



**The Discursive and political use of  
sustainable development  
in the French Caribbean Territories  
(FTCs) :  
Towards a new approach of  
development ?**

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## By way of introduction....

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- ❖ **A research program** : *Environment and Sustainable Development in the Caribbean space*
  - co-financed by the European Union, the Région Martinique and the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane under the European Union operational programme 2007-2013
  - With the support of the Center for the study of biodiversity in Amazonia (CEBA : <http://www.labex-ceba.fr/en/>)
- **Keywords** : Caribbean, FTCs, environment, regionalism



## ❖ Field of observations :

- Curaçao, the French Caribbean territories (**Guadeloupe, Guiana, Martinique**), Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago

## ❖ Research question :

- How is addressed the challenge of sustainable development in the (insular) Caribbean, given the extraordinary fragmentation of the region and tension between exploitation and conservation of a rich biodiversity ?



❖ **A main observation : *the current development strategies give rise to a dual approach with, however, rather mixed results :***

- a discursive use of sustainable development evidences a **new way of looking at the region** and a **change in the way the region sees itself**
- a political use of sustainable development through cross-cutting policies, comes to the **complexity of the structures, the multiple levels of action and regulation, and the difficult appropriation** of public-policy organization by local communities and people



# Outlines of the presentation

## I. The **discursive use** of sustainable development : reconfiguration of the Caribbean space and intersecting perceptions

- A new discourse about sustainable development and the Caribbean

## II. The **political use** of sustainable development : between fragmentation and difficult appropriation

- The outcomes of public policies related to sustainable development and biodiversity are far from fully satisfactory, even if political actors and stake-holders become aware of the importance of the ecological issue



# I. The discursive use of sustainable development

## I.1. The search for new models of development

- Through the Caribbean, the rhetoric of sustainable development has been given an important role in the discursive register of social and political actors as well as in public policies
  - The demonetization of the model based on import substitution
  - The endemic economic crisis and the limitations of tax exemptions policies (Puerto Rico, the FTCs..)
  - A new approach based on a synthesis between « open regionalism » and a strategy of development more respectful of environment



# I. The discursive use of sustainable development

## I.2. New context and intersecting perceptions

- The questioning of the model based on import substitution → new projects of regional integration under the combined pressure of coalitions of actors, policy networks and the change in the international context.
  - The emergence of a new frame : the policy of open regionalism (ACS, OECS and CARICOM which work concurrently to harmonize environmental policies among their members)
  - Making of the Caribbean a full-fledged actor of its destiny : the conference in May 9, 2015 on climate change in Martinique with the French president, his Caribbean counterparts and the regional organizations





# I. The discursive use of sustainable development

## I.2. New context and intersecting perceptions

- The rhetoric of sustainable development is also an integral part of neoliberal policies which inform the regional integration processes
- This double movement, from the Caribbean and beyond the Caribbean → the rhetoric of sustainable development is present at different levels (local, regional and international)
- From Trinidad to the Bahamas, through the regional forums (ACS, CARICOM, OECS), emphasis is given to sustainable tourism as the motor of economic development and to the rich biodiversity of the region
- The Caribbean appears and values itself as a hotspot of biodiversity where intersect rich and multiple influences, native, African, Anglo-Saxon, French and Hispanic



# I. The discursive use of sustainable development

## I.2. Intersecting perceptions

- In Martinique the regional authorities want to transform the island into a jewel of biodiversity: they endorsed in plenary on 28 January 2013, the implementation of the **regional strategy for biodiversity**, the **ecological coherence scheme** and the creation of **regional committee of biodiversity**.
- However, these expressions of will continue to face the extraordinary fragmentation of the measures and the dispersion of decision-making areas.



## **II. The political use of sustainable development : between fragmentation and difficult appropriation**

- The variety of scales of public action, aggravated by a complex interplay of belongings and affiliations to regional structures poorly coordinated within them
- The difficult appropriation by the local populations of specific plans of political action and legal norms adopted in the name of sustainable development



## II. The political use of sustainable development : the fragmentation of the political agenda

- A double fragmentation : the multi-level dimension and the internal agenda (domestic level)
  - **the international and regional framework** for the implementation of sustainable development policies in the Caribbean is complex and unstable ; it depends on international and regional dynamics, including those relating to alliances and their capacity of influence ;
  - *some territories have an ambivalent political status* : the FTCs are members of the ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), ACS, OECS while they belong to the “North” as French overseas territories and to the “South” as part of the Caribbean



## II. The political use of sustainable development : the fragmentation of the political agenda

- ❖ **A persistent fragmentation of decision-making frameworks**
  - ***the fragmentation of the policy instruments*** remains as a challenge for the articulation of the different levels of intervention. Some observations :
    - ✓ To what extent the outermost regions are considered at the EU level, given the complexity of their relationship with the latter ?
    - ✓ e.g. : The policies and EU programs on biodiversity and climate change are managed by the Directorate General (DG) Environment and the Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) of the Commission, while policies and programs for the outermost regions and the OCTs are respectively administered by DG Regions and DG Development, which makes essential coordination and integration



## II. The political use of sustainable development : the fragmentation of the political agenda

- ***the fragmentation of the policy instruments*** remains as a challenge for the articulation of the different levels of intervention. Some observations :
  - ✓ Role and position of the Antilles and French Guiana within regional organizations such as the ACS? Difficulty for an approach at the ecosystem level and to promote a broader regional integration through the ACS because of political status, traditions and colonial legacies ...)
- The difficult relationship between the local and national level (i.e. overseas regions /mainland France)



## II. The political use of sustainable development : the fragmentation of the political agenda

❖ **the political agenda of sustainable development is fragmented** given the large number of players involved without prior coordination at the domestic level

→ *In Trinidad the management of Mangrove ecosystems is governed by the Ramsar Convention and local standards and regulations engaging multiple stakeholders : the Forestry Division (Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources) with the Wildlife Section, the Community Forestry section, the National Parks section, the Institute of Marine Affairs, the Environmental Management Authority, the Pointe-à-Pierre Wild Fowl etc.*



## II. The political use of sustainable development : the fragmentation of the political agenda

- ❖ A persistent fragmentation of decision-making frameworks in the FTCs
  - **The limitations of an integrative approach of sustainable development:** the main issue is not the absence of policies or legislation, but the lack of integration between, on the one hand, strategies and plans for sustainable development and biodiversity, and on the other, policy tools and legal instruments.
    - ✓ The plans for sustainable development or biodiversity are poorly coordinated
    - ✓ the distance from the EU amplifies the problems associated with multiple levels of authority and management
    - ✓ Policies are inadequately integrated: eg the issue of biodiversity conservation is treated partially, through the maintenance of ecosystems and species, without being integrated into sectorial policies (agriculture, mining ....) responsible for pollution





## II. The political use of sustainable development : the appropriation of sustainable development by local populations

- a complex alchemy which involved both the action of policy makers and mobilization of associations and NGOs
- Various scenarios
  - ✓ Process of coproduction or co-management to preserve or valorize vulnerable sites (Adjuntas in Puerto Rico during the 90s, see Massol-Gonzales)
  - ✓ Capacity of the actors to use different registers with which they can make sense of their experience, by inserting it in a national narrative (The *Nariva battle* in Trinidad)
  - ✓ A Challenge for the political authorities in the FTCs and the French State: How to involve civil society in the preparation of a strategic document and in the process of promoting sustainable development, in light of the structural weakness of the so-called civil society, mainly embodied by associations confined to a defensive strategy and ex post opposition movement ?