

# Isla Nobo

## Curaçao 2069

We present to you our vision by telling the story of Janchi in 2069.

*This story discusses the fundamental building blocks of our society: the built environment, energy, information & technology, and transport. With this story, we hope to challenge you to actively participate in creating the Curaçao of tomorrow, one for which we can all be proud. The goal of this story is to initiate interesting points of discussions about the future of Curaçao.*

This story illustrates our vision for Curaçao in 2069. With this, we want to illustrate the challenges that need to be faced to reach this envisioned 2069. An overview is made containing the main challenges, each pertaining to one of the four building blocks:

- The built environment (Isla Urbano)
- Energy (Isla Duradero)
- Information & Technology (Isla Konektá)
- Transport (Isla Móbil)



The built environment  
(Isla Urbano)



Energy  
(Isla Duradero)



Information & Technology  
(Isla konektá)



Transport  
(Isla Móbil)



# Hi, Konta

*I’m Janchi. I’m an architect by profession, but I like to think I am more than that. Born and raised in Otrobanda, I grew up with a fascination for the neighborhood. At that time, the streets were decaying but had potential, so did the city and the island. Like many students back in my day, I moved abroad and decided to study Architecture and Urban Development. During my studies, I got the opportunity to visit multiple thriving countries and cities and learn from them. The quality of life and innovation in all these places inspired me. So, I decided to return home to contribute to realizing the potential I envisioned many years ago. Do you have a minute? Let me tell you my story.*

I wake up to the sun rays hitting my face. What a beautiful view of the Juliana bridge. It’s been a month since I moved into this newly built apartment located in Isla Nobo. Isla Nobo is an area right in the city center of Willemstad which was known for its contaminated soil and polluted air. This apartment tower is one of the last to be realized in a major urban redevelopment. About fifty years ago, no one could have imagined transforming this brownfield land into a high-quality and vibrant city district.

It was a major shift in urban planning for Curaçao to rethink how their city areas are used — shifting from stand-alone houses with large gardens to high-rise apartment blocks. Apartment blocks are not only the most sustainable housing form, but they also offer the possibility to create vibrant living environments with a mix of residence, work, retail, and leisure in the public ground level. Reshaping the zoning plan played an important role in making this possible.

Going down the stairs to the ground floor café, I already smell the familiar aroma of pumpkin and cinnamon. “Bondia Janchi!,” Sandra greets me cheerfully and starts preparing my plate of fresh pumpkin pancakes. She grows the pumpkin on the rooftop of the apartment block, making it the freshest possible. Curaçao’s reliance on imported food caused problems several times over the last decades. A perfect example occurred for three months in 2018; Venezuela closed its borders to the ABC, causing people to realize that heavy reliance on imported fruits and vegetables is not the way forward. Small local farmers took advantage of the situation by putting local produce on the map. A growing awareness for local produce, combined with technological developments, paved the way for the several urban farms that now produce almost 70% of the island’s fruits and vegetable demand.

If I leave now, I can catch the electric ferry to Scharloo that departs in 6 minutes. Many things have changed regarding mobility in Curaçao. The quality of public transportation has improved drastically, making car ownership relatively unattractive. This is why I traded in my car about 45 years ago for a monthly public shared mobility card ‘Bip Bip’ to take me around the island. At that time, Bip Bip cost around 50 guilders per month. On Sundays, I like to take the Electric Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT) to Marie Pampoen Beach Boulevard to do some windsurfing. There I like to meet with other water sports enthusiasts at the bustling boulevard. The bus leaves every 10 minutes from Scharloo and takes only a few minutes because of dedicated lanes with just one stop.

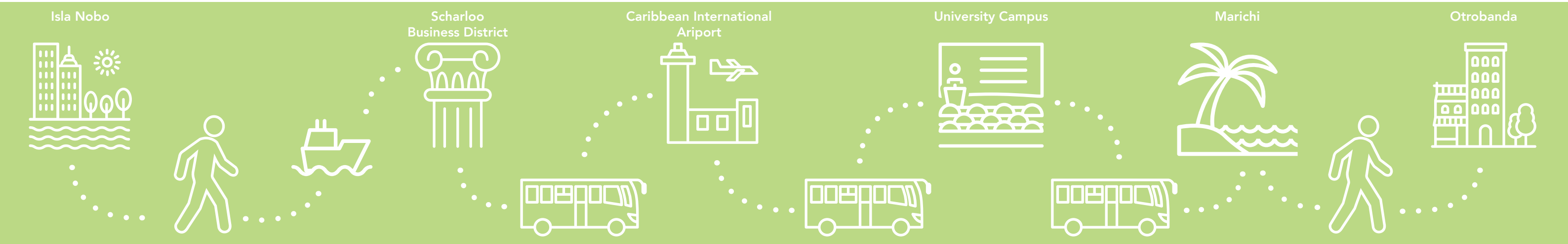
It’s 10 AM on a Tuesday, and I just arrived at Scharloo, the business district of Willemstad. The streets are filled with people. Over the years the population of Curaçao has seen enormous growth, especially in its city center. Compared to 2019, the number of inhabitants has grown to an astounding 620.000 inhabitants today. This growth in population was sparked by a big influx of both returning Curaçaoans (mainly from the Netherlands) and immigrants from the region. With visible investment in the knowledge economy in the 20’s, Curaçao was able to attract top talent from both its locals abroad and within the region. This massive growth created support for the necessary investments to upgrade the quality of infrastructure, transportation systems, energy, IT, and housing. Having an increased diversity in population not only reflects upon our ability to attract talent, but it also stimulates innovation and economic growth. We were able to embrace the richness of our diversity. The success of this is seen in city districts like Barrio Latino and China Town.

From the ferry terminal, I walk 10 minutes to my meeting at Fundashon Kas Popular (FKP). Walking is highly encouraged in the city. With the recent growth in population resulting in denser urban areas, the city center has been reshaped in multiple ways to incentivize walking. Houses, cafés, shops, and offices are densely located at distances that make them easily accessible by foot. Streets lined with trees offer shade from the blazing sun. To further promote walking, cars were banned in the city center about 40 years ago. These measures not only helped establish Willemstad as an example for walkable cities, but they have also contributed to improving the overall health of the inhabitants.

At FKP I’m meeting with Tania to discuss the final phase of the neighbourhood development of Bon Pais adjacent to Wechi. The goal of Bon Pais is to create a contemporary living environment with affordable public housing for students and starters. Tania asked me to share my expertise on designing dwellings which remain cool without having to depend too much on air conditioning. This way, the public housing agency can significantly reduce the use of energy in their dwellings, resulting in a lower energy bill for their residents. On the logistics side, Bon Pais aims to be sustainable too by using as much recycled waste from the closed down Malpais waste treatment plant as possible.

As our meeting comes to an end, I tell Tania I have to leave to meet with my former colleague Kalisa, a professor in Cities of Tomorrow at the University of Technology Jamaica. I’m taking the bus from Scharloo to the Caribbean International Airport to welcome Kalisa. The airport currently functions as the Caribbean hub connecting passengers and freight from North America and Europe to South America and the Caribbean, becoming one of the most important airports in the region processing more than 6 million passengers annually. This is not only maintained by the 620.000 inhabitants of the island but also by a large number of passengers transferring at the airport.

Kalisa and I are attending a conference about Intelligent Cities hosted at the University of Curaçao. The keynote speaker of the conference is the island’s Minister of Science and Technology. The minister discusses the use of automation to help solve challenges which emerged due to the rapid growth in population. “Through the years Curaçao’s growth has been challenging for us,” he explains. “To continue managing our cities efficiently, we want to go to the next level in computing to improve our transportation networks, public services, food supply, and our safety and security.”



After the speech, we discuss the role of technology early on in children's education and how to prepare them for a life full of technological challenges. One lady was sharing that at the age of 9, her grandchildren are already learning how to program. With technology being part of children's lives, it is important to think about its social consequences too. Kalisa mentions that in Jamaica, the university is researching children connecting emotionally with digital entities. Perhaps this is a topic on which the two universities can collaborate on in the future.


After the conference, I say my goodbyes and head out. On my way to the bus stop, I can't help but stand still for a couple of seconds to take in the energetic campus scene. Students are rushing to class, others testing out a prototype and some warming up for a casual football game. I used to visit the campus frequently when I was a guest lecturer for the Healthy and Sustainable Urban Development course. In that course, I often discussed the lessons of the neighborhood development of Wechi as one of the first great examples of healthy and sustainable urban development.

My eyes fall on a group of students working hard on the highly acclaimed "Energy Grand Challenge" - an annual project organized by the university to stimulate innovative energy solutions. A banner hanging outside announces this year's theme; Energy Storage Systems. This theme challenges students to explore the possibilities of creating a fully decentralized energy system for Curaçao. Such a system enables all individual neighborhoods to be interlinked via microgrids, thus making small scale renewable energy technology much more efficient and cost-effective. This kind of technology would have been useful during the development of Wechi back in 2024.


I reach the bus stop on campus and head back to Willemstad. I look forward to ending this day with a nice dive at the public city beach Marichi. On the way to the pier, I can't resist buying a snack from one of the many pop-up shops in colorful recycled containers serving mouth-watering, creative, and local foods — a great use for a place which for many years was underused as an asphalt parking lot.

After my dive, I dry myself off, wipe the sand off my feet, put on a shirt, and walk to the waterfront side of Otrobanda to meet friends and family for dinner. The sun is setting. A group of teens on the Brion Plaza are playing the classic song 'Atardi'. I sit down and observe the crowd. Tourists are hurrying back to the cruise ships, children are playing on the streets, and office workers are meeting for happy hour. I pinch myself. The streets of Otrobanda, the city of Willemstad and Curaçao have become the thriving and vibrant environment I once imagined as a 12-year-old boy. My thoughts are interrupted by the greeting of my best friend, Yubi. "Pabien, Janchi! Wow, 74 years! Now we are really starting to get old."

# Discuss today. Act tomorrow.

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*We've seen how a day in our lives could look 50 years from now. It might seem far-fetched. For the vision, we looked at technologies and ideas that are mature at the moment or are rapidly gaining traction all around the world. By 2069 we expect these to be commonplace. We see the potential Curaçao has to start setting up the foundation to adopt technologies that make our cities and lives better. As the next generation of scientists and engineers arise, we will have the capacity to realize the future of our dreams. How does your Curaçao of tomorrow look? Discuss today to act wisely tomorrow.*