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Research Methodology on the Caribbean Identity of Cuba

Understanding the Caribbean as a geographical-historical-geopolitical entity

At the center of this analysis is the question of the geographical scope of the Caribbean: is it only an archipelago or does it contain a continental territory as well? The root of the problem lies in the fact that many different interpretations have been proposed over time by different scholars. In addition, the various definitions, which are often politically motivated, often ignore the question of Caribbean identity.[1] In such cases we can talk about "forced identity."

However, before discussing the definition of the region itself, it is worth noting that identity can extend beyond geographical boundaries. In this context, Ralph Premdas has developed the concept of trans-Caribbean identity by which he means the self-identity of the diaspora beyond the Caribbean.[2] In such communities the Caribbean appears more as an imaginary entity, as they are cut off from the "motherland" as a nourishing source. Their members are primarily emigrant Caribbean nationals and their descendants who strive to identify with the concept of "Caribbean" while maintaining only weak loyalties to one another. This paper does not address the issue of trans-Caribbean identity directly but instead focuses on defining the Caribbean as a geographically delimited region in the 20th century.

Currently, four or five definitions are commonly accepted: 1) geographical, 2) based on historical-cultural traditions, 3) geopolitical, and 4) economic-political.[3] Antonio Gaztambide-Géigel adds a Central African-American definition, while Demetrius Boersner divides the fourth into two parts, which can be called the Caribbean Basin and the Greater Caribbean. Thus, based on his theory we can speak of five definitions.

Geography physically links the Caribbean to the Caribbean plate, a region where the same tectonic, seismic and volcanic processes are taking place.[4] The Caribbean Plate stretches from the north coast of South America to the south coast of Cuba,

1 Marco Meniketti, "Boundaries, Borders, and Reference Points: The Caribbean Defined as Geographic Region and Social Reality," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 13 (2009), 45–62, 46.

2 Ralph R. Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity in the Caribbean: Decentering a Myth. Working Paper," *University of Notre Dame, Indiana, Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, 234 (1996), 1–47, 11.

3 Horváth Emőke, "A Karib-térség fogalmának értelmezési kísérletei," *Orpheus Noster*, 6.1 (2014), 23–35, 24.

4 Jayda Goodwill, "Caribbean Studies notes," *Caribbean Society and Culture* academia.edu/37790910/Caribbenstudiesnotes_100309053843_phpapp?email_work_card=thumbnail Accessed October 31, 2024.

bordered by the North and South American, Nazca, and Cocos Plates.[5] It includes the Caribbean Sea between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, together with more than 700 islands. In the line of the Puerto Rico Trench, the "ocean banks" (shallow parts of the seabed) of the Lucayan Archipelago,[6] which formed in the late Palaeocene-early Eocene, extend towards the Caribbean Sea as a result of the collision of the plates.[7] Since the 1970s, models have shown evidence of the North American Plate pulling under the Caribbean Plate at the dip of underwater carbonate platforms (calcareous deposits), showing the coherence of the area.[8]

The most commonly used – and most controversial – definition in historiography since the mid-20th century is the insular/ethno-historical definition. Some interpretations compromise the Caribbean Islands and the Lucayan Archipelago in the north, while others consider that the three Guyanas in South America and Belize in Central America are also included. A third view includes the coasts of the Caribbean Sea in Venezuela and Colombia. Some scholars (such as the American cultural anthropologist Charles Wagley) believe that the Caribbean region can be considered as one cultural sphere, as its inhabitants share similar histories.[9] By contrast, theorists of social and cultural pluralism (such as the Jamaican social anthropologist Michael Garfield Smith) point to the cultural divide between Spanish, English, Dutch and French-speaking states that emerged in the colonial era.[10] The Caribbean can be seen as a cultural mosaic or patchwork.[11] These types of societies, in which people live side by side yet retain their unique characteristics (language, religion, culture) without overlapping, have developed as a result of labor migration. Following the cessation of the African slave trade and slave labor from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the Caribbean sugar industry faced labor shortages, leading to increased immigration and recruitment in various economic sectors.[12] However, Charles Wagley observes critically that history should not be ignored and that the countries of the Caribbean had already passed through

5 "FöldTectonikusLemezek," *StoryBoard*, storyboardthat.com/hu/lesson-plans/a-f%C3%B6ld-fel%C3%A9p%C3%ADt%C3%A9se/tektonikus-lemezek Accessed October 31, 2024.

6 Collective name for the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

7 Eleonora Van Rijsingen et al., *Vertical Tectonic Motions in the Lesser Antilles: Linking Short- and Long-term Observations*. Manuscript, 2021.

8 Joan R. Mylroie and John E. Mylroie, "Development of the Carbonate Island Karst Model," *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies* 49.1 (2007), 59–75, 59.

9 Helen I. Safa, "Populat Culture, National Identity, and Race in the Caribbean," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids / New West Indian Guide*, 61.3–4 (1987), 115–126, 117; Iván de los A. Arias Cuadras, "Repensando el Caribe: valoraciones sobre las principales tendencias entorno al concepto del Caribe," *Revista Estudios del Desarrollo Social: Cuba y América Latina* 1.2 (2013), 87–101, 90.

10 See, Horváth, "A Karib-térség," 30–31.

11 Cuadras, "Repensando el Caribe," 90; Sidney W. Mintz, "The Caribbean Region," *Daedalus* 103.2 (1974), 45–71, 45.

12 Tézer Zita, "Gondolatok a karibi identitás meghatározásáról Charles Wagley és Sidney Mintz kutatásai alapján," *Orpheus Noster* 13.1 (2021), 6–17, 11.

the plural society stage to that of the "state-society with ethnic minorities."[13] They have lost their political autonomy, but the symbols of their cultural unity, their socio-economic status and their unique characteristics distinguish them from other segments of the population.

By introducing the concept of "cultural sphere" the work of Charles Wagley, Julian Steward, Sidney Mintz, Eric Robert Wolf, and others presents a comparative approach that emphasizes the historical context in which Caribbean regional units have been shaped by similar socio-historical influences. As the Caribbean's most significant shared past experiences include colonialism, plantation economies, and slavery, these scholars have examined Caribbean and adjacent societies shaped by the African plantation system. Based on this theory, Antonio Gaztambide-Géigel proposed the term "Central African American" or "Afro-American region," as the common unifying force was the African American ethno-cultural identity linking these societies. In other words, this region differs from the rest of the Americas because of its African heritage. This is not a geographical definition in that it does not align strictly with political boundaries; instead, it encompasses parts of countries with similar characteristics, such as Venezuela, northern Colombia, Bahia in Brazil, and parts of the southern United States like Florida. The debate remains unsettled, however, with some considering only the islands to be Caribbean, while others also including the surrounding mainland.

The geopolitical definition refers to the Caribbean Islands, Central America and Panama; it began to be used especially after 1945 in historiography and other studies of relations with the United States.[14] It focuses on the areas where US economic influence[15] and military intervention[16] has taken place to the greatest extent. Due to economic disadvantages and the significant threat posed by the United States, Central Americanism began to develop in the spirit of national independence.[17] Some have tried to build a new identity in response to US interventions. For example, in his 1936 work, *El imperialismo yanqui y la revolución en el Caribe*, the

[13] Fred Hay, "Race, Culture, and History: Charles Wagley and the Anthropology of the African Diaspora in the Americas. Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi," *Ciências Humanas* 9.3 (2014), 695–705, 700.

[14] Antonio Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean in the 20th Century. The Definitions of the Caribbean as a Historical and Methodological Problem," *Social and Economic Studies* 53.3 (2004), 127–157, 141.

[15] Marton Péter, "Az érdekcsoportok szerepe az amerikai külpolitikában. Tanulságok a latin-amerikai és karibi térséggel összefüggésben," In Horváth Emőke and Lehovszki Bernadett (eds.), *Diplomácia és nemzetközi kapcsolatok. Amerika a XIX–XXI. században* (Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2019), 231.

[16] Nicholas John Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1942), 49.

[17] Anderle Ádám, "Nemzet és identitás Latin-Amerikában," In Anderle Ádám et al. (eds.), *Nemzet és Nacionalizmus* (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 2002), 409–544, 477.

Puerto Rican nationalist José Enamorado-Cuesta included Central America and Panama as part of the Caribbean.[18]

A group of Central American activists (Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Honduran exiled leaders and politicians)[19] gathered around Guatemalan statesman Juan José Arévalo[20] in the 1940s, forming a group called the Caribbean Legion (Legión del Caribe) to fight against US-influenced dictators, often following previous American invasions.[21] The 1947 Caribbean Pact (Pacto del Caribe) created an alliance of groups representing the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, with the aim of protecting the economic, military and political interests of the region. According to the pact, the liberated countries undertake to establish a Caribbean Democratic Alliance, which will be open to all the democracies of the Caribbean, as well as El Salvador and Ecuador.[22] This pact also considered the independent states of Central America and the Caribbean as a political entity.

In the economic-political definition, the Caribbean Islands, Central America, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela form a wider Caribbean region, which is loosely linked to the Caribbean culturally but strongly linked to the Caribbean economically and politically.

The term "Caribbean Basin" became popular in the 1980s, triggered by the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)[23] introduced by the United States, which provided benefits to the Central American and Caribbean states while placing Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico – especially Mexico – at a competitive disadvantage before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).[24]

In response to this and reacting to U.S. actions, the three countries activated their Caribbean interests in the region by creating the G-3 (Grupo de los Tres) trade bloc.[25] Despite its short existence (1995–2006), it proved to be a successful venture after entering into economic cooperation with the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).[26]

Finally, the Greater Caribbean, also known as the American Mediterraneum, includes the southeastern United States, the Caribbean island chain, the Lucayan Archipelago, most of Mexico and the eastern half of Central America, and the northern coast of Colombia and Venezuela.[27] The term "American Mediterraneum"

[18] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 142.
[19] For example, the first president of Costa Rica, José Figueres.
[20] He was Guatemala's first democratically elected president.
[21] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 142.
[22] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 111.
[23] The Caribbean Basin Initiative aims to provide beneficiary Central American and Caribbean countries with duty-free access to the US market for most goods.
[24] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 143.
[25] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 143.
[26] Documents concerning the G-3 talks: OAS, *Foreign Trade Information System*, sice.oas.org/TPD/G_3/G3_e.ASP Accessed October 31, 2024.
[27] Horváth, "A Karib-térség," 28.

appears in the works of 19th-century natural scientists in comparison with the Mediterranean,[28] but it was Nicholas John Spykman who introduced the concept into political thought in 1942.[29]

The region is of paramount importance to the United States, both economically and in terms of national defence, and it is clear that the U.S. wants to maintain its diplomatic, political, strategic and ideological dominance through a strategy of interdependence.[30]

For this reason, they have sought to turn the Caribbean into a North American *mare nostrum*, i.e., the "closed inland sea" of the United States,[31] and to influence public consciousness and identity perceptions by maintaining a geopolitical ideology of the Greater Caribbean. Thus, the concept of the Greater Caribbean, or the American Mediterraneum – defined as a separate region since the late 19th century – has become an accepted geopolitical definition on the part of the United States,[32] but but it is not culturally a single entity.

In conclusion, when defining the Caribbean, we should always explain what we mean by this term and why.[33] It is essential that our explanation is consistent with the topic under consideration. Indeed, it seems appropriate to clarify that the definition we propose is not the only possible way of defining the Caribbean.[34]

However, the broader the scope of cultural identity, the fewer the common features beyond political-economic and geopolitical interests. For this reason, it is worth narrowing our analysis primarily to the core zone, the islands of the Lesser and Greater Antilles, which clearly share a similar historical and cultural background.

Even so, the distinction is not entirely clear-cut: Belize in Central America and Guyana in South America are part of the English-speaking Caribbean, while Cuba is closely linked to Latin American countries such as Venezuela, which are outside the Caribbean. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that Cuba is part of the Caribbean, although it has only begun to explore its Caribbean identity over the past thirty years. Its interest in the Caribbean region was initially economic, while it recognized common cultural features from its colonial past with other Caribbean nations through social interactions within the region.

[28] Horváth Emőke, "Az amerikai Mediterráneum fogalma és jellemzői," *Világtörténet* 45.1 (2023), 5–23, 5–6.

[29] Spykman, *America's Strategy*, 46–64; Horváth, "A Karib-térség," 28.

[30] Demetrio Boersner, "La geopolítica del Caribe y sus implicaciones para la política exterior de Venezuela," *Caracas, Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales* (2011), 1–7, 2.

[31] Anderle, "Nemzet és identitás," 477.

[32] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 137.

[33] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 152.

[34] Gaztambide-Geigel, "The Invention of the Caribbean," 152.

Levels of Caribbean identity

The definition of Caribbean identity must consider that societies have varied conceptions of their own "Caribbean." For this reason, Martín-Dueñas and Nuez-Placeres propose introducing subcategories within the collective noun "Caribbean," organized hierarchically between superordinate categories (which are semantically more complex) and subordinate categories (which are more easily understood).[35] Thus, for example, in this form, the generic term "Caribbean" will be used as a base category, encompassing different perspectives (geopolitical, social, cultural). Since we can draw a linguistically defined boundary between groups of Caribbean states, the basic category "Caribbean" can be subordinated to categories based on former colonial mother countries: Spanish, English, French, Dutch (Figure 1), which Ralph Premdas refers to as the levels of the regional Caribbean identity.[36]

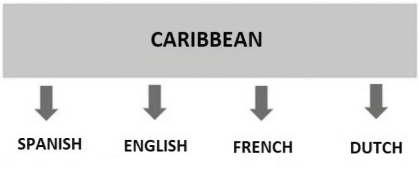


Figure 1: Linguistic hierarchy of the term "Caribbean" based on Martín-Dueñas – Nuez-Placeres[37]

Throughout the Caribbean, no factor more clearly and strongly differentiates groups of people than language. During colonialism, Caribbean geography was divided into linguistic spheres by imperial powers, which led to greater interaction within each region than among geographically close residents who belonged to different linguistic areas. For example, English-speaking Caribbean communities are more connected to each other than to the Spanish, Dutch, or French spheres. Similarly, Spanish-speaking communities, including participants in Spanish-language history conferences, have much in common with Latin American countries. Within their respective linguistic milieus, these groups find solidarity in communicating regional issues and events through mass media in a shared language, which also forms a dividing wall between ethnic groups.

Another subcategory may be the level of insular identity, based on Premdas, which refers to country- or state-based loyalties and is partly understood as national

35 Adan Martín Dueñas and Graciela Nuez-Placeres, "What is Spanish Caribbeanness?" *A Cognitive Approach Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 6 (2009), 17–26, 19.

36 Ralph Premdas identifies four levels of Caribbean identity: trans-Caribbean, regional, insular and ethno-nationalist. See, Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity," 11.

37 Martín-Dueñas and Nuez-Placeres, "What is Spanish Caribbeanness?" 20.

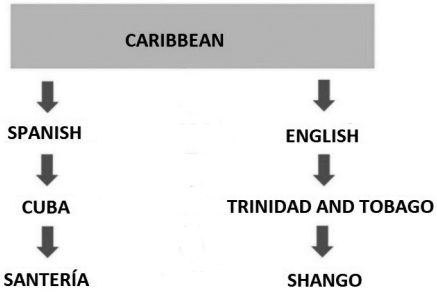


Figure 2: Religious subcategories within the Caribbean

identity (e.g., Cuban identity).[38] At this level, collective belonging takes a more tangible, territorial form, making local differences easily identifiable. For many years, the Caribbean Islands evolved in isolation from one another, especially with the imported European cultural components – Spanish, Dutch, English, or French – leading to their distinct characteristics. In the case of the Premdas ethno-nationalist level (ethnically based divisions), we can go even further down the subcategories that lead us to the identity of a territory or cultural community within a state.[39]

In the Caribbean, this is most evident in culturally plural or ethnically fragmented places like Trinidad where the identities are shaped by a diversity of deep cultural divisions within the state. Interestingly, in populations of African descent, common linkages can be observed among Afro-Caribbean religious communities (Figure 2): for example, the Cuban Santería and the Shango in Trinidad and Tobago. As both are Orisha religions, these links were established by Yoruba slaves during colonial times.

Caribbean identity of Cuba

Our task is to use the model developed by Martín-Dueñas and Nuez-Placeres to illustrate how a group or community forms its own distinctive Caribbean identity, with the highlighting the intermediate steps of cognitive-conceptual functioning (Figure 3).

We can therefore imagine the progress toward a particular cultural group as a chain.[40] According to the model, we can observe the Caribbean identity for Cuba by examining the common Caribbean features within the "Caribbean region" and the "Caribbean Islands," and then the "Spanish Caribbean" within the set of "Caribbean culture." In order to draw our final conclusions, we will thus

[38] Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity," 11–12.
[39] Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity," 12.
[40] Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity," 12.

proceed from the broader Caribbean to explore the regularities that apply to Cuba.

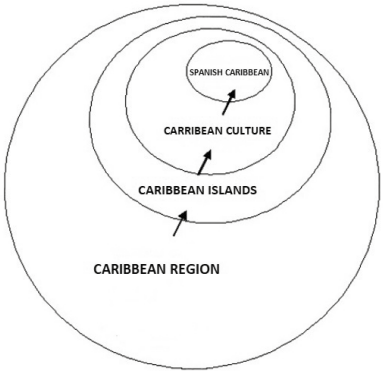


Figure 3: Diagram of the Spanish "Caribbean" metonymic process based on Martín-Dueñas and Nuez-Placeres[41]

The link between regional identity and sub-regional integration

The concept of regional identity is interpreted in a wide range of ways. It can encompass the shared values, ideals, traditions, cultural elements, common historical roots, and other aspects of the inhabitants in a region.[42] The projects of the sub-regional integrations with common economic, political or cultural objectives can contribute to strengthening regional identity.

Henk van Houtum and Arnoud Lagendijk define the interrelations between political, economic, social and cultural relations as follows: the components of regional identity are defined by cultural, functional and strategic identity.[43] If these three dimensions fit together in an organic way, a region will have its own identity (Figure 4).

According to this view, the structure of cultural identity is characterized by a shared consciousness and a sense of belonging to a specific community with a common name (like "Caribbean"), a shared past, and symbols that express the unity of the region. Together, these elements form a cultural region in a distinct space, regardless of administrative boundaries.[44]

The functional identity structure considers socio-economic links and ties within a given territorial unit.[45] The relational capital occupies a significant place and plays a crucial role in the life and development of a given region.

41 Martín-Dueñas and Nuez-Placeres, "What is Spanish Caribbeanness?" 23.

42 Lukovics Miklós, "A regionális identitás szerepe a regionális gazdaságfejlesztésben," In Czagány László and Garai László (eds.), *A szociális identitás, az információ és a piac* (Szeged: JATE Press, 2004), 214–228, 216.

43 Henk Van Houtum and Arnoud Lagendijk, "Contextualising Regional Identity and Imagination in the Construction of Polycentric Urban Regions: The Cases of the Rurh Area and the Basque Contry," *Urban Studies* 4 (2001), 747–767.

44 Van Houtum and Lagendijk, "Contextualising Regional Identity," 141–143.

45 Ibidem.

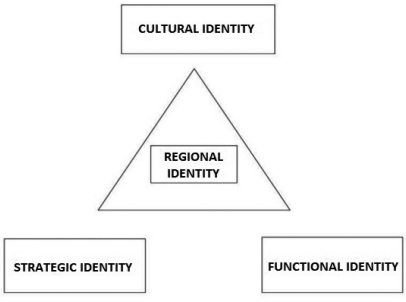


Figure 4: The main components of regional identity[46]

Finally, the strategic identity structure implies that the people of a region share a common vision and purpose, with an emphasis on the future and a commitment to continuous change.[47]

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), established in 1973 by the English-speaking Caribbean states, has had to restructure itself to remain regionally and globally competitive in the global market. Due to their small individual economies, CARICOM countries felt that forming a larger economic space could help them avoid trade and economic marginalization. This vision led to the initial inclusion of Suriname and Haiti, and, from 1994, the creation of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), which integrated the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Central America, and all Caribbean Islands, both independent and non-independent.

In the early 1990s, during the severe economic crisis known as the "special period," Cuba opened the way to Caribbean integration in a bid for economic diversification. Although not a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM, which focuses on integration), but rather of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS, which emphasizes concrete regional cooperation), Cuba participates in several joint programs aimed at preserving Caribbean culture and values and strengthening Caribbean identity.

The existence of a cultural identity structure is evidenced by the fact that the Caribbean Community and the Association of Caribbean States have their own symbols and flags.[48] CARICOM's anthem celebrates the history, culture, and identity of the Caribbean people. The Cultural Cooperation Agreement, signed at

[46] T. Kiss Tamás, "Vázlat a tudás centrum a tanuló régió és a regionális identitás néhány összefüggéséről," In Szirmai Éva and Újvári Edit (eds.), *Nemzetiségi – Nemzeti – Európai identitás. Konferencia kiadvány* (Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Juhász Gyula Pedagógusképző Kar Felnőttképzési Intézete, 2009), 135–149, 141.

[47] Ibidem.

[48] "Symbols of Regional Integration." *CARICOM*, caricom.org/symbols-of-regional-integration/ Accessed October 31, 2024.

the second Cuba-CARICOM Summit in Barbados in 2005, outlines various ways to promote cultural exchanges between the two parties.[49] Caribbean festivals, such as CARIFESTA, and folklore events are organized as part of cooperation programs promoting Caribbean identity. The memorial in the Caribbean Heroes Park in Havana also represents a shared memory of the Caribbean's historical past.[50] The recognition and promotion of Cuba's Santería religious cult, rooted in African culture, aligns with programs to preserve its Afro-Caribbean heritage, affirming Cuba's place within the region.[51]

Functional cooperation, one of the pillars of the Caribbean Community, focuses on human and social development.[52] To this end, joint educational programs and training courses for professionals are organized within the region, with Cuba playing a prominent role. Cooperation networks will be established with international institutions and experts to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences. Every year, many Caribbean students study at Cuban universities and other higher education institutions.[53] They launch health services and programs, develop health infrastructure, open diagnostic centers,[54] take up the fight against epidemics, and participate in disaster response.[55] Cuba contributes to strengthening social links through joint conferences with Caribbean countries.[56] This motivates people to engage in discourse within their own region and share their experiences in person, through scientific publications, and other means of dissemination.

The strategic identity structure calls for the development of a shared vision. CARICOM's strategic plan for 2022–2030 is to maintain a cooperative, effective,

[49] "Cultural Cooperation Agreement between the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Republic of Cuba." *CARICOM*, December 8, 2005. caricom.org/cultural-cooperation-agreement-between-the-caribbean-community-caricom-and-the-republic-of-cuba/
Accessed October 31, 2024.

[50] Lissette Martin Lopez, "Un parque a los próceres caribeños engalana la Quinta Avenida," *Tribuna de la Habana* 26 abril, 2019.
tribuna.cu/capitalinas/2019-04-26/un-parque-a-los-proceres-caribenos-engalana-la-quinta-avenida
Accessed October 31, 2024.

[51] Tézer Zita, "A santería és más afrikai eredetű vallások a karibi társadalmakban," *Orpheus Noster* 15.1 (2023), 32–44, 40–41.

[52] "Who we are." *CARICOM*, caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/ Accessed October 31, 2024.

[53] Jacqueline
Laguardia Martinez, et al. (eds.), *Changing Cuba-U.S. Relations: Implications for CARICOM States* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 158.

[54] Laguardia Martinez, et al. (eds)., *Changing Cuba-U.S. Relations*, 162.

[55] Laguardia Martinez, et al. (eds)., *Changing Cuba-U.S. Relations*, 168.

[56] Colloquium on the Legacy of Fidel Castro by UWI Cave Hill Campus. *Cubaminrex*, November 24, 2017. misiones.cubaminrex.cu/en/articulo/colloquium-legacy-fidel-castro-uwi-cave-hill-campus
Accessed October 31, 2024; Convocatoria. Presentación de artículos. XVI Conferencia Internacional de Estudios Caribeños "Cuba y el Caribe: 50 años de relaciones". CLASCO, 6 julio, 2022.
clacso.org/actividad/convocatoria-presentacion-de-articulos-xvi-conferencia-internacional-de-estudios-caribenos-cuba-y-el-caribe-50-anos-de-relaciones/2022-07-06/ Accessed October 31, 2024.

sustainable and prosperous Caribbean Community.[57] It seeks to ensure enhanced cooperation and communication with stakeholders within the Community and with all relevant regional and international institutions. The Cuban government has started to encourage research groups to successfully cooperate with Caribbean integration efforts, which will also facilitate closer links within the region in the exchange of knowledge and innovation. One such example is the Department of Caribbean Studies at the University of Havana (Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe "Norman Girvan"), founded in 2004, whose basic objective is to promote Caribbean studies from a multidisciplinary perspective, encouraging the exchange of relevant information on the economic and social development of the Caribbean, both at the university level and through cooperation with other organisations related to the analysis.[58] This shows that Cuba is making an effort to continue to be a partner in Caribbean cooperation.

Conclusions

The geographic, historical, and geopolitical definition of the Caribbean has been subject to a variety of interpretations over time, often motivated by political agendas. The Caribbean, however, is a geographic and socio-cultural region that, although made up of a diverse group of nations, is bound together by a common history, culture, and economic challenges.

Cuba, after the collapse of its ally, the Soviet Union, and the largely English-speaking Caribbean Community began to converge to each other: the former initially a result of its desire for economic diversification, the latter because of the need to achieve global market competitiveness. The development of institutionalized relations and cooperation between Cuba and its neighbors within the region has brought with it an interest in their "Caribbean." Put simply, for political and economic reasons, it seeks to create a kind of imposed Caribbean identity. In Cuba, however, there does not yet seem to be a Caribbean regional consciousness, as it is not enough to create regional organisations through which a region can be institutionalised.[59] A distinction must be made between the regional identity or consciousness. The former is used in discourses of science, politics, regional marketing, etc. to distinguish one region from another. In other words, these classifications are always acts of power to delimit, name, and symbolise space and groups of people.

57 CARICOM Secretariat Strategic Plan 2022–2030. *CARICOM*, caricom.org/documents/caricom-secretariat-strategic-plan-2022-2030/ Accessed October 31, 2024.

58 Milagros Martínez Reinosa and Félix Valdés García, "¿De qué Caribe hablamos?" In Luis Suarez Salazar and Gloria Amézquita (eds.), *El gran Caribe en el siglo XXI: crisis y respuestas* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, CLASCO, 2013), 21–34, 22–23.

59 Anssi Paasi, "Region and Place. Regional Identity in Question," *Progress in Human Geography* 27.4 (2003), 475–485, 477.

The latter, in turn, points to multiple levels of identity of people through the institutional practices, discourses and symbolisms that express the region. Political ideologies and regionalism/nationalism do not in themselves, create identification, because the latter only comes about when they take into account the culture and history of the region and provide some motivation.[60] The experience of identity may be politically manipulable, but without the acquisition and experience of symbols or ideologies it is meaningless and powerless to trigger identification,[61] since it requires an interwining of top-down governance and bottom-up societal participation. In Cuba, however, this has only just begun, as interest in the "Caribbean" is largely political and economic, and to a lesser extent social.

Rezümé

A tanulmány a Nagy-Antillák szigeteihez tartozó Kuba karibi identitásának kutatási módszertanához kíván adalékul szolgálni. Arra keresi a választ, hogy az ország saját karibi önazonossága hogyan vizsgálható napjainkban. Ehhez elsőként körvonalazzuk, hogy hol helyezkedik el a Karib-térség, meghatározzuk, hogy milyen szintjei vannak a „karibiságnak", és ez milyen módszerekkel kutatható, majd áttekintjük, hogy a szubregionális integrációk hogyan próbálnak karibi közösséget teremteni annak érdekében, hogy gazdaságilag összefogják a régiót, és hogyan kapcsolódik ehhez a folyamathoz Kuba.

Kulcsszavak: Kuba karibi identitása, Karibi Közösség, Karibi Államok Szövetsége, Karibi-medence, Nagy Karib-térség

Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the research methodology surrounding the Caribbean identity of Cuba, which is part of the Greater Antilles. It seeks to answer the question of how Cuba's own Caribbean identity can be examined today. To achieve this, I will first outline the geographical location of the Caribbean, define the levels of Caribbean identity, and discuss how this can be researched. I will then review how sub-regional integrations are attempting to create a Caribbean community to unite the region economically, and how Cuba is linked to this process.

Keywords: Cuba Caribbean Identity, Caribbean Community, Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Basin, Greater Caribbean region

[60] Anssi Paasi, "Region and Place," 478.
[61] Anssi Paasi, "Region and Place," 478.