

# NEGOTIATION ZONES OF KNOWLEDGE

How Caribbean social scientists make knowledge & careers in a post-colonial academic order

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## RESEARCH QUESTION AND OUTLINE

How do Caribbean social scientists negotiate global inequalities and colonial legacies in their practices of knowledge and career-making?

### Premise I: Social knowledge production is influenced by global inequalities & colonial legacies

Post-, decolonial and Southern sociological perspectives over the past decades raised the critique that: (1) Knowledge production is shaped by a metropolitan perspective, (2) colonialism & colonial rule were often excluded from social thought, (3) sciences and the academic system were part of the colonial project.

#### GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

build on

research centred around Europe and North America; leading institutions, journals and publishing houses in Global North; funding opportunities, material infrastructure

#### COLONIAL LEGACIES

Epistemological entanglement of sociology and colonialism; Eurocentrism; Institutional colonial Higher Education policies

### Premise II: Agents make social knowledge in various daily practices

Knowledge production in the social sciences is understood as a process of situated positioning practices. Building on science studies, this perspective focusses on multi-engaged activities such as teaching, writing, applying for funding or networking. It highlights the reciprocal process of knowledge production and its evaluation and makes potential resistance or negotiations of macro-structural inequalities & colonial legacies visible.

### Research Gap

Post-, decolonial & southern sociologies and Science & Higher Education studies all examine situated knowledge production, however, are not in a systematic dialogue. **Post-, decolonial & southern sociologies** study knowledge in colonial contexts they are often historical, macro-oriented, and focused on an epistemic discussion. **Science & Higher Education studies** study knowledge production in social & institutional contexts. They are often micro-sociological, focusing on practices, and techniques in the natural & life sciences. This project aims to bring to two research strands together.

## OPERATIONALISATION AND EMPIRICAL DATA

### Case Study: Social scientists at the University of the West Indies

- largest regional university in the anglophone Caribbean
- Founded 1948 by the British Colonial Office
- Institutional and political independence in 1962
- Located in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Antigua, founded by 17 governments



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
ORIENS EX OCCIDENTE LUX



### Source Material

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with scholars from the post-doctoral/professional level
- Analysis of administrative documents
- Archival research in the University archives



Screenshot of transcribed and coded interview excerpt in MAXQDA. In the previous passage, the Interview partner mentioned that the evaluation criteria of publication were contested at the University of the West Indies and was asked to elaborate on this point.

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND THEORISATION

### Negotiation:

*"individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves"*  
(Stuart Hall, 2000, p. 27).

## NEGOTIATING SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE

### Contact zones:

*"social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination — like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today"*  
(Marie-Louise Pratt, 1992, p. 4).

### Zone 1: Public Outreach

Social scientists in the Caribbean negotiate research criteria in terms of political and societal impact, activism, policy work and research ethics. Conducting locally and application-oriented research enables researchers in the Caribbean to develop their own research agendas, paradigms, and theorise. Caribbean social scientists understand the Caribbean as a space and active context of knowledge production: not only a space to look at the Caribbean but from the Caribbean as an entangled, situated context.

### Zone 2: Disciplines

Epistemically, researching and theorising Caribbean societies, scholars negotiate the disciplinary order by strategically positioning their research between universal disciplinary audiences and more region-specific, ethnographic area studies. Institutionally, this zone of disciplines is negotiated in the infrastructure of qualifications and career paths: Caribbean scholars pursue interdisciplinary education and careers, teach and publish across disciplines, and build interdisciplinary institutes, programmes and associations.

### Zone 3: Publishing

Epistemically, Southern scholars experience injustice in peer-review processes, address different (non-)academic communities, and use citation politics to challenge the underrepresentation of Southern theory. Thereby they negotiate what constitutes publishing. Institutionally, global inequalities of publishing are negotiated by the establishing processes of regional-oriented journals and the critical discussion of evaluation criteria of publishing and promotion in general.

### Zone 4: Education

Epistemically, the existing canon reproduces a situation of North American and Western European dominance. Scholars negotiate this by creating a dialogue and conversation between regional and Northern research. Furthermore, ethics of responsibility for students who pursue leading roles in the local societies play into the design of courses, programmes and syllabi. Institutionally, over generations, the mobility toward Northern institutions declined and Southern qualifications are more and more pursued.



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