



70 years of Service,
70 years of Leadership



SIR ARTHUR LEWIS
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SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC
STUDIES

The University of the West Indies
Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES)
Mona Campus

19th Annual SALISES Conference
Celebrating UWI @ 70!

Sustainable Futures for the Caribbean: Critical Interventions and the 2030 Agenda

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CONCEPT NOTE

1. CONTEXT

In a global environment characterized by significant political, social, economic, technological and environmental turbulence, the Caribbean region which forms the backbone of American Archipelagic space, faces revolutionary times. Thus, as our global geopolitical environment is subject to pressures of dissolution, fragmentation and transformation in the post-Brexit and Trump era, regional and island economies are faced with radical new opportunities to either sink separately or swim together. Yet the current choice to “sink or swim” represents simultaneously a déjà vu moment given the prescience of the 1947 conference for the closer association of the British West Indian colonies that was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The conference was attended by country and colonial representatives. One of the most important activities of the conference was the establishment of a committee to examine the political and economic need for closer association of the Caribbean territories and to make recommendations in the form of draft resolutions which were later approved by the conference. Are these historical concerns still salient in a shift to a global 2030 sustainable development agenda?

Not unlike today, during the 1930s and 1940s, the Caribbean was plagued with many social and economic problems. The depth of that pre-independence era of socio-economic crises was

outlined by Arthur Lewis in his analysis of the conditions sparking the labour rebellions in the region during the 1930s.

The ... earnings of labourers ... are so low as just to permit subsistence at a deplorably ... level. And evidence of this jumps to the eye in the ragged clothing, dilapidated housing, and undernourished condition of the masses and their children.... Consequently West Indians are prey to ... diseases which ... could all be eradicated fairly easily.... There is practically no legislation concerning housing or working conditions ... there are not enough schools.... The result is that more than half the children get some sort of primary education, but ... it is given in unfortunate conditions. (1939, 15 -17)

The ... distribution of land is the ... legacy of ... slavery ... planters ...bound ... by social and racial ties ... combine to fix wages ... the distribution of income... is most inequitable, the poverty of the masses contrasting ... with the luxury of the landed aristocracy ... the shadow of the plantation carries ... the touch of serfdom, depriving the labourer of that sense of dignity and independence ... debasing mentally and spiritually the ... labourer ... such a concentration of property gives to the planters ... political ... power which they have ... used to advance their own interests. (1939, 48-49)

The 1945 Moyne Commission Report also lamented the deplorable living conditions of the populace: high incidence of infectious diseases and the unfair working conditions (Moyne Report, His Majesty Stationery Office, London 1945). The Commission recommended that the conditions for membership to the Legislative Council be minimized; minimum wages be set and reform in the health, sanitation and education systems be established (Moyne Report, His Majesty Stationery Office, London 1945).

In the face of these conditions, a number of the Caribbean leaders vigorously supported the case in favour of a regional approach at the 1947 Montego Bay Conference. Among them was Norman Manley who asserted that:

It is impossible to suppose that every single one of these territories, or perhaps even the largest of us, can ever achieve alone the basic human services which it is the whole aim of politics to create and make possible for the common man.

(Conference Proceedings, 60)

In light of the momentum of the national self-determination process, there has been tremendous improvement in the quality of life for the majority of the region's people in the post-colonial period. Certainly, despite on-going concerns, wages, access to education and health facilities have increased and illiteracy and undernourishment have been reduced. Life expectancy has risen, maternal and infant mortality have decreased; deaths by infectious diseases have reduced tremendously and the region is experiencing an epidemiological transition with chronic illnesses being the main cause of death. Technological advancements have increased access to the global

market and upward social mobility has been experienced by the children of lower income groups; there have been significant openings for racial groups which previously faced exclusions, and women have come to regularly occupy roles in which they were at best rarely found in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, the 1947 proceedings include no record of a woman addressing the Conference.

Despite these advances, there are troubling signs of a region whose social gains are being seriously threatened by a conflict prone and uncertain global environment, unfair trading regulations favouring the powerful in the World Trade Organization, sluggish economic growth, plus fiscal indiscipline and inadequate local responses from the State, private sector and civil society. Since that historic conference, Caribbean countries have gained political independence but lack economic agency in their policy setting agenda hamstrung by aid conditionality and historic levels of indebtedness. The table below demonstrates this picture of sluggish growth, high levels of indebtedness and unemployment in the Caribbean region. Despite progress in reducing crippling Public Debt, the ratio of Debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still high at approximately 115% in the case of Jamaica at the end of March 2017. The Gini coefficients tell a story of troubling inequality while social protection remains at inadequate levels (Table 1). Coupled with elevated levels of crime and large numbers of disenfranchised youth, the modern Caribbean presents much cause for concern to policy formulators and implementers. Social exclusion and marginalization of some social groups and geographical areas remain and while the region's 39 million people grapple with several profound economic and social problems, and the single market and economy goal of regional integration remains elusive.

T. Albert Marryshow was one of the West Indians most committed advocates for unity. Known as the 'Father of Federation' whose greatest desire was that "THE WEST INDIES MUST BE WEST INDIAN!" When he was appointed a senator of the Federation, he was quick to reveal his elation:

This is my dream come true. Today, I am a member of that august body that I dreamed into existence.

He would have been disappointed with the break-down of the Federation which took place after his death.

Efforts at regionalism have results in the establishment of CARICOM. However, when a report was prepared on Caribbean Regional Integration by a team from UWI's Institute of International Relations (IIR) the conclusion was that that:

... the optimistic era of Caribbean integration may well have passed just ... when it is most ... needed. The difficulties facing the region ... are 'existential threats'.... Climate change, transnational crime, the decline of regional industries ... governance challenges ... are problems which can only be effectively addressed by co-ordinated regional responses.... failure to act ... could quite conceivably herald the effective decline of Caribbean society.... (UWI, IIR 2011, 5).

Indeed, eminent British scholar of contemporary Caribbean affairs Anthony J Payne, concluded in 2009 that: *Our modern Caribbean has yet to seize the moment and become an integrated region, working together for the advancement of its people.*

Nevertheless, spurred on by international development goals, Caribbean governments have now embraced the international goals for sustainable development by 2030, as being intergral to their own national and regional plans. This is an opportune moment then to reflect on our attempts to provide **all** Caribbean citizens with a transformation agenda of “development”, including but *going beyond*:

Economic, political ... social freedoms, such as the liberty of political participation and dissent, or opportunities to receive basic education.

(Amartya Sen 1999. *Development as Freedom* p. 5)

Our conference in reflecting on the challenges that lay before us will be organized around 3 themes that will guide each day’s proceedings:

DAY 1 THEME: FORESIGHTING INTEGRATION DYNAMICS

DAY 2 THEME: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND ON FUTURE EARTH

DAY 3 THEME: SMART GROWTH AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Table 1: Some Caribbean Economic Indicators¹

	Life expectancy at birth (years) 2015 ²	GNI Per capita in US\$ millions	Percentage average annual real GDP growth 2011 -2015	Gross Public Debt/GDP (%) 2013	Adult unemployment rate (%) 2015	Youth Unemployment rate (%) 2015	Percentage of Population poor	Gini coefficients %	Public social protection (% GDP)
Antigua and Barbuda	76.1	20,070	2.0	94	11 (2011) ^a	n/a	2007: 18.3	2007: 0.48	2011: 3.05
The Bahamas	75.4	21,540	0.7	56	11.6	28.4	2001: 9.9	2001: 0.57	2011: 2.79
Barbados	75.6	15,080	0.4	103*	10	30.4	2010: 19.0	2010: 0.47	2010: 7.07
Belize	70.0	8,160	2.5	76	8.5	22	2009: 41.3	2009: 0.38	2011: 2.0
Dominica	77.8	9,800	-0.3	76	23 (2000) ^a	n/a	2009: 28.8	2009: 0.44	2010: 3.80
Dominican Republic	73.5	11,150	n/a	110	13.58 (2016) ^a	31.4 (2014) ^b	n/a	n/a	n/a
Grenada	73.4	11,120	2.5	57	33.5 (2013) ^a	n/a	2008: 37.7	2008: 0.37	2010: 1.64
Guyana	66.4	1,240	4.5	21	6.9	25.1	2008: 36.1	2008: 0.35	2010: 3.70
Haiti	62.8	n/a	3.3	103	4.9	17.7	2012: 58.5	2012: 0.61	n/a
Jamaica	75.7	8,480	0.6	145	10.3	32.7	2015: 20.0	2015: 0.31	2011: 1.61
Saint Kitts and Nevis	73.8	20,400	3.3	103	4.5 (1997) ^a	n/a	2008: 21.8	2009: 0.38	2010: 3.01
Saint Lucia	75.1	10,350	0.4	80	14	47.2	2005: 28.8	2005: 0.42	2010: 1.72
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	72.9	10,610	1.1	74	15.7	39.6	2008: 30.2	2008: 0.40	2010: 4.35
Suriname	71.1	n/a	2.7	22**	6.3	18.6	2012: 47.2	n/a	n/a
Trinidad and Tobago	70.4	20,070	0.1	30	3	9.6	2005: 15.5	2005: 0.39	2010: 5.64

¹ Please note that other indicators e.g. school enrolment, happiness index, number of women in Parliament are equally important.

² Source: United Nations Development Programme 2015. Human Development Report.

^a <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html>

^b <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=DO>

2. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The 2018 conference seeks to explore and expand themes discussed in the 1947 Montego Bay conference.

Are we managing our own affairs well? Do we need broader regional integration? Are we satisfied with our progress in addressing inequalities and ensuring inclusive and smart growth for the 2030 agenda? How will we sustain our economies for future prosperity? How can we empower ourselves, especially our youth and children to secure our lives, health and wealth on Future Earth? Are we still in debt bondage? Is there a sustainable Development finance model? Is there a future without reparatory Justice? These are some of the questions that we will try to answer at the 2018 SALISES conference in Montego Bay.

The 19th annual SALISES conference seeks to examine the Caribbean prospects for 2030 against the background of the aspirations of the peoples of the region manifested during the 1947 Conference and the global goals for sustainable development which were agreed in 2015.

The main objectives of the conference are to:

1. Strengthen organizational and transformational network capacity to increase the output of SALISES research clusters (<http://www.uwi.edu/salises/research.php>)
2. Increase joint research among research fellows from the three campuses
3. Strengthen engagement among local, regional and international academicians, policy makers, members of the public and private sectors and members of civil society for the interrogation of the developmental agenda of the Caribbean in the context of a turbulent and radically changing global environment ;
4. Contribute to the academic discourses on social, cultural, economic, political and sustainable development of the Caribbean in the modern world;
5. Provide a forum where empirical evidence on Caribbean development can be presented and discussed;
6. Propose recommendations for sustained social growth, development financing, economic development and sustainable futures in the Caribbean region.

3. OUTPUTS

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, there are related outputs that are expected from the conference (Table 2):-

Table 2: Objectives and Outputs	
Objective	Outputs
1. Organizational strengthening, <i>Strategic Networks</i> and increase output of Research Clusters	Recruitment of key new members to clusters; build strategic relations with key development agencies/scholars ; presentations at the conference and subsequent publications by members of the SALISES Research Clusters
2. Increase research interaction among research fellows from the three campuses	Dialogue for cross fertilization of ideas on research, presentations, and publications
3. Strengthen engagement among local , regional and international academicians, policy makers, members of the public and private sectors and members of civil society on the interrogation of the developmental agenda of the Caribbean	A written concept strategy for a ‘Sustainable Futures’ policy brief series to guide SALISES in the engagement of policy makers, members of the public and private sectors and members of civil society; plus on line presence of policy briefs.
4. Contribute to the academic discourses on social, cultural economic, political and sustainable development of the Caribbean	Special issue of the journal <i>Social and Economic Studies</i> plus proposals to the Journal of Future Studies and Futures , with selected peer-reviewed articles based on conference presentations and themes; as well as solicitation of papers for an edited book proposal on Making Caribbean Futures.
5. Provide a forum where empirical evidence on Caribbean development can be presented and discussed	Online blog on <i>Sustainable Futures for the Caribbean</i>
6. Propose recommendations for the sustained social growth, economic development and sustainable futures of the Caribbean region	Policy briefs based on the main recommendations/issues at the conference. These will be presented to the government officials and support the SALISES Sustainable Futures policy brief series
7. Increase dialogue on, and with, Development Finance actors/agencies to promote research on the sustainable development agenda and advance projects for the growth and development of region	Increased pathways to new channels for Development Financing in the region.

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