



SOCARE EARLY-CAREER SYMPOSIUM 2024

(Im)materiality, new archives and the Caribbean

21 – 22 March 2024



CONVENERS:

Amalia S. Levi

Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

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Deadline for applications: **20th of November 2023**

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The symposium will take place at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies.



Call for Participation


In the 15th century, the Caribbean archipelago was being integrated into a colonial contact zone of European Empires, i.e. a social space “where different cultures, meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 1992: 4). Since then, this area’s history, societies, and languages have been fundamentally (re)shaped by transatlantic connections with Europe and Africa. Furthermore, traces of the pre-Colombian societies and the exchange amongst them remain, despite the destruction inherent in the colonial encounter (cf. Jansen 2015). In light of this diverse, yet conflict-laden heritage, contemporary Caribbean societies (re)negotiate their identities in vivid debates. In regard to (trans)national reference points for the construction of identities, hegemonic (post)colonial narratives differ vastly amongst each other, particularly those by marginalised actors (e.g. Simmons 2009, García Peña 2016). These tensions in the interpretation of the shared history lead to three interrelated pertinent questions: Where does one find adequate access to information on recent and distant Caribbean history? What is irretrievable? How do different actors actualise this knowledge in societal and political discourses?

At the intersection of these tensions, archives have become a fruitful point of interrogation and cross-fertilisation amongst different disciplines. An important link between the aim to document history and to actualise it is Stoler’s (2009: 44) distinction between the “archive-as-source” and the “archive-as-subject.” In other words: what counts as a source and how does the institutionalisation of sources affect discourses? What dynamics guide the transition from pieces of data to pieces of status (Mbembe 2002: 20)? How can we grasp the elusive immateriality of certain types of sources that live beyond archives through permanent transformation, such as songs and dances, rooted in various languages and cultures (Hebblethwaite 2012, Bastian et al. 2018)? To what extent does material culture reveal lived experiences that archival records obscure (Hicks 2020)? Can dealing with one kind of source offer novel perspectives on the other? Do these archives work together or against each other? How is history, as memorised in and through these archives, (re)narrated in relation to the present and the future (Assmann 2007)?

These questions will be guiding the next **Socare Early-Career Symposium (21-22 March 2024)** to be hosted by the *Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies*, where we seek inter- and transdisciplinary approaches from the social sciences, linguistics, history, literature, cultural studies, and neighbouring disciplines. We invite early-career researchers to apply for a workshop (for 12 participants in total) in the form of paper presentations (15 minutes) and in-depth discussion of the paper (30 minutes). For this purpose, the paper – i.e. a sketch of your research project or idea, condensed into up to 5 pages – will be shared with the other participants. Papers will be due by February 25, 2024 to allow participants time to read them. They can be written in German, English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Discussions are in German, English, or another language shared/spoken by all participants (tba).

LITERATURE

- Assmann, Aleida (2007): *Geschichte im Gedächtnis. Von der individuellen Erfahrung zur öffentlichen Inszenierung*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Bastian, Jeannette A., Stanley H. Griffin & John A. Aarons (2018): *Decolonizing the Caribbean Record: An Archives Reader*. Sacramento CA: Litwin Books.
- García-Peña, Lorgia (2016): *The Borders of Dominicanidad – Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*. Durham/London: Duke Univ. Press.
- Hicks, Mary E. (2020): “Transatlantic Threads of meaning: West African textile entrepreneurship in Salvador da Bahia, 1770-1870,” *Slavery & Abolition*, 41:4.
- Jansen, Silke (2015): “Encuentros lingüísticos en La Española, antes de Colón,” in: Jessica Stefanie Barzen, Silke Jansen & Hanna Lene Geiger (eds.), *La Española – Isla de Encuentros = Hispaniola – Island of Encounters* (Multilingualism and Language Teaching, 1). Tübingen: Gutner Narr.
- Mbembe, Achille (2002), “The Power of the Archive and its Limits”, in: Carolyn Hamilton et al. (eds.), *Refiguring the Archive*. Berlin: Springer.
- Pratt, Mary Louise (1992): *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Simmons, Kimberly Eison (2009): *Reconstructing Racial Identity and the African Past in the Dominican Republic*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Stoler, Anne Laure (2009): *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



Please submit your paper proposal (title, max. 300-words abstract and a short CV) to juniorresearch@caribbeanresearch.net by **November 20, 2023**. Abstracts will be selected by December 15, 2023 and participants will be asked to send the sketch of their research project (5 pages) by February 25, 2024 in order to precirculate them. After the workshop, a publication is planned, open to all interested participants.

The keynote lecture will be delivered by Prof. Steeve Buckridge (Grand Valley State University).

Organizers:

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For further questions please contact: juniorresearch@caribbeanresearch.net