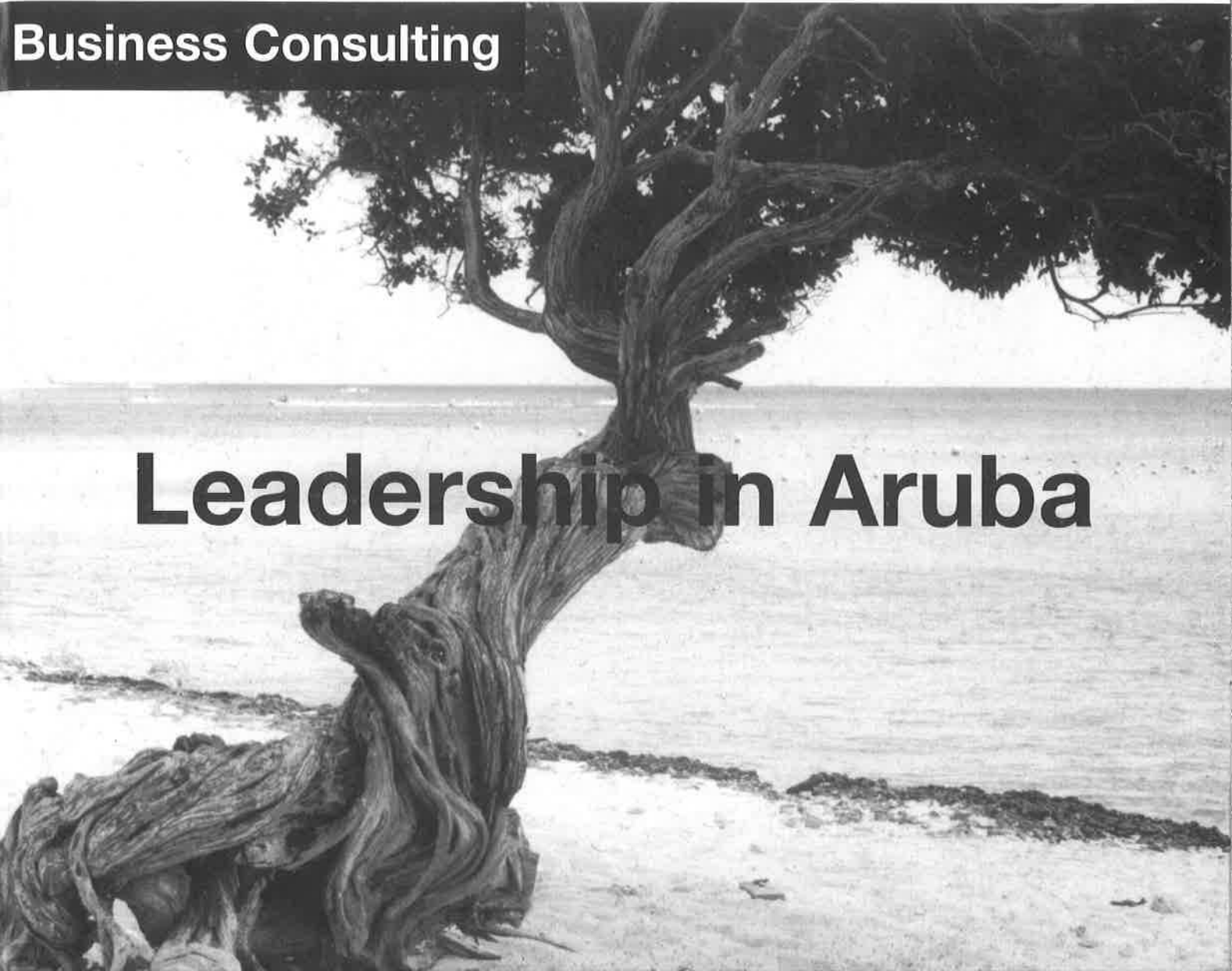




ARTHURANDERSEN

**Business Consulting**

# Leadership in Aruba



**Arthur Andersen Business Consulting**

Leadership in Aruba

Oranjestad, February 2000

*the secret of Aruba's economic success*

## **Foreword**

In 1999 I conducted a study on leadership in Curaçao. Soon after concluding this study I became curious about leadership in Aruba. This curiosity was induced by a number of developments. I wanted to understand the secret of Aruba's economic success. I also wanted to understand a recent development in Aruba: the difficult formation of the last government coalition as a result of heavy extra parliamentary actions from the opposition party, labor unions, environmental groups and a Catholic priest. Also adding to this development was the emergence of a young new leader in one of the big parties in Aruba. All this indicated that Aruba was going through a stage of transition. In this study I wanted to explore the change drivers in Aruba, what pressures these put on the island, and, last but not least, where was Aruba heading towards.

Aruba has developed a strong economy based on the tourism industry. This being the result of successful government policy supported by the private sector. The aforementioned policy started to be implemented in the late eighties when the oil refinery on the island was shut down, leading the island to one of the biggest economic depressions in its history. The present economic growth has led to other less pleasant issues. One of the most important is the population growth resulting from the import of human capital. Despite growing prosperity, there is an increasing feeling of dissatisfaction in significant segments of the population.

In the late eighties Aruba was faced with an urgent need for change. The island succeeded in creating a shared vision. According to this vision, Aruba was to become a world class tourist destination. The Aruban leaders executed this vision in an aggressive integrated manner and have the results to show for it. In consequence, Aruba is at a stage where there seems to be no real need for change. As a result, politicians spend much time in senseless debates, ignoring the fact that important challenges lay ahead that Aruba will need to face. Aruba needs to improve the flexibility of its economy by making its government more effective and efficient. This must be achieved by implementing a privatization program. Privatization is especially required in the telecommunication sector, in order to ensure that Aruba will be able to offer high quality telecommunication services at the best price. This is a necessary condition to create the new economy.

*implementing a privatization program*

Two of the questions I wanted this study to provide an answer for were: How will Aruban leadership handle these issues? And: How will Aruba reinvent itself? To answer these questions Arthur Andersen consultants, Dangelo Stroop, Curt Brunings, Zuleika Lourens, Monique Raphaëla, Angela Guiamo and Janette Davelaar employed a structured questionnaire to interview twenty-five citizens of Aruba. The criteria used in selecting these individuals required each of them to either hold a position of leadership, or to have access to those in leadership positions. These interviews were analyzed and the results are presented in this book. In this study I did not compare Aruban leaders with leaders in other communities. I plan to conduct such a study later this year. More information on this leadership program is available on our website: [www.cura.net/arthurandersen](http://www.cura.net/arthurandersen).

This study is not only a follow up on the study on leadership in Curaçao, but it is a continuation of the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study as well. In the latter, I presented a model for change in the Caribbean. The study on leadership is to some extent also a validation of this theory. Therefore I will quote the "2020" study where the analysis of the interviews support the theory. For clearer presentation these quotes will appear in a "text box".

*2020: Creating our Caribbean Future*

This study is part of the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future". In my opinion, Aruba is equipped to play the role of the front runner in creating this future. This is an invitation to the people of Aruba to assume this role. This can be done by becoming more involved in affairs related to the Caribbean.

Miguel P. Goede

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## **1 Introductory conclusions**

In Aruba, people are very optimistic about the future of the island and the development of its leadership. Arubans are well aware of their achievements. This gives them the confidence that they will succeed in the new economy. In general, Arubans prefer to keep things simple. When facing an issue, the problem is only briefly discussed while more time is spent looking at the options and reaching a decision. Leadership in Aruba tends to be authoritarian, meaning that there is room for improvement in the area of communication. On the other hand, women have broken through the glass ceiling. Many are making careers for themselves in politics and in the corporate world. They have accomplished a great deal. However, this does not mean that they do not face challenges. Also the youth plays a role in the leadership of Aruba. Much is expected from them based on their computer literacy and their outward view. The youth is regarded as much more global oriented and flexible.

## **2 The definition of leadership**

### *definition of leadership*

Based on the interviews, the following general definition of leadership was constructed:

Leadership has certain characteristics (in no particular order):

- A vision for the future
- The ability to direct an organization or a group and motivate its people
- The ability to manage, ensuring that operations are as efficient as possible
- The ability to inspire confidence.

### *the essence of leadership has to do with guiding and influencing (or, the attempt to influence) people*

A leader is a person who has the capacity to motivate and move a group of people towards a desired and shared goal. The decision makers and the group collectively formulate the goal of the group. A gradual process guides the realization of this goal. Furthermore, the leader adequately applies the tools and resources available to realize the objective. The essence of leadership has to do with guiding and influencing (or, the attempt to influence) people.

There is an interrelationship between a leader and his or her followers. A leader is a person who has the rational and emotional capacity to guide a group towards a desired goal. A leader is emotional and emphatic towards the group he or she guides. Furthermore, a leader is able to minimize the distance that may exist between him or her and the group. A leader is open to receive—not only constructive, but also destructive—feedback from the group, as well as information regarding how others perceive him or her as a leader. Another characteristic of a leader is the direct and straightforward approach he or she has towards the group he or she leads.

It is essential to provide the members of a group with all the tools necessary, thus aiding them in their attempt to become self-directive and self-proficient as a team. A leader does not incessantly direct a group into achieving goals, but provides knowledge and know-how in order to be able to let go in a further stage. In conclusion, it can be said that a leader is someone who guides the process by helping people (in a team) help themselves.

### *conclusion*

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the essence of leadership is: giving direction to a group through a vision and a mission, in addition to giving guidance to the members of that group through coaching.

There is a high consistency in the definitions of leadership given by the interviewees. The definitions are also short and practical.

Another conclusion is that Arubans view society as structured into leaders and followers. They do not recognize leaders as ordinary citizens; therefore, they do not generally believe that everybody has the potential to become a leader.

The final conclusion in this chapter is that political leadership dominates the perception of leadership in Aruba. In other words, people realize that there are



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different sectors, each having their own leadership. But it is the political leadership that sets the tune. As a result, if people feel good about the political leadership they will be positive about leadership in general, regardless of the performance of other leaders.

### **3 The justification for leadership**

How do the interviewees justify that some people are leaders while others are not?

#### **Decision making**

*the need for decision making*

The first argument justifying the demand for leadership is the need for decision making.

In society or in a group of human beings working together, choices must be made. To create order and structure the options need to be limited. This is done by the leader. Another aspect is that each human being has a different alternative behavioral option. The leader influences the choices people make. He does so by communicating a vision, values and objectives.

#### **Human beings need leaders**

*people need direction and coaching*

The second argument is that leadership is necessary because people need to be motivated and guided: people need direction and coaching. If you have a group of people that is not guided by a leader, everybody will go off in a different direction. The leader should move the people towards one goal, one objective, the same thoughts or in a certain direction.

According to this argument, leadership is important in order to:

1. Have a shared vision: it is essential for the leader to have a vision, otherwise he or she will not be able to reach the followers and convince them to work together towards achieving the goal simply because the objective is not clear.
2. Achieve (individual or) the group's objectives together with the followers by providing guidance.

It is important to have leadership to provide a vision and a mission so that the objectives of an organization can be achieved and to delegate tasks within the organization. Leadership is also important to be able to evaluate followers and to give them guidance in areas needed.

#### **Leadership and communication**

*need to communicate*

The third justification for leadership is communication. One of the most important things that leadership wants to accomplish is a specific goal. A leader cannot reach goals by himself or herself because he or she is interdependent on the followers. In order to get everybody moving in the same direction, the leader needs to communicate and convince all involved; else he or she will not reach his or her target in the most effective and efficient way.

### **Leadership and emancipation**

*the emancipation of the followers*

The next justification for leadership is the emancipation of the followers. Leadership is a form of guidance helping people to attain a certain goal. A leader motivates people to take action in order to reach a (collective) goal. The issue is to convince followers which goal to pursue before they decide what course of action they should follow in order to achieve that goal.

### **Organizations need leaders**

*organizations justify leadership*

Organizations justify leadership. Without effective leaders, companies will deteriorate and die:

- Because of the lack of a clear shared vision organizations will eventually lose market share.
- Organizations will be unable to motivate employees and consequently, they will not be able to sell or administrate.
- Organizations need to be managed and to keep on improving to prevent them from becoming inefficient, what will lead to incompetence.
- Leaders will be swiftly traded if they fail to inspire trust in their followers.

*"The presence of leadership is important, since it is the leader who holds the major task of defining the goal and working at motivating the group towards realizing that goal. The leader is important and indispensable in aligning all the heads in one direction. This, however, not at all costs, but through a joint effort." (Jocelyn Daris)*

### **Lack of leadership leads to chaos**

*what would happen if we had no leadership?*

The last justification for leadership is given by answering the question: What would happen if we had no leadership?

Leadership is important because without it, it would be difficult to accomplish objectives and people would be divided. Leadership is not only having your own way. It is also considering the opinions of others: listening to find out what they want to achieve, what ideas they have and to see what can actually be achieved. All this information is needed to arrive at a certain point. So basically, leadership is important to bring all those elements and resources together that have been gathered from other people and to try to lead them into achieving the desired goal.

*"Leadership is necessary because there are people who need to be motivated and guided. So, if a group of people does not have the guidance of a leader, most likely everyone will be going off in a different direction. The role of the leader is to move the people towards one goal, one objective, the same thoughts or a certain direction." (Myrna Jansen)*

*conclusion*

**Conclusion**

The main justification for leadership in Aruba is that decisions need to be made. Groups need to reach decisions and they do so guided by their leaders. This implies that organizations need leaders to survive. The leader needs to facilitate communication in the organization and to empower people.

#### **4 The social structures on Aruba**

*the social structures in Aruba*

The social structures in Aruba that influence the kind of leadership found on the island will be described in this chapter. It is within these structures that people (leaders and followers) operate, unless they decide to continually change the structure or, unless it is changed by influences from outside, for example, from abroad.

##### **Division**

*more collaborative leadership*

Some people believe that they are the leaders of the community. Others think that Aruba needs more people with leadership skills. They believe that the island faces many challenges on different levels, for example on political and economical levels, with the labor unions, etc. This is the result of the fact that the leaders of several groups (politicians, the private sector, the Church) look at problems from different angles. This is why Aruba needs more collaborative leadership to lead the island. The need for leaders with more leadership skills and positive characteristics to guide and lead Aruba is evident.

Some are of the opinion that many leaders talk too much, and that Aruba is lacking a common vision for the island as a whole. At present, everyone has his own vision and his own objectives, but there is no common vision. This does not promote swift decision making, for instance, in the Parliament .

On the other hand, there is the conviction that if the people of Aruba had been focusing in the same direction; this would certainly have resulted in swifter decision making processes. This is viewed as an important condition to succeed in the much more competitive environment Aruba now has to survive in. The environment has become more competitive due to the fact that other destinations have improved their tourist product.

##### **Centralized**

*great potential*

There is a great potential for leadership development that has not yet been adequately explored and therefore has also not yet been developed. Aruban leadership has a strong tendency towards centralization and concentration. As a result, leadership is exerted by a small group. Some comment that this might also have negative consequences. There is the criticism that leaders, especially those in the higher strata of authority in Aruba, do not delegate leadership to youngsters who show adequate potential for leadership. They consciously or unconsciously do not make effective use of the younger (potential) leaders, this contributes to lost opportunities for the development of leadership in Aruba and therefore for the progress of Aruba.

### Nepotism

Nepotism<sup>1</sup>, although it has diminished in the last ten years, still plays a very important role on Aruba. Especially within government agencies and state owned companies. Politicians exert their political power to get people from their support group appointed and to influence these people's salaries for the better. Nepotism also comes into play when outsourcing activities. Companies with ties to the 'right' political parties enjoy privileges. The Aruban government is aware that this is a practice that does not benefit the general interest and has therefore issued the so-called "Calidat" (quality) policy. The main objective of this policy is to ensure good governance.

**"Leadership in Aruba is based on doing things for "my own group". In other words, we are doing things in our own interest. We are doing things to get more votes, exposure and to stay in power. It is the way of doing politics and achieving personal objectives, and nothing else". (Miriam Dabian)**

Quality has become an issue in the whole society. This is the result of the work of the Aruba Quality Foundation that for the last five years ran extensive programs in all sectors of the community. In general, service on Aruba—as compared to that of other nations—is of a very good standard. Although several organizations are implementing quality programs, the quality movement is still in the awareness stage. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the quality of service to rise to an even higher standard.

*All companies that do not operate in a full competitive international market employ individuals from social networks. Employing someone is giving someone protection. The point I want to make here is that employing someone in this society is more than hiring labor. This point is best illustrated when someone gets fired. Not only has such a person lost his job, but he has also lost protection and is alone and very insecure. This means a lot of pain for the individuals involved. The point is that having a job is part of a strategy to survive as a person that can be respected by others.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

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<sup>1</sup> Nepotism is when people in management positions help their relatives and friends by using unfair practices and by misusing organization resources in the process.

*A job is a system of protection as a strategy to reduce anxiety in a society where the labor market does not function according to the textbooks. The fear of "going out there" and looking for a job means mobilizing your network, and if not successful, being without shelter or having to be absorbed by another social network. Technical skills are not the primary concern of individuals when faced with the potential loss of their jobs. When individuals do not succeed on the local labor market they have to move abroad, mainly to the Netherlands.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

The situation in Aruba supports the general theory as presented in the "2020" study. Aruba has found a way to obey rules of the market economy where it must and serve social networks where it can. Possibilities to serve social networks are becoming less as a consequence of globalization. But up until now Aruba has gotten away with it.

### **Patriarchal structure**

*men play a more dominant role*

The family bond is very important to the people of Aruba. Families are generally run by men. Aruba is a society in which men play a more dominant role than women do. Family traditions are passed down from father to son. This can clearly be seen in business and politics. In both these sectors we see successful fathers being succeeded by their sons or nephews. Some of these examples are the Eman family of Prime-Minister Henny Eman and the family of Betico Croes. After his death, several of his children started their political career. In the business sector, the Mansur family is a classical example.

*"In both the political and private sectors, leaders are well educated. Very often they are natives from well-known (large) families. As we popularly say: families who traditionally have great experience in politics or business". ( )*

### **The generation gap**

*Aruba is successful in involving the next generation*

Aruba is successful in involving the next generation. In business as well as in politics leaders tend to prepare their successors. The best illustration is how the political party of Prime-Minister Eman prepared Minister Tico Croes for the leadership of the AVP-party. In business, the next generation is being involved in the business very early on in its career and it will take over when it is ready for the task. More and more young people are getting into managerial positions. This is also the case in the government sector where young people hold management positions in

several departments. So both the private and government sectors are aware of the importance of young people. If this trend continues, there will be a stream of young people getting into managerial positions, what will bring about innovations. Everyone agrees that this is the desired direction for Aruba. But not everybody concurs that this is what is happening. This is illustrated in the following quote:

*"Some individuals get the opportunity to become leaders. However, once in this position of authority, many assume that they are fully qualified from that point on and do not need to acquire any additional knowledge through study. In addition, many also consider themselves superior to their followers because of their elevated status. Furthermore, on the one hand, some of the more senior leaders do not readily welcome new and innovative ideas from the younger generation. Consequently, this hinders the development of society and of organizations, and eliminates opportunities for the next generation to learn and to grow." ( )*

### **The educational system**

*education*

The current, and the potential leaders, are products of their education. Many of these leaders are shaped abroad for a significant part of their professional training. Leadership on Aruba is thus influenced by the developments in Europe, in particular the Netherlands, the United States of America and Latin America. One of the positive effects of this is that the leadership is outward looking. So it is wise to keep this aspect of the educational system.

*outward looking*

### **Gender**

*women have broken through the glass ceiling*

As mentioned previously, Aruba is a male dominated society. This does not mean that there are no women in positions of leadership. On the contrary, there are successful women in the public and private sectors who have broken through the glass ceiling. Yet these women are still considered the exception. Nowadays many women hold top management functions; they are leaders in all kinds of organizations. In the past only men use to occupy these top functions.

*"Female leaders have to cope with the negative aspects of leadership in Aruba. Aruba can be considered a male dominated island. Women should not compromise their principles to obtain respect as a leader. Female ministers do not have an easy political leadership career; therefore, it is important for them to commence the career-path of leadership on a solid foundation." ( )*



### Personal growth and attitudes

*free of fear and guilt*

The Aruban individual is free of fear and guilt. This makes him very action oriented. The people of Aruba are entrepreneurs; they are optimistic. The tendency is to take action and not to spend too much time on philosophical reflections. By no means does this imply that Arubans act without taking all aspects into due consideration. The people in Aruba act upon the decisions they make. This attitude was reinforced by Aruba's successful liberation, through the acquisition of a separate status (*a Status Aparte*), and through economic rebirth after the economic crisis of the late eighties.

### Social and economical development

*an aggressive government economic policy*

After going through a deep economic recession due to the closing of the oil refinery in the late eighties, Aruba bounced back. The up-living of the economy was the result of an aggressive government economic policy focused on developing the tourist industry. This has been a major success. Aruba has known an unprecedented economic growth that resulted in zero unemployment and the import of human capital. The side effect of this success is that there seems to be no need for change in Aruba. Leaders in Aruba are talking about slowing down the rate of economic growth because the public opinion is opposed to the further import of human capital. Many on the island are concerned about Aruba's national identity.

### The structure of government

*the ability to make deals*

Aruba is a self-governed island within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This separate status was obtained after more than thirty years of political struggle. This has had two effects: (1) it was the liberation of Aruba from oppression (from Curaçao), which gave Arubans a sense of national identity. From this, self-esteem developed and the population was filled with energy to build the Aruban nation and economy. (2) It has also lead to a simple government structure, which allows for rapid decision making. This means that the government can react rapidly to economic opportunities.

But Aruba is still governed by a coalition government. As a result, political tension still resides within the government, what obstructs swift optimal as well as sub-optimal decision making processes.

This means that the political leaders have a relatively united nation and an efficient political structure at their disposal, making it possible to exhibit political leadership. In this context, the most important skill that a political leader must possess is the ability to make deals with the coalition partner and not frustrate the opposition parties. If the opposition is frustrated this leads to extra parliamentary protests disturbing the tranquility on the island, which, in the long run, is not beneficial to the island's economy, and therefore, not beneficial for economic development in

general. Over the last two years, on a number of occasions, the opposition took to the streets in protest.

### **Multicultural**

*"Aruba is the home of different cultures among others the Dutch with their commercial attitude and the Latin American influences... The courtesy and respect from Indian culture." (Yolanda Richardson)*

Aruba is a multicultural society. This is the result of Dutch colonization; although the Dutch do not seem to play a very dominant role in Aruba's economic and social life. It is also the consequence of the coming of the oil refinery to the island at the beginning of the twentieth century. This brought not only Americans to the island but also colored people from other islands in the Caribbean. This group was concentrated in San Nicolaas around the refinery. This has led to a certain degree of segregation in the society, but of a whole different dimension when compared to other islands in the Caribbean because Aruba has never known a real slave plantation economy. Aruba is also heavily influenced by Latin America, especially Venezuela and Colombia. This is a consequence of Aruba's high interaction with the latter nations because of their proximity to the island. Aruba is, therefore, a Caribbean community having both Latin and North American accents as well some Dutch influence. These influences are also a result of the great number of visitors Aruba receives annually from these countries.

*changes in the thinking pattern of the inhabitants*

A lot of changes have taken place over the last fourteen years. Presently there are quite a number of Latinos, Filipinos, and Dutchmen on the island. Due to this multicultural group, one notices some changes in the thinking pattern (the mentality) of the inhabitants.

*develop a new approach*

The thinking pattern is more progressive. More organized groups are coming forward to defend their interests. In addition, due to some of these changes, Aruba also experiences some social tensions between ethnic groups. In some instances, Aruban leaders are influenced by native Arubans who make objections and are opposed to foreigners. This complicates leadership because it has to handle and talk differently to different groups of the population, what is not always effective. This may become a threat if the Aruban society and its leadership do not develop a new approach to operate long term.

Many foreign families come to the island with their children and try to stay in Aruba without permission. These children are not allowed to attend school to get an education, unless they have been duly registered at the census office. These children (generally teenagers) are consequently walking the streets idle and unconstructive, which is not in the interest of the community. In turn, these teenagers may become unemployable, which could heighten a predilection of some toward criminal behavior. This is why new leadership is needed to tackle these kinds of issues and change the regulations.

*"Arubanism (Or: "Arubianismo") was initially a positive way of expressing Aruban nationalism (Aruba in the first place). Lately, some native Arubans have the tendency to use this notion in a negative way against foreigners living on the island, whereas in today's world of globalization there is no reason to reject foreigners." ( )*

Another consequence of the cultural diversity is the fact that both, the Dutch and the American approach to leadership have great influence on managers in the corporate world. The issue of leadership has now gained attention in Aruba. Organizations are more aware that strong leadership is one of the keys to success in the market place.

*"Leaders are also shaped by the type of organization they function in, and not only the other way around, as many believe". (Anco Ringeling)*

*I would also like to point out the "multicultural" factor. Since there are so many definitions of reality in a multicultural society, it will take a lot of time and energy to reach some sort of consensus.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study

*Most islands are linked to the rest of the world through their dependence on one or a few developed nations. These ties are primarily historical and still exist for two reasons: psychological and economic reasons. Developed countries have great influence on the political structure of these islands. This is the legacy of a long history of colonization. These islands are multi-cultural, in some degree segregated, which is mainly the result of the colonization and the introduction of slaves from Africa more than two centuries ago. The multi-ethnicity and multilingualism of the people illustrate this best. It is an indication that different value systems coexist and are constantly seeking harmony. These factors are shown in matters regarding the educational system. Which language will be the language of instruction in school? The answer to this question is mostly determined by the power structure in society. In this way the educational system mirrors the society in which it functions.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study

*linked to the rest of the world*

The situation in Aruba does not fully support the general theory as presented in the "2020" study. Aruba is linked to the rest of the world not only through the Netherlands but through many other countries as well. This is one of the characteristics that makes Aruba different from other islands.

## 5 The characteristics of Aruban leaders

It is not correct to generalize because some leaders function better than others do. In Aruba leaders have the trust of their followers, which gives them the space to develop and improve their leadership skills.

Aruban leaders have a vision, are very innovative and outward looking, but work too individualistic. Teamwork can be improved. There is also the general impression that leaders serve micro interests instead of general interests.

The profile of leadership is presented in a "strengths and weaknesses analyses". In some instances it is hard to classify a trait. Sometimes a strength is also a weakness and vice versa, it is like the yin and yang in eastern philosophy.

*the profile of leadership*

*the strengths*

*an all-encompassing vision*

### **The strengths**

#### *Vision*

Aruban Leaders have an all-encompassing vision. They are strong determined figures who take well-thought, sometimes risky, decisions based on their vision, regardless of the consequences. They are future-oriented and consider the long-term consequences of their actions. This does not exclude that, on occasion, they may go for short-term solutions.

However, there are a few critical remarks in this area. For example:

*"Sometimes there is a lack of vision. Sometimes it is difficult to convince the other side that there are other approaches to accomplishing a task. Suggestions may be viewed as criticism of their efforts; this is especially the case in the governmental sector. Fortunately, most of the time, factions end up working together. The problem is that leaders don't place themselves in someone else's shoes. Consequently, the ability to envision the whole and to view oneself as a part of the whole is still a weakness in Aruba." ( )*

*In such a society management (except for foreign management) thinks totally different. Having a vision on business is not important to become a manager. It is more important to know how to survive personally and also as an organization. The consequence is that when for example a consultant comes in and restructures an organization, one of the first things he will notice is that there is no (adequate) organizational strategy. There is just one strategy and the name of that game is called "Don't interfere with my business and I will not interfere with yours". This game is played during work and after hours in the interaction of the networks.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

The Aruban leadership contradicts the general theory as presented in the "2020" study. This might be one of the explanations why Aruba is doing relatively well compared to other islands in the region.

*practical and decisive especially*

*Decisive and dominant*

The Aruban leader is practical and decisive especially concerning matters of crucial importance. When matters are important, decisions are made very fast. This tendency is especially obvious when observing the political arena. Some of the interviewees even speak of dominant leaders who always want to be in the center of attention.

Leaders make plans and implement them rapidly. They have the power to convince others of their plans. However, in some instances, leaders still fail to make decisions.

The government, ministers and parties in Parliament need to reach decisions that are not always the most optimal ones. However, leaders need to be determined because there are many conflicting interests placing pressure on the decision making process.

*leaders seek continuity*

*Continuity*

Aruban leaders seek continuity. This can be best illustrated by taking a look at political leadership. Government policy is seldom interrupted. This is one of the reasons why leaders are eager for information and for learning.

*Commitment*

The leadership in Aruba has drive, creativity, imagination, sense of realization, commitment, and willingness to change. This is the case in family businesses, business in general and in politics.

*people work together in unity*

*Unity and patriotism*

Arubans are able to unite, to get together, in many ways. Not only when in trouble, but especially when trying to get good things going. In the Caribbean, Aruba has been recognized as a country where people work together in unity. This aspect is so strong that it compensates for the negative. The fact that leaders in the Aruban community are able to unite for the sake of the country is very positive. This has been the case since the Status Aparte, because every hurdle that Aruba has encountered, it has been able to overcome without experiencing any major negative consequences.

On the other hand, development in Aruba is too heavily influenced by politics. Many times leaders are affected and intimidated by politics. This is a very negative situation because the most important aspect of leadership is the ability to be objective and fight for the general interest of the public. If leaders are influenced by party politics they will deviate and not be able to perform as good leaders in the true sense.

*"We have a good cooperation in Aruba, decisions are made when required and we act upon them." ( )*

*"The basis for Aruba's unity is its patriotism. The people of Aruba are proud of their island and their people." ( )*

*good managers*

*Management and control*

Generally speaking, the leaders of Aruba are good managers. The job gets done. Leaders are relatively well informed by professionals who work for them and support them and who, in a sense, can be considered potential leaders.

*life long learners*

*Learners*

In general, the leaders on Aruba are well educated and are life long learners. They are also open-minded. They make use of the possibilities that are available to educate themselves (magazines, networking, workshops, seminars, etc.). They also make good use of their network to keep themselves informed about developments in their area. The leaders also encourage their followers to keep themselves informed and keep on learning.

*good at crisis management*

*Crisis management*

The leaders seem to be good at crisis management.

*"The leaders are very creative; especially when there is a lack of time and resources." (Martijn Balkestein)*

When the situation is tough the leaders seem to communicate their vision and their solution very well; they are determined to reach the objectives. These points are less noticeable in stable situations.

*leaders possess great influence*

*Role models*

One important issue is that leaders possess great influence. Often leaders in the Aruban community are not aware of this.

*"I heard, for example, a story from one of our community leaders here and he told me that he had gotten divorced. The year this leader divorced, there were a lot of other divorces in this country. This leader attributed the divorces to himself, due to the fact that he was a role model and people looked up to him. This leader was very surprised to see what was happening because he had not realized that his influence went so far. And that is how it goes with every member in the parliament, council of ministers, with other community leaders, etc. So what I want to illustrate is that people have to uphold good moral standards, else they will not be good examples in the community which can be very dangerous. For this reason the role of a leader is considered extremely important, especially in a small community." ( )*

*the weaknesses*

*not a good communicator*

### **The weaknesses**

#### *Unsatisfactory Communication*

Generally speaking, the Aruban leader is not a good communicator. He does not explain his actions very well and his manner of communication leaves no room for discussion. The internal and external communication of most companies is also an aspect that can be improved. Even between leaders the communication is unsatisfactory. One might say that it is an autocratic style of communicating.

*"Leaders assume that because of their position they can simply order people to perform tasks and direct the organization from behind their desk. They seldom or never get outside of their office and talk to their people to explain their ideas and check out what is going on. The effect is that most of the subordinates feel somewhat lost within the organization. There is no feedback from and to the leader. Hence, there is a lack of proper guidance. There are exceptions where leaders do give good feedback and have a good relationship with their subordinates. The difference is obvious. These organizations perform well. So basically there is a need for collaboration between the leader and the subordinates to attain the goals, and feedback is very important in this process." ( )*

Another interviewee puts it this way:

*"The weaknesses of Aruban leadership are: it hears but does not listen, it is neither open to suggestions nor criticism and it is arrogant and selfish. Because of this it has missed many opportunities; it is not open-minded." ( )*

One of the forms in which this lack of communication has manifested itself is in the lack of teamwork:

*"Leaders perform a one-man show. There is very little teamwork and delegation due to the fact that these leaders do not visualize and believe in the potential leadership qualities of their people." ( )*

As can be noticed, the situation in Aruba supports the theory presented in the "2020" study.

Although the interviewees have a negative perception of the manner in which communication takes place, according to the "2020" study this appears to be a very effective way of communicating in societies with many of the characteristics Aruba has. This may be one of Aruba's secrets of success.

*When one starts providing employees with information in small multi-cultural island societies, one must be aware that one starts a public debate. This is the effect of the small scale and the relatively easy access to the Press. There is no difference between the micro, meso and macro levels. The social networks start working to protect their members. In many cases this results in personal attacks in the Press.*

*The public debate absorbs a lot of time, energy and resources and endangers the real change process. ... If one is not successful at shortening the ending phase, the change will be much more difficult because it will absorb a lot of energy and decision-makers will start to question their initial decision.*

*Many of my colleagues disagree on this approach. They still believe in the participative approach of enabling change, meaning to get all involved at an early stage. It is my opinion that this point of view is based on textbooks. In all the successful changes I have analyzed none of them followed this approach.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

#### *Autocratic*

Aruban leaders are not democratic: sometimes other people's opinions are not respected. Some speak even of intimidation. Leaders are therefore unable to pass on their knowledge to others. Furthermore, no consideration is given to long-term development. The solutions employed are to solve immediate problems, regardless of the long-term effects.

*leaders will not delegate responsibility  
on a long-term basis*

Within organizations there is infrequent delegation, and when this does occur leaders can, at any given moment, reclaim the responsibility. In other words, leaders will not delegate responsibility on a long-term basis.

It has also been mentioned that leaders have difficulty handling criticism, which in fact could be considered a learning experience.

*alternative leaders*

Throughout the entire Aruban community, there is a strong tendency to favor informal alternative leaders above these autocratic leaders. Such is considered a positive democratic development. These alternative leaders do not have access to the possibilities formal leaders are favored with. Though informal leaders will perform as leaders, they will not be recognized as such.

At first glance, however, there seems to be a contradiction in this statement because other individuals interviewed mention that leaders respect their followers and allow them freedom to act. They provide possibilities by giving alternatives to those in subordinate positions. These interviewees mention further that Aruban leadership is very flexible because of the personality of the Aruban people. The tendency is to be a "smooth" leader as opposed to one who is very forceful. In addition, this gives the population the impression that they are leading themselves. Therefore, the ability to lead without advertising one's leadership is also a good



characteristic of a leader. It is good to let people think that they themselves are doing the job.

How can this paradox be solved? Maybe Arthur Dowers has the explanation:

*"There is a difference when comparing leaders of small groups with those of big groups. The traits of Aruban leadership in small groups are: it stimulates the whole organization concerning decision making, it works very hard to achieve its objective and it is very devoted. The characteristics of Aruban leadership in larger groups are: it is authoritative and controlling, it serves micro, personal interests instead of general interests and it prefers people from abroad." (Arthur Dowers)*

#### *Nepotism*

A weakness of the political leadership is that it often has to make promises to get votes, which is obviously not the best thing to do.

It is hard to be objective in a small community with family businesses. There is a tendency to judge certain events according to family priorities and not business priorities.

*family priorities and not business priorities*

*These islands have never known the mechanism of the market at a local level. They have known international markets. The businesses that operate in the local markets depend on the networks. This means that quality cost and service issues are not relevant and moreover, that these businesses, compared to international standards, are considered to be less productive and inefficient. There is no incentive for these businesses to increase productivity. They are unaware of structural changes in the world until these changes can no longer be ignored. In general there is no need for change. These businesses, once finding themselves in such a situation, seem to have an amazing capacity to respond.*

*Businesses operating in international markets are always conscious of the movements and trends in the market and are controlled by international management. In these organizations the networks have a dysfunctional role and slow down the organizations in responding to developments on the global marketplace.*

*The social networks heavily influence governmental organizations. The effect of this is that many decisions are taken in the networks and are based on delivering social and economic protection to members of the networks. This has resulted in large governmental organizations and government intervention in businesses that get into difficulties when they encounter competition from and in the (global) market .*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study

The Aruban example contradicts what has been stated in the "2020" study. Although no one can deny that nepotism is present, this does not seem to disrupt the rules of the marketplace. One explanation for this is that this phenomenon is concentrated within government and public owned companies. The expectation is that this phenomenon will be further reduced when government owned businesses become privatized. This will further fortify the market and thus increase efficiency.

*lack of integrity*

*Lack of Integrity*

A weakness of the leadership in Aruba is its lack of integrity in some instances; therefore, the people in general, express the need for an honest and stronger leadership. The interviewees stated that the leaders have hidden agendas and are self-serving. The good news is that they are not doing this at the expense of Aruba's future, because it is also their future.

*"If we have stronger leadership we will avoid more strikes and endless talking. Our government does not have the courage to make unpopular decisions." ( )*

*"Aruba's leaders have always proclaimed that Aruba comes first ("Aruba na prome lugá !"). They know that this is not (always) true. Many put themselves in the first place and the island on the second.*

*Leaders in the political as well as in the private sector work with hidden agendas. However, putting their personal interests on the first place does not necessarily imply a negative result for the island. In conclusion, they are well aware that they too will be affected, should things go bad for Aruba." ( )*

*emotional and impulsive*

*Emotional*

Sometimes Arubans, and consequently also their leaders, are emotional and impulsive. This makes communication even more difficult.

*summary and conclusion*

**Summary and conclusion**

The following summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of Aruban Leadership.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Vision</b></li><li>• <b>Decisive and dominant</b></li><li>• <b>Commitment</b></li><li>• <b>Unity and patriotism</b></li><li>• <b>Management and control</b></li><li>• <b>Learners</b></li><li>• <b>Crisis management</b></li><li>• <b>Role model</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unsatisfactory communication</b></li><li>• <b>Autocratic</b></li><li>• <b>Nepotism</b></li><li>• <b>Lack of integrity</b></li><li>• <b>Emotional</b></li></ul>

There is a remarkable balance between the strengths and weaknesses of Aruban leadership, which makes it suitable for Aruba. However, this equilibrium may be optimal for Aruba here and now but probably not for the future. So the question that needs to be answered is: What is effective leadership for Aruba in the future? There are several change drivers in play. The global trends are one of them. Aruba will follow the global trends concerning leadership. This will be stimulated by the education of the Aruban people, especially of the youth.

## **6 The factors influencing the development of leadership**

Many factors influenced the development of leadership on Aruba. I classified them into the following four categories:

- Historical
- Financial
- Geographical
- Social psychological

### **Historical factors**

#### *Colonization (1499 – 1954)*

Colonialism has greatly influenced the development of Aruban leadership. Since the historical colonial developments in the Netherlands Antilles it has been a fact that men have always been in the front line of the processes of leadership and decision making. Since the early days when the Netherlands had just begun to colonize the Netherlands Antilles, men were sent from Curaçao—the capital of the Netherlands Antilles—to guard and govern over Aruba. Consequently, Aruba has had predominantly male leaders in government who were responsible for the administration of the island. Today, however, we can see that also female leaders are emerging and facing the challenges that male leaders have faced for decades. Another effect of colonization is that it has led to a difficult relationship between Aruba and Curaçao, because Aruba regarded Curaçao—not the Netherlands—as the oppressor.

*predominantly male leaders in government*

#### *Slavery*

In an article written and presented by Arthur Dowers where the author presents his view on the human capital of Aruba is stated that Aruba—contrary to other islands in the region, for example Curaçao—has never known a plantation economy based on the labor of slaves who had been brought over involuntarily from Africa. This has had two effects: (1) the segregation in society that typically resulted from such an economy is absent and (2) the spirit of the Aruban people was never broken nor have there been any attempts to do so.

#### *The influence of the clergy*

Religion, especially Catholicism, was also a factor in shaping the male dominated society of Aruba. This situation is changing gradually towards more female involvement in churches. Today, many mention the influence of a controversial priest who raises social and political issues on the island, as a factor influencing leadership on Aruba.

*Religion*

*"But presently the indisputable leader in Aruba is pastor Lampe. He unexpectedly influenced the community. He talks straight and can present or translate very well issues that have not yet been handled by other leaders." ( )*

*American management style*

*Lago*

The oil refinery Lago & Eagle was established at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This introduced American management into Aruba. This management style became the dominant one on the island and remains so till this day. Another consequence is that many people from other islands immigrated to Aruba making it an even more diverse society and segregated to some extent.

Many people from these other islands concentrated themselves geographically near the village of St. Nicolas in the neighborhood of the refinery. All this became a structure that influenced political leadership.

*The autonomy (1954)*

In 1954 Aruba obtained autonomy as part of the Netherlands Antilles. This created a governmental structure where the Netherlands ruled over Aruba through a Central Government based in Curaçao. Over time, Arubans began to perceive this structure as a form of domination of the island by the government in Curaçao. This gave rise to the struggle for emancipation from Curaçao.

*"I think that the political aspect of the status aparte, when we belonged to the Antilles of six, was a big issue. Some people were convinced that Aruba was creating the finances for the Antilles by paying considerable taxes and that Aruba itself benefited too little from that. So this issue inspired the political leaders of Aruba to take action. From that point on, one could see that we were trying to do things on our own. Decisions are now being made much faster and much easier due to a one level council." ( )*

Based on this issue, many leaders came forward to head the status aparte movement; this started the tradition of Aruban political leadership.

*Status Aparte*

One of the well-known factors is the Status Aparte. From the moment it was obtained, it became necessary for Aruba to forge its own direction and not follow only the directions given by others.

*face the challenge and surpass itself*

The great political and economical problems in the mid-eighties shaped Aruban leadership. It had to face the challenge and surpass itself.

*"Besides, when we obtained our separate status, decisions could be made rapidly which is very effective. When I touch this point I notice, for example, that Curaçao has the concept of "overlegcultuur"—that is, consultation culture. The thing is that in Curaçao the problem is first pinpointed, then it is discussed extensively to figure out how it can be solved. In Aruba we tackle it from another angle: what is the problem? and, what are the options? So, at a certain point, we just make a decision. By doing this we take a lot of risks, but at least we come to a decision and if we aren't on the right path we will discover it later as we go along, then we will have the chance to steer the decision in the right direction. So, for this reason I can say that Aruba's strength is the cooperation that results from working together." (Andy Lee)*

*Betico Croes*

Of course no one can mention the Status Aparte without mentioning Betico Croes who was one of the great leaders of Aruba in this saga for freedom. Aruba had to fight to achieve this objective. This shaped the fighting spirit of Aruba and especially of the leaders. Betico is still a benchmark for the leaders of Aruba today.

### **The financial and economic situation**

#### *Economic crisis of the eighties*

Right after the Status Aparte Aruba faced its biggest economic crisis in history. It was the vision and the determination of the leadership that brought it out of this dark hole. Now the leaders of Aruba are confident that since they did it once they can do it again.

#### *Economic development in the late eighties*

*great economic developments*

The leadership during the first years of the Status Aparte, coming out of the depression, led Aruba to great economic developments. Many organizations from abroad were established in Aruba. As a result, foreigners generally fill management positions at present. In the tourism industry for example, one notices that women have greatly and positively gained importance as leaders. This probably as a result of the influence of American management in this sector, where both men and women can excel in their abilities and become successful leaders directing businesses in the hospitality sector.

This prosperity has caused the Aruban people to believe that there is no need for change. This idea might be a threat for innovation in Aruba .

#### *Migration in the eighties and the nineties*

*moving towards a more modern model*

In the eighties and nineties there was a great influence from people who had come from abroad to work in the booming Aruban economy. This led to changes on Aruba. The old culture was a portrait of the autocratic leader, related to family businesses with a strong center where all decisions were made. Now, employees are being more and more empowered to make decisions. Developments are moving towards a more modern model.

*"Another factor is that Aruba is receiving a lot of immigrants. They bring new opportunities to the island. Without these immigrants Aruba's development would be less positive and less rapid. On the other, hand these immigrants are also causing a lot of social problems." (Martijn Balkestein)*

#### *Competition*

*the power of the client*

Leadership has changed due to strong competition in the private sector. To be specific, the power of the client is causing leadership to change, because what clients think is taken into consideration. This is done by checking what the client wishes, how these wishes can be complied with and how to prepare the organization in order to comply with the wishes of the client. This is the biggest influence on the leadership in Aruba. People are more aware of the clients, which

impacts the leadership in general.

### Geography

#### *Aruba is an island*

*facing the world*

Although one might expect this to have resulted in an inward looking community, to date, this has not been the case. Aruba has faced the world. Ironically, however, the economic success of Aruba threatens to change this because of the many foreigners who now live and work on the island. A group of native Arubans are expressing ideas of less openness to the world.

Contrary to the theory in the "2020" study, Aruba has always "faced" the world and that is one of the secrets of its success. It is ironic that Aruba is considering abandoning what made the island successful in the first place.

*Up to this point in history the surrounding seas have isolated these islands. This isolation has decreased over time by the modernization of telecommunication and the increase of transportation of people and goods. The promise of technology (telematics) is that the sea will no longer isolate island societies because location will be irrelevant for social and economic interaction between people and parties. I agree with this statement but one must not overestimate this technology factor. The state of mind of the people living on islands will also be a very important factor. The question is whether or not the members of an island society are psychologically willing and able to face the world.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

*simplification*

#### *Government structure*

The Status Aparte has led to the simplification of the governmental structure in Aruba. In the first place, Aruba has only one layer of government. This means that there is no uncertainty as to which government is the competent one. In the second place, this means that Aruba holds one election every four years. This has effected a very stable political climate on the island with a clearly defined and efficient decision making structure.

#### *Small scale*

Aruba is a small island but it neutralizes the disadvantages that might come with this by being outward looking. By doing this it has created a big market. Aruba has about 80.000 inhabitants but receives each year several thousands of visiting tourists, which means it has a significant market that works according to the rules of the market. This does not support the 2020-study, since Aruba has surely come to know the mechanism of the market at a local level.

*mechanism of the market*

*These islands have never known the mechanism of the market at a local level. They have known international markets. The businesses that operate in the local markets depend on the networks. This means that quality cost and service issues are not relevant and moreover, that these businesses, compared to international standards, are considered to be less productive and inefficient. There is no incentive for these businesses to increase productivity. They are unaware of structural changes in the world until these changes can no longer be ignored. In general there is no need for change. These businesses, once finding themselves in such a situation, seem to have an amazing capacity to respond.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

#### *Dutch influence*

##### *The relationship with the Netherlands*

Aruba has been part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for several centuries now. There are many physical and non-physical proofs of this. Dutch, for example, is an official language and the main language in school. The Dutch inspired Aruban architecture. Over the last ten years this relationship has been changing. Due to the island's strong economic development it has become economically independent from the Netherlands. The Dutch influence has also diminished as a consequence of the intense relationships of Aruba with other nations such as Venezuela, Colombia and the United States. In a few years from now the Dutch influence will diminish further as Aruba's government heads to financial independence from the Netherlands.

This progress in the relationship between Aruba and the Netherlands is possible due to two factors. Aruba was never ruled directly by the Netherlands but through Curaçao. Consequently, there is a history between Aruba and Curaçao but not between Aruba and the Netherlands. The second factor that comes into play is the strong economic development in Aruba. This contributes to the positive self-esteem of Aruba.

#### *Spanish*

##### *The ties in the region*

Aruba maintains ties with Venezuela, Colombia, the United States and many other islands in the Caribbean. Over the last ten years many people have wanted to work and live in Aruba. Nowadays, one frequently hears Spanish spoken on the streets and in the stores. Not all Arubans are happy with this development. In consequence, the leaders need to face this issue.

### **Social and psychological factors**

#### *Upbringing and education*

The fact is that people in Aruba are now better educated and many of the leaders have lived in several different countries and continents around the world and have



*education and quality movement*

gathered more experience and know-how. The quality movement organized by the Aruba Quality Foundation has taken place, and it really stressed the importance of leadership. Aruba started this quality movement in the last two years. The quality movement really stresses the importance of leadership on the political level, in business and in the community. Education, the quality movement and the attention they draw to leadership has greatly influenced Aruba.

*"Education has definitely influenced the development of Aruban Leadership. Leaders that have had the opportunity to pursue higher education are better equipped compared to those who are not well educated." ( )*

*Training managers and professionals is an issue. Due to the small scale, the possibilities for higher education on the islands are limited. At a relatively early age people need to leave the islands for training abroad, in many cases in the former "mother" countries. For the Netherlands Antilles this means the Netherlands. Here young students lead a very important part of their lives without support of their families.*

*This period is also very important for the forming of social networks. I believe that this also influences their personality. Besides that, they are trained in a foreign environment. The theories they learn relate to this environment. When they return to their islands they have already developed their personality and have formed a set of knowledge and ambition that does not fit the reality of the islands. They are not aware of this and they try to change the reality to fit the theories they learned and saw in practice abroad.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

*"just do it"*

In contradiction of the above, Arubans are practical people, regardless of their educational background. They "just do it". The good thing about this is that the professionals educated abroad do not have the tendency to implement theoretical solutions.

#### *Family structure*

Families bring forth leaders as part of the passing on of family tradition. Moreover, the community implicitly expects some specific families to produce new leaders to maintain leadership continuity in Aruba. This is the case for political as well as corporate leadership.

#### *The small size of Aruba*

The triads of those in leadership positions are derived from characteristics of the environment. The small scale has as a consequence that leaders live in a crystal palace. They are visible and approachable to their followers. Leaders are aware of this and it makes them more transparent in their actions. Therefore, they pro-

*a crystal palace*

actively explain their actions. Leaders are asked to explain their behavior. This is something that needs to be learned very early in life, or later, by copying this behavior from those who master it.

*In small sized societies, relatively isolated from the rest of the world, there is no difference between micro, meso or macro events. All events are placed under a magnifying glass. This means that all changes are major changes, which affect everybody, and everybody is a stakeholder.*

*The result of all these factors is a society of individuals who do not trust each other. This is what I call a 'low trust society' in which individuals experience a high amount of anxiety. As a consequence individuals seek protection from other individuals who have economic or political power, in order to reduce this anxiety. This leads to the development of social networks. The networks play an important role. When individuals engage in transactions they constantly estimate from which network the other party is. Transactions between two individuals of the same network take less effort than transactions between individuals from different networks. To put this in more general terms: we put labels on people from the very beginning and this prevents us to go beyond the labels.*

*In this system personal reputations are very important because it is the credibility of an individual that determines success in interactions and transactions. This is why character assassination and image building are some of the most important tactics to influence the power structure in or between networks. The Press plays an important role in this.*

*These societies expect different things from man and woman. In this article I will not explain why. I will only describe some of the consequences. Caribbean societies are still dominated by men, although increasingly more women are working outside the house and at the same time taking care of the children (frequently without the help of a partner).*

*Men spend a significant part of their time outside the home. After work they join friends for activities varying from meetings, sports, drinking and adult entertainment. These activities are named 'paranda' or 'happy hour'. It is during these events that individuals are included in or excluded from networks. It is here where the ground is prepared for business transactions.*

*Sport organizations and other social organizations (service clubs) are very important. There are advantages in belonging to such an organization and to hold an administrative position. It is good for image building and for networking. Marriages, funerals of relatives or friends and other private or public events are very important events to attend to build and maintain social networks.*

*Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.*

*not direct*

In Aruba people are not direct. There is a hidden form of resistance when people disapprove of a policy. This differs from, for example, the Netherlands or the United States. This is the result of the interaction between the leader and the followers in a small community.

*the perspective is very limited*

The perspective of people in a small society is very limited. If one, for example, considers a management team of a government agency; should someone become the head of a department at the age of thirty-five, that person will remain in this position until he is fifty-five years of age. This is not a good development. A person in such a position has no challenges and his job becomes a routine. The possibilities are limited. Mechanisms should be established to remove these persons and rotate them after a while, or to offer them a position abroad.

Up to this day, Aruba remains a small island society as described in the "2020" study.

*In search of identity*

Aruba as a community no longer has the tendency to look to people who are not Arubans as leaders. It used to be that people would follow a leader who was not an Aruban, much more willingly than they would follow or recognize an Aruban as a leader. But this has evolved and now people accept Arubans as leaders because of the examples of great Aruban leaders such as Betico Croes.

This is not in line with the following statement from the "2020" study:

*Self-esteem*

*high self-esteem*

The people of Aruba have a high self-esteem and believe that they can achieve anything they decide to.

*summary*

**Summary**

Aruban Leadership is influenced by a great many factors. One of the most important ones is the Status Aparte and the way it was obtained. The origin of the struggle for this status was the difficult relationship with the Central Government based in Curaçao, which in a way stood between Aruba and the Netherlands. After the Status Aparte Aruba went through a tremendous economic depression, from which it emerged guided by its leaders. These leaders directed the society into building a very successful economy. They did so in an autocratic way, based on their family tradition. These two achievements gave Arubans great self-confidence.

The economic success invited many people to the island making the society much more diverse. This caused many to react by closing the labor market to outsiders, thus stopping what made Aruba strong in the first place.

*Historically organizations have been managed by foreigners, mainly Dutch. After the seventies this changed as a consequence of rising social tensions, partially as a consequence of this situation. During this time there was a spirit of democratization in Europe and the United States and this also influenced developments in the Netherlands Antilles. Those who were perceived as 'locals' were placed in management positions which, after a while, became known as the 'Antilleanization Policy'. This was the first of three generations of Antillean managers we have known up till now. This first generation was for a significant part selected by the former leaders of those days. In this way they maintained their influence on the organization even if they did not manage it on a daily basis. One of the main criteria, beside the one of being perceived as a local, was loyalty to the status quo. Thus, a management was brought forward that ethnically looked different but held the same values as the previous managers, yet was in some cases not prepared well enough.*

*The influence of the former leaders was significant on the selection of the first generation of Antillean managers. This generation had no role models other than the previous generation. Consequently, when this generation selected the second generation they did so basically the same way for the same reasons. The difference is that they generally selected better-trained successors. In many cases, though, these individuals were trained abroad, mainly in the Netherlands. At this moment in time the third generation managers is emerging and being selected. In general the second generation follows the same trend as the first: selecting their successors so they can maintain their influence. This has become significantly harder to do as a consequence of the clear message the global economy is sending: the manager in the information age must be a well-prepared leader that will position his or her organization in a competitive global economy. Most of the time, organizations operating in the international market still have foreigners in key management positions. Although in some cases Antillean people are added to the management teams. In some cases this is just a cosmetic presentation. In some occupations like 'professional services', foreigners are predominantly present. This is probably a consequence of the way Antillean professionals are trained. The last couple of years we notice an increasing demand for local consultants. This can be compared with the 'Antilleanization Policy'. Still foreign consultants play an important role. For example: when management is the problem there is a preference for consultants from abroad because they know that these consultants will not be of a rival social network and therefore more easily influenced. On the other hand it is easy to find a 'scapegoat' for failure since the foreigner comes from a world with different mindsets and different values.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

## **7 The assessment of leadership of the past ten years**

*"Leadership has been effective during the past 10 years. Unfortunately, there are no key statistics available to benchmark against, but looking at the general results, I'd say leadership has been effective." (Glen Croes)*

In the last ten years there have been many great leaders, especially when Aruba was going through a very difficult period.

*"I think about the past ten years, we are still progressing. We opted for our "status aparte" in the year that Lago left Aruba. Therefore, we had to focus on tourism at that time.*

*At this moment we realize that other things like offshore and education, are also equally important. So if we want to have a strong economic development, we need to create more perspectives for main brains. By doing this, we will avoid losing young people who are going to the Netherlands.*

*Fifty years ago it was not possible for a young person to occupy certain positions. Today, we see that there are more young people in managerial positions who have new points of view and who are more progressive. We also notice that our leaders are becoming younger and are profiling in politics and in other important areas, which is a good sign and a good development for our community. This will encourage our people who are abroad (in the Netherlands) to come back." (Ellen Kuster)*

But not everybody is positive about the leadership.

*"They serve micro interests instead of general interests, they are leaders because they have personal goals they want to achieve, they do not stimulate young people enough so that they too may become leaders." ( )*

The interviewees differentiate between different sectors. They see a difference in performance.

### **Political leadership**

*great political leaders*

Betico Croes is considered the great leader of the past, not only by people who agreed with all his ideas, but also by people who simply respected his skills. In the last ten years there has not been a leader like Betico. But there have been some great political leaders.

*"During the Betico Croes period it was noticeable that we had a great leader on the island. He was a good and reliable leader who was able to bring the people together. Another of his characteristic was that he focused on consensus, and was able to bring calmness during difficult times." ( )*

*towards a more participative style of leadership*

Economically, Aruba has experienced a great development over the past ten years. To see the disputes there are in the political arena and to see how they are not being controlled, just because of political color, worries many. If this tendency of the past remains, it will not benefit Aruba. This leads some to the conclusion that political leadership is a bit static. But there is progress to be reported. More women are active in politics than before and there is a gradual shift towards a more participative style of leadership.

*"Leadership over the last ten years has constantly changed, showing more dynamism for women in this area. Women are setting milestones in government these days. In the Eman I Administration for instance, there was one female minister, whereas, this number was increased by two in the Eman II Administration. It has never been determined that only men should act as leaders. Nevertheless, it is a reality that men tend to guide decision making and leadership processes. Today, both male and female leaders are gradually shifting from the directive leadership style to a more participative style of leadership. Another quality women have been able to portray in leadership these last ten years is the ability to investigate matters in depth and bring forth alternatives for improvements." ( )*

*political developments radiate to the community*

Political developments radiate to the community. So good leadership in this area is very important. There have been some very good leaders, especially in the crisis periods. The politicians of Aruba are not giving the best example of leadership. Decisions are reached sometimes on an ad hoc basis without consulting advisors and without studying opportunities, threats or weaknesses of the direction the leader desires to take. Leaders focus their policy on short-term profits for themselves, which as a result has negative consequences for the Aruban community as a whole.

### **Public sector**

*lack of communication*

There is a great lack of communication in the public and semi-public sector between the Ministers and their services. It is not always clear for the manager of the service which direction needs to be taken to achieve certain targets.

*The social networks heavily influence governmental organizations. The effect of this is that many decisions are taken in the networks and are based on delivering social and economic protection to members of the networks. This has resulted in large governmental organizations and government intervention in businesses that get into difficulties when they encounter competition from and in the (global) market .*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study

Aruba confirms this part of the theory presented in the "2020" study.

*the private sector is more effective*

### **The private sector**

Leadership in the private sector is more effective than in the public sector. Everything depends on what kind of organization one is looking at. Meta Corporation, for example, is a very impressive organization. Many other companies in Aruba are keeping their eyes on Meta Corporation as an example of good leadership practice.

*Businesses operating in international markets are always conscious of the movements and trends in the market and are controlled by international management. In these organizations the networks have a dysfunctional role and slow down the organizations in responding to developments on the global marketplace.*

Quoted from the "2020: Creating our Caribbean Future" study.

*union leadership*

### **The unions**

The interviewees did not often mention union leadership although it was active in the year 1999. The reason for this may possibly be the economic stability of the last ten years, which by the way was made possible by a constructive role of the labor unions.

*"In the last years support and constructive cooperation of the social partners like the labor unions have been outstanding when implementing measures to build up the economy. They have been great leaders." ( )*

### **The Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGO)**

The NGO's were not mentioned. The reason for this might be that, because of the good socio-economic situation, this sector has remained relatively small.

### **The churches**

From a religious point of view, the majority of Aruba is Catholic and that has remained the same since 100 years ago. So also from a religious point of view everything remained static and nothing has changed.

*"The great majority of Aruba is Catholic. At the moment, more and more other Christian groups and churches are rising. Catholic people are becoming members of other Christian movements because they are not noticing any changes for the*

*better in their group or environment. The Catholic system in Aruba has a very formal structure. The gap between the leaders and the people is too big. So this gap must become smaller.*

*What I want to illustrate is that people are not as stupid as they used to be because they can think and rationalize in other ways due to their better education and knowledge." ( )*

*summary and conclusions*

**Summary and conclusions**

For the last ten years leadership in Aruba has been good. There is much criticism about the government, although people acknowledge that Aruba has achieved much since the days of the closing of the Lago and the Status Aparte. This was the result of a shared vision, good communication and collaboration. This is what Aruba wants to see on a consistent basis.

Leadership in the private sector is viewed as good, as consequence of the rules of the game in a market economy: those who do not innovate, die.



## **8 Expectations for the future**

The people of Aruba are generally pleased: they have some concerns but view the future with great optimism.

### **The optimistic scenario**

*tremendous improvements*

The last twelve years have shown tremendous improvements and things will only get better, since Aruba will acquire more experience with a more team oriented style of leadership. Aruba is still progressing and the aspect of leadership is receiving more attention. People are more aware of the importance of leadership. They are willing to follow different courses on leadership. They are more willing to talk about certain aspects of leadership. So Aruba is on its way, although this process may take a few years.

Aruba should provide young leaders with the tools that will help them develop and become better equipped adult leaders; in other words, it should "pave the way to improve leadership". The community is not monolithic which is exactly the reason why a consistent leadership throughout the Aruban community should be maintained.

There will be changes in leadership. But the new leaders will continue to consolidate and stabilize what Aruba has achieved.

Both the government and the private sector are doing a great job by placing young men and women in managerial positions. This demonstrates that the old way of thinking is gradually vanishing. Politicians are also aware that Aruba needs to focus on leadership in all other sectors and not only in the tourism industry. Leadership is also paying more attention to crime prevention, which means more focus on education.

*leadership has to keep adjusting itself*

The chances of succeeding in the future will be greater if Aruba complies with certain conditions. Other ideas and new ways of thinking are constantly emerging, therefore leadership has to keep adjusting itself.

*"I am very positive with respect to the future because our leadership is still progressing in the right direction. An important reason to succeed is that our future leaders must not make the same mistake leaders in the past have made. They have to understand that the people they will be leading are no longer ignorant. Now we have better educated people with much more skills and knowledge. As I mentioned before, leadership means listening to and seeking to understand the ideas of the people with whom you work, without arbitrarily discarding their opinion. A referendum does not need to be taken to all the people. But one should solicit the opinion of his supporters and backers." ( )*

*a common vision*

Aruba needs to develop a common vision for itself. This will reduce party politics and is in the best interest of Aruba. Its leaders have to compromise to a common vision. If this happens the island will manage to survive. Therefore, a national plan

*missing step*

for Aruba has to be developed with an overall vision incorporating all sectors of the community. This is the missing step that people want to see from all Aruba's leaders.

*"I believe we are now headed in the right direction, which is definitely better than where we were ten years ago. This stems from the fact that the people are now more responsible for their actions and that they feel more involved in the things they do. "Status Aparte" requires personal responsibility for our own behavior, our own future, our job, etc. We realized that many opportunities and threats come with this. Therefore, we understand that we must act upon those opportunities, if we are to profit from them. Now that we see our economy growing, inactivity on our part would hinder our progress. Therefore, we are much more pro-active, assertive, less passive and more aware of the technology available to us." (Martijn Balkestein)*

#### **The concerns**

*at the crossroads*

But there are those who are concerned. This group states that Aruba is at the crossroads where it needs to rationalize its leadership. Aruba needs people with leadership qualities (skills) in key positions to guide the island, to maintain the level of prosperity and to try to convert it into welfare for everyone. This is necessary because the competition, especially in the tourism industry where Aruba gets its money from, is becoming stronger and stronger.

There is, thus, a need for a shared vision and to have people in leadership to work out that vision. This applies especially to politics. Leaders must put aside personal conflicts and genuinely seek to be united by not highlighting their political differences.

Aruba has great confidence in the younger new (potential) leaders, who have not yet had the opportunity to develop their leadership skills to a maximum. It hopes that potential leaders will experience personal growth and that these new leaders will develop a more participative style of management and become better teamplayers. The new leaders need to work cooperatively towards a shared goal and focus less on the individuals.

Much is expected from education. The interviewees hope that—through education—potential leaders will learn skills like creativity, innovation and how to develop a global competitive attitude.

They also expect benefits from the fact that people temporarily leave Aruba. Travel and having lived abroad opens new perspectives on which to focus. New leaders today have had the opportunity to travel and see the world, and to learn from the experiences it offers. The availability of these experiences in the Aruban community will greatly benefit Aruban leadership.

## **9 The development of new leadership**

*new style of leadership*

The interviewees are positive that new leaders can be instructed into the new style of leadership. The generation between thirty and forty years of age has to be given a chance to lead in the coming years. The whole system has to change. The new leaders have to use the media more effectively. Nepotism must be eradicated.

### **The structured approach**

*create opportunities*

Aruba should create opportunities for leadership development. In the government sector there should be more focus on the effective delegation of tasks etc, to achieve more efficient processes.

The interviewees would like to see yearly workshops organized addressing leadership and, in this way, presenting the latest development on this subject. Part of the purpose of such a workshop should be to give feedback to the participating leaders, because feedback, both positive and negative, are seen as very important in the process of improvement.

### **The natural process**

*developing new leaders*

Some of the interviewees are of the opinion that leaders are born and not trained. Born leaders can be trained to become better leaders.

Others believe that if a person is stimulated very early on in life, they can become leaders. According to this group, developing new leaders begins with a good education from the parents. Parents have a great influence on the development of their children. It is the parents' role to stimulate the positive development of their children and teach them values such as respect, freedom, etc.

Secondly, education at school is as important as education in the home. Activities like schoolboard, sports and so on make a good contribution to the development of leadership. These things teach a person how to function and listen in a team and how people feel in a team. Automatically the stronger ones will become leaders in the future.

*the youth*

The youth, who will be the future leaders, needs sufficient attention. If young people get more involved in community services, clubs, sports, etc., they will develop leadership skills. Inducing excitement will cause everyone to get involved: involvement is a precondition.

Along their career paths, people need to be empowered and encouraged to gradually progress along the learning curve. Without adequate transition, potential leaders should not be placed in a position where they will have to make the leap from zero responsibility one day to having to make "life or death" decisions the next. They should be provided the opportunity to build experience, and should be motivated to get involved. Problem solving, people skills, communication skills and

management skills should be developed, to make them more effective leaders. A leader must also understand the market and build experience.

*the syntheses*

**The syntheses**

*challenge for Aruba*

New (potential) leaders are developed by investing in the educational system and through coaching. This is a challenge for Aruba. Different organizations are involved with leadership issues and are contributing to the development of leadership. The government will have to realize that this development has to be integral and that, it too, will have to assume responsibility and contribute to leadership development in its sector. To this purpose the government will have to:

- improve their decision making process
- think long-term
- educate themselves
- invest in leadership courses
- compete with foreign leaders (globalization)

*other opportunities*

Other opportunities to stimulate leadership abilities are involvement in, for instance, sport activities, especially at school. Another option that was mentioned is the mentoring of young leaders by the more experienced ones. This is also an opportunity to share knowledge. The young leaders would bring their new concepts to the table while experienced leaders would share what they have learned from practice.

## 10 Leadership of the future

*people are continually expecting more from leaders*

In general, people are continually expecting more from leaders. Leaders need to communicate their vision. This is not limited to only political leadership but it is expected from leaders in every organization.

Making choices has become, and will continue to become, difficult. Leaders are expected to have foresight to perceive how their actions in one area will affect other areas.

New and younger leaders should also originate from a larger, wider scale in the Aruban community. There is a strong need for leaders from different backgrounds in our community. Aruban leadership should become more colorful in more ways than one, to mirror the Aruban society.

The educational level of the people of Aruba has increased, especially since the status aparte of the island. This is especially noticeable at the higher echelons of civil service leadership where governmental policies are currently expected to be developed.

*In general, more is expected from leaders. One expectation is for leaders to function as "primus inter paris" and not as autocratic figures who demand to be served ( ).*

Much is expected from the young (potential) new leaders. People expect them to be smarter, to have a solid background and to have a more open and transparent decision-making procedure, as opposed to the "behind closed doors" process.

### **A profile of the Aruban leader of the future**

The leader of the future will have to be a visionary teamplayer and a life long learner.

*profile of the leader*

In the profile of the leader of the future we must find the following terms:

- Vision
- Role model
- Outward looking
- Communication
- Servant leadership
- Technology
- Pro-active

#### *Vision*

To ensure Aruba's progress, it will be essential to develop a vision for the whole island and its leadership . The interviewees expect that it will be difficult to accomplish certain objectives in Aruba without strong leadership and without a common vision.

*Role model*

The interviewees expect the leaders of the future to be the role models for young and developing leaders in the society at large.

*Outward looking*

The leaders of the future are expected to be global citizens. This will facilitate smoother working relations with partners from other countries. The expectation is that the younger generation will be able to develop this outward look.

*Communication*

The leader of the future must communicate. He must be able to transmit his vision, motivate the people around him and explain his actions.

*"Servant leadership"*

Leaders of the future will serve general interests, even though they will be facing many obstacles. They will have to improve their communication skills, respect the opinion of others and minimize cultural barriers.

*Technology*

In the future, technology will be the main change driver. A leader must understand this force, know what the trends are, apply this technology and stimulate others to use it.

*Pro-active*

The leaders of the future must be pro-active to cope with constant and rapid changes. Aruba can no longer afford to sit idle, waiting to find out what changes will occur, to react to them only then.

*"We have to be more pro-active due to the extensive changes that have occurred in Aruba's living patterns. We must not sit and wait for changes to catch us unprepared. Our government is presently reacting to changes day by day. They are not planning ahead. For this reason, our style of leadership has to change." (Miriam Dabian)*

*summary and conclusions*

**11 Summary and conclusions**

Leadership is an issue in Aruba. This is a consequence of the many changes that are taking place.

The leadership on Aruba has strengths and weaknesses.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Vision</b></li><li>• <b>Decisive and dominant</b></li><li>• <b>Commitment</b></li><li>• <b>Unity and patriotism</b></li><li>• <b>Management and control</b></li><li>• <b>Learners</b></li><li>• <b>Crisis management</b></li><li>• <b>Role model</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unsatisfactory communication</b></li><li>• <b>Autocratic</b></li><li>• <b>Nepotism</b></li><li>• <b>Lack of integrity</b></li><li>• <b>Emotional</b></li></ul>

The Aruban leader is practical, visionary and action oriented. Leadership is autocratic, centralized and concentrated, and sometimes serves micro interests but not at the expense of the continuity of the organization or society.

The current leadership in Aruba is shaped by historical, financial /economical, geographical and social/psychological factors.

Although many critical remarks have been made regarding leadership, one must conclude that, basically, the leaders of the past and of the present have served and continue to serve Aruba well. But the Aruban society has changed due to Aruba's success and due to influences from abroad. Therefore, the leadership needs to adapt.

Notwithstanding all the challenges Aruba faces, the people of this island hold a very positive view on the future. They are confident that they will develop new leadership that will be able to create a shared vision for Aruba and an even better future for its inhabitants.

The Aruban leader of the future must fit the following profile:

- He has a vision
- He is a role model
- He is outward looking

Leadership in Aruba  
Arthur Andersen Business Consulting

- He is a good communicator
- He is committed to "servant leadership"
- He keeps himself abreast of technological developments
- He is pro-active

There seems to be a need for a kind of learning platform for leaders in Aruba. This will provide them with an infrastructure for continued learning. This platform might offer information on the latest developments and opportunities for young leaders to be coached.



**12 List of interviewees**

Andy Lee, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek  
Arthur Dowers, Dr. Horacio Oduber Hospital  
Brigitte Gomez, Women Affairs  
Javier Walter, Caribbean Mercantile Bank  
Jocelyn Daris, Project Bureau Reorganisatie  
Yolanda Richardson, Project Bureau Reorganisatie  
Ellen Kuster, Aruba Financial Center  
Ezzard Cilie, Dr. Horacio Oduber Hospital  
Darlene Jacobs, Bureau Ministerie (Economische Zaken)  
Katheleen Royer, Cruise Tourism Authority  
Marjolene van de Biezen Marques, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek  
Miriam Dabian, Aruba Tourism Authority  
Anco Ringeling, Uitvoeringsorgaan AZV  
Myrna Jansen, Aruba Tourism Authority  
Martijn Balkestein, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek  
Glen Croes, Chamber of Commerce / Interbank Aruba  
Robert Croes, Antraco

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