

Theorising the Caribbean against the grain. How West Indian social scientists established the Caribbean as a space of knowledge production in the 1950s

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Meta Cramer (orcid.org/0000-0001-7684-0565),
Institute for Sociology, University of Freiburg, Germanyⁱ.

i. Meta Cramer is a PhD student at the Institute for Sociology, University of Freiburg, working on the production of social knowledge in a post-colonial world order.

Abstract: This paper examines the foundational and formative period of interdisciplinary social thought in the anglophone Caribbean to critically engage with hypothesis of academic dependency and shed further light on how West Indian scholars in the 1950s resisted institutional and epistemic structures of dominance. Manifold contributions outline the colonial and imperial legacy and entanglement of social sciences knowledge production, however often focus on macro-historical and epistemic discussions. To enhance these, I argue, concrete empirical case studies of social knowledge production in the Global South can be productive to elaborate and learn from non-hegemonic traditions of theorising and researching. Conducting a reconstruction of the institutional context of knowledge production and its interaction with each other, it will be shown that West Indian social scientists represent an inspiring example of how social theorising was practiced against the grain of centre-periphery relations.

Keywords: Academic dependence. Sociological theory. Knowledge circulation. Center-periphery. Caribbean.

Teorizando o Caribe a contrapelo.

Como cientistas sociais do Caribe anglófono estabeleceram
o Caribe como espaço de produção de conhecimento nos anos 1950

Resumo: Este artigo examina o período fundacional e formativo do pensamento social interdisciplinar no Caribe anglófono, no intuito de se engajar criticamente com a hipótese da dependência acadêmica, e joga luz sobre como intelectuais das Índias Ocidentais nos anos 1950 resistiram a estruturas de dominação institucionais e epistêmicas. O legado e o enraizamento imperial da produção de conhecimento das ciências sociais é constituído por contribuições de diferentes tipos, ainda que frequentemente estejam focadas sobre discussões macrohistóricas e epistêmicas. Argumento que, para reforçá-las, estudos de caso empíricos da produção de conhecimento social no Sul Global podem ser produtivos a fim de elaborar e aprender de tradições de teorização e pesquisa não hegemônicas. Ao conduzir a reconstrução de um contexto institucional de produção de conhecimento e sua interação um com o outro, buscarei mostrar que os cientistas sociais das

Índias Ocidentais representam um exemplo inspirador de como a teorização social era praticada a contra a corrente das relações centro-periferia.

Palavras-chave: Dependência acadêmica. Teoria sociológica. Circulação do conhecimento. Relações centro-periferia. Caribe.

(Post)colonial epistemic and institutional orders of knowledge production

In the past decades, the colonial legacy of knowledge production, the imperial epistemic order of social sciences and the role that colonial and imperial power and domination play and have played in disciplinary developments and research has been increasingly come into the focus of sociological research (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Boatcă & Costa, 2010). Following Sujata Patel (2019), four different strands of sociological research can be identified: Firstly, historical-sociological “Empire Studies” examining how social scientists, universities and institutions were involved in and shaped by colonial politics (Go, 2020; Steinmetz, 2013). Secondly, postcolonial analysis, often based on postcolonial studies and their focus on the British Empire, studying disciplinary sociological knowledge and its focus on “modernity” – meaning western societies and knowledge – and developing an epistemological critique (Bhambra, 2014; Go, 2016). Thirdly, de-colonial researchers who expand this critique by including a larger historical period that begins with the colonisation of Latin America, presenting proposals for de-linking the production of knowledge from colonial epistemes, and developing the conceptual framework of “coloniality of knowledge” – describing the continuity of colonial power structures on an epistemic, intellectual and artistic dimension based on racial/ethnic divisions in modern days (Coronil, 1996; Escobar, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000). Fourthly, studies on “Southern Theories” work out marginalised traditions of thought in the social sciences that were produced in non-hegemonic spaces of knowledge production without an overarching paradigm (Alatas & Sinha, 2017; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2007; Patel, 2019).

Additionally to these widely circulated contributions, Caribbean social scientists have worked extensively on colonial legacies in knowledge production. While post-colonial studies emerged in context of the British Empire’s exploitation colonies in the 18th century onwards and de-colonial studies from a critique of this focus and a perspective on the settler-colonies in Latin America, colonized in the 15th century, the Caribbean as an inter-imperial space of exploitation colonies represents an exceptional and overlooked context of knowledge production.

Contributions by Caribbean scholars to the humanities remarkably shaped the global discourse of anti-colonial thought in the 1940s and from the 1990s onwards

(Césaire, 1950; Fanon, 1986; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 2002; James, 1989). Furthermore, work in the social sciences highlighted the overlooked role of the colonial plantation system onto knowledge production as well as the disciplinary system evoking an exclusion of knowledge from and about the Caribbean (Girvan, 2010; Gordon, 2014; Gordon et al., 2016; Henry, 2000). What unites these works is a critique of eurocentric knowledge production in those social sciences that were complicit with the colonial project and continue to work from an imperial perspective focussed on Europe and North America.

However, besides these more macro-historical oriented analyses, only little research studies the practical dimension of postcolonial orders in academia, such as institutional contexts, practices of career building, and social knowledge making. Analysing concrete institutional and social practices in Higher Education and research appears crucial to further comprehend the production of imperial and colonial epistemes in sociological knowledge. Global knowledge production is shaped by various historically embedded inequalities, such as funding, institutional reputation, research infrastructures (libraries, archives), or representation in high-ranked journals. Therefore, the paper at hand elaborates a reconstruction of knowledge production in its institutional context and its interaction with academic work in the South to analyse potential resistances of global inequalities that are invisible from a macro-perspective. In conducting a case study of West Indian social scientists in the 1950s, it will be shown how these scholars practiced social theorising against the grain of centre-periphery relations.

Geopolitics of knowledge production: academic dependency?

Post-colonial inequalities in the global social sciences have been prominently described being structured in a centre-periphery model in which institutional and epistemic dependencies co-occur. Following Malaysian sociologist Syed Farid Alatas, social sciences are in a situation of academic imperialism “analogous to political and economic imperialism, that is, the ‘domination of one people by another in their world of thinking’” (Alatas, 2003: 601).

According to academic dependency theory, the social sciences in intellectually dependent societies are dependent on institutions and ideas of western social science such that research agendas, the definition of problems areas, methods of research and standards of excellence are determined by or borrowed from the West (Alatas, 2003: 603).

1. By the West, he refers "to what we may call the contemporary social science powers, which are the United States, Great Britain and France" (Alatas, 2003: 602).

Alatas defines various layers of the academic dependency of southern scholars on Western¹ social sciences, e.g. on a psychological, epistemological institutional and financial level (see Alatas, 2003: 605).

Similar arguments are made by Beninian philosopher Paulin Hountondji, who emphasises the role of agents of knowledge making and the role of space and place in the geopolitics of knowledge production. Following him,

African scholars assume that, having been born and educated at home, they will be starting their scholarly training and, their scholarly careers "on the margins of science", far from the heart of the world's scientific and technological activity (Hountondji, 1990: 6).

According to Hountondji,

scientific and technological activity, as practiced in Africa today, is just as "extroverted", as externally oriented, as is economic activity; its shortcomings are, therefore, of the same nature. That is, they are not cognate or consubstantial with our systems of knowledge as such. On the contrary, they derive from the historical integration and subordination of these systems to the world system of knowledge and "know-how", just as underdevelopment as a whole results, primarily, not from any original backwardness, but from the integration of our subsistence economies into the world capitalist market (Hountondji, 1990: 7).

Hountondji further specifies that the "decisive stage" of research that is missing in the South is "theorizing", the "interpretation of raw information, the theoretical processing, often through experimental machinery and methods" (Hountondji, 1990: 7). Similar to Alatas, he differentiates thirteen different dimensions of scientific dependence.

Against the background of these concepts, German sociologist W. Keim developed a three-dimensional model of centre-periphery relations in the social sciences (Keim 2008). Following her, a first dimension refers to material infrastructure and academic and political freedom, an "appropriate material, institutional and personal basis" (Keim, 2008: 25). This dimension on which developed/undeveloped sociologies can be distinguished, "is mainly determined by external factors such as availability of funding, scientific and higher education infrastructures" (Keim, 2008: 25). On the second dimension of centre-periphery relations, intra-scientific factors of autonomy or dependency, self-reproduction and independence in staff, institu-

tional and knowledge regards, visible at the necessity of international exchange and communication for dependent sociologies are discussed (Keim, 2008: 26). Thirdly, intra-scientific factors of centrality and marginality, the “position and function of given sociologies within the international community” (Keim, 2008: 26) are considered: thereby, centrality refers to international visible, acknowledged and prestigious sociologies (Keim, 2008: 26), observable in bibliometric analyses and “geographical specialization of research institutions” (Keim, 2008: 33).

The heterogeneity of academic dependency

This centre-periphery hypothesis of a dominance of social sciences knowledge production in the Global North is supported by recent large scale bibliometric studies which show a concentration of publications, citations, and cooperation in the US and Western Europe (Collyer, 2018; Kurzman, 2017; Leydesdorff & Wagner, 2008; Mosbah-Natanson & Gingras, 2014). These studies, however, are biased in the sense that databases of publications (the basis of the bibliometric studies) often exclude contributions in other languages than English, therefore produced knowledge is invisible (Keim, 2008: 29; Ramos Zincke, 2014: 4; Vessuri, Guédon, & Cetto, 2013: 651f.).

The scarce empirical studies on conditions and practices of social knowledge production in non-metropolitan spaces other than publications as research products present a mixed picture.

Looking at knowledge production as a situated process in institutional contexts, material conditions and everyday-life practices, this research enlarges the more historical, macro-structural, epistemically oriented literature in post-, decolonial and southern sociology.

Based on a study of South African Labour Studies, Wiebke Keim supports the hypothesis of a centre-periphery model of global knowledge production in which, nevertheless, counter-hegemonic currents can emerge (Keim, 2008; 2011). Looking at career practices of Argentinian social scientists, Leandro Rodríguez Medina too finds evidence of a centre-periphery model in which scholars have to negotiate their position between global and local evaluation criteria (Rodríguez Medina, 2014; 2019). Similarly, in interviews with scientists in the semiperipheral Southern Tier – Australia, South Africa, and Brazil – Raewyn Connell and her team found out about scholars’ negotiation of their southern position, and complex strategies and tactics of scholars who engaged with the global dominance in various ways (Collyer et al., 2019; Connell et al., 2018).

Additionally, studies focused on institutional factors of Latin American social sciences highlight the development of an independent system of knowledge production, visible in publication circuits, history of ideas and the academic job market, in which Anglo-American research does not play a central role (Beigel, 2014; Beigel, Gallardo & Bekerman, 2018; Ramos Zincke, 2014; Vessuri, Guédon & Cetto, 2013). In these studies on Latin American countries, the Caribbean region, especially the anglophone West Indies, are often overlooked (Delgado, 2012; Iton & Iton, 2016: 28). The lacking representation of West Indian journals in publication databases further hinders a systematic bibliometric analysis. Researching in the anglophone Caribbean is confronted with the immense challenge of having to position itself in the English-speaking, thus large, Anglo-American dominated discourse.

Overall, these findings reveal that academic dependencies differ significantly in distinct contexts with different colonial histories. To further understand the particular socio-historical contexts of social knowledge production and their differences, case studies of specific constellations of institutional and epistemic dependencies might expand our knowledge. Academic dependency hence will be used as a tentative concept to analyse institutional factors (re)producing centre-periphery relations such as institutional leadership, publication opportunities and epistemic dependencies such as paradigms or disciplinary orders.

Based on these findings, in the following I will conduct a case study of West Indian social scientists in the 1950s to further understand academic dependency in context as well as its resistance. During this period, West Indian social scientists institutionally and epistemically founded Caribbean social sciences in the anglophone Caribbean and centred the it as a space of social theorising. Methodologically, I am drawing on the approach of 'global entanglements' developed by social theorist Shalini Randeria (Conrad & Randeria, 2002), which entails "analys[ing] contemporary societies on a geopolitical scale and in historical perspective". This "decolonial perspective, instead of centring the colonial as the shaping moment of post-emanipatory societies, emphasizes the continuous anti-colonial struggle" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez & Reddock, 2021: 2f.). Against this background, I specifically research the history of higher education institutions in the anglophone Caribbean – naturally entangled with British imperial politics – based on secondary historical literature as well as published accounts of West Indian scholars about the university at that time to reflect on the moments of anti-colonial struggle. To understand what kind of social knowledge was produced in this institutional contexts, I further regarded autobiographic interviews with and published works by the scholars I study.

The colonial legacy of higher education in the anglophone Caribbean

Knowledge production in the anglophone Caribbean² – “the first to enter the British Empire and the last to leave” (Lewis, 1985: 221) – was only established in the 1950s, together with formal political independence of the West Indies in the 1960s (Lewis, 1985). The educational system long served imperial interests of instructing loyal imperial citizens. The institutionalization of knowledge production in the Caribbean and by Caribbean scholars was long hindered by the British Colonial Office (however, for the rich tradition of social thought before its institutionalization in the mid 20th century, see Benn, 2004; Bogues, 2003; Henry, 2000; Lewis, 1983). Like in most other non-settler colonies, institutions of higher education were not founded in the Caribbean territories. Higher education was only possible through mobility to the colonial metropole, which can be described as a pattern of institutional academic dependency prohibiting the development of institutionalised knowledge production (Cobley, 2000: 2; see for the following Bacchus, 2009: 242f.; 319ff.; Taylor, 1951; Braithwaite, 1958; Whitehead, 2005; Marshall, 2000).

Against this background, the anglophone Caribbean represents a vivid case study to critically study the three dimensional model of centre-periphery relations by Keim and also make visible how Caribbean scholars resisted structures of institutional and epistemic dependency. I will firstly examine the colonial legacy of higher education in the anglophone Caribbean on an institutional dimension by looking into the policies of mobility and institutionalisation of higher education under British rule. It will be demonstrated how the institutional dependency was accompanied by epistemic and political effects that were supportive of an anti-colonial knowledge production. Secondly, the institutionalisation of research *in* the anglophone Caribbean will be shortly discussed concerning research agendas and epistemic features. In the conclusion, I will discuss the interplay of different levels of centre-periphery relations and their resistance in the discussed case.

West Indian students in London: mobility to the metropole

Despite decade-long lobbying for a local institution of higher education in the anglophone Caribbean, until 1948, the British Colonial office did not install a research institution and students intending to pursue higher education had to migrate abroad. While this can be interpreted as a situation of centre-periphery relations on the first dimension – the lacking of infrastructure of higher education – a vibrant

2. The Caribbean was the region first colonised by European colonial powers in the 15th century. From the 16th century onwards, a profitable plantation economy system was established in the West Indies, based on the enslavement and transportation of five million African people and later migration of indentured labourers from China, India and Southeast Asia (Mintz, 1974; SlaveVoyages, n.d.). In the following, by Caribbean, I will exclusively refer to the anglophone West Indies; the Spanish- and French-speaking Caribbean will remain unconsidered in this paper. Since knowledge production is highly dependent on language, they represent separate objects of study.

diasporic community of West Indian scholars in London was producing anti-colonial knowledge and thereby resisting these structures of dominance.

Already from the 1930s onwards, an emerging group of Caribbean scholars connected with other anti-colonial activists and developed a new anti-colonial school of thought. Their activities mainly took place in informal meetings in the London area in the mid-20th century and built the basis for decolonising political, institutional and epistemic orders (see Reddock, 2014; Pierre, 2008: 150ff.; Robinson, 2000: 182ff.; Henry & Buhle, 1992: 112ff.; Gopal, 2019: 360ff.; Bogue, 2003: 69ff.).

Besides this anti-colonial scholarly activity, from a student perspective, London became a space to connect transnationally after decades of imperial educational policy aimed at isolating the Caribbean territories. As Cuban-Jamaican writer and scholar Sylvia Wynter remembers in an interview on her experiences as a student at King's College London from 1947 onwards, asked by David Scott about an "Emerging sense of West Indianness" in the British metropole:

very true, because, remember, in the different islands we had been totally cut off from each other. We weren't even taught Caribbean geography in the schools. The geography that was taught was that of England, the history that was taught was English history. We weren't even taught the geography of the United States. At that time the United States was considered a second-rate country. London was the centre of empire and the British Empire was still very powerful. [...] But it wasn't only about being West Indian. There were many Africans there, all of them struggling for independence, so there was a powerful pan-African sensibility. [...] There was a ferment at that centre, because these are going to be the days that will see the climax of the definitive struggles against the British Empire (Scott, 2000: 129).

The British imperial institutionalised education thus produced a specific knowledge – in this case, non-knowledge – about the Caribbean islands that hindered the building of a transnational collective knowledge, resistance, and institutions. As Wynter further elaborates about the "experience [of] displacement" in pursuing Higher Education abroad, being asked by Scott about its "hermeneutical function": "the ground on which you stand, from which you had interpreted the world around you, is now shaken; all of the certainties that you had taken for granted in the Caribbean are now gone", thus she ascribes an epistemic effect to the institutional context (Scott, 2000: 132; see for her contribution to decolonial thought Wynter, 2003).

Wynter later taught at the University of the West Indies in the 1960s before moving as a professor to the US. Her work can be seen as a crucial contribution to decolo-

nial Caribbean thought: She “called for resistance to colonial authority and thinking that requires what she described as a ‘counter-voice,’ or what others might deem a full-blown counter-discourse” (Lewis 2021, 137). As decolonial theorist W. Mignolo outlines, “Wynter’s work [...] [aims] to understand, [...], how particular epistemologies are unthinkable and/or unarticulated within hegemonic Western categories of knowledge and philosophy of knowing” (Mignolo, 2015: 106). Similar to the decolonial school, she worked on “Afro-Caribbean epistemic revolution against the Eurocentric concept of “Man” and its role in the construction of racism” (Mignolo, 2015: 111). Wynter’s work underlines the global circulation of knowledge and ideas of decoloniality that were outlined in the beginning.

Her work, grounded in her experience of growing up in colonial Jamaica, studying in London and experiencing a transnational solidarity there, thus can be seen as an example of how epistemic dominance is challenged by scholars whose education was situated in institutional structures of academic dependency. In reference to Keim’s three-level model, on the first dimension of material infrastructure, a clear centre-periphery dependency is observable in the lacking institutionalisation of higher education in the anglophone Caribbean, however on the second and third level of intra-scientific factors, the circulation of radical Caribbean thought in London at that time underlines how Wynter later could build on Caribbean research instead of Northern theories; her success might be seen as conducive for indicating a centrality. The change of material infrastructure in the anglophone Caribbean by the establishment of higher education was driven by imperial interests, however also accompanied by resistance.

Institutionalising Higher Education, promoting a regional identity

In 1948, a regional university was founded in Jamaica, named The University College of the West Indies (UCWI) and financed by the Colonial Development fund. While the UCWI campus was built in Mona, Jamaica, additionally, a distant-learning system of resident tutors based in smaller territories was established connecting the region with the university, thus further promoting a regional identity (Sherlock & Nettleford, 1990: 53).

Considering the institutional structures, the UCWI was financed by the UK through the Colonial Development and Welfare fund and had a “special relationship” with the University of London (Colonial Office, 1945: 107), meaning that syllabi, examinations and curricula were designed by the University of London that also awarded the degrees (Taylor, 1951: 7). The Colonial Office decided upon the staffing and chose

3. The policy strategy of Higher Education in the anglophone Caribbean was developed by the “Irvine Committee”, a group of five persons appointed in 1944 to examine the existing infrastructure of higher education in the West Indies and that afterwards suggested the institutionalisation of the UCWI. The Committee was part of the larger Ausquith-Commission, installed by the British Colonial Office to elaborate the situation of higher education in the British Colonies, in 1943 (see Copley, 2000, 9ff.).

researchers from across the Commonwealth who led the departments. The administrative structure of a college system as well as cultural symbols as coat of arms, the academic uniform, dining rituals or a large cricket ground were oriented at the ones of Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge (see Taylor, 1951: 8f.; Thomas, 2001: 726). However, “[a]t a time when women were routinely absent from English universities”, the British Colonial Office³ pathbreakingly “gave high priority to “the provision of higher education for women in the West Indies” (see Massiah, Leo-Rhynie & Bailey, 2016: 27; Colonial Office, 1945: 96; Sherlock & Nettleford, 1990: 22).

Consequently, cultural norms and practices of the UCWI, the administration and institutional set-up were oriented at British institutions, and staffing, examination and contents were controlled in the metropole. Given this, the institutionalization of the UCWI can be interpreted as a shift from the colonial to a neocolonial regime (see Copley 2000: 14). It was designed to educate ‘imperial citizens’, elites who are loyal to the Empire and control anti-colonial movements (see Thomas 2001: 726; Grant 1987: 183) and later “conceived of as a ‘parting gift’ of the United Kingdom Government” to replace political dependence with cultural ties (Braithwaite 1965: 79).

After its establishment, student enrolment was low due to lacking scholarship and funding, high entry requirements in relation to the region’s secondary schools, a high failure rate, the requirement of residence in Jamaica and an ongoing preference of students to pursue higher education overseas – the UCWI had to convince that it “has more to offer to West Indians than they can get in foreign universities, in terms of suitable curricula as well as of emotional balance” (Lewis, 1961: 122, footnote 4; see also Grant, 1987: 184f.). Other Colleges recently founded by the British Colonial Office in other colonies had comparable problems and critique on the British influence grew (see Copley, 2000: 16; Thomas, 2001: 727). The growing nationalist movement criticized the UCWI for only serving a small neocolonial elite while seeing education as both important for regional development and increased social mobility (Thomas, 2001: 727).

However, the institution fed a regional solidarity and West Indian identities. Sociologist O. Patterson well represents this second generation of social scientists who were finishing their secondary education in the independence years and had the opportunity of studying in the Caribbean. As he recalls in an interview (part of the same series) with David Scott, he retrospectively considers himself lucky in missing the Centenary Scholarship, that i.a. enabled S. Wynter to pursue an undergraduate degree in England (see Scott, 2013: 118). For him, the UCWI as a newly built regional university had precisely the impact of creating a West Indian identity which the stay in London had for Sylvia Wynter:

The University College of the West Indies was a genuinely federal institution. So one of the first things that happened when you went there was that you were resocialized out of your parochial nationalism into this federal concept. [...] But more important, these were friendly contest – you were being socialized into being West Indian. For the first time you were living among people from the other islands. You're meeting people from Trinidad and St. Vincent in the halls [of residence]. That was a very powerful experience. By the middle of the first semester you had really gotten the sense of a West Indian identity (Scott, 2013: 122).

Patterson, too, experienced a growing transnational solidarity across the anglophone Caribbean territories through the university. The institutionalization of higher education therefore not only supported education and research efforts but crucially the political awareness and identity of anglophone Caribbean that time. Unlike Wynter, who stressed the global reach of the London networks and social environment, Patterson's focus was on the Caribbean region and its identity. On a student level, the institutionalisation of higher education in the anglophone Caribbean therefore already evoked a huge political effect that can be seen as countering the institutional academic dependency⁴. The establishment of the regional University College represents a major shift on the first level of centre-periphery relations in that a material infrastructure was built enabling local higher education and politically promoting regional solidarity. The effect of this dimension onto intra-scientific aspects of knowledge production can be best analysed when examining specifically the social sciences research landscape which will be analysed in the following.

Establishing social sciences research and theorising in and about the anglophone Caribbean

1948, “[a]n Institute for Social and Economic Research [ISER] has been established through the financial support given by the Colonial Social Science Research Council” (Taylor, 1951: 12) which was affiliated with the UCWI (M. G. Smith, 2001b: 71). The ISER represented the first and still central institutionalization of social sciences in the anglophone Caribbean and profoundly influenced the building of the social sciences for following generations (Scott, 2013: 134).

Additionally, in 1953 the quarterly journal, “Social and Economic Studies” (SES) was founded as an ISER publication media which still serves as a main medium for Caribbean researchers (Pierre, 2008: 144). The leading staff of the ISER – as the UCWI – were selected by the Colonial Office and dominantly British. Knowledge of the British researchers teaching economics at ISER Mona about the Caribbean was

4. Other scholars who developed counter-hegemonic social sciences perspectives and studied at a similar period as Wynter and Patterson are e.g. Norman Girvan and Walter Rodney who later were engaged in the ‘New World Group’, a transnational West Indian intellectual movement striving for epistemic independence of Caribbean thought (Girvan, 2010; Marshall 2014).

5. This was the same for the whole UCWI, leading to migration of scholars to the US who could not pursue their research interests. E.g. Wynter recalls how she “had to keep rigidly to the teaching of the Golden Age literature of Spain, for which I had been appointed. This was because of the University of London curriculum model that UWI had adopted”, a situation in which an offer to teach in the US was a “great temptation” (Scott, 2000: 156).

little, the seminars “were, more or less, identical to those taught at British universities” (Beckford, 1984: 47). This period of social sciences at the ISER was dependent on British institutions, the University of London defining the research agenda and teaching curricula⁵, the Colonial Office the staffing. The ISER-journal *SES* too was funded and controlled by British researchers, thus publication media were also dependent. During this period, efforts were made to change the university’s elitist tendencies, however internal resistance by both staff and students was documented, highlighting the problematic set up (Peters, 2000: 106; see also Sherlock & Nettleford, 1990: 53ff.). These institutional structures can be interpreted as indications of centre-periphery relations on all three levels as distinguished by Keim: on the level of autonomy, although infrastructurally, an institution has been established, West Indian scholars had little control about staffing decisions and publication media and Caribbean social sciences was not in a position of centrality in the international discourse, rather British interests and research agendas were presiding.

In this institutional setting, the first generation of social scientists in the Caribbean emerged made up of “young black male intellectuals returning from London with their PhDs” (Lewis, 1994: 9). Being in the Caribbean and not the metropole, the scholars’ activities focused on the UCWI. They worked in a “constant struggle” of adapting approaches of traditional, Western social sciences and developing new ones for the region (Sankatsing, 2001: 59; Henry, 2016: 230).

The work of economist William Arthur Lewis and anthropologist Michael G. Smith can be seen as outstanding for this period of research, their concepts of the ‘dual economy’ and the ‘plural society’ influenced later research and firstly centred the anglophone Caribbean as a space of social theorising. While their works were profoundly criticised by following generations of Caribbean social scientists and initiated widespread debates, both can be seen as founding for Caribbean social sciences: M.G. Smith set the groundwork for an interdisciplinary sociology and anthropology – social theorising – of Caribbean societies while A. Lewis provided the groundwork for Caribbean economics and development economics globally. Most importantly, while both were accused of being oriented towards US-European models and thought, only minimally taking prior anti-colonial, Marxist thought of Caribbean diasporic intellectuals into account, at the same time they critically accounted for the history of enslavement and plantation economy in the anglophone Caribbean and thereby drew on the situatedness of their theorising to develop new interdisciplinary social thought and research.

In the following, I will demonstrate how both scholars positioned their work at the intersection of disciplinary boundaries, criticised hegemonic eurocentrism, centred

West Indian societies as spaces of knowledge production and conceptualised them in context of their colonial past and history of plantation economy. They both provided the groundwork for following interdisciplinary Caribbean social sciences and critical disciplinary innovations.

*Michael G. Smith:
how not “to ignore one-half of mankind”
in sociological research*

Born 1921 in Jamaica, Michael G. Smith pursued his higher education at McGill University in Canada, before obtaining a PhD in anthropology at University of London in 1951⁶. Against the background of the colonization and West Indian slave society, he developed a societal model of West Indian societies which are plural in the sense that “institutionally distinct collectivities are incorporated together to form societies” (Smith, 2001a: 130; see also 124ff.). These collectivities “are internally distinguished by fundamental differences in their institutional practices” (Smith, 2001a: 125), making up “weakly-integrated multi-ethnic societies” (Sankatsing, 1965; 2001: 60; Smith, 2001).

6. After completing his PhD in London, 1950, Smith worked in Tanzania before joining the ISER in 1952. Since then he worked on the Plural society model and published several essays which were published 1965 as a collection (Smith, 1965).

In the preface to a collection of his major essays, Smith sketches the background of his work against the hegemonic functionalist sociological research at his time and eurocentrism of social theory in which colonial societies are unconsidered.

Theoretically, Smith draws on the work of J.S. Furnivall – a British colonial public servant –, “especially his concept of the plural society as a unit of disparate parts which owes its existence to external factors, and lacks a common social will” (vii Smith, 1965). In refutation of the then popular theory of action by US-sociologist T. Parsons as well the “antecedents”, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber (ix) – those “Western sociologists [who] have emphasized the thesis that, by necessity, societies are consensual normative systems” (x) – he outlines that existing social theory excludes non-Western societies:

Unless we choose to ignore one-half of mankind and most of its history, we cannot deny the validity and significance of the distinction Furnivall made between those societies which derive their integration from normative consensus, and those which depend for their order on regulation by force. At the disciplinary level, the central issue this raises is whether sociology will remain a comparative, analytic science or become a normative one; whether sociologists will study societies as they are, or as they think they should be, in order that they might “exist” on dubious logico[r] deductive

grounds. West Indian slave society is a classic instance of the plural society identified by Furnivall (Smith 1965, xif.)

Following Michael G. Smith, the hegemonic sociological research – of now considered canonical and founding authors of French, German and US-sociology: Durkheim, Weber and Parsons – ignores societies of the majority world and most importantly does not address the role of colonial rule and its effects on societal order. Smith interprets this as a genuinely critical obstacle of sociological research that is empirically inaccurate and cannot explain societies with a colonial history as the West Indies.

Offering

detailed accounts of colonial power dynamics and the complex intersection of plantation, peasant, and urban life, [...] Smith's encompassing model [...] sought to explain contemporary ethnic divisions, albeit in hindsight somewhat unsuccessfully (Gomes & Timcke, 2019: 5).

7. This resonates with observations of anthropologist S. Mintz and historian M.R. Trouillot who both situate the Caribbean as a 'frontier region' between the disciplines of sociology and anthropology (S. Mintz, 1965; Trouillot, 1992).

Following Paget Henry, his work represents a period of fruitful dialogue between Caribbean and American sociology under the "main paradigm [of] the tradition/modernity issue" (Henry, 2010: 146), in which "Caribbean sociology/anthropology is portrayed as the joint construction of primarily Caribbean and American sociologists and anthropologist" (Henry, 2010: 146)⁷. Although Smith's work "entailed disciplinary and epistemological critiques of Eurocentric anthropology" (Gomes & Timcke 2019: 5), he is also attested a systematic over-identification with Western intellectual tradition at the cost of neglecting Caribbean thought (Henry, 2010: 148). His work was widely discussed and shaped the formation of sociology and anthropology in the anglophone Caribbean (see Barrow & Reddock, 2001: 85ff.).

8. After his first period of research about Caribbean economies and his main publications 1950 and 1954, A. Lewis "served as Principal and later Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, after the University achieved its independence from London University, and from 1970 to 1973 [...] he served as President of the Caribbean Development Bank" (Benn, 2004: 103).

*William A. Lewis:
researching those countries
"lumped together as underdeveloped"*

Similar critiques were raised against William A. Lewis' early work⁸. Born 1915 in St. Lucia, Lewis gained a scholarship to study economics at the London School of Economics (LSE) as the first West Indian in 1933. He continued his career via a scholarship-funded PhD at LSE and a position as lecturer at University of Manchester before returning to Jamaica in 1959 and becoming the first West Indian Vice Chancellor of the University College of the West Indies.

In this role, he published on the role of education for economic development, arguing strongly for local higher education institutions in poor countries against

the background of decade-long mobility of West Indian students to the British metropole for higher education:

The chief reason why it is worthwhile, from the economic point of view, to have a university at home, even though it costs more than sending students abroad, is that the function of a university is not confined to teaching students. [...] Apart from teaching, a university contributes to its community through the participation of its teachers in the life of the country, and through its research into local problems (William A. Lewis, 1961: 124).

Two arguments on the interrelation of institutional and epistemic aspects of knowledge production can be outlined that shaped his work: firstly, the understanding of economic development as a socio-political process that is not bounded to the economic sphere. Secondly, the importance of locally situated knowledge production in which scholars are in contact with the society and provide knowledge on the social context they are active in. William A. Lewis “saw political and constitutional reform as a precondition for social and economic progress and was an ardent advocate of West Indian federation on both political and economic grounds” (Benn, 2004: 104). Therefore, the political effect of the regional University College of the West Indies to promote a transnational identity as observed by Patterson from a student-perspective too was crucial from Lewis’s scholarly perspective.

In 1979, Lewis was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics for his pioneering work on development economics. Following his own words, his interest in questions of economic development represented “an off-shoot of his anti-imperialism” (Girvan 2005, 14). In his multifaceted work, Lewis developed a model of classical economics arguing for a dual economy model – the coexistence of a modern urban sector and subsistence economy in the rural areas – and for the assumption of unlimited labour supply in the West Indies (William A. Lewis, 1954: 403; 1955; Benn, 2004: 104ff.; Sankatsing, 2001).

Developing latter theorem of “Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour” in 1954, Lewis starts his argumentation with a critique of the eurocentrism of the hegemonic neo-classical economic paradigm and proposes a pluralisation of economic theory based on the ignorance of the majority world, thus a similar refutation of existing hegemonic disciplinary knowledge as Smith.

We have to begin by elaborating the assumption of an unlimited supply of labour, and by establishing that it is a useful assumption. We are not arguing, let it be repeated, that this assumption should be made for all areas of the world. It is obviously not true of the

United Kingdom, or of North-west Europe. It is not true either of some of the countries usually now lumped together as underdeveloped ; for example there is an acute shortage of male labour in some parts of Africa and of Latin America. On the other hand it is obviously the relevant assumption for the economies of Egypt, of India, or of Jamaica. Our present task is not to supersede neo-classical economies, but merely to elaborate a mutant framework for those countries which the neoclassical (and Keynesian) assumptions do not fit (Lewis, 1954: 140f.).

This passage can be seen as a crucial refutation of the universalism and eurocentrism of then hegemonic neo-classical economic research in which countries in the global south are “lumped together as underdeveloped” – not considered genuine research contexts – and in which universalistic assumptions neglect the lived reality of those living in the majority world. His work, challenging the hegemonic neoclassical disciplinary paradigm, is seen as founding for the field of development economics and studies (see Northover: 2005). Lewis is described as “both a pioneer of development economics and a pragmatist who while believing in the value of economic theory, also respected the wisdom of common sense. For this reason, Lewis may be said to transcend the traditional categories of economic theory” (Benn, 2004: 119). In the 1960s, the interdisciplinary intellectual movement of the ‘New World Group’ formed out of opposition against Lewis’ economic theory and work and he was thoroughly criticised for aligning with British imperial interest (Marshall, 2014: 117f.).

However, his and Michael G. Smith’s contribution considered effects of colonial rule and the plantation economy and initiated critiques from a historical perspective. Their scholarly work in the founding phase of the institutionalisation of the regional University and the Institute for Social and Economic Research is an outstanding example of how researching and social theorising was enacted against the grain. While the institutional context of their research was characterised by a British domination, they successfully established the anglophone Caribbean as a space of knowledge production and context of theorising. In centring their work on Caribbean economy and society, they initiated a first step towards a research paradigm that focusses on the anglophone Caribbean in context of its colonial history and built the groundwork for the following interdisciplinary Caribbean social sciences that revolved around the role of the history of plantation economy onto contemporary anglophone Caribbean societies. Both authors engage with the Eurocentric disciplinary order and focus on Western societies of hegemonic research in which the majority world, colonialism and colonial societies are not considered neither as objects of study nor as contexts of social theorising or research.

Coming back to Keim's level of centre-periphery relations in the social sciences (Keim, 2008), in context of an institutional dominance by the British, these contributions can be interpreted as efforts towards independency on the intra-scientific level in that produced knowledge does not foreground Northern contexts and research – the dominant disciplinary order in which the Caribbean region was overlooked by hegemonic sociological and economic paradigms is profoundly criticised – but rather is interested in the local context of the they successfully established the anglophone Caribbean as a space of knowledge production and context of theorising. In centring their work on Caribbean economy and society, they initiated a first step towards a research paradigm that focusses on the anglophone Caribbean in context of its colonial history and built the groundwork for the following interdisciplinary Caribbean social sciences that revolved around the role of the history of plantation economy onto contemporary anglophone Caribbean societies. Lewis' later reception as a founding author of development economics can be seen as indicating a global centrality of his work, on Keim's third-level of centrality .

Building Caribbean social sciences against the British institutional grain

Beyond global patterns of academic dependency, the presented case demonstrates how in context of institutional power asymmetries, on an epistemic dimensions, precursors of independent schools of thought were developed. The meso-level analysis revealed the simultaneous interplay of features of centre-periphery relations and resistance of West Indian social scientists against the grain of British built and led institutions.

Against the background of post-, decolonial and southern sociological research that addresses the colonial legacy of knowledge production, highlighting the imperial epistemic order of social sciences, this paper proposed an empirical analysis in form of a historical reconstruction of concrete constellations of institutional structures and knowledge production situated in post-colonial contexts. It was outlined how dominant conceptions of 'extroversion' and 'academic dependency' have been critically examined and revised by various empirical studies on the meso-level and argued that instead of macro-level bibliometric analysis, mid-range theorising and research might further enlarge our knowledge on potentialities of decolonial knowledge production and visibilize resistances by Southern scholars. Additionally, the paper at hand widens existing research on centre-periphery relations of social sciences knowledge production by not only considering research products in the form of publications as studied in bibliometric analysis or in text-based, epistemological approaches, but rather taking into account institutional aspects of higher ed-

ucation and research infrastructure. Thereby, the processual and situated character of knowledge production comes into the forefront. The specific history of colonisation and decolonisation in the they successfully established the anglophone Caribbean as a space of knowledge production and context of theorising. In centring their work on Caribbean economy and society, they initiated a first step towards a research paradigm that focusses on the anglophone Caribbean in context of its colonial history and built the groundwork for the following interdisciplinary Caribbean social sciences that revolved around the role of the history of plantation economy onto contemporary anglophone Caribbean societies, the dimension of language as well as the small size of the region further represents important features of the case study, enlarging existing research on knowledge production in Latin America. As shown for other contexts (see Rodríguez Medina, 2014; Connell et al., 2018), international exchange and communication were crucial in the studied case: while research agendas focussed on the local context, certifications were achieved in the metropole and global networking took place. Based on the three-level model of centre-periphery relations proposed by Keim it was shown how different layers of dependency interact but also not necessarily determine each other. While on the dimension of material infrastructure, a dependency can be observed, intra-scientifically West Indian scholars developed a tradition of thought that centres the anglophone Caribbean as a space of theorising.

By co-reconstructing the entangled history of higher education institutions and research of Caribbean social sciences in the mid-20th century, the colonial entanglements of metropolitan institutional policies and peripheralised knowledge production were made visible. The historical development of Caribbean social sciences can be described as a dynamic process: regarding external factors and organisation, it was demonstrated how the material infrastructure as libraries or funding and positions for scholars with a full income were established in the 1950s. In context of a situation of dependency concerning financial, institutional, and epistemological dimensions in the 1950, Caribbean social scientists successfully achieved some academic independency in regard of an innovative research programme that focussed on the situation and perspective of the local societies. While Michael G. Smith initiated a debate about theorising anglophone Caribbean societies and shaped Caribbean sociology and anthropology, William A. Lewis severely challenged hegemonic economic research and achieved to establish a new research field, later institutionalized as “Development Economics” and influenced Caribbean economics.

The knowledge produced by these scholars was initiating a tradition of interdisciplinary Caribbean social sciences in which Western colonial epistemes were resisted and the Caribbean established as a space of knowledge production and social theorising.

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