

Social Science as a Victim of Its Own Disciplines

The English- and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean

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Half a century has passed since the first systematic studies on the social reality of the English and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean began to appear.¹ Until that time, apart from a handful of enclave studies in the field of traditional anthropology, nothing had been written about the region except Colonial reports. The present study makes an analysis of the untiring critical search for models applicable to the region's own reality, involving the modification and adaptation of existing models and the examination of new approaches and paradigms in heated debates about the social reality of the region. During this period, three generations of social scientists have developed a variety of conceptualisations in an attempt to describe, explain and understand Caribbean social reality.

Origins of the Social Sciences

From the outset, social sciences in the Caribbean have been closely related with the dy-

namic social processes of the region. In the small-scale societies of the Caribbean, in which face-to-face relationships are the norm, all the significant vibrations of these societies are registered on the seismograph of the social sciences. Thus, topics of study derive directly from the dynamic socio-historic processes of the region, even though the social sciences as instruments of study are not related with this reality and have not been designed to tackle the most burning issues of the Caribbean.

In analysing the origins of the social sciences in the Caribbean, the first thing that strikes the observer is that they were not developed in the region as an endogenous response to its own challenges and social processes, but that they were transplanted from another latitude where they were generated in response to socio-historic processes of a different nature. Thus an analysis of the origins and initial development of social sciences in the region cannot begin from any evolutionary approach, which would see them as the product of the region's own social reality, as a response to its

history, or as deriving from the social processes of the Caribbean. This implies that the point of departure is to be found in the theoretical epistemological analysis of the origin and development of western social sciences and their disciplines, as the product and direct crystallisation of dynamic processes and social changes which occurred historically in Europe.

In point of fact, social thought and its crystallisation in the social sciences did not arise objectively, nor are their approaches universal, but rather constitute the subjective product of certain socio-historic processes with the particular society or civilisation which led to their birth, and within which they may assume a certain usefulness. As the German author Hans Freier observed (1931: 20): 'All thinking in the social sciences and social philosophy is determined in the end analysis by the social reality from which it springs. Real societal forces are expressed, defined and justified, and acquire meaning through it.'

Similarly, from within the social science tradition of the United States, Robert Nisbet (1966: 9) protests against the 'genetic fallacy' of understanding the history of thought as a set of discreet sequences of engenderment: 'Especially in political and social thought do we need constantly to see the ideas of earlier ages as responses to courses of events and to challenges formed by major changes in the social order'.

Western social sciences, in their disciplines, as well as in their concepts, categorisations, theories, paradigms and methodology, are the product of a genesis intimately related with the European socio-historic context within which they were born, and in which they were subsequently nourished by the dynamic social processes undergone by that continent.

Western social sciences represent the result of socio-historic developments, and, more specifically, a response to the great challenges confronting Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arising from the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the Rise of Capitalism and the French Revolution.

Sociology was the direct product of the French Revolution. With the work of Saint Simon and Auguste Comte, western sociology

was born in the midst of chaotic developments, in an eagerness to discover new principles of social order (Nisbet 1966; Klages 1969; Gouldner 1970). Sociology subsequently crystallised as the science which takes as its study human coexistence in the framework of the modern nation-state, that is, within western civilisation and its expansion in the westernized world (Wolf 1982; Wallerstein 1970; Elias 1971; Turner 1990).

The discipline of economics arose in response to the Industrial Revolution and the Rise of Capitalism, which led to the independence of economic life in Europe (Ekelund and Hébert 1990). Under the impact of the development of capitalism, which in the more technologically advanced societies had become the dominant mode of production, this discipline gradually became more and more isolated, ramifying itself around the marketplace (Wolf 1982) until it became practically a doctrine of capitalism, or, in the case of Marxism, a critical reaction against capitalism. It should be noted that the capitalist system does not produce in response to needs, but in response to demand; it produces for markets, for those within its ambit who manifest acquisitive power. At the present time, the marketplace, the tabernacle of capitalism, constitutes the backbone of the discipline. For Alfred Eichner, the paradigm of the discipline of economics has less to do with explanation than with criteria of optimization. That is to say that it deals with 'the specification of the conditions to be met if resources are to be allocated in an optimum manner, within a variety of hypothetical contexts' (Eichner 1983: 21).

Meanwhile, the subjugation of the rest of the world gave birth to anthropology, which has taken as its subject distinct communities, seen from a western perspective as exotic and relatively isolated. The rise of anthropology was closely linked to the discovery of distant civilisations and the process of domination of other peoples (Lévi-Strauss 1973; Assad 1973). Even in cases where extra-geographical regularities and generalisations related to earlier stages of human development were being looked for, an approach based on European realities was still present. Anthropology, as several authors suggest, had its origin and greatest stimulus in European expansionism

and in the new challenges presented to the West. Eric Wolf (1982:18) asserted that anthropology is the daughter of imperialism and Lévi Strauss (1973: 56) suggested that it is the daughter of violence, a product of 'the *de facto* state of affairs in which one half of humanity arrogated to itself the right to treat the other half as an object'. Little by little this discipline became the antithesis of sociology, by distancing itself as far as possible from the nation-state and concerning itself with communities which, by virtue of their relative isolation, had managed to preserve significant features of traditional life which had not been consumed by 'civilisation'.

Political science was born and grew up in the search for a solution to the Hobbesian problem of the war of all against all. In the western model the State became the norm, and democracy, which had prevailed as a political system in Europe after a lengthy political evolution, was exported to the remotest corners of the globe, often to societies of great ethnic diversity, which were weakly integrated or even tribal.

The origin of western social sciences thus shows that their system of disciplines has been the direct product and a logical development of European reality, and has been related to the peculiar characteristics of that continent. In its disciplines, and in its concepts, categorisations and theories, as well as in its paradigms and methodology, western social science has been the product of a genesis intimately related with the concerns, interests and challenges of the European socio-historical context within which it was born and where it was subsequently nurtured by the dynamic social processes experienced by Europe.

In point of fact there exist no objective criteria for designing one single system of disciplines for the social sciences. Any system of social science disciplines represents a response to the demands of the social reality within which it is formed. For this reason the western system of social science disciplines has no claim to universality, in spite of its spread across a wide part of the globe, based on the subjugation, domination and colonisation of other peoples. If the social sciences had developed, for example, in the Caribbean, in response to this region's own social and his-

torical reality and to its own social dynamic, the disciplines would not necessarily have been the same, much less their theories, paradigms and methods. Caribbean reality, like other non-western realities, may give rise to its own distinctions between disciplines and areas of specialisation, which will not necessarily derive from the European-originated system of social science disciplines.

The fact that the social sciences were not the product of Caribbean realities, or those of any other subjugated region, but part of the cultural and intellectual heritage of Europe, has profound epistemological and conceptual implications.

The Process of Endogenisation

Once transplanted to the Caribbean, western social sciences were confronted with the dynamic reality of a colonial world on the path of decolonisation, with its own history and its own social and economic problems, very different from those which had formed the focus of study of the social sciences in Europe.

From the beginning of the twentieth century the processes of social emancipation of the chronically oppressed peoples of the Caribbean, and subsequently the process of decolonization, threw up in midst of their turbulent development a great number of topics of study in relation to the development of the nation and the state. Throughout the Caribbean fragile subjugated societies found themselves facing the challenge of building nations and states on the ruins of colonialism and within contexts in which national unity was noticeably absent.

These dynamic developments were clearly reflected in the social sciences of the region by the close links between theory, praxis and currents of ideology which marked the models and approaches of the region's social sciences. There was no divorce between the social sciences and social reality, and indeed, the process of the institutionalisation of the social sciences at centres of teaching and research throughout the Caribbean has been the direct result of the great need for social sciences capable of studying the most burning issues of the region.

In response to this reality the development of social sciences in the region has been characterised by an ongoing process of endogenisation, that is: the application or redefinition of existing models with the aim of providing valid instruments for understanding the region's own reality, and the search for new approaches and procedures derived from within. It should be noted that in social processes, what is 'external' cannot automatically be opposed to what is 'internal', because once an external element has been introduced and incorporated dialectically into the national setting, the impact of such external influences becomes a factor in internal development itself.

On the one hand social scientists made unceasing efforts to adapt, modify, contextualise and acclimatise fashionable models, paradigms, theories and methods from traditional social sciences, and on the other hand great efforts were made to develop new approaches and perspectives appropriate to the region's own reality. In this way social research directed attention towards the process of decolonisation, nationalism and national identity, nation building, new political systems, the problem of race, the nature of the economies of Caribbean societies, strategies for economic development, the viability of microstates and regional cooperation. More than any other intellectual activity, Caribbean social sciences, representing a crystallisation of social thinking, captured the most urgent challenges of community life, the pulse of social processes and the concerns and aspirations of frail societies in search of a future.

This was the constant struggle of the first generation of Caribbean social scientists, Arthur Lewis, C.L.R. James, Eric Williams, Rudolf van Lier and M.G. Smith, whose works began to appear in the nineteen-forties and fifties.

Arthur Lewis sought his own approach to an economic explanation, which led to his strategy for the industrialisation of the Caribbean based on the dual economy model. For his part, Eric Williams (1964) unmasked the distorted traditional historiography of the Caribbean. He made the timely observation that 'The British historians wrote almost as if Britain had introduced Negro slavery solely for the

satisfaction of abolishing it' (Williams 1964: 182). In his classic work entitled *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) Williams came to the conclusion that it was not racism which led to slavery, but vice-versa, that slavery led to racism in the Caribbean. The problem of race and ethnicity stands out precisely as one of the greatest and most persistent problems of the Caribbean. The social sciences responded with the theoretical model of the plural society elaborated by Rudolf van Lier and M. G. Smith.

The second generation which came to the fore in the nineteen-sixties with the emergence of the *New World Group*, continued and deepened the search for new approaches more capable of unravelling the complex social and historical reality of the region, with their plantation economy model. And finally, the third generation of Caribbean social scientists presents a multifaceted picture, emerging in the midst of a great demand for redefinition.

There has been a whole range of approaches, at times based uncritically on European models, but at other times going to the other extreme in rejection of everything coming out of the West, while paradoxically using a language derived from Europe. This could only be a fruitless effort, because although the region may create its own procedures, there is no such thing as a purely Caribbean social science.

Let us briefly review these contributions from the perspective of the search for better answers in the social study of the region.

From the thirties ethnocultural enclave studies were carried out within the framework of a traditional anthropological perspective, that is, of entities relatively removed from the rest of society. This line of research cannot be considered as part of the process of endogenisation of social sciences in the region, since it was inspired by outside interest in the peculiar characteristics of the region.

In this direction Herskovits and Herskovits (1934, 1936) carried out various studies on the Afro-American culture of Haiti and the interior of Suriname (Herskovits 1937) and later Trinidad (Herskovits and Herskovits 1947). Their exaggerated emphasis on the search for African roots and the preservation of African elements as against western influence drew

strong criticism. This same anthropological tradition continued with respect to indigenous and maroon societies, until Richard Price (1983a, 1983b) introduced in the eighties a broader viewpoint based on parallel studies of colonial sources together with the collective memory and the traditions of the maroon societies of Suriname. In fact a great number of ethnocultural enclave studies suffered from the weakness of failing to take sufficient account of the processes of detribalisation and the incorporation of the respective groups into the national society and economy.

At the national level one of the important characteristics of the region, consisting of its colourful diversity of populations, led a great debate concerning ethnicity, race and class, when Van Lier (1949, 1950) introduced the plural society model into the region, which derived from studies by Furnivall (1939, 1948) on Indonesia and Burma. Shortly afterwards, M. G. Smith (1965) made a theoretical elaboration of this model and presented it as a new paradigm for Caribbean reality and its socio-historic processes. According to this researcher, a plural society exists when different social groups live together under a central government in a given territory, with each group preserving its own institutions in regard to kinship, economy, education, religion and leisure. The central thesis of the plural society model, that ethnicity constitutes the principal explanatory variable in the Caribbean, provoked a furious debate in regional social science, the race-class debate, in which nearly every social scientist was involved. Marxist-oriented researchers were at the opposite pole, maintaining the thesis that social class explained everything. Only recently has the debate become somewhat depolarised, inasmuch as the participants have come to realize that race and social class should not be treated as exclusive or rival categories. In fact, the plural society model expresses in a sophisticated manner the basic palpable truth that Caribbean societies are weakly-integrated multi-ethnic societies in which the weakness of the nation and the state are mutually amplified, while the class model suffered from an unsustainable economic reductionism. The plural society model sought a new paradigm to describe Caribbean reality, because it im-

plicitly questioned the existence of a relatively homogeneous nation-state with central institutions, which is precisely what constitutes the basis for western sociology and economics, as has been pointed out by a number of scholars (Wolf 1982: 9; Wallerstein 1987; Featherstone 1990).

At the same time as the plural society model was being introduced into the region, Arthur Lewis (1950, 1954) was beginning his pioneer research in economics. In his voluminous body of work his search for valid models is most clearly manifested in his dual economy model, which dominated economic analyses over two decades. Instead of holding to the Keynesian paradigm then in vogue, Lewis developed his own model which went back to the classical economists. It was based on the premise shared by Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Marx: that of the existence of an unlimited supply of labour. According to Lewis, Caribbean economies were dual economies, in which a modern urban sector coexisted with a subsistence economy in the country areas. To solve the key problem of the lack of capital and entrepreneurial initiative, Lewis proposed what was later to be known as 'industrialisation by invitation', granting foreign investors numerous privileges, subsidies and other guarantees designed to ensure their profits. The most important of these guarantees was the fixed wage. According to this model there would not be any pressure on wages as the modern sector expanded through industrialisation, since rural areas would provide an unlimited supply of labour, backed by an inexhaustible labour-force available to the modern sector.

The model put forward by Lewis, winner of the Nobel prize for economics, was welcomed throughout the region, but it met with no great success, and the reaction came towards the end of the sixties. A new generation of young economists, coming together as the *New World Group*, with researchers such as Lloyd Best, Kari Levitt, George Beckford and Norman Girvan, made a historical analysis of the economic structure of the Caribbean and launched the plantation economy model (Best 1968; Best and Levitt 1968). The economy of the Caribbean was seen as an appendix to that of the metropolis, outwardly driven and lack-

ing internal economic dynamism. Throughout the next decade this model led the economic debate, relating plantations with persistent poverty (Beckford 1972) and applying the plantation concept to multinational companies in the region (Girvan 1970). In his rejection of European paradigms Best (1967) strongly opposed Marxism as an imported paradigm, maintaining, and continuing to maintain up to the present, the much criticised thesis that social class does not exist, because it is merely a special case of ethnicity seen as solidarity (Best 1992a, 1992b).

The strongest criticism of the *New World Group* came precisely from the Marxist side (Oxaal 1975; Sudama 1979), and in fact the group broke up as the result of an ideological polarisation related to the Marxist view. Gradually new Marxist-oriented approaches, concerned with transformation, transition and non-capitalist paths of development, gained ground in social science debates within the region.

In the eighties the search for this type of global explanatory model was abandoned, and emphasis was placed on mid-range studies related to the nation-state. Several studies were undertaken on the process of decolonisation, on small size and economic viability; on the political system and democracy, social stratification, the Caribbean family, the status of women and militarisation.

During the last decade, particularly since the end of the Cold War, there has been a proliferation of supranational studies, particularly on topics such as regional cooperation, geopolitics and international relations, the impact of globalisation and the theme of ecology.

This rapid survey shows that over the past fifty years there has been an unceasing creative search by three generations of social scientists from the region for valid approaches to social investigation of a broad spectrum of topics in every social sphere.

The Extradisciplinary Approach

What becomes very clear from this analysis of the corpus of the principal conceptualisations of the social sciences in the Caribbean, is the

ongoing struggle against the limitations of social science disciplines. From the nineteenth century onward, the social sciences have been plagued by the divorce between their disciplines, and the need to combine the forces of existing disciplines has given rise to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

In the Caribbean the rejection of neat dividing lines between the traditional disciplines led to a consciousness of the need for an interdisciplinary approach, which was articulated as far back as the fifties by Vera Rubin (1957: 120), when she exhorted anthropologists to 'borrow from the resources of all social science disciplines'. Towards the end of the sixties and at the beginning of the seventies the *New World Group*, which was comprised principally of critical economists, opted for a multidisciplinary study, in an attempt to 'broaden the disciplinary focus, by drawing on history, sociology, anthropology and geography' (Beckford 1972, XXIV-XXV) in their economic studies, in order to bring about an integration of the disciplines. This attitude was taken up more fully at a seminar held in Kingston in 1975 by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), on methodologies and research orientations, with participation by social scientists from the majority of social disciplines, and at which everyone agreed that Caribbean social sciences should be interdisciplinary 'in their scope and direction' (Lindsay 1978: IV).

But, in spite of this untiring quest, scholars devoted to Caribbean social reality have not succeeded in liberating themselves completely from the problem of disciplines. As we noted above, western social science disciplines are not universal but are the specific product of a given socio-historical context, and they are not necessarily the most useful ones for studying and understanding other social realities. This means that the validity of the system of disciplines itself may be subject to question in places such as the Caribbean, and may for this reason be unsuitable as a point of departure. This indeed is still the case with respect to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, which take as their point of origin the system of traditional disciplines, instead of questioning it, and thus cannot offer a fundamental solution.

So the basic dilemma was: not being able to accept uncritically the present system of traditional social science disciplines, but at the same time being unable to discard out of hand the more valuable achievements of European social science.

Our solution to this dilemma has been the elaboration of an extradisciplinary approach which stands outside of the traditional system of disciplines, but without discarding in advance any of its achievements or its methodological tools which have been accumulated over the course of time. The basic premise of this approach is that social processes and phenomena can only *temporarily* be isolated as objects of study, but that immediately afterwards they must be set again within the network of interrelationships in which they are to be found in social reality. This is not done by the social disciplines. The extradisciplinary approach rejects the procedure common among present-day social sciences of sharing out a field of study among relatively autonomous disciplines, which isolate fields of study, processes or phenomena as pertaining to their special expertise, without attempting subsequently to reinsert them into their natural context. Specialisations are necessary for a systematic study of such a complex reality, but only as interrelated fields of study, which will not infringe on the integrity and unity of social reality, as do existing social science disciplines.

From the vantage point of the extradisciplinary approach, we have made a reassessment of the great debates among the social sciences of the region and the principal conceptualisations which arose from them. Instead of taking as our point of departure traditional social science disciplines, as had been the case with all previous reviews, we started from the criterion of the spheres of social activity which in practice regional social science research has used as the basis for the construction of its respective models and theories. Our analysis was accordingly carried out around three spheres of social activity: culture, politics and economics.²

One permanent dimension of social science research was related to the nature of the countries of the region itself. Essentially it concerned the question whether or not there had

existed in the Caribbean a society, an economy and a political entity with a life of its own, or whether the region presented in essence mere epiphenomena of an external strategic and economic enterprise.

There are many points in Caribbean social science at which emphasis has been laid on the asymmetrical relationship which exists between Caribbean society and the outside world. We are thinking particularly of the contributions of Eric Williams, Lloyd Best and Kari Levitt; of George Beckford, Norman Girvan, Havelock Brewster and Clive Thomas.

Here are some of their approaches:

- There is no such thing as a Caribbean economy, because the region constituted an extension of the metropolitan economy and a place where it suited the metropolis to carry out its production of agricultural produce. These were outwardly driven plantation economies, as affirmed by Best (1968).
- This was a transoceanic economy, controlled by the decision-making centre in the metropolis (Best 1968; Best and Levitt 1968).
- The society was conceived of as a plantation economy which could not go beyond the stage of underdevelopment, because the dynamism necessary to economic development was not to be found within, but rather outside the plantation (Beckford 1972).
- The multinational companies which dominated the important sectors of petroleum and bauxite production were institutionally integrated at the international level, but only weakly so at the level of the national economy, so that these economies depended on the outside world for certain elements vital to the economic process, and at the same time were highly vulnerable to external conditions (Girvan 1970).
- The cause of the lack of internal vitality in the Caribbean economy was ascribed to the fundamental role of international capitalism allied with the national bourgeoisies (Rodney 1972; Thomas 1974).
- There has been a lack of capacity to manipulate the operative elements of the economic system, due to an absence of the traditional interdependence of economic functions at the national level, as pointed out by Brewster (1973).

- Overall the conclusion was reached that the dynamism necessary to economic development was not to be found within the region but rather outside of it.

Instead of a minimal consensus between social scientists, however, there arose numerous debates, without the emergence of any conceptualisation adequate to deal with the problematics. The main reason for these disagreements was the taxonomic bias of the various approaches, since a part of the debate was devoted to the search for an unequivocal definition, in terms of relatively fixed categories, of entities in constant movement. This gave rise to a diversity of descriptive models, such as the plantation economy model and the plural society model, which concerned themselves with concrete and circumstantial manifestations. In this way, models were proposed which attempted to define, delimit and group historical phenomena as these manifested themselves empirically, instead of attempting to explain the genesis of facts and phenomena, starting from the underlying factors which permanently generate them.

Internal Social Dynamism

Taking as our base an extradisciplinary approach, we have felt the need to introduce a new concept which has allowed us to evaluate more accurately the principal conceptualisations of social science research in the Caribbean and which has proven to be singularly important for the analysis of social sciences in the region. The 'internal social dynamism' variable expresses the degree to which the development and evolution of a social unit are the product of the operation and utilisation of self-contained factors, that is, of endogenous forces and mechanisms from within the society itself. It refers to the extent to which there exist processes of self-direction and internal life within the society in question.

In contrast with what has mainly been the case in Europe, Caribbean societies have not been societies with their own internal dynamism, with social forces which might have functioned as the engine of social processes, social development and social evolution.

Throughout most of their history, and in some areas even now, the Caribbean has been characterised by a relatively low level of internal social dynamism. The countries of the region arose as implanted societies, in which the economy and the local historical dynamic were motivated and controlled from outside.

For more than two centuries, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, Caribbean society, as an implanted society, was for all intents and purposes an appendix of the metropolis, lacking social forces sufficiently developed to serve as the principal driving force of history. It lacked those self-directing endogenous forces which, operating in a process of permanent turmoil within the heart of the society, might have given the emerging society a life of its own. Caribbean societies lacked any significant endogenous movement towards a historical evolution, or a national history, which might have crystallized their own social aspiration with the framework of a national project. This can be seen in all spheres of social, cultural and political life. In contrast to the taxonomic tendency to identify descriptive categories, internal social development should be treated as a longitudinal dynamic variable; that is to say, the level of internal social development itself should be treated as an object of study over the course of time.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that for more than two centuries natural population growth was not the product of normal sexual reproduction. It was cheaper to import healthy adult slaves, who had already survived epidemic diseases, than to rear new slaves, with all the complications of infant mortality, lost working-days on the part of pregnant mothers and the onus of bringing up the children. Caribbean societies began to develop into implanted societies when the European visitors announced themselves to be hosts and began their historic political and economic enterprise in the Caribbean, importing millions of adults from outside the region as slaves or indentured servants. It is easy to imagine the profound implications of such permanent interventions on cultural, social, political and economic activity, and the consequences for family life, cultural expression and community development for nation building. Although there were a good many achievements

such as the creation of autonomous languages, and numerous cultural expressions such as dances, music and a great deal more, in general terms the principal driving force of Caribbean development was to be found not within but without. In fact, the emergence of a self-identity was permanently blocked (Williams 1970: 503).

Validity of Western Social Sciences in the Caribbean

The 'internal social dynamism' variable has allowed us to answer, in explicit and concrete terms, the most important theoretical and methodological question that can be asked about a half century of social sciences in the Caribbean: What validity have western social sciences had for the study of the region?

One premise can be established at the most general level shared by all western social science disciplines, in spite of their particular idiosyncratic postulates, due to their emphasis on the state or the social system as a relatively closed unit of analysis. It is postulated that there has to be some kind of internal regularity which governs the processes and development of society for the social sciences to become possible. Thus, the basic premise is that there are interrelated social processes at the heart of society, which, far from being random in nature, correspond to an internal logic of society. Certain inherent regularities in society govern its development, social changes and evolution, as well as the processes which occur in it. This means that social forces are operating permanently within society in such a way as to exercise a decisive influence on its development, evolution and its historical project. Indeed, the aim of the social sciences is precisely to discover and trace the relationships of these endogenous mechanisms.

This fundamental premise which underlies, as an axiomatic principle, the most important models and paradigms developed within the western social sciences, is not valid for Caribbean societies, during the major part of their history, nor is it valid in certain key areas for the present day. On the contrary, as we have already suggested, there has been in the Carib-

bean a chronically low level of internal social dynamism characterised by structural discontinuity, as a result of the ongoing operation of powerful mechanisms of external origin.

When the transatlantic packet-boat brought the message, 'We don't want any more sugar, we want coffee!' plantation crops were simply changed, and the productive system of the region was totally altered; not as a result of internal processes, or social processes, or labour conflicts, strikes or other endogenous factors, but simple because someone in some far-off European capital had decided that it should be so, within the framework of asymmetrical international relationships.

This is to say that the Caribbean societies' own internal dynamic does not provide a sufficient basis for an explanation of the historical and social processes which have been present in the region.

This leads us to the principal conclusion of our analysis of the social sciences in the Caribbean: that most of the paradigms, models and theories of western social science lack validity in the Caribbean, because they suppose a degree of internal social dynamism much greater than that which exists in the Caribbean, where historically there has predominated an endemic structural discontinuity affecting every sphere of social, economic, cultural and political life. Even terms such as evolution, development, underdevelopment, social systems and social process cannot be applied freely or must be handled with extreme care in any socio-historic study of the region. To speak of the economic development of the Caribbean over, let us say, the last two centuries, lacks all meaning. There has been no genuine Caribbean development, only European development of which the Caribbean has been a mere extension and appendage.

The answer is not to be found, however, in setting up an equally subjective idiosyncratic system of purely Caribbean social science. The answer to Eurocentrism does not lie in some other type of ethnocentrism. The response of the Caribbean, and indeed of many other regions outside the West, should be the creation of an extradisciplinary social science, which takes as its point of departure not a rigid system of relatively autonomous disciplines, but

rather interrelated specialisations forming part of an integrated social science, connected with the spheres of social activity most relevant to the region's own social reality and the social challenges thrown up by history; a single social science, with a paradigm that starts from discontinuity as well as from continuity; from sudden dislocation and not simply from transition; from change, not as an altered state but as a creative force. That is to say, social sciences do not start solely from endogenous laws or regularities found within the relatively integrated nation-state taken as the unit of analysis, but allow a significant role to interruptions or interventions from outside the system, perhaps with a new paradigm of structural discontinuity, within the framework of weak states in nations yet to be built. Only in this way can the Caribbean combine the valuable achievements of European social sciences with the demands of its own reality.

Prospects

What are the prospects for present-day social sciences in the region?

The contemporary period should not be opposed to the historical period, because the contemporary period is a special case of history. The search which historically has characterised social sciences in the Caribbean in a long process of endogenisation has not yet ended. In spite of their value, and the contribution which they have made, most of the debates surrounding the socio-historical process of the Caribbean, which have dominated social science research over half a century, have failed to come to any satisfactory conclusion.

At the national level, the complex problematics of social and political stability as they relate to problems of race, social class and economic development strategy, continue to occupy a high place on the agenda of Caribbean social science. Not only in the Caribbean, but in the post-colonial world in general, numerous national projects have failed or experienced profound crises, with very high social costs, because they have not offered an adequate solution to these problematics. In the Caribbean, in particular, the interconnection

between ethnic problems and the political process continues to constitute a serious ongoing threat to social peace and stability.

At the supranational level two major topics have claimed attention. The first of these is the problem of ecology, which, even though it is not limited to the social sciences, is assuming more and more importance as a preoccupation of social science research in the Caribbean Basin, whose enclosed sea shows a particular vulnerability in terms of its ecology. The second topic is related to the effect of the global processes now in progress and the response to them, stemming from the disappearance of traditional systems of control and hegemony, with a serious potential for widespread conflict both nationally and internationally. There is no reason to suppose that the so-called peace between the superpowers during the post cold-war period will be of benefit to the Caribbean, which has lost its strategic role as a region, and indeed funds on which the region used to be able to depend are being diverted towards other regions such as Eastern Europe.

These three macro-topics (i) the maintenance of global coexistence and the interrelationship of microstates with broader groupings, (ii) the maintenance of the minimum conditions necessary to avoid ecological collapse and (iii) a lasting solution for ethno-cultural and socio-political stability at the national level, together with interaction between the three areas and their articulation with other social processes, will determine to a large extent not only Caribbean coexistence, but indeed global coexistence, well into the twenty-first century. On the responses to these challenges will depend the definition of new and viable alternatives for the development, stability and peace of the multi-ethnic societies of the Caribbean, which are not yet nations but only timid sketches of nations.

The implication for social science in the Caribbean is that key concepts such as development, underdevelopment, modernization and social evolution need to be reexamined. The western model concept of 'development' based on modernization and 'progress' appears to be exhausted. In fact it can be calculated that, if the rest of the world including the Caribbean were to achieve a standard of living comparable, for example, to that of the Euro-

pean middle classes, it would require, within the framework of the existing model, such a significant multiplication of production, energy consumption and pollution to satisfy the needs of those additional thousands of millions of people, that it could easily provoke the ecological collapse of the planet. This obviously renders imperative the need for a new model of development, the search for which will mean going beyond the framework and approach of western social science. An extradisciplinary social science in the Caribbean, which succeeds in promoting creative social science research, based on the region's own reality, and not afraid to go outside the parameters of the existing disciplines, but without discarding the worthwhile contributions of traditional social science, seems to promise new possibilities for social science research in the Caribbean. The Caribbean, like other regions which have not been the birthplace of the traditional social sciences, can and must set up its own system of specialisation for the study of its own reality, which need not necessarily be inspired by or start from the western system of disciplines. This then is the conclusion of our analysis of the efforts, over a period of fifty years, of three generations of social scientists involved in an ongoing process of endogenisation.

After half a century of social science in the Caribbean the challenge of today continues to be a search for new approaches to development, on the margins of a world fragmented at the macro-level into geographic and ethnocultural blocks involved in a process of economic integration. It is a search being carried out shoulder to shoulder with the peoples of the Caribbean, because there is a close link between the challenges facing Caribbean social science and the challenges facing Caribbean societies; they are in fact the same challenge.

Notes

1. The present study covers two linguistic sub-regions of the Caribbean region: the English and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean, which, in terms of the social sciences, can be investi-

gated together as a significant subject of study, on the basis of certain clear convergences, interaction and mutual influences which they have presented in the course of the development of their respective social sciences. Purely for reasons of brevity and style we shall use the abbreviated form 'Caribbean' to refer to the English and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean, without any implication of exclusiveness towards other parts of the region.

2. These spheres of activity do not coincide with existing social science disciplines. In fact a great source of confusion exists in this regard in the use of the same word 'economics' to refer to concepts as distinct as part of social reality, and the academic discipline which purports to study it. Thus it becomes difficult in economics to establish the type of distinction which exists between a social problem and a sociological one.

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