

Dear chairman and members of the House of Representatives' Committee on Kingdom Relations,

Herman Finkers once said: "*The traffic light is red, the traffic light is green: there is always something to do in Almelo*". Apparently he had never been on St. Eustatius before. There's not even a traffic light here (not really necessary either, by the way). And judging from what you see on the outside of everyday life, indeed little seems to happen.

If you then realize that St. Eustatius is in transition from a status of "*administrative neglect*" to one of "*administrative maturity*", you would expect that there is a lot to do.

The above observation is not only mine, but I also hear it at school, in the shops, on the street, etc. Sometimes the observation is interpreted in a positive way: after all, few people seem to long for the time when the democratically elected island government did exist but did not function at all. Now there is at least "rest in the tent".

More generally, I sense a sense of resignation: it is no different, the leadership of the island lies with the governor who is on the lead of the Secretary of State in The Hague. Above all, they listen to advisors from the European Netherlands who, without exception, look at the island with their own, and therefore too limited, frame of reference. Perhaps there is talk of a limited circle of Stadians, but there is absolutely no question of a wide-ranging social discussion in the form of townhall meetings that were promised at the time.

No plan or progress on any subject escapes the seclusion of the governor, his observer and the small circle of advisors around them. If a dignitary comes from the European Netherlands, he or she is invariably photographed in a pose in which an infrastructural project is set in motion: I believe that the road renovation project has already had such a "starting shot" about three times, without a significant follow-up to date.

Note: The hurricane season is once again approaching. I hope that all the important issues in this context have indeed been completed. In particular, I am now referring to the laying of all the cabling underground. I have seen a great deal of activity with regard to this project, but did it go according to plan? I do not know. This project, too, does not have a plan that has been made public.

Note: Although I do not hear much about it at the moment, the decision to be taken in the autumn on whether or not to hold local elections will again be a source of fire. Especially if the decision turns out to be negative. The latter is to be expected if you do not develop activities to meet the set requirements. If someone is already turning these election buttons, it will be done quite invisibly.

It may be too short a course, but when someone notices that we have ended up with a situation of administrative neglect in a velvet-clad dictatorship in The Hague, I would think: '*this summary may be a caricature of reality, but it is one that is not very far from it*'. And the street signs, the refurbished walls of the cemeteries, sports facilities, etc. are the proverbial "bread and games" for the people.

It's easy to hear the argument that the local Stadian wouldn't be able to run an adult island government. This could of course be the case as a snapshot made in the past, but is it simply "taking over" the right way? Isn't the organization of an island wide learning process so much more fruitful and sustainable?

Of course, I do not rule out the possibility that my gaze is (too) limited; perhaps good things will also happen. But I dare to say that when I see little improvement around me (while I'm still quite attentive and try to keep an eye on the site of the local government, and especially try to understand!), this also applies to an important part of the ordinary Stadians.

This is not my first signal that I give you about the developments on St. Eustatius since February 2018. I have tried to organize the developments as I have experienced them to date and I would like to share this "homework" with you. I have put all this together and provided personal reviews on the website www.statianews.info (the site opens in English; in the upper right corner the NL flag gives access to the NL-language part of the site).

In this context I have also taken note of the report of the University of Groningen that was drawn up on your behalf and on the basis of which a vision must emerge as to how to deal with the Caribbean part of the Kingdom in general, and with St. Eustatius in particular, should be dealt with. I consider the website to be a "document in development": if an appealing point comes to my attention, I will be happy to include it in it.

It will be my pleasure to talk to you again next time.

Kind regards,

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