Human development, Structuralism and the World Market: assessing poverty, production and environmental vulnerability in the Caribbean

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Abstract

The development experience of the English-speaking Caribbean is replete with paradoxes. The majority of island nations are deemed upper and middle income, are acutely vulnerable to macro-economic and environmental shocks, highly indebted micro-polities that remain exceptionally dependent on world markets. The 2016 Caribbean Human Development Report attempts to consider these multiple complex challenges under the rubrics of 'multidimensional poverty' and 'multidimensional progress'. After review of historical literature on development and using data available from public sources, this paper examines the report's theoretical framing, methodology, and policy conclusions. It foregrounds poverty, production, and the environment as interrelated development themes in the report, and offers analysis based on the prevailing structural and socio-institutional context of the region. By doing this, it finds some evidence that over time that some of region's economies are increasingly characterised by a decoupling of productive capability evinced by the decreasing role of industry in the economy, as compared to increased expenditures on human development factors such as education and healthcare provision. It offers a primer for an integrated approach to identify structural, socio-political and technical rigidities to address interconnected issues of inequality, volatile growth, and environmental crises in an effort to redefine a sustainable path for development.

Keywords: human development; Caribbean structuralism; decoupling; sustainability; industrial policy; poverty

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Introduction

For observers of the English-speaking Caribbean, the region is replete with paradoxes[1]. The region has several small island states with an average per capita income of over US9448.00 that make them middle and upper-middle income countries, according to the World Bank (World Bank 2019). This has meant that concessionary lending and overseas development assistance are curtailed (Dagher, 2019). Even with small populations, public debt in the region is among the highest in the world, with Barbados at 126 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Grenada at 62.7 per cent, Jamaica standing at 97.4 per cent, while Guyana remains among the heavily indebted poor countries (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018; ECLAC, 2018a). They comprise several tourism-based, offshore financial centres and resource rich nations making them acutely vulnerable to exogenous economic and environmental shocks (ECLAC, 2011, 2018a; Heger, Julca, and Paddison, 2008). With respect to vulnerability to climate change, Dominica ranks among the top three countries at-risk globally, having been successively devastated by hurricanes Irma and Maria, dramatically increasing the loss of human life and infrastructure damages (Eckstein, Hutfils, and Winges, 2018). It is estimated that these storms had a cumulative cost of US5.4billion to Caribbean island territories during the 2017 season alone2 (ECLAC, 2018b).

[1] The English-speaking Caribbean refers primarily to 14 members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) including Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Haiti later gained membership in 2002.

[2] The effects were assessed in terms of physical damage, losses of incomes and social services, plus additional costs. In Dominica, damages totaled $930.9 million, while losses amounted to approximately $380.2 million – the equivalent of 226 percent of the 2016 GDP, while damages and losses in Antigua and Barbuda amounted to $155 million.

Table 1. Macro-economic and social indicators of Caribbean countries[3]

Country	Population (total)	Real per capita income (US$) 2017	Main growth sector / per cent of GDP	Public Debt to GDP (as a per cent)	Human development status	Climate risk exposure (ND-GAIN ranking)
Antigua and Barbuda	104,084	14803.01	Tourism / 60	88.2	07.80 (70)	126
The Bahamas	403,095	30,762.01	Tourism / 50 Financial services / 15	57.4	0.807 (54)	46
Barbados	287,010	16,356.98	Tourism / 39 Financial services / 20	126.9	0.800 (58)	53
Belize	390,231	4971.20	Tourism / 38.1	92.9	0.708 (106)	118
Dominica	74,679	6719.34	Tourism / 24.8 Agriculture / 14.3	73.3	0.715 (103)	75
Grenada	108,825	10,451.03	Tourism / 24.2	62.7	0.772 (75)	68
Guyana	786,508	4655.14	Agriculture / 19.4 Mining (bauxite, diamonds, gold) / 18.1	44.5	0.654 (125)	123
Jamaica	2,906, 339	5114	Tourism / 20 Remittances / 14	97.7	0.732 (97)	97
St. Kitts/Nevis	56,345	17924.07	Tourism / 26.8	58.2	0.778 (72)	90
St. Lucia	180,454	9715.20	Tourism / 65	67.8	0.747 (90)	68
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	110,488	7145.10	Tourism / 23.4	73.4	0.723 (99)	50
Suriname	573,085	5317.39	Mining / 26.2	62.5	0.720 (100)	76
Trinidad and Tobago	1,375,443	16,126.40	Natural gas and hydrocarbon products / 45	62.2	0.784 (69)	77

Source: World Bank Development Indicators, UN Human Development Reports, CIA FactBook, (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018)

[3] The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Country Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in tandem with its readiness to improve resilience. Lower ranked countries suggest a high level of vulnerability and low level of readiness and resilience. See here: https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/ranking. Barbados, Dominica and St. Lucia also feature in the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein, Hutfils, & Winges, 2018).

Although Caribbean nations have historically had a relatively similar production structure geared towards agricultural exports, based in part on topography that determines the availability of natural resources and their shared colonial history (Farrell, 1982; Kemp-Benedict, Drakes, and Laing, 2018), their economies have become more complex. These countries' level of exposure to economic pressures both directly related to their longstanding integration into the world economy and shaped by their interaction with external markets provide the main source of demand for their products. There is however a certain degree of structural diversity in terms of the level of development and degree of economic specialisation among these countries (see Table 1 above), with Jamaica showing growth in the last few years in primary production, while Barbados, Belize, and Guyana showing a relative decline in primary export basket (Schincariol, Barbosa and Yeros, 2017). On the issue of poverty, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), while the income-poor made up more than 28% of the regional population in 2014, larger numbers accounting for 50.9% remain vulnerable to poverty (ECLAC, 2018b). Given these factors, the policy shift towards human development as expansion of capabilities, including political, civic rights, healthcare and education needs have been widely embraced in the region (PIOJ, 2014; Stewart, 2019; UNDP, 2004). These concerns have however been at the expense of broad conceptualisation of development linked to structural changes in production towards a deeper level of technological sophistication in export products and employment generation (Andreoni and Chang, 2017). Their rankings in terms of climate vulnerability shows that income status or per capita income on the one hand, and capacity to withstand shocks may diverge.

These considerations and the paradoxes that underlie the empirical reality of the Caribbean and development experience motivate this paper. In 2012, and subsequently in 2016, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Latin America and the Caribbean Office decided to undertake an important study that sought to integrate concerns about poverty,

environmental stress and household economic vulnerability in several Caribbean states4 (UNDP, 2012) . While both reports attempt to cast human development within context based on two different thematic concerns, the first human security, and the second multidimensional poverty and progress. In particular, the 2016 Caribbean Human Development Report (hereafter CHDR), uniquely themed ''multidimensional progress beyond income', centres on 'the multidimensional challenges of sustainable development and human progress taking into consideration the particularities of the Caribbean', and with a specific on the household and community levels (UNDP, 2016a, p. vi). It investigates 'the specific circumstances and deep structural challenges that continue to hinder the Caribbean regarding its wide, progressive agenda for human development and economic transformation' (UNDP, 2016a, p. 2). The paper therefore argues that the narrow and rigid framework that underpin the CHDR does not offer adequate explanations of why the Caribbean is in its current development conundrum. It proposes that, by revisiting the structural development economic literature, or structuralism, we can gain better insight into these issues and underlying reasons towards more appropriate policy constructs.

The paper thus critically reviews the CHDR's conceptualisations and policy recommendations linked to poverty, production and environmental vulnerability. Using content analysis, this contribution addresses how human development has been framed, and to what extent the report's analysis, findings and policy conclusions adequately account for the empirical realities aforementioned. We review seminal historical literature based on the structuralist tradition to illustrate its relevance to contemporary development concerns. Data that accompany the empirical analysis are drawn from a variety of sources, including the World Development Bank, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Centre for Research on the

[4] This study focuses on the 2016 report as it addresses environmental, poverty and economic concerns simultaneously. For interesting reviews of the 2012 report, see (Gomez, Gasper, and Mine, 2016) and (Munroe and Blake, 2017).

Epidemiology of Disasters Emergency Events Database (CRED EM-DAT), ECLAC, and the Caribbean Development Bank to support the overall argument. The paper thus sketches an integrated approach to consider the structural, technical and socio-political rigidities to the major development challenges. The paper is structured as follows: given the aforementioned purpose of the report, the next section revisits structuralism and development, and delineates the approach's usefulness linked to understanding contemporary Caribbean development. It also presents the analytical framework. Section 3 undertakes a broad review of the CHDR focusing on three main themes of poverty, production and environmental vulnerability examining the report's conceptual tools, methodology, findings and policy recommendations, juxtaposed against some recent empirical data. Finally, section 4 summarizes the main points and briefly discusses some implications for theory and policy.

Literature Review

Structuralism, Development and the Plantation Economy School

In the heyday of development economics, human development (though not so termed) was intricately linked to the modernising production structure of societies through industrialisation, and the relationship of this process to both internal and external forces (Evans and Heller, 2015; Stewart, 2019). Development economics grew out of the concern for the specific relationship between nations in the centre capitalist countries and the peripheral regions, including the Caribbean and Latin America during the post-war period (Fischer, 2015). With significant scepticism towards prevailing neoclassical economic theories that promoted participation in the world markets, structural theorists explained why some countries became wealthy and successfully industrialized, while others appeared, locked into producing lower value primary products (Prebisch, 2016). To remedy this unequal dynamic, policy leaders at the Economic Commission for Latin America led by Raul Prebisch suggested that industrialization

geared towards producing for domestic markets could remove the impediments of growth (Ocampo, 2001; Saad-Filho, 2005). Dependence on technologies from external markets also proved detrimental to growth prospects of former colonies and could create foreign exchange shortages and ongoing balance of payments problems (Cimoli and Porcile, 2016; Vernengo, 2006). Moreover, the lack of entrepreneurial capabilities in these peripheries was also deemed an important source of development problems for poorer countries that resulted in unbalanced growth (Hirschman, 1958). In this scenario, declining terms of trade where low-value primary exports yielded insufficient foreign exchange to purchase imports were of increasing concern and created balance of payment problems since developing economies were driven by demand for energy and raw materials in the industrialised world.

As a critique to Arthur Lewis' model of development (Lewis, 1950), Caribbean dependency scholars, known as the New World Group, themselves inspired by the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis and the intellectual currents at the time associated with Gunnar Myrdal, Dudley Seers and Paul Baran. They noticed similar patterns in small Caribbean economies that tended towards stagnation, but in these newly decolonized countries, their integration had resulted in a monoculture economy that was unable to advance structural changes to achieve higher standards of living (Best and Levitt, 1969; Girvan and Girvan, 1973). They sought to carve out an intellectual space to resolve problems associated with the early experiences of industrialisation whose model drew heavily on Nobel laureate in economics Arthur Lewis (Marshall, 2008; McKenzie, 2005). The New World Group, as they were called, put forward perspectives that emphasised the metropolitan-colony relationship as a principal cause of economic stagnation – and why economic growth did not translate into development. For them, the economic behaviour resulted from the encounters with Northern and European colonial-inspired institutions and constituted a major plank of their theoretical explanation of the character of Caribbean economies (Best, 1968). Girvan (1973) also posited that mineral exploitation

depended on multinational resource-producing enterprises that created an economic imbalance, insofar as they were disconnected from the rest of the economy, did not generate 'return value', repatriated the majority of its profits created major difficulties for Caribbean economies.

In this respect, they emphasized, the legacy of planter rule, but in particular the institutional structures and constraints, which the contemporary Caribbean economy had inherited from colonialism (Best, 2012; Best and Levitt, 1969). This dependent relationship and unequal integration in the global economy likewise had implications for sovereignty, and the pursuit of autonomous economic policies to chart their collective development on their own terms based on the tenets of equality in the international community (Bishop, 2015; L. Lewis, 2013). This was evident by the several incursions on 'sovereignty' in the region, the Grenadian invasion by the United States, and the massive effects occasioned by the withdrawal of concessions in trade deals with Europe. This was not merely a function of the small size of these islands that render them vulnerable, but of the institutional structure and historical relationships, that stringently circumscribed the policy space to determine its own future (Dagher, 2019).

As a result, in similar fashion to Latin American structuralists (Saad-Filho, 2005), plantation school economists emphasised the nature of economic organisation, institutional characteristics of these societies, and external relations with capitalist economies that reproduced persistent poverty and inhibited structural transformation (Beckford, 1999; Best and Levitt, 2009). This was conceived as a 'total institution' in which growth was induced by the offshore economy that prevent local market deepening. Production and distribution decisions of the economy by foreign owners were thus largely determined by external forces, and domestic actors' behaviour and interpersonal relations reflected this expression of interests. This type of society had an overall hierarchical or top-down structure of the society based on racial lineage, skills and class, and reproduced inequality (Beckford, 1999). This was equally manifested in the consumer bias and behaviour of elites whose consumer tastes favoured foreign imports over local substitutes.

Institutions therefore had to be totally transformed to correct these social, economic and political misgivings and to create a dynamic comparative advantage away from simply exporting natural resources.

Moreover, the theoretical approach sought to mirror the major empirical concerns that mounted the critique of the Plantation School is that the so-called 'industrialization by invitation' – coined by Lloyd Best – that did not generate the employment anticipated across the Caribbean economies involved in light manufacturing or capital intensive industrialization (Carrington, 1966). This remained a major bugbear. Nor did the industrial plans that were initially set out, for example in Jamaica in the 1950s, nor in Trinidad and Tobago from the mid-1950s help reposition these economies on a sustained growth path (Bernal, 1988). The nature of the state and its interactions under postcolonial conditions were not clearly articulated, as part of the Plantation Economy model that left a great deal of room for misinterpretation and limited policy direction. They over-emphasised the role of transnational forces in defining economic production decisions that left little room for agency (e.g. Girvan, 2006). In major respect, they characterised these social relations in a very static and monolithic manner, and did not fully explore the changes in society and the major influences of those adjustments after colonialism. It did not realise the potential of the state to remedy credit constraint that could support its redistributive power to support and finance education, health and social programs or via nationalisations or equity acquisitions, thus leaving the relationship between the social forces, and the state severely under-theorised (Dagher, 2019; Edwards, 2017a, 2017a; Perry, 2018).

The Political Economy of Growth and Human Development: towards an integrated structural approach

More contemporary structuralist explanations inspired by these earlier approaches can offer deeper insight into structural changes and human development occurring today (Chang and Andreoni, 2019; Khan, 2018). Scholars of the earlier iteration of structural development economics

acknowledged the importance of a dynamic shift in the economic system as a whole to encourage new industry and productive capabilities (Robert and Yoguel, 2016). Taking inspiration from this approach, Andreoni and Chang (2016, 1) conceived development as 'a process of production transformation led by the expansion of collective capabilities and resulting in the creation of good quality jobs and sustainable structural change'. Accordingly, Chenery (1975) explained that the structuralist approach seeks to 'identify specific rigidities, lags, and other characteristics of the structure of developing economies that affect economic adjustments and the choice of development policy'. These structural problems thus cannot be addressed through a focus on comparative advantages, narrow set of capabilities, or efficient (re)allocations of factor endowments based on remedying market imperfections (Lin, 2012). Rather, industrial policies that create and coordinate new investments can help create interdependencies and complementariness between capital, demand and skills and technologies (Andreoni and Chang, 2018; Hirschman, 1958; Perry, 2018). Human development thus results from an endogenous process of transforming the production structure from a dominant agriculture or resource-based through deliberate policy efforts and institutional changes within the society to build upon existing capabilities across structural, political and organizational domains (Khan, 2018). They generate significant multiplier effects and are causally interlinked to social provisioning as rents gained from exports or production have effects on wages and private investment in the economy.

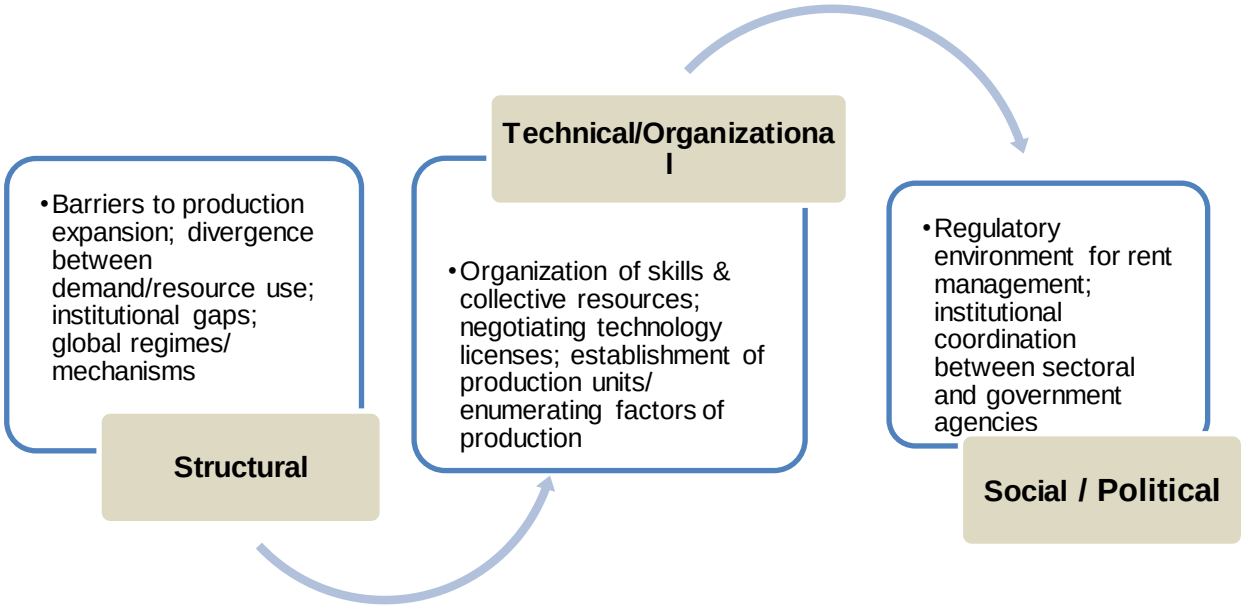
In this sense, rents refer to incomes generated from productive activity and transfers from state institutions to social groups through deliberate policy (Khan, 2018; Ngo and McCann, 2018). The distribution of these rents and benefits are interspersed with global market dynamics, as international trade rules and prices of goods such as commodity affect how they are generated and quantity in any given year. The competition for rents among social groups and powerful actors in large measure help determine how institutions perform in developing countries with a single dominant economic sector, like natural resources or service-oriented activity, as the case in the Caribbean. Rent management systems are methods of organising politics, institutions, and the

market structure of an industry to create, transfer and distribute these surplus incomes. The organisation of power among external and domestic actors define how beneficiary firms or public agencies can improve productivity, invest in new institutions which determine the impact, positive or negative, on growth and development (Ngo, 2016; Perry, 2018). This encourages informal deals between firms in the domestic onshore sector of the economy, and the political elites to maintain levels of production and profits. This makes room for a large traditional or informal sector to emerge as the mass of people engage in trading with the local population and some tourists as their main markets. Rents from natural resources or exports in this way may serve as investible resources for creating the conditions for industrial policy and redistribution (Perry, 2018). Governments that lack the fiscal base to allow for productive investment and domestic resource mobilization, given the external environment, and thus compete for foreign investments given constraints such as diseconomies of scale, narrow set of capabilities and dependence on trade to expand productive frontiers and exports markets (Farrell, 1982; Hausmann and Klinger, 2009).

As part of this social transformation process, markets are but one area of organisation (Perry, 2017). This involves the interdependent interactions among three main domains, namely structural, organisational or technical, and the socio-political process. In a developing country, the political and organisational context and the wider influences of transnational forces and actors is analytically significant. Structural factors, notably international finance and in a developing economy whose economic structure suited colonial accumulation influence the possibilities for productive transformation to meet the basic needs of the population. The availability of finance in the domestic and international markets and the relationship between finance in the production process can foster or constrain industrial activities. On the technical/organisational domain, state policy and policy leaders seek to organize activities, including the distribution of policy rents through administrative and public agencies to deploy capital, foster new skills and expand production capabilities (Andreoni and Chang, 2018). Through the state, it seeks to transfer of resources from one set of social groups to another, or from one sector, to another to transform

erstwhile institutional and productive relationships.

Figure 1 – Structural, technical and socio-political (STP) drivers that constitute the 'transformative' rationale for development policy



Source: Author

In postcolonial countries, where new production may stymied by powerful groups' (usually merchant capitalists) relative influence to maintain the status quo based on colonial racial and class structures. Marginalised actors or factions, like community groups, labour unions or nationalist political leaders may organise to mount a challenge to reorder the distribution of benefits/rights (education, jobs, healthcare entitlements, better wages, new property) (Edwards, 2017; Teichman, 2019). The pattern of development is contingent and varies over time based on the available resources, policy changes, or the external environment underpinned by social relations at the level of the domestic and international economy. While human development has

been implicitly entangled in development theory from the beginning, recent development policy associated with the human capabilities approach have paid less attention to production concerns (Chang, 2013; Stewart, 2019). On the other hand, recent iterations have sought to integrate both (Evans and Heller, 2015; Sumner, 2016), considering how structural variables, income growth and giving greater attention to factors like employment and education.

This perspective considers the role of broad-based industrial and social policy that creates interdependencies beyond manufacturing towards service activities, boosts technological upgrading and expands skills and employment opportunities to achieve a variety of goals. This requires shifts in political, organisational and economic arrangements. From this perspective, multi-sectoral coalitions drawing together different groups in the society that focus on better income distribution (Hickey, Sen, and Bukenya, 2015). As the gap between skilled jobs and unskilled jobs is reduced when new, higher-productivity industries are developed to generate more wages and entitlements for workers across the economy. In order to manage such adjustments with minimal social disruption, to more equitable and environmentally constructive form of development, redistributive and social protection systems, including the altering of property and other economic rights (Hickey et al., 2015). To facilitate this, social mobilisations drawing up a high degree of technical capacity, institutional knowledge and organising groups to mount popular public education schemes in support of rebalancing the economy (Girvan, 2012). This framework to expand production and improve human development outcomes offers a new prism to understand contemporary and prevailing circumstances and will now applied to examine the CHDR (2016).

Framing the Caribbean Human Development Report – definitions and issues

The intellectual and analytical foundations of the report are essential to understanding the issues and factors, and how its authors arrive at their conclusions. This section thus outlines the definitions and issues addressed by drawing upon '*Chapter one: A new paradigm for assessing*

vulnerability: embracing human development', locating it in the broader poverty and development literature. The 2016 CHDR was inspired by an interest to consider the specific development realities of the Caribbean region based on a concern that challenges vulnerabilities were multiplying and proliferating causing poverty (Gomez, Gasper, and Mine, 2016; UNDP, 2016a). They serve as an agenda-setting, norm diffusing and policy advocacy tool developed through deliberative dialogue among stakeholders (Gomez et al., 2016). In addition, they would help to focus policy attention on so-called structural and strategic matters with a better chance of achieving impact. Considering the worsening social and economic crisis in the Caribbean, the UNDP mounted a data-gathering exercise based on the concept of multi-dimensional poverty[5]. In May 2015, the UNDP Latin American and Caribbean Office brought together its professional staff to engage in dialogue with twelve stakeholders of different professional backgrounds and expertise drawn from the academic, public, non-governmental and private sectors, and civil society of six Caribbean countries that constituted an Advisory Panel group[6].

In the CHDR framework, multidimensional poverty describes a series of multiple deprivations in addition to household income that take into account health, education, and living standards, and shows both the incidence and intensity of poverty (Alkire et al., 2015). It represents an agglomeration of multiple measures to help indicate whether poverty at the individual and household level is being reduced or increasing over time. This notion of development is consistent with an approach beyond simply income that is at the centre of this report (Stewart, 2019; Vázquez and Sumner, 2013). It utilises classification of near-poor and vulnerable to represent groups and individuals that suffer from these multiple deprivations based on level of income, social status, gender, and age that have over the years been exacerbated by low economy-wide growth that prevents their upward social mobility. In this respect, the Report defines multidimensional

[5] The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) identifies multiple deprivations at the household and individual level in health, education and standard of living. It uses micro data from the household surveys. Each person in a given household is classified as poor or non-poor depending on the weighted number of deprivations his or her household, and thus, he or she experiences. See: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/what-multidimensional-poverty-index.
[6] The author sat as a member of this committee.

progress, based on normative considerations as

> 'nothing that diminishes the rights of people and communities or jeopardizes the environmental sustainability of the planet can be regarded as progress. To achieve this progress, the definition of well-being must be expanded to include decent work, quality education, gender equality, social protection and care systems that are within reach of households, and contribute to the development of safe communities, and care for the environment' (UNDP, 2016a, p. 32).

Integral to this level of progress is a consideration of economic, environmental and social vulnerability that underscores a range of 'structural constraints' that impedes one's ability to adapt, monetary poverty, the intensity of natural and human-induced disasters, as well as violation of political and human rights (UNDP, 2014, 2016b).

Poverty

The notion of multidimensional progress in the Caribbean is squarely concerned with vulnerability and poverty, making the case for that higher levels and the creation of new classes of 'near-poor' and 'poor' which have particularly arisen over recent years, in part due to government's inability to consolidate human development gains and low levels of growth (UNDP, 2016a). Chapter two '*Profiling human vulnerability in the Caribbean: who are most vulnerable and why?*' and Chapter 3 '*Persistent poverty and inequality influence human vulnerabilities and affect multidimensional progress*' are the main focus of this section'. The CHDR highlights vulnerability by use of its counterfactual, resilience or adaptive capacity, that is people's exposure to multiple interlocking economic, social or environmental hazards are based on their ability to avert or absorb a given shock (UNDP, 2014, 2016a). Though the three areas overlap in complex ways to generate particular outcomes, this section focuses on the first two while the following sections will analyse and discuss the environmental dimension discretely. Economic vulnerability is characterised by people who hover above the poverty line but are incapable of reaching the middle class measured in terms of access to US$10 – US$50 per day (UNDP, 2016a). It thus elaborates the factors that relate to the risk of falling back into poverty, as unequal pay for the

same work, having disproportionate amount of home-based responsibilities for women, or facing the risk of un/under-employment, insecure sources of income, higher health care costs, poverty, discrimination and social exclusion, limited access to land or land rights, or lower levels of social protection (UNDP, 2016a).

Social exposure on the other hand, results from violation of human, civil and political liberties, and people being discriminated from accessing services or purchase goods based on personal or group characteristics. Moreover, the CHDR further identifies the causes of these vulnerabilities as linked to high levels of indebtedness (see table 1), high costs for food imports and high costs for energy. It further notes that a reduction in poverty in six countries, while poverty is becoming worse in another five, with high levels of indigence[7] in Haiti, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis and Belize. The report further acknowledges that 'the specific circumstances and deep structural challenges that continue to hinder the Caribbean regarding its wide, progressive agenda for human development and economic transformation' are undoubtedly related to 'people escaping poverty' through 'educational attainment and the labour market', as well as social protection and access to financial and physical non-monetary assets (UNDP, 2016a, p. 32). Such considerations are not focussed per se on state capacity to deliver important public and social goods (Hickey et al., 2015; Perry, 2017), but rather an emphasis on human vulnerability and resilience at the household and community level. It also highlights that such a trend has been observed in Caribbean countries, with extreme cases in Jamaica and the Dominica, over the last decade, with lower attainments in human development indicators particularly in the five years preceding the report's publication.

In other words, this approach reifies the individual and household's ability to participate effectively in markets and enjoy the marginal rewards from such efforts and social investments in education and labour market policies (Barrientos, 2009; Hulme and Shepherd, 2003). Hulme and Shepherd (2003) argue that such an approach conceives poverty as only among those groups

[7] Indigence is defined as an individual's incapacity to afford the basic food basket (UNDP, 2016a, p. 102).

whom the market can 'liberate' through further market-opening instruments, and no other types of support or institutional changes that address the economic structures and political institutions that reproduce poverty and require longer-term changes. These perspectives show the differences between the chronic poor and the transient poor – the former focuses on those groups whose life chances are stymied due to long periods of cyclical and even inter-generational poverty compared to those experiencing a temporary condition with the expectation of imminent improvements (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003). In this respect, associating purchasing power with economic vulnerability reducing the structural dimensions of poverty to consumption aligned with the World Bank's own understanding (Cammack, 2017). According to Cammack (2017), this perspective has been widely by World Bank analyses, which entrenches the idea that people need to be whipped into shape in order to compete in markets and enlarge their consumption and employment choices with minimal levels of compensation. It also diminishes any possibility of chronic poverty being addressed linked to those with minimal or no changes for economic and social mobility because they are structurally limited by the nature of the social relations that generate poverty itself (Green and Hulme, 2005; Selwyn, 2018).

This no doubt is associated with the structural conditions of production beyond market consumption and exchange (see next section), that is, the structure of economies, their historical antecedents and how domestic and international forces may lock economies into certain paths. The CDHR's line of argument is thus: that people are poor because there is little growth, and there is little growth because of a lack of market participation. Supposedly, because these states have not made optimal use of markets, or possess malfunctioning markets, low levels of competitiveness and poverty prevail. It would appear that this analysis may depict the Caribbean in such a fatalistic way has certainly not advanced with the potential policy shifts and theoretical flexibility that the catalytic effects of the 2008 global crisis have engendered. This point is further reinforced in the Report:

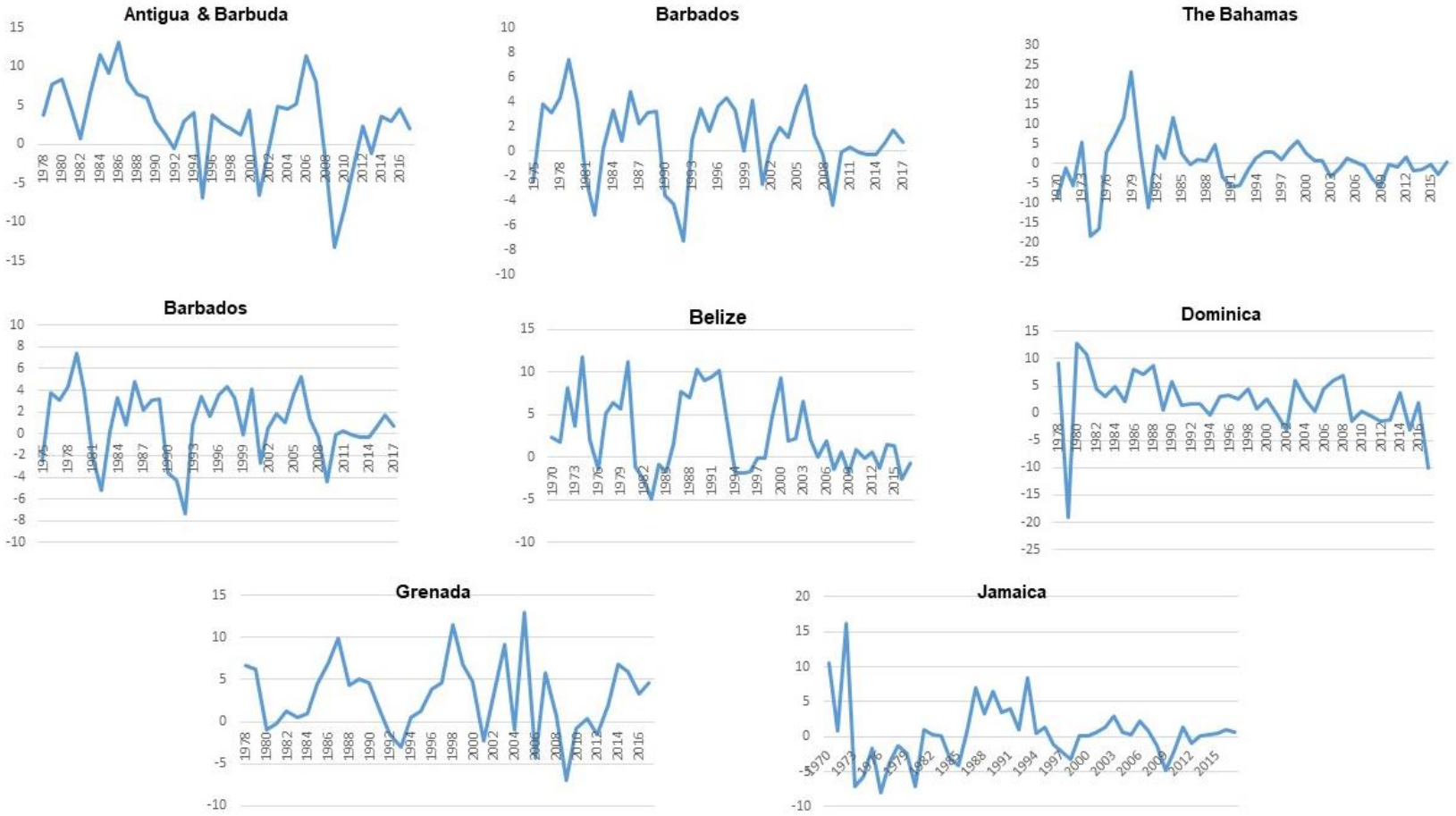
> The new growth paradigm should give prominence to the knowledge that economic growth is enhanced by multidimensional progress while not ignoring the important role of

> economic growth in enabling multidimensional progress. Faster and more stable economic growth is fostered by multidimensional progress and synchronously enables multidimensional progress (UNDP 2016, 130).

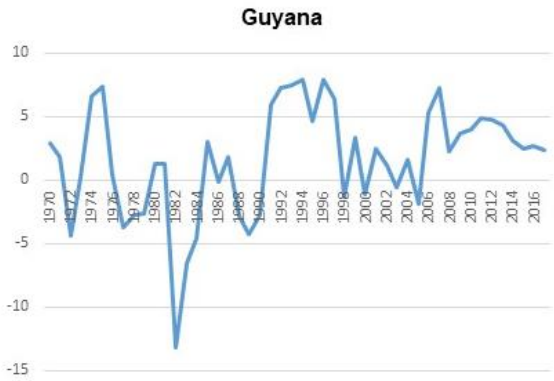
The use of the term inequality, and its emergence, almost seem serendipitous, as there is no explanation about its determinants or sources, while there is some discussion about its effects. It inevitably reflects the 'trickle-down' principle, where improved social conditions emerge not by any specific force or because of a policy, but by a natural tendency of the growth and economic progress.

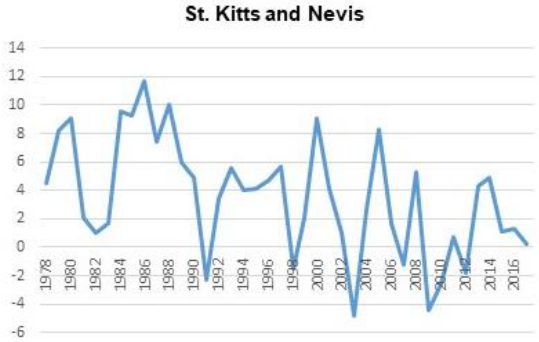
In addition, the 'structural causes' of unemployment and labour market participation that the report identifies do not acknowledge interdependent historical, socio-political and structural at the level of the world economy (Schincariol et al., 2017). It first frames the problems facing Caribbean societies and then explains these failures within based on national conditions. In other words, the imperative of market expansion as a basis for human development becomes self-reinforcing, and Caribbean countries lacklustre performance in these parts represents a self-evident justification of the current challenges of Caribbean development. It diverges significantly from the essence of earlier development thinking reviewed above that facilitated understanding problems on its own terms with policy objectives such as inducing structural changes and employment creation in the economy (Beuermann et al., 2018). It is now about expansion of opportunities for both human beings and business firms, and the general subordination of aspects of social life to market relations (Cammack, 2017; Ngo, 2016). The CHDR thus explains away issues of mass poverty, lack of structural transformation, narrowing economic alternatives, low growth and limited technological development as a failure to become more competitive in international markets. The volatile growth path (see figures 2 and 3) do not take into account the structural realities and dynamics of production and the determinate causes that structuralists understood well.

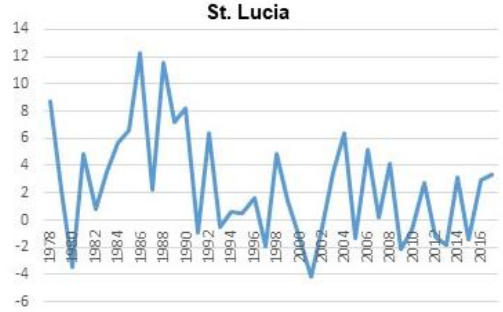
Figure 2 : The pattern of growth in the Caribbean (1970s to present) Source Source

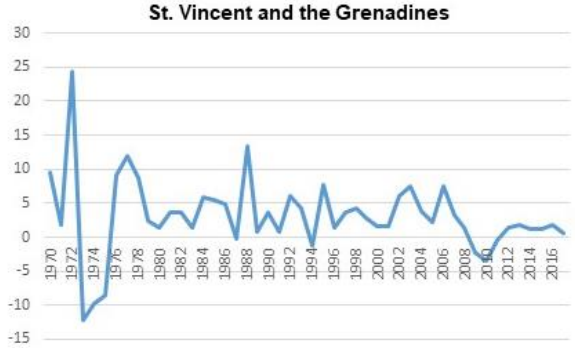


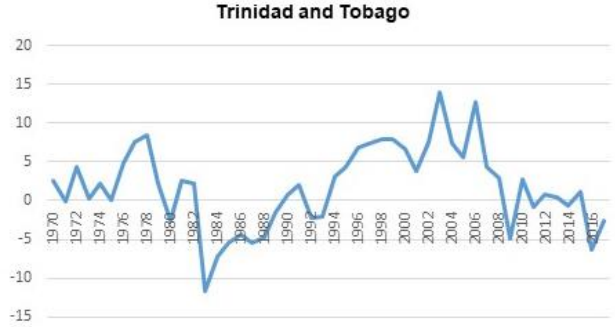
Source: World Bank Development Indicators, www.data.worldbank.org











Source: World Bank Development Indicators, www.data.worldbank

In spite of overall decline in the rates of economic and productivity growth in the region in recent years (see figures above), especially over the last decade in light of the global crisis, there have been periods of "growth acceleration" in some countries. Werker (2013) identified periods in the economic growth across the region, when some countries showed some level of sustained growth of more than 6 per cent over an extended period of time (eight years). They include: Antigua and Barbuda 1978-1991 ; The Bahamas 1963-1971, 1978-1986 ; Barbados 1960 to 1972 ; Belize 1966 to 2006 ; Dominica 1979 to 1988 ; Grenada 1981 to 1991 ; St Kitts and Nevis 1981 to 1993 ; Saint Lucia 1988 to 1996 (growth rate exceeded 10 % during 1982-1990); St Vincent and the Grenadines 1980 to 1990 ; Trinidad and Tobago 1973 to 1982, 1995-2009 (Werker, 2013, pp. 26–29).

Production

On the question of production, the CHDR limits much of its analysis to the role of foreign investment. It acknowledges that labour market outcomes are based upon the type of employment and the contribution of foreign investment in expanding the capital stock. Additionally, the current fiscal/financial woes of the region have been depicted as another reason to woo foreign investment to restore the capitalist growth process. The report makes this clear:

> 'Foreign direct investment can contribute to economic growth by increasing the stock of productive capital, introducing new and improved technologies, establishing or developing export markets, and introducing new organizational systems within the business sector' (UNDP 2016, 136).

It is necessary to lay a sound foundation for future growth by development and innovation in economic sectors, economic diversification, and improvements in cost efficiency and in international competitiveness, fiscal reforms and completion of the Caribbean economic integration agenda (UNDP 2016, 25). The report does not refer to how firms or states may

productive capacity and expand into new productive areas. This is unsurprising, given the lack of policy attention that such human development reports and goals have paid to production matters more generally (Chang, 2014). The notion that foreign investment serves to address the major structural weaknesses of the economy have not been borne by recent evidence, and has in part resulted in economy dynamics that have led to diminished production capability (Grazzi and Pietrobelli, 2017). Empirical studies also show that foreign investment by themselves have not translated intotechnology spill-overs, and improvements in technological capability into new sectors of economic activity in the Caribbean (Barclay, 2015; ECLAC, 2017).

According to ECLAC reports, foreign investment flows in the sub-region can reach as high as 10 per cent of gross domestic product totalling US$ 6.027 billion in 2014 (CEPAL, 2015). Trinidad and Tobago topped the island nations with 23 per cent of inward flows relative to GDP, the majority of which went to the hydrocarbon sector. The Bahamas, in addition to the Eastern Caribbean territories received the majority of investment in the tourism sector, while capital inflows to Guyana, Jamaica, and Belize/Suriname were predominated by gold mining, telecommunications/transport, and hydrocarbons respectively. These dynamics are intertwined with and create tensions in generating externally propelled economies that have some degree of dependence on foreign markets to generate growth and income (Best and Levitt, 1969; Couriel and Correa, 2018; Kemp-Benedict et al., 2018). The level of economic performance that is generated depends on the interdependencies of a number of factors including the internal structure of the society, its current level of development, the rent management system in place, and the degree of institutional power exercised at the nexus of domestic and external forces and agents (Ngo, 2016; Perry, 2018). In turn, this affects the productivity-generating capacity of the economy.

Moreover, these factors are expressed in the structural heterogeneity and sharp fluctuations in growth of Caribbean economies especially seen during the period of market liberalisation. The evidence also shows a certain dualism in the economy, as there has been shifts

to slow-growth sectors especially services, and a high concentration of employment in informal sectors, as industrial production has slowed in several countries with a high dependence on transnational corporations (CEPAL, 2015; ECLAC, 2017). This structural heterogeneity is manifested by lower contributions of industry to growth, while increased supply-side expenditures in health and education over time – despite the lower levels of human development and higher poverty experienced in the Caribbean over the five years up to 2016. The CHDR characterises the macro-economic situation by under-developed labour markets, chronic indebtedness, high costs of food imports, lack of economic diversification, high energy costs, and so on (UNDP, 2016a).

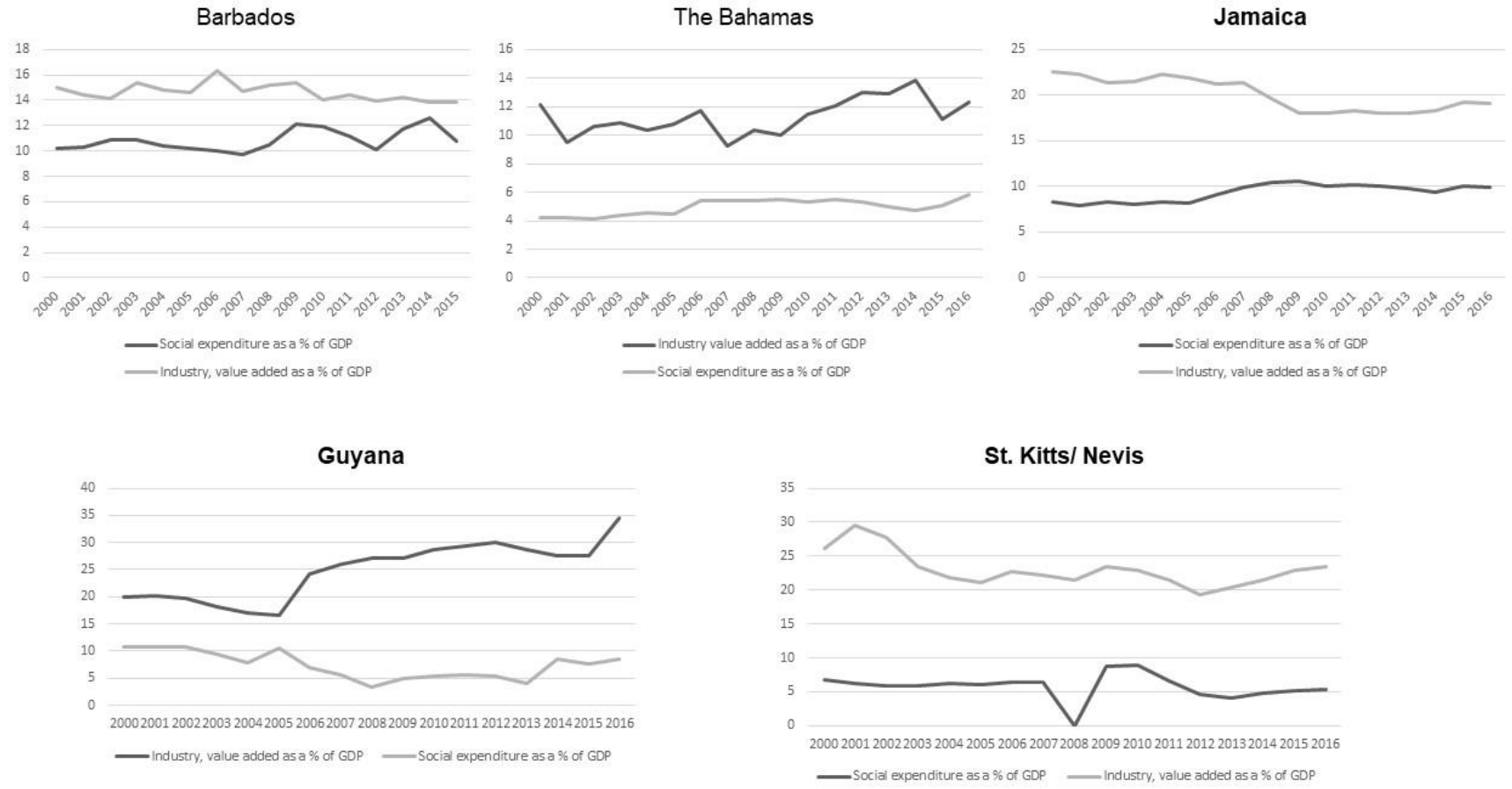
The report however does not note that the quality of human development is affected by the change in productive activity and the sectoral nature of production and quality of employment generated by structural changes (Amsden, 2010; Andreoni and Chang, 2017; Chang, 2014). The quality of such changes has been increasingly represent by a decoupling occurring since the early 2000s, until very recently, between industrial contribution to GDP and the expenditures on health and education, the latter of which is promoted by the human development paradigm, in particular the new multidimensional progress of the CHDR. Production factors and employment composition have consequences for economic growth more broadly and distributions of economic wealth. Nonetheless, development economists long noted the role of production and the structure of economic production as causes of divergent development outcomes and the need for state-led industrial policy (Prebisch, 2016), but paid limited attention to quality of life factors such as health and education (Stewart, 2019).

Even though the CHDR that the downturn in growth may be responsible for weak employment and labour outcomes, it does not indicate, that causality may run in the other direction. In other words, low levels of employment in a diversity of sectors of productive activity may affect the growth pattern; it does not illustrate why. This section offers an explanation in lieu of the limited treatment of production and the sectoral nature of production with respect to finance,

technology and the nature of industry and the link to health and education expenditures. Even as industry is declining the expenditures on health and education increase, that may have direct consequences for the quality of employment and imbalances in the labour market. Supply-side approaches to education / training initiatives do not automatically lead to improved developmental outcomes such as better employment opportunities (Amsden, 2010). While improved education and health may support a better quality of life overall, the manner in which this is delivered may not support broader productive transformation and employment opportunities. It therefore will not sustain the development process.

Consequently, the report continues with certain cosmetic suggestions but does not propose how to address institutional fragmentation among responsible ministries apart from public-private partnerships that may reinforce harmful forms of political clientelism (Minto-Coy and Berman, 2015). Relatedly, technological fixes are promoted as a necessary solution without sufficient understanding of the socio-political context. The structure of labour markets has also come into relief where public employment programmes are seen as crowding out private sector employment for political purposes rather than efficiency gains. As a result, policy is seen not to address structural problems, but individuals' capacity constraints to participate in labour, financial and invest in products to improve competitiveness (Cammack, 2017) outside of a social structure. Similarly, entrepreneurship, skills and education programmes that attempt to build individual agency while diminishing collective capabilities and neglecting the structural problem of income distribution linked to economic productivity (Cimoli et al., 2017).

Figure 3. The relationship between industrial production and social expenditures (% of GDP) in select Caribbean countries[8]



Source: World Bank Development Indicators data.worldbank.org, CEPALSTAT https://estadisticas.cepal.org

[8] This was based on available data for the countries.

Figure 7 above in this way shows the relationship between industrial production and social provision, based on available data in Caribbean countries. While the trend in certain countries show a clear decoupling between industrial output and social expenditures, especially in Guyana and Jamaica since 2000, and in the Bahamas and St. Kitts and Nevis after 2009. This trend may indicate the hollowing out of the productive sector and the decreasing capacity for these economies over time evinced by lower levels of output. In Barbados, this trend reverses as the economy entered a period of austerity in 2009. Indeed, this shows that Caribbean countries have focused to some degree on social investment, while neglecting production expansion especially in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. We indicate here the specific relationship between these governments to dedicate greater levels of expenditure to health, education and housing, while the economy shows limited productive expansion overall.

Environmental vulnerability

While the level of productive development of an economy is linked to the possibility to address various forms of inequality, there are similarly disproportionate impacts to the effects of climate change and ecological disaster on economies and social groups affecting their ability to adapt and achieve a sustainable future (Diffenbaugh and Burke, 2019). The CHDR acknowledges the 'intensity of natural and human-made disasters has increased dramatically over the last decades, impairing human capabilities and threatening human development everywhere' that is especially felt in the Caribbean (UNDP, 2016a, p. 7). This section is therefore based on *Chapter 4: Economic transformation, environmentally sustainable growth and role in multidimensional progress*. In tandem with social and economic vulnerability, 'environmental vulnerability' incurs costs and losses in terms of human lives, physical and productive assets and infrastructure and the productive sectors in the region especially in agriculture and tourism. It then diverts its attention to proposals around 'development finance' to address these multiple vulnerabilities, but does not quite lay out the developmental context in which these multiple challenges are

constructed (Antwi-Agyei, Dougill, and Stringer, 2015; Brooks, Grist, and Brown, 2009). While the economic cost of climate change is important for these small economies, such crude numerical data do not capture the qualitative effects. This relates to the loss of human life, interruption of public services, and the ensuing negative impact on the quality of life, including family disruption due to migration, increased threat of disease, limited access to health and education services, deteriorated infrastructure, and consequently the increased incidence of poverty due to the loss of livelihoods (Heger et al., 2008).

Increasingly, more severe weather patterns like droughts and hurricanes are visiting the Caribbean in more sustained ways (ECLAC, 2019), especially affecting its main productive sectors such as tourism, agriculture and mining (Bishop and Payne, 2012; Mejia, 2016; Mycoo, 2018). According to the report on the costs of climate change in the Caribbean, the effects due to increased hurricane damages, loss of tourism revenue, and infrastructure damages, under the business-as-usual are projected at about $22 billion annually by 2050 and $46 billion by 2100 (Bueno, Elizabeth A. Stanton, and Frank Ackerman, 2008). This represents about 10 and 22 per cent of the region wide economy. In September 2017 alone, successive storms hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated a number of the Caribbean islands, causing widespread damage to Barbuda, part of the independent state of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, and Dominica and St. Kitts. The total estimated[9] cost to infrastructure damage, productive sectors and to the social system in these countries was approximately US $5.4 billion (ECLAC, 2018c). Dominica witnessed 100 per cent loss of its crops and extensive destruction to productive vegetation, and loss of livestock, while an additional 90% of building structures were damaged, where approximately 62% of houses were severely damaged and 15 per cent destroyed (see table 2 below). Antigua and Barbuda experienced a combined loss of physical assets and productive sector disruption, equivalent to roughly 9% the country's GDP in 2016 while Barbuda was

[9] This figure also includes the British Virgin Islands.

declared uninhabitable by the government authorities (ECLAC, 2018c).

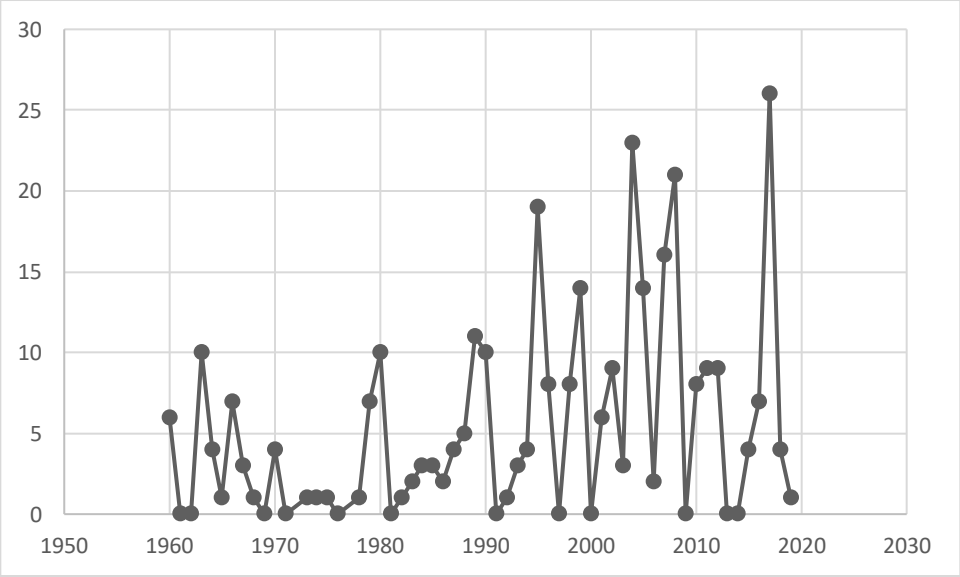
Table 2. Breakdown of estimated damage, losses, recovery needs to Caribbean nations (in US$ million) due to hurricanes Irma and Maria

Country	Total damage	Total losses	% of GDP total	Recovery needs
Antigua and Barbuda	136	19	80	222
Bahamas	32.3	86.9	--	--
Dominica	931	380	110	1300

Source: (CDEMA, 2018; ECLAC, 2018c; UNDP, 2017)

Since the mid to late 1990s, the frequency of storms and hurricanes have doubled in absolute terms, while the damage have also increased considerably with 2004 holding the position of the most destructive year when hurricane Ivan severely devastated the eastern and northern Caribbean[10] (see figure 5 below).

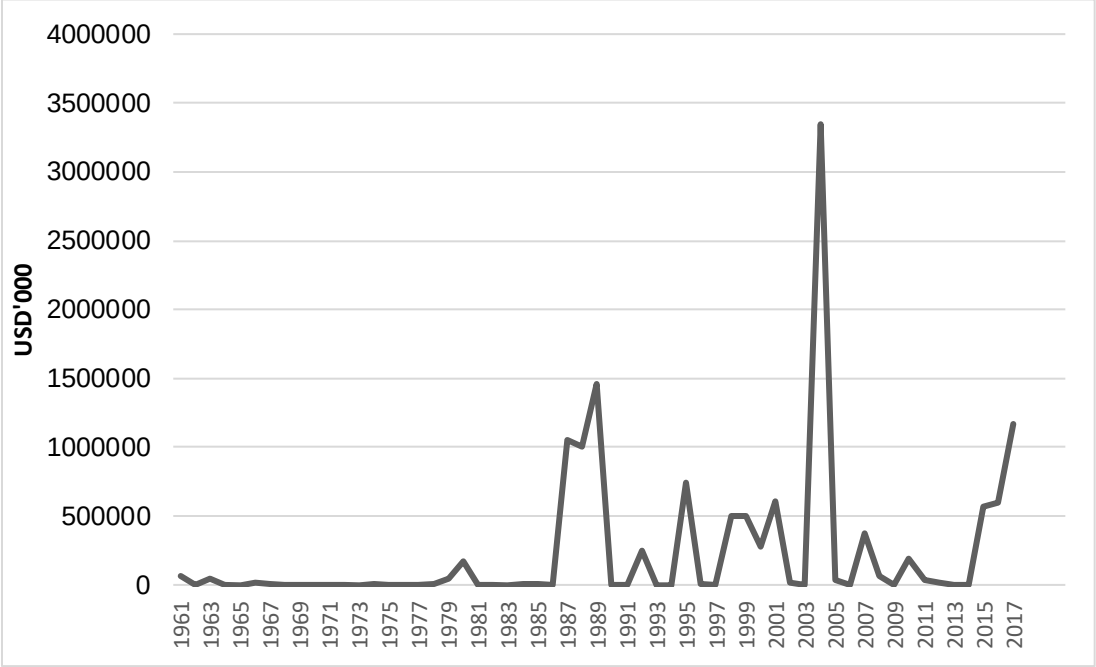
Figure 4. Number of hurricanes and storms in the Caribbean



Source: EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) www.emdat.be

[10]Hurricane Ivan caused damages amounting to approximately US$3.1 billion, the textent of which was equal to about 10 per cent and more than 200 per cent in Grenada as a proportion of GDP (Heger, Julca, and Paddison, 2008).

Figure 5. Total Damage by hurricanes (US$000) Caribbean total

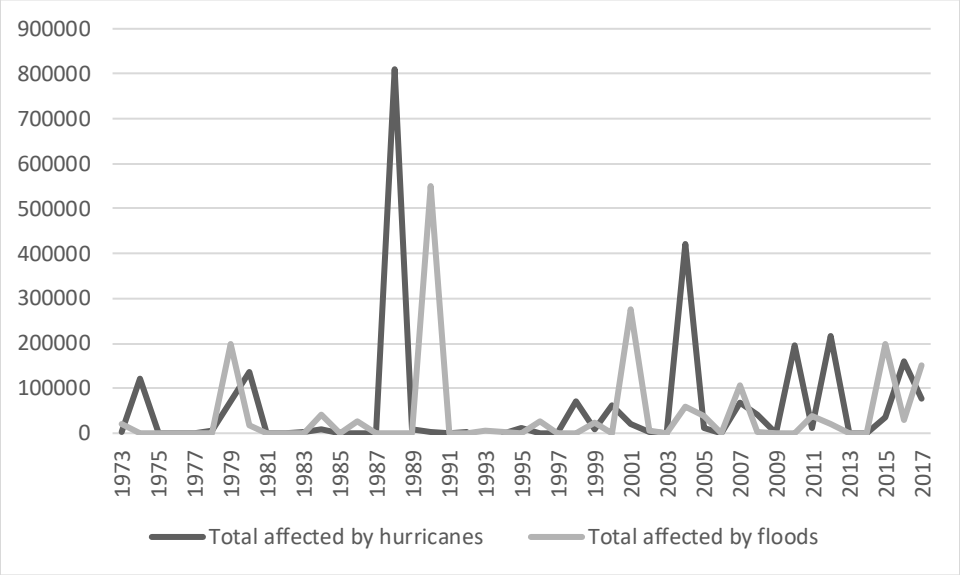


Source: EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) www.emdat.be

Even though the more Southern nations like Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are not significantly exposed due to their location, according to the Emergency Events database[11], they have in recent years been subject to acute flooding and internal calamity. Trinidad and Tobago saw massive flooding incidents in 2018, affecting 150,000 people, and causing damage equivalent to US$3.7 million. In 2015 and 2017, Guyana experienced severe flooding incidents that affected 202,274 people in both years, about a quarter of the total population.

[11] See https://www.emdat.be/emdat_db/

Figure 6. Total numbers affected by hurricanes and floods



Source: EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) www.emdat.be

To increase climate resilience, however, the CHDR focuses largely on market-mediated initiatives,linked to improving which it views as critical to improving the region's international competitiveness. For example, the report states:

> The expansion of the share of renewable energies in the energy mix represents an opportunity both for decreasing the external dependence, and simultaneously creating new, green employment opportunities within the Caribbean economies (UNDP, 2016a, p. 158).

The proposals mentioned for expanding and facilitating financial mechanisms, technological fixes and new incentives to address issues of environmental sustainability and fossil fuel dependence, should be considered against the structural nature of global financing arrangements, especially in renewables, and ongoing investment-state relations that have largely been skewed against the Caribbean (Atteridge, Canales, and Savvidou, 2017; Atteridge and Savvidou, 2019). In addition, the report follows current policy measures linked to financing and technical support arrangements from agencies like the Inter-American Development Bank, among others, that continue to emphasize improving the banking and business climate, revitalization and investment in new exportable products linked to the 'blue economy', tourism,

agriculture, culture and the creative economy. It also reinforces greater efforts towards attracting external financial capital. In this sense, these are not new recommendations. They have contributed to maintaining the current dependent position that increases these states' vulnerability to vicissitudes in international capital and trading markets (Dagher, 2019). They in effect do not adequately address the structural relationship with the global economy that Caribbean plantation scholars laid out. These proposals may have the opposite effect of further deepen fiscal crises, worsening inequality and environmental crises, as well as narrowing possibilities to develop a productive economy that addresses the basic needs of the region's people to improve their adaptive capacity to endure external shocks.

Conclusion – towards a new vision of Caribbean Development

This assessment of the current situation of Caribbean development draws upon the debates around structuralism and political economy of development to show its continued relevance, by assessing the analytical, methodological content and associated policy conclusion of the 2016 Caribbean Human Development Report. It puts forward the argument that Caribbean economies are increasingly structurally complex and diverse and should be understood within the context of global economic dynamics and political transformations. While the CHDR argues for a more market-oriented perspective of poverty, I show that poverty and inequality in the region cannot be solely framed as a concern of low growth, constrained consumption and exchange of goods, but rooted in the structural conditions of the political economy and economic production. Relatedly, by focusing on human development as multidimensional progress focussing on health and education, the CHDR has marginalized considerations of employment and production. As erstwhile agrarian-based economies, the structure of these economies have diverged somewhat towards minerals, tourism services, and to a lesser extent, finance which are all volatile and income elastic sectors competing for rents in global markets. Thus, the quality of employment and

pattern of growth is further defined by this transition and exposure, and characterised in certain cases, especially Guyana, Jamaica, and St. Kitts, by a decoupling of social provisioning and productive capability. This insight is essential as it calls into question the human development approach that focuses on market-mediated solutions and competitiveness indicators, and not on deepening productive endeavours that can transform the political and economic trajectories of Caribbean societies, beyond simple price-takers.

Finally, this contribution also challenges the temptation of many such policy studies to give pre-determined answers or solutions, without consideration of the nuanced political contexts with myriad social actors that have specific organizational capabilities and power, public sectors with uneven institutional capabilities, differentiated developmental needs, and objectives to meeting their collective societal goals. The proclivity for powerful institutional actors such as regional development banks to treat them as a monolith (Beuermann et al., 2018) - equally a shortcoming of the plantation economy model – must be resisted. Such approaches pay less attention to dynamics of change in these contexts and reify market-led governance approaches, as the state is seen as complicit in economic stagnation. There are increasingly valid historical examples in the Caribbean of state-led policy alternatives and experimentation (Perry, 2018) that could inspire new research and generate new policy ideas and approaches. This assessment thus offers this starting point for (re)assessing the region's peculiar development circumstances that may excavate new pathways to be developed around the issues pertinent to this report. With the multidimensional challenges the region faces, new analyses must draw on sound and relevant frameworks and intellectual capacities for the Caribbean to have any chance of realising a sustainable future.

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