the environment is commonly regarded; mainly as the background for human life to take place, instead of something as inherently valuable (Plumwood 1993). Ecological damage done to the environment is often not considered relevant until non-marginalised groups of people are affected by it (Nixon 2011). In his work, Nixon connects ecological damage to the effects it has on people, but he hardly takes into consideration the inherent value of nature itself. Haeden Stewart (2017) suggests the term *toxic landscapes* for places affected by slow violence to draw attention to the way in which the environment, the human and non-human are intertwined. In doing so Stewart offers a term that acknowledges the damaging effects of slow violence on a landscape, regardless of whom it effects (Stewart 2017). The degradation of the landscape itself is seen as a form of violence deserving of attention. By using Stewart’s concept of toxic landscapes in this thesis, I aim to shift the focus away from a solely human-focussed understanding of slow violence, and instead consider slow violence as relevant for understanding how humans, non-humans and environment are all affected.

In Nixon’s definition, slow violence is also framed as ‘out of sight’. Thom Davies (2019) pushes back against this framing of landscapes affected by slow violence as invisible, since they are obviously not necessarily invisible to the people living in these landscapes. Davies rightly posits the question ‘out of sight to whom?’ to bring into frame the very people affected by slow violence (Davies 2019). He argues that what allows slow violence to take place is that people’s stories and knowledge about their experiences with slow violence are devalued. With this argument, Davies opens up a path that shows epistemic violence to be a fundamental aspect of slow violence (ibid).

Accepting Davies his notion of epistemic violence as a part of slow violence, it is relevant to define what epistemic violence can look like. It is a form of violence which devalues ways of knowing – as was discussed in 3.1. Furthermore, epistemic violence is characterised by the ignoring of non-formal expertise (Davies 2019), where ‘ways of knowing the world and knowing the self [..] are trivialised and invalidated by Western scientists and experts’ (Briggs and Sharp 2004, 664). Put differently, lived experiences are discounted as unknowing or irrelevant, because of who people are or how they obtained their knowledge. Miranda Fricker (2007) coined two terms of epistemic injustice that help specify the manners in which knowledge can be devalued, thereby allowing for a more precise application and understanding of how epistemic violence is a fundamental aspect of slow violence.

Fricker writes there are two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007, 2007). Testimonial epistemic injustice is when someone’s knowledge or experiences is discredited because they belong to a marginalised social group (Fricker 2007, 1). Hermeneutical epistemic injustice occurs when someone does not have the concepts or frameworks to make sense of their experiences. This can make it hard for people to stand up for themselves, because they do not have the words to express what is happening to them (ibid.). Understanding these two forms of epistemic injustice as ways in which epistemic violence can manifest allows for a more precise analysis of how slow violence can be perpetuated through the devaluation of people and their knowledge systems.

In this thesis I will use Nixon’s (2011) concept of slow violence, strengthened by the theories discussed in this chapter. Leaning on Stewart’s (2017) concept of toxic landscapes, I aim to move away from the anthropocentric perspective of slow violence and incorporate the inherent value of nature and the non-human lives affected by it in the term. Furthermore, I follow Davies (2019) in understanding epistemic violence as a fundamental part of slow violence. Combining his critique with Fricker’s (2007) framework for epistemic injustices makes it possible to make sense of the specific ways in which knowledge and experiences can be devalued and marginalised. Bringing these perspectives together creates a layered theoretical foundation of slow violence that pays attention not only to the ecological and marginalised aspects of slow violence, but also to its material and epistemic dimensions.

# Methodology

In this chapter I explain how I conducted my research and explain methodological choices that I made. First, I discuss my research strategy and research sample. Next, I address the data collection methods that have been used. Following that is an explanation of the applied analytical technique. Lastly, I reflect on the research process, the validity and reliability of my research, and on my positionality as a Dutch, white researcher in Bonaire.

## 4.1 Research strategy

For this research I conducted a qualitative ethnographic case-study on the Lagun Landfill in Lagun, Bonaire. I made use of ethnographic methods to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Bonairian residents regarding the landfill in Lagun. I did so following an phenomenological approach, meaning I aimed to describe and understand people’s lived experiences based on how they themselves described their experiences (Yin 2016, 20)

The research is framed within a critical, postcolonial perspective. I have tried not only to analyse the socio-historical structures that have shaped the situation regarding the landfill, but also to contribute to decolonising epistemologies by focussing on and amplifying the voices and experiences of Bonairians who have lived with the landfill for a long time. In doing so, I aim to acknowledge and validate Bonairian knowledge systems as legitimate forms of knowing. Furthermore, certain parts of my research are autoethnographic as I found my own lived experiences to be relevant to adequately describe the field. This autoethnographic approach (see Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010, for more details on this approach) also functions as a form of triangulation, since my own experiences in the field turned out to confirm lived experiences participants shared with me. To minimise the effects of confirmation bias influencing my experiences, I consistently reflected critically on my experience. Furthermore – given the sensory nature of most of my autoethnographic notes – tried to be very consciously present in both my body/the environment during sensory walks.

During this research I followed an iterative-inductive approach and used theory as the precursor, medium and outcome of my research (O'Reilly 2012, 26-27). This means that I went into the field informed and aware of both the situation and relevant theories but kept an open mind to let theory emerge from the data as my research progressed (ibid.). This allowed me to be flexible and adjust aspects of my research accordingly when necessary. Furthermore, during my research, data gathering, analysis and writing were not distinctly separate but inextricably linked processes, making the research process inherently iterative (Yin 2016, 84-85).

My theoretical framework is based on the review of scientific literature in the form of journal articles, books, governmental or scientific reports and newspaper articles. The theoretical framework helped me prepare for the fieldwork, as it made me aware of concepts I could encounter in the field. During my fieldwork, I kept linking empirical data with scientific literature to ensure data gathered during my research is embedded in scientific thought.

## 4.2 Research sample

Finding participants who were willing to participate in my research has been relatively easy, since a large group of people were eager to talk about this topic. The primary way I have gotten in touch with people is via ProLagun, the organisation for and by people who suffer from the landfill. The board of the organisation agreed to participate in my research. They also added me to the group chat of ProLagun – their main social platform – in which I was allowed to post a call for participants. I attended a ProLagun gathering, where I could meet people from Lagun in person. This was highly useful; I met several people with whom I scheduled interviews or engaged in small talk.

Since people who are part of ProLagun suffer from and worry about the landfill, they generally shared similar perspectives and experiences. I also tried to find people living near the landfill who were not part of ProLagun, to see if their perspectives differ. I was told there are a few families who live next to the landfill who are not part of ProLagun. I visited their kunukus to see if they were willing to participate in my research. However, either people were not home, or I was met with unwillingness. This could be for a variety of reasons; perhaps they had more pressing matters to attend to, or perhaps people were not keen to ‘donate’ time to a Dutch white researcher that does not speak their language. Whatever the reason, the absence of this group from my research should be taken into account when considering the outcomes of this research.

Another means I got in touch with people was via Jan Verbeek, spokesman of ProLagun. He has a wide network thanks to his position in the organisation that I gratefully made use of. He helped me get in touch with a variety of people, such as researchers and Dutch public servants.

Besides finding people via my contact at ProLagun, I had some luck on my side: my stepfather is acquainted with someone who currently has a prominent position on Bonaire and brought me in touch with him. Via this contact I was able to reach out to other people in prominent positions on the island, which helped me gain access to (former) politicians and people in public functions. People in these positions helped strengthen my data source triangulation since their ideas and experiences differed from inhabitants of Lagun. My luck did not stop there: the people I was living with during my time on Bonaire had a network that they kindly shared with me, which also led to several valuable participants.

As it is a small island and lots of people know each other, anonymisation of participants is important to protect participants from possible public backlash. There are only three people whose real names are used: Farid, Susy and Jan. They are already publicly known for their stance and have given permission to use their real names throughout this research. All other names in this research are not the real names of the participants. Furthermore, in some cases their exact job functions have been changed or purposively kept vague so that the description of who they are cannot be traced back to them.

## 4.3 Methods

Besides making use of data source triangulation, I also used several ethnographic research methods to enhance the quality and reliability of my data. By ensuring methodological triangulation, I found that when one method falls short in the attempt to collect certain data, another method can help fill up the gaps (Yin 2016, 89). Furthermore, the use of several methods led me to spot confirmations and overlap in the dataset, which helped strengthening validity. In the next section I will discuss the methods I have used.

### 4.3.1 Fieldwork

Between January 9 and February 27, 2025, I conducted fieldwork on Bonaire and lived close to the Lagun landfill. This allowed me to emerge myself in the environment and participate in local cultures. I met up regularly with members of ProLagun – either for ‘official’ interviews or in a more informal setting – to get a better understanding of what was going on in the lives of participants. During my time on the island I applied participant observation, went on sensory walks (Pink 2008), held in-depth interviews, engaged in small talk, hosted a focus group, participated in a ProLagun gathering, attended a relevant court case and read government documents. After February 27th, although my time in Bonaire had come to an end, I continued my research from the Netherlands. My fieldwork thus became multitemporal, as the temporal dimension lasted longer than the spatial dimension (Dalsgaard 2013). In the Netherlands I continued my research with a study on Bonaire’s political history and the reading of relevant government documents in which the relationship between the BES-islands and the Netherlands is discussed. I also kept close track on the developments regarding the landfill: I attended the debates in the Dutch government regarding the landfill online, listened to talks by the PEB and ProLagun on the landfill, kept in touch with members of ProLagun and read news articles on these developments. Furthermore, I held five more online interviews with researchers. The last interview took place on May 29th, thereby officially concluding my fieldwork.

### 4.3.2 Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews with 33 participants. Nine people were willing to participate in a second or third interview, which gave me the opportunity to address new questions based on data I had gathered. I thus conducted a total of 43 interviews. The participants I interviewed can be divided into different groups. Twenty-one participants are people who live close to the landfill and have been affected by it. Due to the multicultural composition of the island and the uneven way in which the landfill has in the past affected people, it is relevant to mention the descent of participants – see figure 1. Three people are Bonairians who live elsewhere on the island. They have joined ProLagun because they are struggling with the effects of waste management issues caused by poor governance, too. For them, ProLagun is an inspiration in how to stand up against a government that is ignoring them. The remaining nine participants are people who, one way or another, have a role of expertise regarding the landfill. This group consists of two Dutch government workers, two Bonairian government workers and five researchers with different backgrounds.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Descent | Bonairian  (Afro-Caribbean) | Bonairian  (Dutch) | Dutch | United States |
| Number of participants | 17 | 2 | 12 | 2 |

*Figure 1 – descent of interviewed participants*

Interviews took place either in public locations such as a café or library, online, or in people’s homes if they preferred that option. Prior to the interviews, I constructed a list with open-ended questions which helped remind me of the topics I wish to address. This topic list was not so much directory as it was a crutch I could lean on if necessary. I made sure to give participants the space to mention experiences and thoughts they deemed relevant. While listening to their stories, I would take notes and sometimes record the interview, if given permission. After the interview, I copied my notes into a word document and analysed the interview. Analysing the interviews right after conducting them gave me a first impression of relevant themes that stood out and showed me how I might have to change my list with questions for the next interview to enrichen my data further. For example, my initial focus was mainly on participant’s experiences with the landfill. After several interviews, it became apparent that participant’s anger towards the local and Dutch government was a recurring theme that I needed to address more deeply in my research than I had initially anticipated. Based on this analysis of my data, I changed my topic guide. This approach illustrates the iterative nature of my research.

### 4.3.3 Sensory walks

I went on multiple sensory walks during my time on Bonaire. These sensory walks took place within an area of roughly 2km within the landfill’s reach and made me familiar with the environment around the landfill. During these walks I paid close attention to phenomena such as smell, wind, sound and the landscape. Most of the times I went on these walks by myself, without distractions such as a phone or music, to really immerse myself in the environment. I made pictures of things I encountered as visual reminders of things I encountered on the way (this could be the general environment, or mounts of waste dotting the landscape). By the end of the walk I wrote down my observations in my notebook.

### 4.3.4 Small talk

During my fieldwork I was also in contact with participants outside of interviews in informal settings. This gave me the opportunity to engage in small talk often and with ease. Furthermore, at ProLagun gatherings, small talk was abundant. The people that I spoke with were aware that I was a student who was doing research on the landfill. Often, they were very open to sharing their experiences. I mainly asked them questions to elaborate on stories they were sharing, to enrichen the information they shared. I made notes during these conversations. In my notebook, I listed the topics that were discussed in these conversations. This system helped me keep track of topics that lived under participants and was useful when making updating my topic guide for interviews.

### 4.3.5 Focus groups

I hosted a focus group in which members of ProLagun that are not living close to the landfill participated. The idea for a focus group had come after a ProLagun meeting in which so many people wanted to share their stories with me, I suggested hosting a focus group so that we would have enough time to address what everyone wanted to say. During the focus group, participants shared stories on their experiences with poor governance in regard to waste management on other parts of the island. The meeting took place in the hair dressing shop of a participant – a location that was chosen because the effects of poor waste management are strongly present there. There were five people present, which made it easy to moderate the group well. Four participants were Bonairian, one lady was from Suriname. During the focus group we went for a short walk, because the participants wanted to show me their lived experience with poor waste management on this part of the island. Although the people who participated in this focus group did not live close to the Lagun landfill, their experiences with the effects of waste helped shed light on how poor governance and bad waste management is a widespread issue on Bonaire. In other words, this focus group acted as a form of data source triangulation, as this group of people did not live close to the landfill, yet were still affected by poor waste management in a different setting. During the meeting I took notes, that I later copied into a field report.

### 4.3.6 Participant observation

Participant observation is a tool I used on several occasions during my time on Bonaire. Since I did not volunteer and was not living in a closed community, I could only apply ethical participant observation in certain settings. One of the settings in which I used participant observation was when I attended the public court case of the PEB VS. the Kingdom Representative. This court case was attended by 21 members of ProLagun, as well as by the Kingdom Representative and a Bonairian government official. The gathering of ProLagun members took place before and after the court case. This was my first time meeting members of ProLagun and proved an excellent chance to get in touch with people who would later become participants. Another gathering of ProLagun I attended was an official meeting of the foundation. During these gatherings I was introduced to the group as ‘the researcher’ and given permission to make notes of the gathering. These gatherings were an excellent opportunity for small talk, the findings of which I wrote down amidst conversation with people. If I wanted to write down an observation on a particular person, I asked them for permission to do so. During both the court case and the ProLagun gathering I took notes of my observations during and processed these into a field report afterwards.

## 4.4 Data analysis

To analyse my research findings and relate them to theory I used Yin’s format of the five analytic phases (2016, 185) which occur in an iterative process: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. After compiling my data, I disassembled my data without coding, as I found the coding process to be distracting me from actually grasping the data. By following Spyrou’s (2016) notion of approaching interviews as wholes, instead of dissecting and coding them, I tried to move beyond fragmented pieces of data and instead try to understand the complete story that my participants shared with me (Spyrou 2016, 17). Although I analysed without coding, I did use a system when going through the data. In the disassembling process I first went through all interviews and fieldnotes, making derived notes in which I formulated the essence of what people were saying (Yin 2016, 200). After this process, I went through the data again, and this time started creating schematised overviews of how I understood the data. I then started the reassembling process in which I used the schematic overviews and derived notes to connect data with each other and with theory. To overcome pitfalls of inconsistency or inaccuracy, I made sure to re-visit my data over and over again to make sure that my interpretations and conclusions remained faithful to the original data.

During the analysing I went back and forth to theory to see how my findings related to literature. I worked with a schematic diagram which I used to visualise my findings for myself.   
I shaped the schematic diagram according to a tree, with low-hoovering concepts at the roots and the more zoomed-out theories at the top. This method helped allowed me to ‘play’ with my data by making visual how data and theory can be connected and understood on different layers.

## 4.5 Reflection on validity, reliability and positionality

In qualitative research, the social researcher is the main research instrument (Yin 2016, 130). For this reason, it is important that I reflect on how my position as a researcher may have influenced access to the field, types of data collected, interpretation of data, etc.

Being a white woman from the Netherlands, I was very aware of my positionality before entering the field – especially being from the former colonising country. I was also painfully aware that for my coming to Bonaire I could be considered ‘parachute researcher’ – someone who goes to another area to ‘extract’ knowledge for their research and then goes back home (Baptiste and Robinson 2023, 556). I am indeed a researcher from a university in the Global North who came to do research on Bonaire without speaking Papiamento or having visited the island before, and my stay was relatively short. I tried to negate the position of parachute researcher in several ways.

During my time on the island, I tried my best to learn basic Papiamento so that I could have brief chats in this language with participants who spoke both Dutch and Papiamento. Second, I let local needs and perspectives guide the research priorities. An adequate example of this is the earlier mentioned shift to focus more on participant’s experiences with local government. Third, I remain in contact with participants, keeping them up to date on how the research is advancing and generally maintaining friendly relationships. The research findings will be shared with them in accessible formats. By doing this, my goal is to ensure participants still feel seen and heard, as well as remind myself not to drift away from the people who made this research possible. Lastly, I tried to use Caribbean thinkers for the theoretical framing of this research. Ferdinand (2022, 12) notes that ‘the colonial gaze is maintained by the scholar who departs from the Global North and carries in his suitcase concepts that are to be experimented with in a non-scholarly Caribbean’. By using a theory grounded in the Caribbean, and referring to Caribbean thinkers where possible, I try to engage with the intellectual work that emerges from the region.

During my fieldwork, I was fortunate that many people were willing to participate and provide me with information for my research. This has helped me gather rich, high-quality data. Prior to their participation, I informed participants about the purpose of my research and asked for their consent to participate. Throughout the research I explicitly reminded participants of their right to withdraw at any moment without any negative consequences. During interviews, I regularly checked in with participants to ensure they felt comfortable and always offered the option to pause or stop the conversation if they wished. Finally, I asked each participant whether they preferred to be anonymised in the research and respected their choices accordingly.

It is important to note that my research sample is not all-encompassing. Although in qualitative research this is the standard, it is still good to be aware of how the research sample has shaped my findings. I have only spoken with people who can speak Dutch and who were willing to talk with me. There were no participants who spoke only Papiamento and were open to working with a translator. I have been told by several of my participants that there are people living near the landfill whose experiences would be valuable for my research, but I have not been able to get in touch with them. Besides these people, I also have not managed to interview any members of the current Public Entity of Bonaire, despite repeatedly having tried to get in touch with them in various ways. Whether these people have remained out of reach due to a lack of time on their side, my inability to speak Papiamento, or perhaps an underlying anti-Dutch or anti-researcher resentment, I do not know.

In this thesis, following a phenomenological approach, I present the subjective experiences and ideas of my participants. To strengthen the validity of the conclusions that can be drawn from their experiences, I have triangulated by considering multiple perspectives and data sources. This helped move towards what Mutsaers and Meijeren (2023) call *intersubjectively realistic accounts* of the experiences of participants; accounts that not only integrate the lived experiences of participants, but that are also validated through comparison of different viewpoints (Mutsaers and Meijeren 2023).

Although the experiences of participants are subjective, I tried to identify patterns that emerged from the data as objectively as possible. Following an emic perspective and a constructivist philosophy, I uphold the notion that all research findings are subjective and that all data gathered is a (co-)construction (Fusch, Fusch, and Ness 2017, 927). I routinely wrote memos and reflected on my own biases and how my background might influence my interpretations so that the data I gathered and analysed is as accurate a representation as possible. Still, all data has been filtered and interpreted by me, which in its very definition makes it subjective.

# Lagun landfill – forced into the periphery

In this chapter I share the lived experiences of people of Lagun to show how the landfill affects their lives in noticeable and palpable ways. I look at their experiences through the lens of colonial inhabitation. I start by discussing the phenomenological experiences of participants. Next, I explain why the situation they live in should be understood as a form of toxic uncertainty and why the landfill should be considered as a form of slow violence that is being inflicted upon the population.

## 5.1 Disposable landscape: out of sight, out of mind

The landfill looms in the background while I help set up the large balcony for the ProLagun meeting that is about to start. The meeting is being held at the house of Farid, a man who, together with his wife Susy, has been one of the most prominent voices in the fight against the landfill. He built this house on their kunuku over thirty years ago, before he knew that the kunuku opposite his house was used as a landfill. He often mentions how back then, the balcony had a brilliant view of the lagoon, which used to be speckled with flamingos. Now, the view of the lagoon is obstructed by the landfill and the flamingos have gone. It is fitting to have the ProLagun meeting on this balcony, where the enormity of the landfill – consisting of over more than 30 years of waste – is a stark reminder that this health and environmental disaster has been long in the making.

The landfill has grown gradually over the last thirty years or so. During this time the landfill has functioned without the necessary permits, without proper rules and regulations, and without even so much as a fence. A report of the *Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT 2024, 17)* states: *‘*The landfill is not licensed. […] Because the dumping of waste takes place almost entirely without oversight it is unclear what is being dumped*’* (translated from the Dutch)*.* The landfill, which should be a carefully managed system, is essentially an open dump. The 2024 report of theHuman Environment and Transport Inspectorateconfirmed the shocking conditions of the landfill – something that was known to inhabitants long before ILT published the report.

Afbeelding met buitenshuis, hemel, landschap, boom

Door AI gegenereerde inhoud is mogelijk onjuist.

*Image 1: Part of the landfill. On the left you can see the 25-meter waste pile, on the right you see unsorted waste lying around and goats freely roaming over the landfill. Photo courtesy of Martin.*

When asking people on Bonaire to describe the landfill, it stands out that every single person mentions piles of unmanaged waste and a lack of regulatory oversight. They all describe the landfill in roughly the same manner, an adequate example of which is shared by Rick, an employee from the fire department. He notes:

Batteries, fridges, garden waste, car tires; it is all in there together. People can just drive around the site freely. And they [Selibon employees] say, “yeah, you have to throw it over there”. But sometimes people find that too far to drive or too complicated. Then they just throw all their waste down in one spot. (Rick, interview, 28 January 2025).

Rick is not the only one mentioning the issues that the lack of regulatory oversight cause. I spoke with Mira, a young woman who lives with her partner in the vicinity of the landfill. During one of our conversations, she emphasised repeatedly that there is essentially no oversight, saying: ‘no one cares what you dump, or where you dump it. They just wave you in a direction and don’t look at what people do on the landfill’. Besides Mira and Rick, twenty-one other participants, too, mention the lack of regulatory oversight on the landfill.

One look at the landfill is enough to confirm their statements. During my time on the island, I occasionally went for a walk on the eastern coast of Bonaire, close to the landfill. As I walked along the trail that slithers around the landfill, even from a distance I could see a variety of waste elements in unsorted piles and burned elements laying around. This sight was accompanied by a stench that occasionally hit my nostrils, making me want to hold my breath whenever I smelled it. I recall looking at the landfill and, unexpectedly, finding it an almost eerie experience. Wherever you look, elements of waste can be seen, both on and off the landfill. As the waste is not adequately covered, wind and rain can carry lighter forms of waste such as plastics away from the landfill, defiling the landscape and the nearby lagoon.

Besides the unmanaged situation on the landfill, waste is unmanaged and pervading the area around the landfill as well. Individual’s and Selibon trucks can be seen driving down the road towards the landfill, loaded with uncovered waste in the back which flies off and ends up on the side of the road. Besides these accidental drops of waste, small piles of waste can be seen all around the landfill. For whatever reasons, this waste did not make it to the landfill and oftentimes has been set on fire. The entire landscape feels like it is left behind and being treated as a ‘disposable landscape’ (Nixon 2011, 19)

A disposable landscape is made possible by a way of living on it in which there is no care for the land – a way of inhabiting the land without relating to it (Plumwood 1993, 12). As discussed in the theoretical framework, this constitutes one of the elements of colonial inhabitation. However, whereas Ferdinand (2022, 121) describes that the colonial gaze renders the Earth meaningless if no profit can be made, it seems that Ferdinand’s theory of colonial inhabitation is only partially applicable here: colonial inhabitation as being inherently exploitative of land is not the case here – a damaged landscape is not necessarily an exploited one. It is useful to turn to Liboiron (2021), who writes of ‘pollution as colonialism’, and confirms the idea of pollution being a consequence that follows from a certain way of relating to nature. They argue that pollution is not merely an environmental problem but a colonial one, describing it as a continuation of colonial land relations in which landscapes can be degraded (Liboiron 2021).

The mismanaged landfill and general presence of waste on this part of the island gives the area near the landfill an overall feel of ‘out of sight, out of mind’. This ‘out of sightedness’ is a recurring theme when talking about the landfill and plays out over multiple dimensions. The most ‘on the ground’ dimension is that the population living there is affected by the visible pieces of waste that invade their environment is not something that seems to be cared about. Neither the people who drop waste on the side of the road or Selibon have taken the responsibility to clean the waste they left behind. This is a point of anger for members of Lagun, who often send each other pictures in their group chat complaining of the trash that can be spotted along the roads. They, too, feel ‘out of sight’, as the disturbance of their environment is apparently not something others care about. Nixon (2011, 19) suggests that people who live in ‘disposable landscapes’ are declared ‘disposable’ as well – something that seems to be happening to the people of Lagun, too. Nixon’s idea of slow violence as happening ‘out of sight’ (2011, 2) appears to be viable in this context.

## 5.2 Flies, fumes and further visible violences

The lack of care for and oversight on the landfill, combined with the absence of a fence, has allowed for all sorts of goods to be dumped together on the landfill throughout the past, decade after decade. Mismanaged waste can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and flies, both of which can carry vector-borne disease with them (Babaremu et al. 2022, 2). That the landfill in Bonaire has become a breeding place for these pests is made evident by the multiple accounts of participants, one of whom recalls:

It's swarming with flies. It's just really unbearable. I mean, when you walk around there, there are between five hundred and a thousand flies swarming around you. Yeah, that's just really unpleasant. It stinks like hell. Because the fresh waste isn't always covered immediately. (Interview with Jake, 26th of January 2025).

What’s more, the flies do not remain contained to the landfill, but being winged beings easily spread out over the island. During the ProLagun meeting mentioned at the opening of this chapter, a swarm of flies suddenly invaded the balcony. People had to keep their mouths closed and started to swat their bodies to get rid of the flies. The solution of one of the hosts was to spray a pesticide in front of everyone, ‘protecting them’ from these pests. To me, it seemed that the pesticide only worsened the potential health risks, a feeling that was shared with several participants who underwent the procedure reluctantly or refused the spray by walking away. It seems that inhabitants of Lagun have to choose between two evils: either being invaded by flies or suffering the toxic pesticides.

That the flies do not stay contained to the landfill is something I experienced myself firsthand. One evening, after having cooked myself a lovely dinner, I accidentally left the door open to my small cabin. I had retreated to another room, thankfully embracing the coldness of an airconditioned room, when I heard a buzzing that seemed to reverberate through the walls. Apparently, a swarm of flies had found the entrance to my cabin. As the buzzing grew louder and louder, I sat frozen in my bedroom, afraid of what was awaiting me on the other side of the door. I looked at my phone and saw a message in the group chat of ProLagun, stating that ‘the flies are everywhere again’. Apparently, there were more people experiencing something similar. Once I had gathered the courage to open the door, I saw what looked like at least a hundred flies buzzing around my small kitchen. It took me the entire evening to rid my apartment of flies. During this time, I could not eat and felt as if my home was invaded by unwelcome, dirty guests.

The mismanagement of the landfill has not only led to pests being given free reign; it is also the main culprit for the toxic fires that have erupted on the landfill in the past two decades, with the largest ones having happened in 2024, right before I entered the field. During my time on the island I met Rick, the earlier mentioned employee at the fire department who was present during all fires on the landfill in 2024. He is European-Dutch but grew up on Bonaire. After having studied in the Netherlands, he went back to the island because he wanted to use his skills to help improve the fire department. Since Rick’s profession requires an in-depth understanding of the fires, I asked him for an explanation on how these fires could have come about. He explained to me that the unmanaged dumping of waste has led to the development of toxic pockets within the landfill. These toxic pockets have resulted in smouldering, underground fires, causing the landfill to visibly fume. When it rains, the water droplets carry the top-layer of the garbage down with them as they fall from the sky. This exposes the smouldering fires to a burst of oxygen, which causes these fires to flare up. Consequently, the toxic fumes become exposed to the air and are spread out over the rest of the island via the ever-present eastern wind.

These long-lasting, unforeseen consequences of waste should be taken as a reminder that humans do not have full mastery over nature. Instead, waste has a ‘productive afterlife’ and can ‘bite back’ (Reno 2015, 558, 564). Reno writes: ‘Waste, in all its variety and complexity, should serve as a reminder that we can never fully grasp the planetary processes to which we contribute, nor can we assume that they are easily managed’ (2015, 566). Although human actions have led to waste being dumped – damaging the landscape in the process – the consequence of this dumping are not made possible by human mastery over nature, but by the lack of it. As a result, the people living relatively close to the landfill, are suffering the effects of the underground toxic fires that pose an imminent th

The fumes and fires have a direct effect on people’s health, and experiencing the effects of just one fire is already enough to cause health damage. Although the fires on the landfill only recently gained public attention through the media, they have been an ongoing problem for inhabitants of Lagun long before. I spoke with several people who have lived in proximity of the landfill for at least a decade. One person I spoke with is Kenley, a kind, elderly, Afro-Caribbean man who moved to a house right next to the landfill in 2012. He recalled how the first fire he experienced way back in 2014 had an immediate effect on his health:

I started having symptoms during that fire [in 2014]. We went to the pulmonologist, and she confirmed that we had a disease called Reactive Airways Disfunction Syndrome (RADS). That is a reaction from your lungs. We also got irritation in your eyes. Throat irritation. The nasal passages. And severe headaches. Air pollution. That is what had caused it. And this was just the first fire. (Kenley, 24 January 2025).

Despite complaints from inhabitants from Lagun, and despite the fact that it has been known for years that these fires were damaging and the entire landfill was mismanaged, the landfill has kept on growing rapidly due to increased tourism and the earlier-mentioned new stream of migration towards the island. To combat the increasing growth of the landfill, an incinerator was installed on it in 2018. Incineration is known to cause smog and release fine particles, both being a major cause of respiratory disease (Abubakar et al. 2022, 8). Yet, an incinerator was installed and remained in use for five years, which soon proved to be the worst issue yet. The incinerator, which should be at least three kilometres away from the nearest settlements, did not adhere to the necessary standards and was blowing unfiltered toxic smoke directly into the houses of the people living right next to the landfill (RIVM 2024). It also had a detrimental effect to the environment and the beings living there. Farid recalls the loss of wildlife he believes the incinerator caused:

[our dog] Poppetje got cancer after 14 years. And our other dog also died. The vet said that all the symptoms of the animals that died, point to poison. That’s what the vet said. [..] He thinks that all the dead bats, lizards, iguanas, goats, little snails, dead parakeets, dead trees, dead pigeons—everything in the area, everything was dead. This whole neighbourhood was full of dead animals. One thing I know for sure is when the incinerator was on, in the direction where the incinerator blows, everything was withered. The plants weren’t green. On the other side, everything was green and beautiful, but where the smoke from the burner went, everything was dry and dead.

Not only the environment and its animals were affected; people around the landfill fell ill because of the incinerator. Kenley shared with me that he and several others living near the landfill fought against the incinerator for 5 years, but alas, to no avail. It was not until much later, when research from the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) confirmed that the incinerator emitted toxins that cause irritation to the eyes and the respiratory system, that the incinerator was put to a stop (RIVM 2024). By then, Kenley and his wife had already moved away from Bonaire, as their health would not allow him to live there anymore. Besides Kenley, another family was forced to leave because both children had become asthmatic during their time in Bonaire, something they connect to the incinerator as well. Farid has suffered neurological damage, experiencing tingling throughout his body, which the doctor thought may be due to the incinerator. The incinerator is now gone, but the violence inflicted by it lives on in the environment and the bodies of people and animals. This is a clear element of slow violence: even if certain actions are stopped (such as the usage of the incinerator), the damage done remains many years after it was first inflicted.

After the incinerator was put to a stop, the issues for Lagun were not over. Besides living with the daily effects of the landfill, two large fires erupted in May and November 2024. I spoke with 22 people who experienced the landfill fires in 2024. Their stories are all alike: burning eyes, a hurtful throat and difficulty breathing are shared experiences amongst them. Doctors told at least six participants who needed medical help after the fires to start using Ventolin, an inhaler used for asthmatic symptoms.

Afbeelding met natuur, vuur, warmte, hemel

Door AI gegenereerde inhoud is mogelijk onjuist.

*Image 2: Lagun Landfill fire 05/11/ 2024* *– Courtesy of Martin, photo shared with his permission.*

Although the effects of the landfill discussed in this subchapter resulted in slow violence, the violences themselves – the pests, the fumes, etc – are forms of violence that are visible.

The violences inflicted on Lagun are thus not *invisible* (as Nixon describes slow violence), they are *ignored*. Slow violence is only ‘invisible’ in the sense that the people who are affected by its effects are devalued, their voiced experiences rendered meaningless. This emphasises Davies (2019) argument that slow violence is indeed epistemic violence.

## 5.3 Living in a state of toxic uncertainty

The landfill is considered a ‘threat to health and environment’ by ProLagun and the inhabitants they represent (ProLagun 2025). That inhabitants worry about both is emphasised in a survey ProLagun held. The survey was very informal: before the start of a ProLagun meeting, a poll was posted in the group chat, along with a question to please click on the options that people consider most worrying. After the meeting, I was given permission to use the results from the poll for this research. Below you find the outcome of the poll.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ‘What are your concerns about this crisis?’ | Amount of people who selected this option. |
| Health | 58 |
| Air & soil pollution | 53 |
| Risk of new fires | 49 |
| Contaminated food and water | 45 |
| Government inaction | 43 |
| Pests | 32 |
| Property value | 27 |
| Stench & psychological impact | 23 |
| Economic and social impact | 21 |
| Other | 6 |

*Figure 1: results from a survey held by the board of ProLagun to gain insight into what topics worry people living near Lagun the most.*

This poll makes apparent that the people of Lagun believe there is a link between environmental pollution and health risks. Not only do people living near the landfill have to deal with the pests, the unmanaged waste and the effects of the fires; they also worry about the effects of the landfill that are more ‘invisible’, such as air and soil pollution. For example, occasionally an awful stench is coming from the landfill, something that the community often complains about during their meetings. The stench is something I experienced myself as well. Unfortunately, it is not merely a smell, but something that seems to cause severe headaches. During my time on the island, there were several days in which I was bedridden due to these headaches. As these headaches mainly occurred during the beginning of my stay, I had no framework yet for what was happening. As time passed and I spoke with more people, they confirmed that the stench from the landfill were most likely the cause for my headaches. However, neither inhabitants of Lagun nor I can be certain this is indeed the case, as I discuss later in this chapter.

One person I spoke with about the stench is Sarah, an American girl who, ironically, moved to Bonaire specifically for health reasons. In the USA, she had lived in a polluted city, something she felt that her body needed to recover from. Unfortunately for her, the house that she moved into when she first came to Bonaire was close to the landfill, something she can now sarcastically laugh about. We discussed how she experienced the air quality around the landfill for some time, and she mentioned that besides the headaches, the stench results in another effect as well: *‘*When there is that stench, really, you can’t sleep. You can’t have your windows open. You do not want to be outside*.*’ Sarah went on to say that she, too, suffered from headaches; something she has linked back to the landfill.

Sarah is certain that the stench and headaches are the result of environmental pollution. Her argument is founded on the notion that she can feel how her body reacts to the landfill. She states: ‘It's not like environmental pollution is always the same and has the same markers, but there's stuff your body does when it's just overloaded [due to pollution].’ When living close to the landfill, she had headaches, respiratory issues and cognitive fog. Because these complaints went away when she moved further away from the landfill, specifically to areas outside the wind stream, she is certain of the correlation between her complaints and the landfill.

Sarah is not alone in her conclusion. Although causality between their worsening health condition and the presence of the landfill has not yet been proven, all members of ProLagun claim that this link does exist. The process of victims ‘detecting’ a disease pattern is known as *popular epidemiology* (Auyero and Swistun 2008, 358). In Lagun, this is taking place by people who identify headaches, throat and nose irritations, symptoms they consider as being caused by the landfill.

While certain pollutants that are objective factors leading to environmental degradation and are known to cause disease have been measured in Lagun (RIVM 2024), there is no concrete evidence linking these pollutants to the landfill or to the health of the population. Participants in Bonaire thus live in a condition of *toxic uncertainty* (Auyero and Swistun 2008). This toxic uncertainty translates to new layers of suffering, as participants remain in doubt of what is really happening to their health due to the effects of the landfill not being properly measured.

The members of ProLagun are angry that their calls for health research have been ignored and that their lived experiences are not enough to sway the government into believing them – at least not enough to prompt them into taking action against the landfill. To stop being ignored, one of the main goals of ProLagun is the introduction of health tests, so that they can prove the detrimental effects of the landfill. The emphasis that is put on epidemiological scientific research shows that Eurocentric ways of knowing dominate what knowledge is considered valuable. Farid’s wife Susy gave a very clear example of this when she said: ‘The government is not going to accept it, when all the people say that all medical issues people from this neighbourhood experience are due to the landfill. We need evidence! Evidence, evidence!!’. This shows that the people are aware that their experiences are discounted and they feel the need to search for other methods that will ensure people will believe them.

Even if health studies would be done, it remains the question if these would lead to serious governmental action. Comparing the situation of inhabitants of Lagun to a similar situation in the Netherlands where the company TaTaSteel causes environmental- and health damage, it seems that the odds of health investigations resulting in a quick move to a solution for their problems are small. This is why listening to the lived experiences from inhabitants of Lagun and taking them seriously is extra important.

Mutsaers and Meijeren (2023, 2) once posited the question ‘how do we get to the ‘truth’ of violence in the first place?’. I would argue that this question seems relevant in this case as well. Listening to the experiences of people from Lagun Bonaire, it seems worth noting that whatever the outcome of possible health research, they experience the effects of the landfill daily, regardless of epidemiological evidence. Their lived experiences constitute a truth in themselves and should be taken seriously.

By believing the inhabitants of Lagun, a first step towards a decolonial ecology can be taken when their forms of knowing are accepted as worthy. This is not to ignore that health tests could indeed be important for the local population – it could be beneficial to know the amount of lead or dioxins their bodies have absorbed, and what medical actions have to be taken to negate the effects of this. However, it does show that the voices of those experiencing longstanding devastation of their landscape and health are considered ‘unknowing’. This devaluation of local knowledge can be understood as a form of epistemic violence taking place in Lagun, which fits within the framework of colonial inhabitation.

## 5.4 Conclusion: the landfill as a form of slow violence

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Nixon’s definition of slow violence is that of ‘a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all’ (Nixon 2011, 2).

Based on the experiences of inhabitants of Lagun, it appears that slow violence in Lagun is taking place in several distinct ways. First, the past of the landfill has been a gradual unfolding taking place over more than three decades, during which the landfill has slowly leached into the surrounding environment, inducing a form of delayed destruction on the landscape. Second, the pollutants of the landfill are carried in bodies and landscapes long after the violence was first inflicted on them. Third, Davies (2019) his idea that slow violence can only take place when epistemic violence occurs indeed appears to occur on Bonaire, where the complaints of the population are consistently ignored. Fourth, the slow violence is happening ‘out of sight’ because it takes place on Bonaire’s eastern coast, where the geographical location of the landfill and the people there who are considered ‘disposable’ has rendered the violence ‘invisible’ – at least to those on whom the violence is not inflicted.

# Colonial past, lived present

*As I sit on the terrace enjoying my evening meal, I overlook the small square that the restaurant I am eating at is located on. A s I look around, I see only white guests eating at the restaurant. On the other side of the square, in the gazebo, some Afro-Caribbean families are gathering around a barbecue they brought themselves. Their children are running around the square laughing, while the adults crack jokes and share food. Earlier that day, I had gone for a stroll around the same small square, looking at trinkets and souvenirs displayed by market vendors for tourists. I noticed that no one on the market square looked Afro-Caribbean, so I asked some merchants about the makeup of the market. The merchants I spoke with were Colombian, Chinese, Venezuelan and Dutch. They all told me that there are not usually ‘real’ Bonairians (referring to the Afro-Caribbean population) on the market. I was still thinking about this as I walked to the resort where my parents were staying. At the resort, I saw more of the same: guests were mainly white, while the staff were almost entirely Afro-Caribbean and speaking Papiamentu. It baffles me that almost everyone I speak to jovially says that the colonial past is not at all felt on Bonaire. Everywhere I go, I see unequal relationships. To me, sadly, the influence of the island’s colonial past still seems very much alive.*

*\**

Following the notion of the double fracture that environmental and social issues have to be brought together, in this chapter I go beyond the experiences of living with the landfill and delve into different readings of social and political viewpoints on the issues regarding the landfill. This chapter consists of three subchapters, each of which offers a different reading on how the issue with the landfill could have been ignored for so long. In 2.1 I discuss experiences of marginalisation that inhabitants of Lagun have had with their government. In 2.2 I examine how Bonaire’s colonial past and small scale might contribute to feelings of shame, which can help explain local and governmental inaction regarding the landfill. In 2.3 I discuss the perception of the Bonairian government as being unskilled, and why this should be considered as closely tied to Bonaire’s colonial past.

## 6.1 Necropolitics

Although the smouldering landfill has been a known issue for a long time, a solution for it has not been forthcoming, to the anger of inhabitants of Lagun. Over 10 years ago, several inhabitants of Lagun decided to stand up for themselves against the landfill and formed *Asosiashon ProLagun* (APL), the precursor of present day ProLagun. Kenley was an active member of APL and has kept track of all actions and experiences regarding the landfill. During one of our conversations, he told me of the letters he sent to both the Dutch and the Bonairian government, in which he demands better management and even removal of the landfill, as well as justice for how the landfill has affected his health and life. He erupts in anger when he speaks of the feeling of being ignored for so long:

I wrote my first letter of complaint to them [to PEB] in, in 2014. I have written to them throughout the years, and, in 11 years, I have never, I never received a response from them. There is *no* empathy. Not from our government. Not from the *entire Dutch society*! (Kenley, January 24 2025).

Although APL started over 10 years ago, it should be noted that the battle between Selibon – backed by the Public Entity of Bonaire (PEB) – and several inhabitants of Lagun had already been going on for quite some time at that point. Farid and Susy recall actively demonstrating against the landfill since as early as 1993. Up until the now, neither Farid and Susy nor Kenley have seen changes for the better, nor have they received any form of compensation or help for the disaster they have been forced to live with. They have witnessed the growth of the landfill over time, consistently raised concerns, and been ignored at almost every turn. They told me that what fuels their anger, is their believe that this never would have happened to them if they lived in the Netherlands. They feel as if their voices are apparently not as worthy as those of inhabitants living in the Netherlands, which reminds of Fricker’s (2007) concept of testimonial epistemic injustice.

That both the Dutch and Bonairian governments have turned a blind eye to the situation for so long further underlines the neglectful approach to the lives of the people living there. By ignoring the situation in Lagun, both the Bonairian and Dutch governments have effectively decided which lives are not worth protecting. In the stance of these governments, necropolitics can be seen at work. As Achille Mbembe (2003, 11) argues, necropolitics involves the power to decide who lives and who is left to die. The prolonged exposure of Lagun’s inhabitants to toxic conditions, despite their repeated calls for health measures, indicates a form of governance in which the population of Lagun are apparently considered to be disposable.

A shift occurred in the attention given to the landfill, after the second large fire in 2024, when Jan Verbeek decided to roll up his sleeves and become spokesman of ProLagun. Together with his wife and Farid, he took the step to turn ProLagun into a foundation, dedicated to demand justice for their living situation. ProLagun gained more members after the fires, an increase caused by the presence of ProLagun and absence of governmental support being offered. Jan made smart use of the media attention from the second fire and managed to bring further awareness to the situation by contacting politicians, multiple media and other people in relevant functions, using his network and his networking skills to get this done. That Jan succeeded in gaining more awareness of the situation in Bonaire begs the question if, up until then, not only testimonial epistemic injustice had taken place, but perhaps the people demanding justice were constrained by their lack of knowledge on how to approach the situation – which would be a form of hermeneutical epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007, 1)

Although media and political awareness of the issues permeating the landfill increased in 2024, the Public Entity of Bonaire still downplayed the presence of the landfill, something that became apparent when one of the commissioners of Bonaire said that ‘the landfill isn’t the problem, the fires are the problem’ (Commissioner Abraham Clarke in a public debate, 28 March 2025). Jan Verbeek, spokesman of ProLagun, responded to the deputy with the following statement:

**This is what we are dealing with. A commissioner who claims that the fires are the problem – so not the landfill itself?** It has been scientifically proven that living near a landfill is not good for your health, especially when it is poorly managed. This isn’t rocket science. So yes, preventing the fires is of course essential, but as long as the local government keeps insisting that living nearby is fine (despite the landfill gases, despite the flies, despite the stench from exposed household waste), we’re not going to get anywhere.

The different point of view from the commissioner – who spoke for the PEB – as compared to the point of view from inhabitants of Lagun shows a difference in risk perception of the landfill. This brings to mind Mary Douglas’s (1992) idea that perceptions of risk are shaped by cultural processes, with the people living near the landfill having established an understanding of the risk that the landfill poses that differs from that of the commissioner. The risk perception of inhabitants of Lagun is currently not taken serious as a valuable form of knowledge. Inhabitants of Lagun perceive this as a disinterest from the government, feeling unheard and unacknowledged. Thus, despite the increase in public attention given to the landfill, inhabitants of Lagun still experience a lack of acknowledgement for their experiences and a lack of empathy from their government.

## 6.2 Shame and slavery’s past on a small-scale island

In 6.1 it was discussed that inhabitants of Lagun feel ignored, invalidated and uncared for, feelings that are caused by supposably uninterested governments and a lack of help being offered to them. However, not yet discussed are reasons that look deeper into the reason inhabitants of Lagun have been ignored for so long, or why it took until the fires of 2024 for people to engage with ProLagun. This subchapter looks further than the lived experiences of inhabitants of Lagun, and sheds light on how the island’s small-scale and colonial history are relevant to take into account when trying to understand the situation around the landfill better.

Susy was the first person who suggested to me that the smallness of the island affects meaningful action being taken against the problems regarding the landfill. Susy and Farid were the first who actively took a stance against the landfill. They both told me several times that they wished that more people would have supported them from the beginning on, and that they feel both anger and compassion towards people who stayed quiet: anger because the landfill is affecting everyone but not everyone is fighting with them; compassion because they understand the fear that comes from speaking up on Bonaire, where ‘everyone knows each other’.

As time passed and the issues with the landfill became more pressing, slowly, more Bonairians tried to draw attention to the cause, something that the original members of APL gladly welcomed. Pete, a member of APL for roughly 10 years now, admits that he initially did not join their cause because on Bonaire standing up for yourself is not that common. Pete grew up on a kunuku very close to the landfill. He knows all families living there, something that initially stopped him from speaking up. He told me: ‘We are scared that everyone knows what we’re saying. This is such a small society. You’re simply scared. Scared to stand up for yourself.’ He refers to the smallness of the community as an important reason to stay quiet. His fear is a known issue on small islands. Small island interactions are often characterised by ‘pervasive personal connections’ (Baldacchino and Veenendaal 2018, 333). Inhabitants of small islands tend to know each other relatively well. In a society where you cannot just ‘walk away’ from each other, being vocal about disagreeing with the status quo can be seen as a dangerous option, as it means risking social exclusion (ibid., 343).

Marly, an Afro-Caribbean woman who studied in the Netherlands and now lives with her partner and two children on Bonaire, is certain that the fear of standing up for yourself is not only due to smallness of Bonaire. She considers the island’s history with slavery to have played an important role in this, too. During one of our conversations, she said: *‘*Slavery on Bonaire was so different than it was in other countries, and this has an effect on how the culture currently is’. Marly is of the opinion that Bonairians suffer from intergenerational trauma. Bonaire used to be a penal colony for enslaved people where any form of standing up for yourself or doing something wrong would result in severe punishment. According to Marly, this form of slavery left a mark on the island’s inhabitants in the sense that standing out for whatever reason – although specifically ‘bad’ reasons – is always considered dangerous.

Her idea of intergenerational trauma in a post-slavery society is not new; this line of thought was introduced in academia in the 1930s, popularised by Fanon (1961) and has since grown into a field sometimes referred to as *ptss: post traumatic slave syndrome* (Cross 2024). During my fieldwork it stood out to me that the long-lasting effects of slavery on Bonairian culture was strongly emphasised by some, while never mentioned (or even disputed) by others.

I had an interesting conversation with Jolene, a girl from the Dutch Caribbean who studied in the Netherlands for several years. She came back to the islands to do research on the relationship between the Dutch government and the Public Entity of Bonaire (PEB). She is witty and exceptionally well-versed on how she considers coloniality to affect present-day Bonaire. Jolene shared how she believes slavery has left a deep mark on the island’s inhabitants:

Submissive behaviour and shame are embedded in the Bonairian culture. Remember, it used to be a penal colony for slaves. Mentally they are submissive, because they have always had to be. People on Bonaire have been oppressed so severely that no form of resistance was possible. You still see this today. On Bonaire, you have to keep your mouth shut.

Although she bypasses that small acts of resistance were in fact present on Bonaire (for example in the form of story-telling or music) (Boneriano 2024, 67), several of my participants, too, have pointed out the relative submissiveness of Bonairians, connecting this to the island’s past with slavery. One participant even told me that ‘the importance of humility is even in the national anthem’, referring to the sentence ‘Pueblo humilde I sèmper kontentu’ (*humble people, always content*) (Bèk 2024).

While in Bonaire, I also had the opportunity to speak with Luis, a Bonairian. Luis, too, is of the opinion that Bonaire’s history with slavery is present on the island and affecting everything, from personal relationships to how people act in their jobs. This is relevant for the landfill because, according to him, people who are tasked with solving the problem of the landfill, dare not speak of possible solutions for the problem. He states:

Those traumas from the past, they are still there. The trauma of the slavery, it is still there. So the continuation of that, it is still there. And that brings with it a certain fear, a certain trauma, a certain insecurity. People are still scared to really give their opinion. (Luis, interview, 12 February 2025).

Luis goes on to say that this fear of giving an opinion goes hand in hand with a fear of not doing well and being called out on it. Luis notes: ‘They [administrative workers of Bonaire’s government] do not have the knowledge or know-how. They are scared of putting something on paper and then having to face discussions within the civil service, where others will be like “what you put on paper, it is wrong!”.’ Luis’s notion can be linked back to the lasting effects of colonialism as is posed by Fanon, who argued that colonial regimes leave behind a deep sense of inferiority on the people on whom it was imposed (Fanon 1968). It also brings to mind colonial inhabitation once more, which Ferdinand notes perpetuates feelings of inferiority in the population upon which colonial inhabitation is imposed (Ferdinand 2022, 35). Luis’s story makes visible how colonial inhabitation is present in the lives of Bonairians who feel this way, as their view of themselves as ‘less’ is internalised.

The notion that the intergenerational effects of the island’s past with slavery reverberate into the present, offers an extra viewpoint that explains why people living in Lagun have, for a long time, had a hard time openly disagreeing with the landfill. However, also without taking the island’s past with slavery into consideration, several participants noted that on Bonaire there is a culture of ‘posing’ and looking well. Twelve out of thirty-three participants explicitly mentioned that Bonairians have a difficult relationship with admitting defeat because it is considered shameful, although not everyone links this to the island’s history with slavery. According to these participants, the most embarrassing thing for Bonairians is admitting to not knowing something. As one person put it:

Having those kinds of conversations with someone, I mean, saying that someone is not doing their work well, or even suggesting they may not be doing their work well, that is simply not done. It is very rude. People have a hard time accepting feedback like that. (Rick, interview, 28 January 2025).

Although not all participants explicitly mention this as an aspect of Bonairian culture, most do recognise this behaviour in their local government. After the 2024 fires, the Kingdom Representative took over the government from the Public Entity of Bonaire, stating he did so because the PEB neglected their duties. This was well received by the residents of Lagun, who hoped that this would finally bring a positive change to their situation. However, the PEB instead sued the court over this intervention, claiming the PEB could solve the issues themselves. When I attended this court case, participants I spoke with who collectively agreed that this behaviour from the Public Entity of Bonaire is an ‘ego trip’ and an unwillingness to admit they are not doing their job well. Still, rather than considering the Bonairian governmental action as a form of pure disinterest in the landfill, another way to understand this stance of the local government could be to take into consideration the effects of Bonaire’s colonial history and small scale. Knowing that making a mistake or failing at something is considered ‘wrong’ or ‘shameful’ amongst Bonairians, suggests a different reading on the government’s actions than was offered in 6.1: instead of the government being disinterested in the situation regarding the landfill, perhaps a fear of (acknowledging) failure is what caused the Bonairian government to have acted the way they did.

## 6.3 The imposition of Dutch governmentality

In 6.1 a reading of governmental inaction as a sign of necropolitics and disinterest was offered; in 6.2 this view was countered with the suggestion that perhaps the colonial and small-island effects have led to a fear of failure in the local government that stopped it from functioning well. In this subchapter, a third reading is given, which discusses a lack of skills from the Bonairian government, which is also tied to the small scale of Bonaire as well as to the island’s colonial history.

Oostindie and Veenendaal (2022, 37) have noted how post-colonial governance in the Dutch Caribbean often underestimates the challenges of building institutional capacity in the small-scale societies of the Dutch Caribbean. The Dutch colonial legacy left a form of governance behind that is not directly transferable to Bonaire. In the 1950s, when the partial decolonisation of the Dutch Caribbean took place, the Dutch government assumed that Dutch bureaucratic and institutional models could be simply implemented. This assumption was still present on 10-10-10, when several of the Dutch Caribbean islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba) became special Dutch municipalities. Because the geographical and cultural differences with the islands were not adequately taken into account by the Dutch government, the post-colonial relationship between the Netherlands and the Caribbean Netherlands is marked by unrealistic expectations from the Dutch government and frustration on both sides (Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022; Haringsma 2022).

While the BES-islands are special municipalities of the Netherlands, they are not comparable to any municipality in the European Netherlands. For example, Bonaire is only 288 km and is thus a small island state (Boneriano 2024, 17). However, their responsibilities are far beyond those of ‘normal’ municipalities: the isolated location of Bonaire means that the island needs to have all kinds of vital facilities. Bonaire has an airport, fuel and electricity supply, prison, fire brigade, drinking water provision, and a telecommunications network. Because they do not belong to a province, the municipality of Bonaire is responsible for all these facilities – a task that in the Netherlands belongs to the provincial governments or even the Dutch National Government (Bijleveld-Schouten 2009; Oostindie and Veenendaal 2022, 129; Thodé et al. 2023, 67). Being only a small island, with a small population, the island has notorious difficulty with finding people fit for the right functions to keep all those facilities up and running properly (UNEP 2014, 7-8; Singh et al. 2023, 2).

Participants mention (often angrily) that the mismanagement of the landfill stems from a lack of knowledge on how to safely manage a landfill. This knowledge gap that stood at the cradle of the landfill is often referred to as being one of the main causes for the disastrousness of it. Two participants explained to me that they had found that personnel of Selibon does not receive practical instructions on how to manage the landfill. They ascribe this to the lack of employees of Selibon who have the proper know-how of how to work the landfill.

One of the core issues for the absence of the necessary instruction, is the lack of locally available expertise and education. Several participants mentioned that personnel at Selibon often do not receive practical training or instruction on how to manage the landfill safely, not due to negligence, but rather because of an absence of knowledge and capacity for education on the island itself. The limited access to education and lack of experts on Bonaire means that specialised training in environmental management or public health is not very accessible.   
 Bonaire’s small population further limits the availability of qualified personnel. Jolene, the political researcher, once said: ‘all people who have an havo/vwo education [i.e. are higher educated] are shipped to the Netherlands’. Brain drain, combined with the relatively small population of the island, are important reasons as to why finding people with knowledge of how to safely manage a landfill is difficult.

That there is a lack of know-how on how to safely manage a landfill is also confirmed by Luis. Luis, too, states that this should not be blamed on the PEB, although his arguments for this differ from the others. Luis told me that Bonaire has institutions that are forced to adhere to Dutch standards, but without the human resources, infrastructural foundations, or historical context to support them effectively. He explicitly refers to this as Dutch neocoloniality. Luis is angry at the high expectations and lack of help coming from the Dutch government. His analysis of an imposed Dutch knowledge system on Bonaire shows colonial inhabitation at work: the colonial way of inhabiting the island was imposed – preferring Eurocentric ways of knowing – without taking its effects into account.

This sense of imposed governance shows the structural dependency of Bonaire on the Netherlands and illustrates the importance of taking the colonial past into account when discussing how problems regarding the landfill could have arisen. While the Dutch government continues to shape the institutional and regulatory frameworks on the island, it often does so without sufficiently investing in the capacity building required to implement these frameworks. This paradox of high expectations coupled with low support creates a *governing void*, meaning that the local government is held responsible for performance but lacks the right tools and know-how to act (Mair 2013). Moreover, this dependency structure makes it difficult to assign clear accountability: when things go wrong, such as in the case of the landfill, the Dutch government can seemingly escape responsibility by pointing to Bonaire's autonomy on the matter of waste (Bijleveld-Schouten 2009). However, because the BEP can rightfully argue they lack the tools, knowledge and money to adequately address the problem, they, too, can pretend to not *really* be responsible for the issues regarding the landfill. This dynamic reproduces a form of colonial paternalism in which the island is expected to ‘grow up’ and take responsibility, but it needs help of its former coloniser to do so. The result is a complex situation, in which both parties seem to feel as if they are not really responsible for the situation, resulting in neglect of the landfill and the lives of the people living with it. Instead of viewing this as an isolated policy failure, this should be seen as part of a broader pattern in which the colonial legacy continues to shape the limitations of governance on Bonaire. This third reading, therefore, reframes the problem as bad governance as a consequence of structurally constrained governance within a neocolonial framework.

## 6.4 Conclusion of the different readings

The different readings in this chapter show that Bonaire is still struggling with the effects of its colonial past. Colonial inhabitation is clearly visible, in three different ways. In 6.1 it is made apparent that certain groups of people and certain ways of knowing are considered less valuable than others. In 6.2 it becomes clear that although colonial inhabitation started long ago, the effects are still felt today: both in the continued fear of repercussions as well as in the internalised feeling of inferiority. In 6.3, colonial inhabitation is shown to be enacted by the imposition of Dutch government systems on the island without taking its effects or complications into account.

# Conclusion

Inhabitants of Lagun are affected by the landfill in multiple ways. The land they live on has been rendered disposable, allowing degradation of the environment to take place. This form of colonial inhabitation of their environment has led to slow violence. Lagun becomes a landscape that is permeated by slow violence because the different forms of toxicity that have seeped (and are continuing to seep) into the environment are delayed forms of destruction across time and space. It is a delayed destruction across space, as the landscape loses its wildlife and fresh water. It is a delayed destruction across time, as there is no telling when the toxicity that has leaked into the environment will become a thing of the past. As the different forms of contamination are incredibly difficult and expensive to clean up, a reversal of the violence done becomes near-impossible.

The violence in Lagun is also a slow violence because it is happening ‘out of sight’ in two distinct ways. First, it takes place on Bonaire’s rugged eastern coast; the part of the island not appealing to tourists, and a place where originally only a few Afro-Caribbean families lived. This makes it easier to ignore for the local government – and shows the marginalisation of these people. Second, the violence can be considered ‘out of sight’ because it is taking place in the Caribbean. The geographical location of the landfill has rendered it invisible. The combination of the geographical location with Bonaire being a former colony results in the people on Bonaire being treated as second-rate citizens by the Dutch government. People are turned into what Ferdinand dubs ‘Negroes’, using the term not as related to skin colour, but as a ‘category of exploited beings’ (Ferdinand 2022, 45). This ‘out-of-sightedness’ thus leads to a form of marginalisation.

One of the goals of this research was to explore if and/or how Ferdinand’s framework for the (French) Caribbean can be a useful framework for the Dutch Caribbean as well. The empirical chapters show that the double fracture is a useful lens through which to understand the problems regarding the landfill; the empirical data indeed shows that Bonaire’s colonial past and the island’s present issues with the landfill are connected with each other. The fact that there is indeed a double fracture on Bonaire becomes evident from the way that inhabitants of Lagun, as well as both Bonairian and Dutch politicians, look at the issues created by the landfill. In the stories that participants of Lagun share about the impact of the landfill, although the government is often mentioned and blamed, Bonaire’s colonial history is hardly ever considered an issue that is relevant in the context of the landfill. This shows an odd discrepancy of how most people – although angry at a political system that is clearly not working – do not relate this to the effect that the island’s colonial history has on the present.

Not being aware of the double fracture on Bonaire goes both ways: it seems as if though the Public Entity of Bonaire looks at the problems regarding the landfill as almost unaware of the disastrous environmental impact the landfill has on the environment and solely focusses on the colonial governmentality imposed on them, as was made evident by their response to the Kingdom Representative who took over management of the landfill after the fire in November 2024. Following Ferdinand’s notion and bringing social and environmental issues together thus seems relevant in the context of the landfill in Lagun, as it can be a start for both parties to approach the issues differently. That being said; the double fracture is not so much a practical concept to be used, as it is an overarching theme that can act as a reminder to constantly bring environmental and social issues together.

Although the double fracture is a useful framework that turned out to be directly applicable in this research, a critical reading of the empirical chapters also shows that Ferdinand’s notion of colonial inhabitation – although already quite relevant – is not yet *directly* applicable to the Dutch Caribbean. Based upon my research I have identified several points of Ferdinand’s concept of colonial inhabitation that I suggest have to be expanded to be better applicable to the Dutch Caribbean context.

Ferdinand (2022, 176) rightfully argues that coloniality is a fundamental part of colonial inhabitation. However, he does not make concrete certain aspects of coloniality; he mainly uses metaphors in his work. For this reason, I consider it useful to turn to Sultana (2022) who explicitly states that coloniality goes hand in hand with epistemic violence. Connecting this term to Ferdinand’s framework allows it to move beyond the metaphorical and into the practical. That this is useful was made clear in different readings of slow violence – something that Ferdinand himself considers part of colonial inhabitation – where understanding the relevance of epistemic violence as undergirding slow violence was shown.

The second fundamental idea underlying Ferdinand’s concept of colonial inhabitation is ‘the commercial exploitation of the land. [..] extracting products for the purposes of enrichment’ (Ferdinand 2022, 28). It is a way of being on the land where humans, non-humans, and even entire landscapes are exploited and reduced to resources in an extractive system of domination (ibid., 35). Although it makes sense that Ferdinand chose for this definition of colonial inhabitation in the context of the French Caribbean islands, where large-scale cash crop plantations dominated the landscape, I disagree with Ferdinand’s notion of equating colonial inhabitation solely with exploitation. He describes colonial inhabitation as a way of being on Earth that generates economic profit through the destruction of the Earth (Ferdinand 2022, 109, 123). Not yet incorporated in his thesis are the effects of waste or the effects of land that is rendered meaningless and made into a ruin in the process, *without* economic gain emerging from it. This is a gap in his framework, as former colonies are not only sites of extraction; they are also used as dumping grounds. Think of the mountains of dumped textiles in the Atacama desert of Chile (Jaegher 2024) or the toxic waste dumped in countries along the Gulf of Guinea (Okafor-Yarwood and Adewumi 2020). Understanding colonial inhabitation exclusively as extraction overlooks the fact that dumping is also a way of inhabiting the earth that can lead to destruction.

Incorporating Liboiron’s (2021) notion of ‘pollution as colonialism’ in colonial inhabitation helps build the argument that *any* form of degradation of the landscape – including dumping of waste – should be explicitely included in the tangible forms in which colonial inhabitation can be witnessed. I thus suggest complementing colonial inhabitation with Liboiron’s idea. Considering the widespread issues with waste in the wider Caribbean and former colonies in general, this extension of Ferdinand’s concept may not only allow it to become more relevant for the Dutch Caribbean, but make it more relevant for other Caribbean islands and former colonies as well.

Another point of colonial inhabitation that I think could benefit from a slight alteration regards the way Ferdinand relates to the non-human world. In Ferdinand’s definition of colonial inhabitation, he argues that everything in the environment, whether human or non-human, is oppressed by the need for exploitation from that environment and shaped to the wishes of the proverbial master (Ferdinand 2022, 109). In the framing of this argument, he himself succumbs to the idea of nature as a passive object over which can be ruled. When looking at landfills that lead to ruined landscapes, the toxic elements leaching into the environment are not consequences of humans trying to dominate that specific environment for profit (Riquelme, Méndez, and Smith 2016; Husaini et al. 2024). Instead, it is an unforeseen side-effect of waste materials that interact with each other and eventually ‘bite back’ (Reno 2015, 565). Reno (2015, 566) writes: ‘Waste is always relational and not only because someone elected to dispose of it. It is also embedded in further relations with life forms and forms of life implicated in its vital materiality’. For all the attention Ferdinand gives to bringing awareness to how colonial inhabitation has affected the non-human, he heeds no attention to the ways in which the non-human world interacts with and influences the human and non-human world.

Based on Reno (2015), who brings to attention the materiality of waste, I suggest it is necessary to nuance Ferdinand’s notion of colonial inhabitation as something that completely dominates the environment by mastery over it. By being aware of this, the reduction of the non-human world as passive can be challenged and the agency of the non-human is acknowledged. Having suggested an enrichment of colonial inhabitation, I do consider it a useful lens through which to understand the problems facing the landfill in Lagun as it helps better position and thus understand the experiences of the inhabitants of Lagun.

In this thesis I have shown that I agree with Ferdinand’s notion of colonial inhabitation as lying at the root of the double fracture. A decolonial ecology is ‘a matter of challenging the colonial ways of inhabiting the Earth and living together’ (Ferdinand 2022, 175). Having made the concept of colonial inhabitation more fitting for Bonaire and use it to understand the lived experiences of inhabitants of Lagun, I hope I have offered a roadmap that indicates some of the first steps towards a decolonial ecology that can be taken.

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# Appendix 1 – table with participants

*Removed for privacy reasons*

# Appendix 2 – open-ended questions

*Removed for privacy reasons*

1. A small but notable exception to this is the work of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, which has committed itself to conducting scientific research on former Dutch colonial territories, including the Caribbean Netherlands. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)