

Lammert De Jong & Dirk Kruijt (eds.) (2005) *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean: Paradoxes of Quasi Colonialism, Local Autonomy and Extended Statehood in the USA, French, Dutch and British Caribbean*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Rozenberg Publishers, paperback, ISBN-13: 978-9051706864, 206pp.

How to make sense of the unraveling of the Netherlands Antilles, an experiment in associated statehood that is now at the point of transition, after all but one of its five constituent members have voted in referenda to abrogate the status quo? This is perhaps the pragmatic rationale behind *Extended Statehood*, a book of essays that brings together four reviews of the evolution and current relationship between the four metropolitan powers in the Caribbean and their respective associated sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJs). These reviews are framed by two reflexive essays by the compilation's senior editor, and accompanied by a 'thick interview' with a well-travelled disc jockey from the SNIJ of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin. DJ Shadow is a "pragmatic anti-national" (p. 158) whose insights on the book's subject matter are carefree and populist, contrary to the macro-driven accounts of scholars or ex-policy officials that grace the rest of this book.

The publication of this volume is one of a few, but increasingly more common in recent scholarship, that embrace "constitutional in-betweenity" (p. 5) as a given, rather than a policy fluke, in the current configuration of metropolitan-SNIJ relationships, in the Caribbean as elsewhere around the globe. While still a work in progress – as are all federal systems - what is certain in this narrative are two observations. First, that SNIJs are not meant to be evolving towards the achievement of political independence and full sovereignty. This aspiration may have held true in previous decades; but the political, material and civic aspirations of islanders, as well as the economic flows that sustain these polities, render such notions as fanciful, destabilizing and even odious. Second, and following from the first observation, is that continuing to investigate these island polities in terms of *colonialist* discourse is unproductive, because it disregards the permanency (certainly in the medium term) of a link with a metropolitan power that is desirable by the islanders. It is not the nature of the link itself that is the meritorious subject of debate, but its manifestation: to the extent that even *independistas* in the Caribbean do not wish to rupture the umbilical cord that links them to France, the Netherlands, UK, USA or the European Union. It is the consideration of these autonomies as members of federal arrangements that is struck as the tone of this text in its scene-setting, opening essay.

The book reviews the evolution of relations between metropole and island autonomy, originally conceived as a process of decolonization, but now seen in retrospect (with the possible exception of the French case) as a process of (still ongoing) *ad hocism*: a sequence of policy moves, feints, posturing, countermoves and u-turns: within these, the metropolitan party manifests long stretches of benevolent neglect, and during the rest of the time tries to maintain influence, administer benign supervision, and facilitate economic development via "development cooperation", at times even manifesting some frustration, even surprise, at the [changing] expectations of the small islanders. Meanwhile, the latter - pragmatists *par excellence* - have grown to appreciate the privilege of open access to the metropolitan country, along with extended citizenship rights, many having voted with their feet and joined the island diaspora there.

Still, old habits die hard: in effect, it is as if the contributors to this book have largely not heeded the arguments of their editor to ditch the redundant colonial paradigm. Jorge Duany and Emilio Pantojas-García review the “contradictions” of associated statehood for the largest SNIJ of all, Puerto Rico, but continue to refer to “the completion of the island’s decolonization” (p. 21); Justin Daniel refers to the “unfinished character” of the departmentalization of Martinique and Guadeloupe within the French state (p. 59). Peter Clegg is concerned that aid from the UK will risk “perpetuating Montserrat’s dependency” (p. 141). Francio Guadeloupe obfuscates matters when he refers to “alternative post-colonies of the Caribbean” (p. 157). Perhaps it is to federalism and regional economic development theory that one should turn to find the right language to address these cases.

In these accounts, much is made of the alleged lack of capacity of these islands to manage their own development, their proneness to being swamped by hurricanes or else taken over by drug trafficking, money laundering or other forms of “international lawlessness” (p. 87); the fragile basis of their finances; and the ‘crowding out’ effect of exogenous aid; whereas de Jong reminds us that SNIJs overall enjoy a better quality of life than their sovereign neighbours in the region, and that fiscal transfers are a fact of life. A description of the offshore finance industries developed successfully in various Caribbean SNIJs, which have also successfully removed themselves from the list of OECD harmful tax competition regimes, is relegated to two footnotes. There is only mention in passing of the significance of tourism to the development of the Caribbean region. The difficulties mentioned with respect to sub-national island jurisdictions would not necessarily be ones from which regions of the associated metropolitan power itself are exempt. Moreover, GNP *per capita* comparisons between mainland and island economies are suspect because so much of the economic activity in small island territories may be subsistence-driven or operating within the informal economy, and thus never appear in official statistics.

The paradox referred to in the book’s title takes on different hues in the various chapters. In Puerto Rico, it is a robust sense of cultural nationalism that is seen to fit badly within the island’s current political status. In the French *départements*, it is a search for identity that also encapsulates a commitment to the French unitary state as well as the European Union; in the Dutch Caribbean, it is how to benefit from integration into the Netherlands without succumbing to second-class citizenship; in the British overseas territories in the Caribbean, it is to respect democratic principles while executing appropriate and responsible oversight.

All in all, *Extended Statehood* is a useful book for scholars of federalism, regional development and island studies to pore over and keep on their shelves. The historical background of each case is well documented, while the discussion of current policy dilemmas is useful and instructive. Sadly, the book lacks an author and subject index.

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