



Caribbean In/Securities: Creativity and Negotiation in the Caribbean (CARISCC)

Working Papers Series

Post-emancipation in/security: A working paper

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Introduction

In the first working paper of this series, Patricia Noxolo outlined the research network's perspective on security as created across different scales and by bottom-up as much as top-down processes. Equally, the project's recognition of the history of in/security in the Caribbean over a *longue durée*, and particularly the significance of slavery within this longer history, calls for some engagement with the post-emancipation period. With the advent of emancipation, followed by the slower process of changing socio-economic relations within plantation societies, the nineteenth century proved an important testing ground for everyday struggles.

It is notable that emancipation itself was cast as a source of insecurity for colonial elites, who wasted no time in emphasising uncertain economic futures and the threat of impending financial ruin. Meanwhile, ordinary Caribbean people sought to assert their definition of freedom, even as political and economic hierarchies proved stubbornly persistent. Thus the post-slavery era was framed by the kind of instability of meaning referred to in Noxolo's working paper. In fact, historians have long recognised the significance of political protest and social

contest during this period (Hall, 1971; Heuman, 1994; Olwig, 1995; Shepherd, 2007). These bottom-up attempts to negotiate and shape post-slavery relations constituted an important facet of everyday securitisation.

Livelihoods in port

Firstly, Caribbean port towns were marked by external and strategic processes of securitisation. Secondly, ports were sites of internal island practices and strategic negotiations of in/security on a smaller scale. Development research concerning the Caribbean highlights a range of livelihood strategies in present-day island contexts, including microenterprise (Verrest, 2013). Acknowledging the significance of colonialism and transatlantic slavery within Caribbean experiences of in/security invites questions of how such strategies – rooted in the era of slavery – were developed and modified after emancipation. With the post-emancipation movement of workers away from estates to free villages and urban centres, urban spaces took on increased significance as sites for securing livelihoods. This was particularly the case for those labouring in the service economy. For such workers, the rise of leisure travel to the archipelago presented specific opportunities to adapt and mobilise petty commerce and hospitality.

Reading for everyday negotiations of in/security invites consideration of a range of nineteenth-century texts, including newspapers, business records and travel narratives. What do such records reveal about everyday strategies? What was the relationship between textual and visual representations of urban residents? Which sites emerge as significant for securing post-emancipation futures?

Visitors repeatedly depicted urban sites in the Caribbean as problematic, unhealthy and threatening. Urban spaces were subject to regulation and colonial interventions sought to order the urban environment. Yet regardless of reputation, these spaces were routinely and necessarily negotiated by residents and travellers alike. As such, urban Caribbean spaces can be productively analysed for historical negotiations of security.

One site which emerges as significant is the market. Within port towns, markets hosted frequent interactions between visitors and residents, elites and non-elites. Markets were evidently crucial sites for securing everyday livelihoods. As these spaces were increasingly incorporated within tourist itineraries, they also brought new forms of opportunity alongside increased competition. With the expansion of tourist services, the sites of marketing activity shifted. Traders responded creatively with mobile commercial strategies, but new patterns of commerce also ushered in new forms of exclusion. Thus enhanced opportunities to profit from trade with leisure travellers coexisted alongside increased precarity and competition for those seeking to secure livelihoods in port.

CARISCC will also provide an opportunity to interrogate the legacies of some of these historical practices. The negotiation of livelihoods in the context of a tourist economy, for example, can be explored in relation to Susan Mains' research, and agricultural economies in the present-day Caribbean are examined within Rhiney's work (see forthcoming working papers). Further information about the network can be found on the CARISCC website: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/cariscc/index.aspx>.

Conclusion

Post-emancipation livelihood strategies might partially be read through the texts and images in circulation during the nineteenth century. There are moments at which such texts may capture forms of everyday securitisation so routine as to be absent from official archives and colonial records. Equally, folk negotiations of in/security are creatively depicted in the later work of musicians and writers from the region, creating striking dialogues between critique and celebration of livelihood strategies.

References*

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**This is a short working paper – references have therefore been kept to a minimum.*

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