

Introduction

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The Caribbean region is more than a geographical expression. It is the designation of a cluster of nations with a distinctive political character and a diverse combination of races, religions, languages and cultures. Perhaps no other region of the world is so varied. As the Caribbean scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1992, 21) states: “Caribbean societies are inescapably heterogenous. . . . The region – and indeed particular territories within it – has long been multi-racial, multi-lingual, stratified, and some would say, multi-cultural.” This diversity, embedded in the pattern of settlement and in the social structure of the Caribbean countries, influences political power and mobilization as well as patterns of ethnic formation and self-consciousness, which engender various claims with respect to resources and voice.

The Caribbean is also a distinctive socioeconomic order determined by experiences of a historical formation rooted in colonialism and the plantation system, and all the consequences manifested in social stratification, cultural contradictions and endemic economic limitations. As a result, the persistence of “plantation variables” is a fact, and the economies of the region eventually evolved typically into monocrop production, which is mostly foreign-owned and export-oriented. Later, since the 1960s, emphasis on crops such as sugar, coffee and bananas was replaced by an excessive emphasis on tourism, which has been heralded as the road to modernity and prosperity.

In the late twentieth century, substantial numbers of Caribbean people resided in North America, Great Britain, the Netherlands and France in what has been referred to as the “Caribbean diaspora”. This phenomenon, which

includes a substantial preservation of Caribbean cultural characteristics in predominantly Caribbean residential areas in the metropolitan countries, has created a new meaning of “Caribbean region” as including all areas of the world where Caribbean people have migrated and established themselves as distinct subcommunities (Premdas 1996, 8).

Recently, even though Caribbean countries are signatories to a wide variety of conventions and international agreements, economies and societies in the region and all over the world have been grappling with the challenges of globalization and the tyranny of financialization: the astonishing pace of technological innovation, widening poverty gaps, food shortages, climate change, rising energy costs, environmental problems and global financial crises, along with vexing social ills such as unemployment and underemployment, rising criminality, health and educational challenges, and the like. Taking these facts into consideration, it becomes crucial that the present preoccupation of Caribbean societies be social transformation from societies enduring colonial woes to self-reliant, economically viable, technologically responsive, politically stable and culturally secure entities pursuing “the quest for endogenous holistic sustainability”. A “holistic” approach utilizes four pillars of sustainability: social, cultural, environmental and economic.

Evidently, globalization has already impacted the economies and societies of the Caribbean: exacerbation of economic instability, rising current account and fiscal deficits alongside high debt obligations, a slowdown in productivity growth, limited adjustment in traditional sectors, high unemployment and underemployment, reduction and deterioration of public services and the quality of infrastructure, degradation of the environment and natural resources, increasing social problems (including crime and violence), the growing distance between rich and poor, marginalization and social exclusion and unfair competition arrangements which put Caribbean nations in a situation of ever-increasing inferiority. Besides, the nature of the current financial integration of Caribbean countries has created new forms of external vulnerability. As the effects of globalization will more likely intensify, and given its complexity and its potentially disruptive power, together with its opportunities, there is clearly an urgent need to understand it, to take advantage of whatever benefits it offers and to minimize potentially negative outcomes.

The Caribbean also has several strengths as regards globalization: the region is democratic; adheres to a system of laws; has embraced economic

liberalism, particularly since the beginning of the 1990s; has a relatively high level of education compared with other less developed countries and is mostly English-speaking and geographically close to the United States, the largest single market in the world (United Nations 2004). But a positive, realistic, and forward-looking stance will not be possible without a good understanding of this new world order which is shaping and will continue to shape the contemporary Caribbean and the rest of the world. Consequently, the question that arises is this: What are realistic development options for Caribbean territories given the policy space available to their national institutions at present?

This era of neoliberal globalization and financialization, however, challenges old-fashioned areas of intellectual concern to discovery, explanation and theory. To effectively deal with the multidimensional problems of the region requires capable theoretical analyses and thorough and technically proficient policy responses and interventions for building social resilience for local sustainable socioeconomic development while enhancing institutional strength in the region. This multidisciplinary edited book, *Caribbean Realities and Endogenous Sustainability*, emphasizes the need for a sound understanding of the nature of modern realities and seeks to offer concrete policy suggestions to national and regional institutions as well as the local business community while engaging scholars, policymakers, professionals, students, and all persons interested in the burning issues associated with this theme.

The Structure of the Book

Caribbean Realities and Endogenous Sustainability discusses alternative theoretical perspectives, sustainable growth-inducing economic policies and special challenges in this era of neoliberal globalization. These perspectives, policies and challenges have to be boldly and seriously considered if appropriate administrative and economic interventions towards changing the Caribbean status quo and eliminating social and political ills are to be pursued. With important contributions by distinguished academics and scientists, the book evaluates past efforts and policies, criticizes failed perspectives, and offers alternative strategies, policies and realistic options to address the region's current socioeconomic impasse and misery from a distinctly Caribbean viewpoint. While different areas of concern are addressed, the chapters are informed, to a greater or lesser extent, by such important factors as historical legacy, the

role of institutions (including market and government), geopolitics and international relations, security, local culture and social psychology, which clearly stand in contrast to the starry-eyed analysis of the current orthodoxy. Overall, the contributions to this edited book not only expand the body of knowledge but, more important, provide a rich menu of alternative strategies and policies related to Caribbean international relations and social and governance ills in the twenty-first century.

This volume is structured around three main themes – which are also the titles of the three parts of the book. Part 1, “Theoretical Issues and Alternative Perspectives”, contains chapters 1 to 4. In the opening chapter, Emilio Pantojas-García seeks to explain why, despite changes, the Caribbean continues to play a subordinate role in the new global economy. The author concludes that, even though the structure and role of the region in the world economy have changed, subordination and vulnerability persist. In chapter 2, Ron R. Sookram explores the corporate governance landscape of the Caribbean by considering the major corporate failures and their impacts as well as the region’s responses to these failures. The author proposes a responsible leadership approach to corporate governance linked to sustainability which, consequently, broadens the framework within which good governance is assessed. Chapter 3, by Ronald Marshall and Russell Foote, adds to the discussion on the fashioning of a Caribbean identity. By examining social, cultural, educational and political policies, the authors argue that there is a multicultural social dynamic influencing behaviours that are prompted by various policy positions, which could shed more light on the identity question. In chapter 4, Jacqueline A. Braveboy-Wagner reviews the foreign policies of the small Caribbean nations, seeking to find out how well they are adapting to global changes while focusing on general patterns applicable to most if not all the states of the region.

Part 2, “Economic Policies for Sustainable Growth”, comprises chapters 5 to 8. Chapter 5, by Dave Seerattan, reviews the economic performance of Caribbean countries over time in the context of the emerging global environment, evaluates key areas of weakness and suggests the main planks on which political reforms can be prosecuted to address the region’s vulnerabilities and improve its overall performance. In chapter 6, Anthony Peter Gonzales’s findings offer support to theories on the positive links between trade openness and overall competitiveness as well as the empirical work on trade competitiveness

being undertaken in the context of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) and the European Union and the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU-28), on the one hand, and Central America and Panama, on the other. Chapter 7, by Debbie A. Mohammed, provides an overview of the current Caribbean economic position in the post-global recessionary period, discusses various attempts to address declining competitiveness and revenue, and offers policy recommendations that can facilitate the creation in the region of viable green agriculture and tourism sectors specifically and a more sustainable green approach generally. In chapter 8, Indianna D. Minto-Coy examines the role of diasporas in social and economic progress, makes a case for the relevance of the diaspora option in a Caribbean context and draws broad conclusions on strategies and guides for Caribbean governments in their efforts to mainstream them into national and regional development.

Part 3, “Globalization and Special Challenges”, includes chapters 9 to 12. In chapter 9, Wendy C. Grenade explores new dimensions of regionalization in the global south by analysing the Shanique Myrie case, based on the 2013 judgment of the Caribbean Court of Justice, and examining the implications for Caribbean integration. The case exemplifies the complexity of regional integration in the contemporary era. Chapter 10, by Georgina Chami, defines the global context in which the Caribbean region operates and discusses the nexus between security (broadened to encompass social, political and economic dimensions) and governance. According to the author, governance plays a key role in all these areas. The chapter concludes by examining the future implications for the region and what would contribute to good governance. Chapter 11, by Gour C. Saha and Kamla Mungal, addresses the process and level of adoption of business analytics in Trinidad and Tobago and, more generally, in the Caribbean. Considering the results of a recent survey of firms, the authors propose a suitable framework to improve performance on the business sophistication pillar aimed at increasing the level of adoption and boosting firm and country competitiveness. In the last chapter of the book, Kristina Hinds-Harrison and Annita Montoute examine the important role of trade unions in global politics. The authors use Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago as case studies and argue that the manner in which these types of organizations now operate as well as the ways in which they are now conceived of and portrayed in the Caribbean have been significantly altered by forces of globalization.

References

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