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# Framing — Applying the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: The Value of Disciplinary Promiscuity for Practical Governance

The prospects for sustainability of environment and society both globally, and in the Caribbean, looked to be improving at the end of 2015, in the wake of UN agreements on the 2030 Agenda (the Sustainable Development Goals: SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, even if these were more aspirational than fixed commitments. By the end of 2016, the mirror image of this picture threatened to prevail. Any return to the path of resilience and democracy in the region, and among the Caribbean diaspora in increasingly racialized societies of developed countries, will depend on understanding of and empathy with the needs, rights, culture, the identity of Caribbean peoples. The apparent intractability of applying developed country norms of welfare and planning to the poorer nations of the Caribbean has to be addressed by developing hybridised approaches. The irony of graduation from low-income country (LIC) to middle-income country (MIC) status, when graduation then cuts middle-income SIDS (Small Island Development States) off from access to preferential ODA (official development assistance) funding, also demands attention. They remain subject to the typical vulnerabilities of SIDS (extreme weather events, sea-level rise etc.) in a context when environmental hazards are being exacerbated and compounded by the risks from neo-populist, protectionist, and racist agendas in the anglophone developed world, as reflected in nationalist populist calls for cuts to ODA and threats to the implementation of the Paris climate accord. 'The Caribbean' and its peoples are once again under threat from an increasingly atavistic global community.

This section of the volume addresses these challenges through a number of lenses. It is, in Rivke Jaffe's words at the conference, 'disciplinarily promiscuous,' and productively so. The chapters bring ecocriticism to life, proving its seminal relevance to understanding Caribbean life and identity. They address the potential in realistic, pragmatic approaches to development of human settlements, drawing on the ingenuity and energy of communities in informal settlements. They highlight issues of regional governance and local self-determination as well as the role of art and protest in asserting local identity and rights in the face of the resource depredations of globalisation. They further demon-

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strate how, through the process of glocalisation, global crises take on local form and stress the importance of empathy and trust in stakeholders. In framing people differently, the chapters help us empathise, in the hope that the international community will treat people differently and with respect. Such a portrayal of community mobilisation gets us closer to civil society.

The chapters provide innovative responses to what are by now familiar environmental threats faced by already marginalised communities in the Caribbean. The authors address challenges from a range of perspectives that emphasise different fields of study and knowledge bases consistent with the aims of the SDGs, while simultaneously offering a critique of the utility of the 'sustainability' label. What is inspiring about them is that they demonstrate state-of-the-art approaches in the respective disciplines at the same time as contributing to solutions on the ground, or, on a broader scale, reframing our approach to development. Further, they develop long-standing themes of sustainability research and echo experiences common across similar 'glocalities' across the globe: the inverse relation between the originators of planetary risk and those who suffer from climate change, extractive industries, tourism development, and international land speculation. They show that, whatever disciplinary specialism is engaged, the researcher/activist can make a difference to both the framing of problems and the shift in perspective to help the victims help themselves to solutions. The chapters are both conceptually rich and practical.

The apparent heterogeneity of the contributions (they come from the francophone, Hispanic and anglophone Caribbean, from different disciplines and types of environment) belies their combined effect of shedding light on both perennial issues of community and economy in the Caribbean as well as on local manifestations of global processes that have material effects that threaten the livelihoods, culture, amenity, and customary rights of indigenous and traditional communities. If you will, they highlight the impact of neoliberal policies of economic growth that may or may not lead to 'development' and where the main benefits are enjoyed by actors outside the communities or country.

Key themes are: the indispensability of respecting the traditions; customary rights and agency of indigenous and established local communities engaged in subsistence livelihoods; the threats to these rights and livelihoods from globalisation; the value of different disciplinary perspectives in supporting awareness and mobilisation to resist these threats; the struggle for slavery reparations; and the perennial difficulties of securing regional cooperation in the governance of common pool resources of the Caribbean region itself.

The first two authors, a landscape architect and a political geographer (Werthmann and Bohle), take a bottom-up, participatory perspective on the development of informal settlements in full recognition that the Caribbean population is an urban one, and that the state lacks capacity to implement an

effective, top-down approach to urban planning. Complemented by Rivke Jaffe's presentation at the original conference, they build on and refine traditions from the UN Habitat and World Urban Forum conferences since 1976, where participatory development of human settlements has long been championed by practitioners on the ground but usually hampered by traditional training. The latter insists on application of global norms and standards that are unaffordable in context, especially where there is lack of clarity over property rights and the boundaries between legal and non-legal aspects of development and settlement governance are blurred.[1]

These contributions firmly reframe the discourse around human settlements to recognise the culture, claims, and capabilities of residents of informal settlements (slum-dwellers), while drawing attention to the need for supply of basic services and security of tenure (property rights). Along with anthropologist Jaffe's work on hybrid governance (i.e. the partnership between state forces and [criminal] community powerbrokers, or 'dons,' to maintain law and order in informal, organically grown settlements) and Jaffe's analysis of the class and ethnic dimensions of pollution (often referred to as environmental racism), these interventions recognise and value the contribution of the community and serve to de-emphasise the tourist gaze (Urry 1990) of the Caribbean. Rivke Jaffe addressed distributional issues linked to environmental problems and deprivations. Her presentation at the conference (not reproduced here, but see her seminal publications[2]) addressed the concentration of environmental problems in low income areas in Curaçao, which reflect a racism more institutional than personal but which embody a 'blame the poor' narrative. While contributions do not focus on tourist mega-projects in detail, it is worth noting the common practice of carefully gating tourist developments in ways that foster an apartheid of tourists and locals, a move that often bars locals from access to beaches and the coast in breach of customary use rights for fishing or recreation – a process usually driven by foreign investors.

## 1 Contributions

Christian Werthmann describes the incremental and collaborative reconstruction strategies in Haiti following the devastating 2010 earthquake in a complicated national political context and pressures to 'reconstruct better.' Whereas donors and big international NGOs (BINGOs) seek short-term, high-visibility

1 Consider, for example, Turner 1972, with which the pieces by Werthmann and Bohle resonate.

2 Rivke Jaffe 2016.

outputs, there is a need for a more measured approach that ensures democratic process, support, and security of tenure and draws on community capacity for long-term self-build development. The state can and must supply infrastructure services, land, and guarantee public space and basic communications infrastructure. The lessons here are relevant to the challenges of rapid urbanisation throughout SIDS and the South and also remind us that the Caribbean, for all our 'Caribbean imaginary' of isolated beaches fringed by rainforest, is in fact a highly and increasingly urbanised region. Werthmann's approach points up the problems of sovereignty that emerge when the disaster aid budget runs at four times the national budget and when decision-making authority may rest with external rather than internal actors.

Werthmann raises vital questions about post-disaster recovery as well as development of informal settlements in their own right. The magnitude of the losses in the earthquake was reflected in the rush of aid funds and agencies to Haiti, and the resulting failure to use the funds effectively. International NGOs may be in competition with one another, and the local state or NGOs may exercise little sovereignty over what is spent and how. The problems of the receiving community will be exacerbated by uncertainties over land tenure rights, by risks in building in allocated locations and by the initial focus on new-build rather than upgrading existing, informal settlements. Werthmann also presents a striking example of the effective engagement of graduate students in a mutually enriching learning and capacity-building process, reminding us of the need for external researchers to reflect on how to engage in the region.

Political geographer Johannes Bohle writes about spatial geographies of identity and knowledge in the Caribbean, a core theme of glocalisation. He presents two cases in Martinique's capital Fort-de-France in order to examine institutional and non-institutional practices for sustainable urban living: First, the 'ÉcoQuartier' *Bon-Air*, built according to European planning norms, and second, the marginalised communities of the informal settlement *Trénelle-Citron*. Bohle gives the historical context to two distinct approaches to 'sustainability' in a Caribbean perspective on urban development that is sensitive to the importance of community inclusion and capacity-building. Efforts to reconstruct face fewer but stronger hurricanes that can destroy new buildings in an instant. Bonaire has 40 percent unemployment, and 40 per cent of residents over 50 years old. The policy here was to demolish and rebuild, prioritising existing inhabitants, who feared gentrification and that the proposed rebuild would not be affordable. Trénelle-Citron is an illegal and unstructured settlement of 8000 people, with wooden houses, reinforced using mutual help and traditional social practices.

Esther Figueroa is a polymath film-maker, writer, educator, linguist and environmentalist who gives a compelling illustration of the benefits of combin-

ing methodologies of documentary film, dissent and protest in efforts to engage with the authorities who, under the mantle of 'development,' are charged with facilitating resource extraction activities that threaten amenity and social cohesion, thus undermining community rights. The examples of resistance to threats from plans to mine bauxite in Cockpit Country in Jamaica and to build a transhipment port in the Portland Bight Protected Area communicate a social movement's conflict with national state and international economic actors over the environmental rights of local communities, 'whose' land contains valuable bauxite resources the extraction of which will denude and desertify their environment. The documentary shows the relative powerlessness of local communities faced with the exigencies of globalisation, the need for SIDS with huge debt burdens to maximise extraction of raw materials and the labelling of their resistance as 'unpatriotic.' She also demonstrates the non-monetary costs imposed on the community in a contribution that resonates with the work of scholars of environmental racism, who show how environmental contamination is usually focussed on the least privileged communities. She comments on the 'slow lives' lived in deep rural communities and on Rastafarian rejection of the dominant development paradigm. Cockpit Country's longstanding status as a source of bauxite extraction is poignantly counterpointed by a local tradition of self-sufficiency and Maroon autonomy. Her documentary film has had a policy impact: the local government has promised to map the boundaries of the permitted mining area. This is an effective means of mobilising in communities that are dispersed, with low levels of literacy. It is, in short, contextually appropriate and fits the terrain, showing how a research organisation can help publicise and organize local campaigns. Figueroa provides a deeper contextualisation in the history of slavery and exploitation of nature in production of the commodities of empire; she further highlights 'national sacrifice zones,' where pollutants are routinely dumped on 'victim' communities. She also shows the value of nature to the local community that goes unrecognised by developers.

Anabelle Contreras Castro then engages in a constructive criticism of identity issues of a 'Costa-Rican' Caribbean, a region on the north-east coast adjacent to Panama, raising the issue of cultural-political diversity and integration in the face of manipulation of the physical environment by outside investors who, in partnership with the state, expropriate land under the pretext of environmental protection. Once again, land tenure and property rights feature from an anthropological perspective.

The *Foro del Caribe Sur* was founded to combat the enforced expropriation of local communities and to reconceptualise this region, historically an imaginary space for diverse groups – conquerors, pirates, priests, scientists, travellers, tourists, businesspeople – to project their own visions and dreams. This included the United Fruit Company; construction of the railway; the 'crusades'

to convert the indigenous peoples to Christianity; contemporary calls for tenders for major projects won by foreign companies; projects such as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's followers' 'Global Land of World Peace,' a quasi-autonomous 10,000 hectare 100 Million dollar commune and bio-banana plantation; and the location of a US Ministry of Defense department. In the eyes of external investors, the diverse local population is either seen as an impediment or is reduced to the role of labour. Several indigenous groups live here in reserves: *cabécares*, *birbis*, and there are several important nature reserves. Over the last 40 years, the 'framing' or conceptualisation of the area has changed, especially with the passing of the 1977 Indigenous Law setting up the Park of Friendship as well as the ongoing development of sex tourism etc. This all changed the way the region's inhabitants think of themselves and their environment, which includes imagining it as a place of resistance. The land is no longer a 'swamp' but a 'wetland'; the people no longer 'blacks' but 'afro-Caribbeans'; and the label 'pais ecologico,' or green tourism, is applied, ignoring social inequalities. Contreras Castro argues that these labels are a farce that serves to disguise the exploitation of the land. Under the new Maritime-terrestrial Law (*Ley Maritimo-Terrestre*), some land occupancy is no longer legal. Reserves are also proposed, which involve conflict between a government seeking to create a conservation area, letting the territory as concessions, and residents, who sought legal clarification of their property rights and who found themselves in competition with foreign landowners. State intervention under the cloak of nature protection to expropriate and develop projects results in a climate of distrust.

Cultural anthropologist Claudia Rauhut focuses on Caribbean leadership in a Caribbean-based transnational struggle for slavery reparations. Based on self-representation, declarations and reports as well as empirical data from research in Jamaica, Rauhut argues that the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) "has spurred the revitalization of the US reparations movement and fortified the transregional networks of activism." (Rauhut in this volume). She sees the Caribbean as one of the most powerful sites of recent reparations activism offering new approaches to the question, especially with respect to its actors, potential beneficiaries, targeted institutions and collective goals. While former Caribbean reparation activists orientated themselves towards US organizations, especially the National African American Reparation Commission (NAARC), the strategy of targeting not privately owned companies or banks but European governments was readily adopted by NAARC in taking legal action against the US government. Rauhut interprets this as transfer of knowledge from the Global South to the Global North, that signals – at least symbolically – an inversion of, and challenge to power relations in transregional networks.

Daniel Graziadei points us to the poetry of the Anthropocene. He develops a picture of the continuity of island, sea and globe and thereby addresses the theme of glocalisation head-on: he thematises the process of postcolonial culture-building, as well as the manner in which we all share in the 'human ecumene,' including the rest of creation. The local becomes a metaphor for the global. Graziadei's stimulating contribution takes us further into the role of literary ecocriticism, imaginative geography and the failure of island societies under pressure from sea-level rise and the forces of globalisation and migration. Graziadei gets to the heart of our tragically shifting relations with nature and the need for conviviality of humans and other species. His is a radical call to wake up to the challenges of the Anthropocene, a call now all the more resonant as the forces of populism threaten to engulf and obliterate any such commitment to reflexivity.

Finally, Soares returns us to the perennial and more traditional issue of the attempt to secure regionally integrated governance structures for the Caribbean, in this case, for fisheries in the anglophone Caribbean. This implies both finding appropriate mechanisms for management of the global commons, and the Caribbean Sea itself, as well as solutions to the numerous maritime boundary disputes in the Caribbean. These disputes have bedevilled international relations, in particular between the hispanic and the anglophone Caribbean, reminding us of the differential but enduring impact of colonial histories, as seen in the current disputes between Belize and Guatemala and between Guyana and Venezuela. Barbados and Tobago also clash over flying fish. Again, this piece addresses property rights as well as political geography, although there is cause for optimism in progress being made by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, notwithstanding the failure by CARICOM to agree a Common Fisheries Policy.

## 2 Summary

In sum, these contributions from contrasting methodological and disciplinary perspectives draw attention to the persistence of challenges to the Caribbean environment, both at the local and at the regional level. They point to some key components of resilience and also serve to show how approaches first promoted in the 1970s are re-emerging, re-envisioned but consistent with earlier calls for relevance and for participatory decision-making. This in turn recognises the legitimacy of agency of local communities and indigenous peoples, faced as they are with challenges to their customary use rights of the terrestrial and marine environment in a neoliberal process of globalisation and the institutionalisation of the 'tourist gaze' in sex and wedding tourism, tourist mega-pro-

jects, and extraction of natural resources from oil and gas to fish and forest. That some of this may happen with support of the big international NGOs (the BINGOs) and under the guise of 'nature conservation' reflects similar themes across developing countries globally, in the wake of glocalisation. Primary resource users (farmers, fishermen, indigenous peoples) lose their customary rights to access the resources they depend on, for example in losing access to beaches for fishing; likewise, communities that have enjoyed historic access to the amenity of an unspoilt natural environment lose out to extractive industries. While the murder of activists combating deforestation is not documented here, other local problems associated with the migration of global capital are.

The political and policy responses are instructive. Werthmann and Bohle demonstrate the value of including residents of informal settlements in both the planning and the construction of their own habitats, in effect formalising the informal, an approach echoed in Jaffe's work on hybridisation of law and order, where community leaders in slum settlements work in *de facto* cooperation with the police, so that order can be maintained in settlements where the police are reluctant to enter. Rauhut's contribution, an apparent outlier in the context of environment and sustainability, pinpoints the necessity and potential effectiveness of transregional alliances of nation states in reparation activism within CARICOM, the Caribbean as a whole and beyond and underlines the progressive stance the CARICOM Reparations Commission is taking by appealing to former slave-owning states as opposed to privately-owned companies or individuals. She underlines the changing dynamic of the reparations debate at a time when one former colonial power, the United Kingdom, is reduced from the role of sovereign to supplicant, post-Brexit. She also reflects the structural origins in colonial history, and slavery, of themes of environmental exploitation of local communities addressed in other contributions here.

Graziadei, in drawing on the literary tradition to interrogate the island trope, presents us with a fine-grained and sophisticated reflection on the publication's theme of glocalisation: how can islands today, any more than in the 17$^{th}$ century when Donne was writing, be considered separate from global continuities? However, their vulnerabilities lie both in their histories in the context of slavery and colonisations as well as in the 'tourist gaze' or the paradisiacal imaginary.

Distributional impacts of globalisation are addressed head-on by Figueroa, who reminds us of the fact that those with least power suffer most from environmental depredations. And her documentary methodology provides both support for mobilisation and a record of the process of calling the authorities to account, demonstrating the power of the documentary in the political process. Contreras Castro highlights the disingenuous allocation by the state of mineral

extraction rights under cover of nature protection legislation that has excluded traditional users from their environment.

Taken together, the contributions of Figueroa and Graziadei demonstrate the value of the arts and humanities in raising awareness of threats to communities and to nature in the Caribbean. Werthmann and Bohle further underline the value of an emancipatory approach to the residents of informal settlements and by implication the value of removing barriers to self-help development when the resources for a state-led, paternalistic programme are not available. At the same time, the state is clearly charged with supplying the communities with the land and the infrastructure – water, sanitation, utilities – they require to support long-term resilience of both community and habitat. Lastly, Soares reminds us of the challenges of multi-level governance of the Caribbean Sea, with nation states slow to develop an adequate system of regional governance of fisheries and the marine environment, undermining the sustainability of the livelihoods of small-scale fishers in the (unrealistic) hope of profit from a growing industrial fishery.

These contributions highlight key issues in Caribbean studies as well as the value of having the Socare research community add to the range of disciplinary and ideological perspectives on the Caribbean. They also demonstrate persuasively that contributions of value to both problem awareness and solutions (or perhaps more realistically, improvements) may emanate from any one of the full range of disciplines – and the value of having these perspectives evidenced so persuasively, as they are here.

We should also, as a community engaged in scholarship, research, and advocacy, reflect on the legacy of our own work. As we critique the actions of BINGOs and international speculative investors, we need simultaneously to consider what glocally enhanced capacities researchers from outside the region leave behind.[3]

This section is also evidence of a welcome collaboration between Socare and the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA), in which leading members of Socare are actively engaged. The Environment and Sustainability Strand of the CSA has been working since the 2003 Annual Conference in St Kitts and Nevis to raise the profile of research and policy in the arts and social sciences related to environmental rights and challenges across the region. One key criterion applied to the SDGs is universality: the SDGs apply equally to developing and industrialised countries, so that a shared understanding of the distributional

3 See, for example, the approach of the UN SIDS partnership "Learning from the Sharp End of Environmental Uncertainty in SIDS" at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7918 or in a shorter version at http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?page=view&type=1006&nr=2705&menu=1507

consequences of growth or 'development' in the Caribbean can help focus attention on changes required in industrialised countries to transcend the destructive dynamic of globalisation and apply its more constructive opportunities.

Both the CSA and Socare demonstrate a commitment to environmental and social justice as well as an openness to the range of disciplinary perspectives represented here. The arts complement the social and natural sciences in the search for a developmental paradigm that is convivial for all beings on the planet. This 'disciplinary promiscuity' benefits from the writings of social scientists, economists, geographers (Eyre 1989; Watts D. 1990; Girvan 1991; McGregor/Barker 1995; Miller 1996; Meeks/Lindahl 2001; Watts NSJ 2007; Jaffe 2016) and literary critics (DeLoughrey/Handley 2011), as well as recent engagement with nature, sexuality and the politics of the body (Sheller 2003, 2012 and this volume). All of these point to the consolidation of an interdisciplinary corpus from small island states in particular, from which thinkers for the theorising and implementation of the 2030 Agenda should draw: an emergent paradigm that recognises both the potential contribution of the marginalised in industrial as well as developing countries as part of the renewal the planet needs as well as the value of the contribution to this paradigm by academics from SIDS.

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