

Reshaping (g)local dynamics of the Caribbean: Relaciones y Desconexiones – Relations et Déconnexions – Relations and Disconnections

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Who creates visions of the Caribbean and how are they produced? Who seeks to explore how the circulation and non-circulation of knowledge and culture occurred historically in and about the Caribbean? These were some of the key questions addressed and discussed during the conference „Reshaping (g)local dynamics of the Caribbean: Relaciones y Desconexiones – Relations et Déconnexions – Relations and Disconnections,“ funded by Volkswagen Stiftung and organized by Anja Bandau (Hannover), Anne Brüske (Heidelberg), and Natascha Ueckmann (Bremen). The conference took place from 14-17 October 2015 at Schloss Herrenhausen convention center in Hannover, Germany, and was initiated by the Society for Caribbean Research (SOCARE), an international organization that coordinates and promotes research on the Caribbean across all academic disciplines. The international conference contributed to the understanding of the Caribbean by highlighting transatlantic and transoceanic knowledge circulations. Its interdisciplinary approach created a space for dialogue and discussion on how the humanities, cultural studies and social sciences may discuss these circulations and how a critical, transcultural, and decolonial history of science may arise. During the four days of the conference, more than 80 participants and 30 guests discussed and analyzed how ‘the Caribbean’ is constructed as a common cultural space. They approached the topic in four dimensions: in and between linguistic spaces and areas, in and between social and cultural practices and theoretical reasoning, in and between agents and political regulations, in and between academic disciplines.

Instead of the traditional emphasis on aesthetic continuities and filiations, the conference presented a broader perspective on the Caribbean, cutting across a vast number of disciplines and – as implied by the subtitle – negotiating the dialectic of relations and disconnections. The academic disciplines represented were, amongst others, Romance Studies, Linguistic and Literary Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Political Geography, History, and Gender Studies. Other participants included Caribbean visual artists, writers, or landscape architects. This inclusive approach was a central aspect of the conference and brought to light the benefits of combining and considering both academic and artistic approaches.

The highlights of the conference were four keynote lectures from various disciplines such as Sociology, History, and Language and Literary Studies. MIMI SELLER (Philadelphia) focused on „Caribbean Constellations and Mobility Justice,“ critically engaged with the ethics of transport and travel, specifically: the unequal access to the right of mobility. She pointed out that Caribbean mobility experiences uneven topologies, but further emphasized that in the Caribbean social groups contest the privilege of mobility among elites. Through various socio-cultural practices, such as claiming ownership and re-locating of infrastructure facilitated by ‘development’ co-operations, these groups appropriate, claim and reshape ‘network capital.’ In „Politics and Knowledge: How the Havana Cigar Went Global“, JEAN STUBBS (London) discussed the transnational commodity history of the Havana cigar in various historical contexts and periods. She highlighted that the Havana cigar became a global commodity as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth century and that various (g)local agents transformed and modified (production) practices to brand, contest and reproduce ‘Cubanicity’ since then. In her lecture „Nouvelles archives numériques des cultures antillaises,“ CORINNE MENCÉ-CASTER (Fort-de-France) critically engaged with the complexity of cultural heritage in the Antilles. She discussed how, as a result of a scattered history that is not entirely recorded, but stored within literatures and oral memory,

questions of cultural heritage remain problematic. This history is experienced differently by the various social agents and has a direct impact on the question of cultural heritage as a process of production, in- or exclusion, and storage of memories. She discussed how new digital archives, particularly the digital library MANIOC (<<http://www.manioc.org>>), create the possibility to overcome or circumvent the conflicted memories and define Antillean cultural heritage. INEKE PHAF-RHEINBERGER's (Berlin) lecture „The Caribbean – in History, as a Visual Presence, and in Contemporary Writings“ provided a state of the art of Caribbean Studies in Europe, demonstrating that the Caribbean has always been a socially constructed space that extends to include parts of the American continent and other parts of the world. Drawing on Caribbean literature, she scrutinized the significance of European colonization in the literary construction and representation of the Caribbean as a space, highlighting for example how postcolonial Caribbean writers reinterpret the concept of water to overcome its relatedness to European colonization and to signify water as a means to connect. In reference to modern-day slave narratives, she further emphasized that slavery should not be conceived as a historical period but needs to be reflected as continued experience.

Moving on to the plenary sessions, „Environment and Sustainability“ NICHOLAS WATTS (Berlin / London), JOHANNES BOHLE (Bielefeld), ESTHER FIGUEROA (Gordon Town), RIVKE JAFFE (Amsterdam) and CHRISTIAN WERTHMANN (Hannover) discussed the (re)building of infrastructure in Caribbean places such as Haiti and Martinique, and stressed the need to consider the Caribbean as an urban space. Tropes of pollution as well as the notions of sustainability and environmental justice were addressed to highlight the inherent hierarchical relations implicit to the (re)structuring of landscapes and places.

In „Arts and Visual Culture in the Caribbean“, CHRISTOPH SINGLER (Besançon), VEERLE POUPEYE (Kingston), and LEON WAINWRIGHT (London / New York) elaborated on current themes in and canonization of Caribbean art, discussing the need

to (re)consider the role of movement for art and (transnational) artists, which has always affected Caribbean art and continues to do so today. The role and impact of language in the transmission and production of Caribbean art was debated in terms of whether linguistic lines and borders (e.g. the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean) apply to art and to what extent there exist transfers and flows. Visual artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons presented her work and emphasized the need to conceive art as a gift, specifically but not exclusively in Caribbean contexts, in order to overcome the hierarchy of who may access art.

The third plenary session, „State of the Art in Caribbean Studies“, critically engaged practices of and discourses on border-crossings as well as with the relevance of scale in Caribbean Studies. GESINE MÜLLER (Cologne), ARIEL CAMEJO (Havana), RALPH LUDWIG (Halle), ANNIKA MCPHERSON (Augsburg) and GRACIELA SALTO (Santa Rosa) discussed critical reflections on the positionality of social actors, including researchers, aiming to understand different versions of the Caribbean. They specifically called for further transdisciplinary and transregional approaches.

Eight panels provided further in-depth analyses of the various topics addressed in the keynote lectures and plenary sessions: „Knowledge Circulation in the Caribbean I: Translation of Concepts“ (chair: Jana Gohrlich), „Knowledge Circulation in the Caribbean II: Negotiating History“ (chair: Alejandro Gómez), „Ethnopoliticization as a Strategy of In- and Exclusion“ (chair: Sinah Kloth), „Theorizing Rhythm, Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Writing“ (chair: Ruth Mayer), „Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean Practices: Social Fields and Decolonial Options“ (chairs: Manuela Boatcă and Claudia Rauhut), „Intra-Caribbean and Transoceanic Dynamics: ‘Going Creole, Coolitude, Kala Pani...’“ (chair: Gisela Febel), „Migration and Transnational Networks“ (chair: Martina Urioste-Buschmann) and „Non-Knowledge – ‘Non-Histoire’ – Non-Narrativity“ (chair: Gudrun Rath).

Dialogue between established scholars and young researchers was considered especially

important in this conference. Junior researchers from various disciplines presented their ongoing research on the Caribbean in an independent poster session, hosted by Jorge Duany. The diverse topics addressed in this session included the development of Spanish in Caribbean language contact or even the formation of Caribbean fishery policy.

Finally, the conference was framed by various cultural events. Addressing the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, the film *Murder in Pacot* (2014) by Raoul Peck was screened in cooperation with the German-Jamaican Society at 'Pavillon' cultural center in downtown Hannover. The film, which uses a partially destroyed mansion rented out to strangers in Port-au-Prince as setting for a psychosocial drama, was discussed by the audience and host Jörg Wenzel. Secondly, the Haitian author Kettly Mars presented her most recent novel *Je suis vivant* (2015) in a public reading, co-hosted by Literarischer Salon Hannover at the Leibniz University. While Mars read parts of her novel in the original, German translations were read by actress Julia Schmalbrock. The bilingual event created a special atmosphere that continued during a conversation with the author, led by Julia Borst, and the lively discussion with the audience. Thirdly, *Jamaica for Sale* (2008) was screened and discussed in presence of its director, Esther Figueroa, award-winning filmmaker and author from Jamaica. Again, this was a cooperation with the German-Jamaican Society. The event took place in the auditorium at the conference venue, where a spirited conversation on the Caribbean's economic dependency on tourism and the lack of sustainability in building tourism's infrastructure brought the screening to a close.

It has become clear that the leading themes of the conference were linked to socio-cultural dynamics in the (im)mobility of people, the movement of material goods, as well as the transfer of ideas, concepts, and visual art. Colonial, neo- and post-colonial discourses and practices were discussed critically at international and intra-Caribbean levels. The construction of Caribbean identities and the construction of 'the' Caribbean by various social actors such as migrants, visual artists, scholars, and writers also came into play.

These discussions highlighted the economic, socio-cultural, political systems and regimes of power that have influenced the Caribbean in the past and continue to affect it in the present. However, it also became clear that these relations of power raise claims and prompt transformations amongst Caribbean social agents today. With regard to methodology, conference participants frequently emphasized that, although disciplinary borders are increasingly crossed and transgressed, the effort to continue and increase such research remains highly relevant in the field of Caribbean Studies. A shift from inter- to transdisciplinary approaches and research groups should therefore be encouraged in future research.¹

Conference Overview:

Opening and Welcoming Address

Anja Bandau (Hannover) / Natascha Ueckmann (Bremen)

Keynote 1

Mimi Sheller (Philadelphia): Caribbean Constellations and Mobility Justice
with a commentary by Martha Zapata Galindo (Berlin)

Panel 1a - Knowledge Circulation in the Caribbean I: Translation of Concepts

Chair: Jana Gohrisch (Hannover)

Gudrun Rath (Linz): Narrativas del zombi: Circulaciones y derivas

David Frohnapfel (Berlin): Sameness or Diversity: Dissimilating vs. Assimilating Curations of Contemporary Haitian Art by Barbara Prezeau-Stephenson and Leah Gordon

Annika McPherson (Augsburg): Rethinking Diaspora in and with Rabindranath Maharaj's *The Amazing Absorbing Boy*

Christopher Laferl (Salzburg): Exclusion and Inclusion in Caribbean Song Lyrics before the 1960s

Panel 1b - Ethnopoliticization as a Strategy of

¹For more information on the conference, please follow this link: <http://www.romanistik.phil.uni-hannover.de/caribbean_conference.html> (24.02.2016). A detailed conference reader may be found at: <<http://www.romanistik.phil.uni-hannover.de/12051.html>> (24.02.2016).

In- and Exclusion

Chair: Sinah Kloß (Heidelberg)

Sibylle Fischer (New York): Mapping Caribbean Intellectual History: The Conspiracies of Gual y España and Fermín Núñez

Françoise Vergès (La Réunion / London): Caribbean Thought and Decolonization

Anabelle Contreras Castro (San José): Amenazas globales y respuestas comunales. Reimaginar la identidad y la territorialidad desde el Foro Caribe Sur

Clement Henry (Goodhope Village): Ethno-Politicization and Human Security in Guyana

Hugh Todd (Georgetown): Socio-economic and Political Challenges to the Development of Caribbean Small States: The Case of Guyana

Plenary Session 1 - Environment and Sustainability

Chair: Nicholas Watts (Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, Berlin / London)

Johannes Bohle (Environmental Historian, Bielefeld)

Esther Figueroa (Environmental Filmmaker, Writer, Gordon Town/ JA)

Rivke Jaffe (Anthropologist, Urban Studies, Amsterdam)

Christian Werthmann (Landscape Architect, Ecological Urbanism, Hannover)

Panel 2a - Theorizing Rhythm, Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Writing

Chair: Ruth Mayer (Hannover)

Jana Evans Brazier (Cincinnati): „Riding with Death”: Vodou-Art and Urban Environmentalism in the Streets of Port-au-Prince

Nemesio Gil Pineda (San Juan): The Black and the Beautiful: Strategies of Depiction and Visualization in Richard Ligon's and R.C. Dallas's Caribbean Travel Narratives

Emiel Martens (Amsterdam): Welcome to Paradise Island: The History of Jamaica's Cine-Tourist Image

Matti Steinitz (Bielefeld): Transbarrio Dialogues in the Black Power Era – Latin Booga-

loo and Identity Formation in New York City's Puerto Rican Diaspora

Juan José Velez (Bremen): Salsa y subjetividad: funciones de la cultura musical hispanoafrocaribeña contemporánea en la articulación discursiva de identidades culturales

Panel 2b - Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean Practices: Social Fields and Decolonial Options

Chairs: Manuela Boatca / Claudia Rauhut (Berlin)

Sandra Álvarez Ramírez (Hannover/Havana): ¿Ciberfeminismo en Cuba?

Julia Roth (Bielefeld): Daughters of Caliban Fighting Multiple Oppressions: Amerafrican Feminisms in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas

Claudia Rauhut (Berlin): The Claims for Slavery Reparations in the Caribbean

Ulrike Schmieder (Hannover): Periódicos y revistas afrocubanos y el „saber” sobre Haiti, África y la esclavitud en el espacio atlántico

Stuart Earle Strange (Ann Arbor): Many and One, Being and Becoming: The Ethics of Agency in Maroon and Hindu Self-Description

Plenary Session 2 - Arts and Visual Culture in the Caribbean

Chair: Christoph Singler (Latin-American Studies, Besançon)

María Magdalena Campos-Pons (Artist, Boston/Havana)

Carlo Célius (Art Historian, Paris)

Veerle Poupeye (Director of the National Gallery, Kingston/Jamaica)

Leon Wainwright (Art Historian, London/New York)

Poster Session

Chair: Jorge Duany (Miami)

Jessica Barzen, Hanna Lene Geiger, Silke Jansen, Alla Klimenkova (Erlangen): Hispania submersa – Spanish in Caribbean Language Contact

Carola Heinrich (Wien): El Otro cubano. Emigración y regreso en la cuentística cubana con-

temporánea

Alla Klimenkowa (Erlangen): Identifying kréyol and criollo in the Contemporary French Caribbean and Spanish America

Gabriele Knauer, Alejandro Sánchez Castellanos (Berlin): El paisaje lingüístico de La Habana en proceso de diversificación y cambio

Hanna Merk (Trier): La Academia Dominicana de la Lengua y las consultas lingüísticas – ¿Defensa/emancipación de la variedad lingüística nacional?

Lisa K. Soares (Coventry): Recasting Rights in the Caribbean: The Formation of a Regional Fisheries Policy

Keynote 2

Jean Stubbs (London): Politics and Knowledge: How the Havana Cigar Went Global with a commentary by Christine Hatzky (Hannover)

Panel 3a - Intra-Caribbean and Transoceanic Dynamics: „Going creole, coolitude, kala pani ...“

Chair: Gisela Febel (Bremen)

Kathleen Gyssels (Antwerp): „L’Autre Amérique“ moins La Guyane? Points blancs sur la carte rhizomatique ou les trois G’s vues et vécues dans l’esprit martiniquais (antillanité/créolité)

Daniel Graziadei (Munich): Donne Decolonized: The Sinking of the Island of Conviviality into the Mare Tenebrosum

Kristian van Haesendonck (Leiden): Going Creole: Towards a Comparison of Caribbean and Cape Verdean Narratives

Juliane Tauchnitz (Leipzig): La robinsonnade (dés)équilibrée. Tendances escapistes et les limites de la Créolité dans L’empreinte à Cru-soé de Patrick Chamoiseau

Panel 3b - Migration and Transnational Networks

Chair: Martina Urioste-Buschmann (Hannover)

Jorge Duany (Miami): „Qué pasa, Little Havana“: Los paisajes transnacionales de la diáspora cubana en Miami

Catherine Krull (Victoria), Jean Stubbs (Lon-

don): Crossing Borders: Knowledge Networks, Ideas and Values among Cubans in Canada and Western Europe

Grace Aneiza Ali (New York): A Portrait of Migration in the Guyana Photographic Archive

Sinah Kloß (Heidelberg): Staying in Touch, Sending Used Clothes: The Role of Materiality and Translocality in Transnational Guyanese Gift Exchange Practices

Omar Ruiz Vega (Berlin): Puerto Rico and its Colonial Music History

Keynote 3

Corinne Méné-Caster (Fort-de-France): Nouvelles archives numériques des cultures antillaises

with a commentary by Ralph Ludwig (Halle)

Panel 4a - Non-Knowledge – „Non-Histoire“ – Non-Narrativity

Chair: Gudrun Rath (Linz)

Adriana López-Labourdette (St. Gallen): Estética del vestigio. Restos, cuerpos y memoria posesclavista en el Caribe hispano

Karen Poe Lang (San José): Lo inescrible que hace escribir. Enfermedad y muerte en Pájaros de la playa de Severo Sarduy

Janett Reinstädler (Saarbrücken): Los traumas (olvidados) de una revolución: Memoria en el cine cubano después de 1989

Miriam Lay Brander (Constance): Between Ethnography and Cultural Resistance: The Caribbean Proverb as a Practice of (Non-) Knowledge

Panel 4b - Knowledge Circulation in the Caribbean II: Negotiating History

Chair: Alejandro Gómez (Lille)

Héctor Pérez Brignoli (San José): El Caribe como „Banana Republic“

Alejandro Fernández Calderón (Magdeburg/Havana): Menegildo vs. Napolión: El conflicto intracaribeño de los pichones antillanos en la crónica del racismo cubano (1902-1931)

Vicente Sanz Rozalen (Castellón): El Caribe en el sistema atlántico. Perspectivas desde la

Historia trasnacional

Keynote 4

Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger (Berlin): The Caribbean - in History, as a Visual Presence, and in Contemporary Writings

Plenary Session 3 - State of the Art in Caribbean Studies

Chair: Gesine Müller (Cologne)

Ariel Camejo (Literary and Cultural Studies, Havana)

Ralph Ludwig (Linguistics and Creole Studies, Halle)

Annika McPherson (Anglophone Cultural Studies, Augsburg)

Graciela Salto (Latin-American Literary Studies, Santa Rosa/ ARG)

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