

Ref. <https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl/2022/06/05/column-bericht-uit-sint-eustatius-12/>

Last week my fellow columnist from Bonaire wrote about the permit policy or lack thereof.

It was nice that Mrs. Van Esch of the Dutch Parliament asked questions about the illegal sand suppletion at the Chogogo resort on Bonaire. It is unfortunate that she did not immediately include the practices at the resort under construction on St. Eustatius in her questioning.

The Minister's response was not very hopeful. Undoubtedly it is based on what the island administration has communicated, namely that the holes in the permit have been repaired so the sand suppletion is lawful.

Since Statia was not included in the question, I would like to suggest that the members of the Kingdom Relations Committee also ask questions about the course of events on Statia with regard to the construction of a 5-star resort.

There has not been a single information evening at which the Statian population has been informed about the construction of the resort in its current form. There have been two townhall meetings but that information was from a different investor, concerned a smaller project on an adjacent piece of land. Other documents, for example about the current project, could not be produced.

In anticipation of any consent or permit, the clearing of a very large plot of land was energetically started. No measures were taken to limit the nuisance of dust for adjacent houses.

Subsequently, work began on preparing the land for construction, again with a great deal of dust pollution, and construction began. All this without a permit and also without traceable consultation with the Stenapa nature organization.

Only after construction had reached an advanced stage did vaguely described applications for building permits appear. Meanwhile, the development of the resort has almost reached the final stage. Then, by chance, it is discovered that paths from the resort to the sea, which is somewhat lower, have been shoveled away. On viewing via Google Earth, it is clear to see that the paths have been widened. Furthermore, in the publications of the Executive Council, there has been a request for a permit for a Beach Bar. There is no beach there at all!

Since November 2021, I have been trying to gain insight into opinions granted by the mentioned nature organization and building permits granted. It appears that, for the time being, these simply do not exist. If I get a response at all, the tone is often along the lines of "there is no need to account to you at all; after all, you are not the Lower House".

No, of course I am not a member of the Lower House. But I am a concerned and involved resident of the island that is also close to my heart. Previously, another concerned and worried Statian expressed his concerns (recently this Statian was referred to by State Secretary Van Huffelen in a parliamentary letter as one J.M. te S.)

For years he too has very regularly reported in his letters to the House of Representatives about the imperfections in the construction of the resort by a financially very wealthy investor. It is such a pity that this type of project is established without any input from the population and that all the rules are trampled on.

I do not want to confuse the reader by naming all kinds of files next to each other but I do want to point out to the reader that this is not just a construction project. In almost all cases the government commissioner does her own way (or the way of The Hague), using the fact that residents are not heard and the Island Council is not informed.

You could read it as a joke when I draw the comparison with the village of Asterix and Obelix in the otherwise Roman occupied Gaul (France). This village with its two heroes repeatedly leads the occupiers astray, aided by an invincible magic potion. In the real world I do see a proud island (part of the country of the Netherlands) that would like to govern its island affairs itself but where The Hague just keeps on pushing its own way without any opposition or participation of the inhabitants or the Island Council. Unheard of that these practices are also part of "our civilized Netherlands".

For the record, I note that I am not explicitly for or against this project. I do think that also with very wealthy investors the normal rules and procedures should be observed. In my personal opinion the wealthy tourist (American or European) will be attracted by this investment and the native Statian will be pushed further away from his or her own island. A similar development was also recently brought to your attention on Bonaire. These (future) scenarios remain underexposed. In other words: the Statian people will certainly not benefit from these developments, rather they will be harmed.