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POSTCOLONIAL DEVELOPMENT, (NON)SOVEREIGNTY AND AFFECT: LIVING ON IN THE WAKE OF CARIBBEAN POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

ABSTRACT

This paper sets out a new research agenda for work on postcolonial development, sovereignty and affect. It examines how ideals of postcolonial independence play out through the more heterogeneous affective atmospheres that disrupt neat paradigms of sovereign control and non-sovereignty in everyday life. The example employed is everyday life in a Caribbean government office, but the paper develops a wider set of new conceptual tools and ethnographic approaches so as to facilitate research in postcolonial studies and affect more generally.

LIVING ON IN THE WAKE OF INDEPENDENCE[i]

In his most recent book about the Caribbean, *Omens of Adversity*, the acclaimed postcolonial theorist David Scott (2014: 2) examines what he calls a contemporary feeling of "living *on* in the wake of past political time, amid the ruins, specifically, of postsocialist and postcolonial futures past". Scott (2014: 6) says

> "There is, I think, a profound sense in which the once enduring temporalities of past-present-future that animated (indeed, that constructed, even *authorized*) our Marxist historical reason, and therefore organized and underwrote our ideas about historical change, no longer line up quite so neatly, so efficiently, so seamlessly, so instrumentally – in a word, so *teleologically* – as they once seemed to do. That old consoling sense of temporal *concordance* is gone. The present as time, as a temporal frame of meaningful experiential reference, no longer appears – as it was once prominently pictured as appearing – as the tidy dialectical negation of an oppressive or otherwise unwanted past, and it is hard to continue imagining the present as though it were merely waiting for its own dialectical overcoming of a Hegelian-Marxist story of futurity understood as the ready horizon of Universal History".

But while there is little doubt that this sense of temporal concordance that once animated much postcolonial[ii] radical thought has dissipated in the contemporary era, also focusing upon the Caribbean in this paper I nevertheless want to argue that it would be wrong to say that affective attachments to postcolonial national

independence and sovereignty have disappeared completely. Indeed, it is my contention in what follows that they still play out heterogeneously through the affective atmospheres of everyday life, but that postcolonial research now needs new critical tools of analysis and new ethnographic approaches to unpack what this means for today. The paper therefore engages questions of postcolonialism and sovereignty, but also develops in new and distinctive ways a broader set of debates concerning affect. Affect theory has been employed and critiqued in a number of areas of postcolonial studies (Ahmed, 2000; Nash, 2000; Saldanha, 2005; Tolia-Kelly, 2006; O'Riley, 2007; Gunew; 2009; Nayak, 2010; Swanton, 2010; Noxolo et al, 2012; Da Costa, 2016), and whilst not explicitly framed in the terms of 'affect theory' affective structures of colonialism and subjectivity have long been central concerns in the work of Caribbean writers including Franz Fanon (2007), CLR James (2001), Derek Walcott (1986; 1998), Kamau Brathwaite (1967; 1999), Wilson Harris (1999) and many others. Still, Geography and related disciplines have paid less explicit attention to the possibilities for a relationship between postcolonial development, sovereignty and affect theory. This is the distinctive contribution of this paper and the claim is that postcolonial contexts, like the Caribbean, can make a significant contribution to debates that still today too often ignore or treat them as the periphery. In response to this gap in the literature, the next section explores some of the key conceptual parameters for what a new agenda might look like, and the majority of the paper then presents an illustrative in-depth case study of everyday life in a Caribbean government office. Given the importance of a grounding context to such concerns, this research agenda presented in the next section is very much built from Caribbean concerns. Nevertheless, it is also written in such a way so as to further stimulate thinking for those who have an interest in affect theory, and who work on

postcolonial development, sovereignty and independence in other regions of the world as well.

A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR POSTCOLONIAL DEVELOPMENT, (NON)SOVEREIGNTY AND AFFECT THEORY

Rather than start off by describing what I mean by 'affect' and then importing this into the Caribbean, I instead want to argue that postcolonial research should begin from a concern with the specificities of place and develop its approach from there. At a general level in the Caribbean, such concerns engage Yamimar Bonilla's (2015) recent and very important book about the Caribbean *Non-Sovereign Futures*. Bonilla (2015: 172) makes the salient remark that "although it might seem as if the project of postcolonial sovereignty has led to a political dead end, many populations still find meaning and power in the right to nation and state" (Bonilla, 2015: xiv). Thus, if we only focus upon "the supposedly empty horizon of nationalist revolution, we are sure to miss the many 'unspectacular' transformations that abound in the daily re-creations of ordinary life." (Bonilla, 2015: 172). In the case study presented in the next section of this paper I explore in detail how affective attachments to ideals of postcolonial sovereign independence played out during a single day I spent with some town planners from St Lucia (an Eastern Caribbean island nation state which gained independence from Britain in 1979). This case study analyses in depth how these affects surfaced, resonated, dissipated, felt flat, and otherwise, through my ethnographic encounters with these civil servants; but in particular how they often played out through more heterogeneous atmospheres surrounding postcolonial

independence, attenuated individual and national sovereignty. These concerns bring something new to both affect theory more generally and a longer tradition in postcolonial studies concerned with the everydayness of postcolonial resistance (Scott. J; 1990; Gupta, 1998; Sparke, 2008; Sanyal, 2014; Sidaway et al, 2014). Recent publications point to the "lack of in-depth empirical studies on the everyday workings of postcolonial bureaucratic institutions" (Müller, 2013:234; Jaffe, 2014). But the argument in what follows is that we should not only be producing ethnographies of the state that examine how state practice draws on wider cultural and social beliefs and practices (Mountz, 2004; Painter, 2006). Along with this mainstay approach, we now need new approaches that analyse how concerns like postcolonialism, independence, planning and development have affective and psychic dimensions that are considerably more complex and nuanced than prevailing terms of critique allow. State planners cannot, for example, be reduced to performance artists, tricksters, dupes or pawns; instead, they continually navigate the pressures and promises of postcolonial rule and associated affective attachments to sovereign independence in an indeterminate manner. A general argument of this paper then is that critical research has become too narrow and reductive in its conceptualisations of power and agency, and that a re-working of affect theory can now help us better examine how such agents inhabit and feel out the contours and impasses of complex affective institutional arrangements in the wake of independence. In turn, this also makes new connections between postcolonial sovereignty and affect theory debates more generally, as affect theory has to date been dominated by case examples from Europe and North America.

Before turning to this Caribbean case study I therefore want to briefly foreground three conceptual and ethnographic concerns about the type of broader research agenda I am interested in developing on postcolonial development, sovereignty and affect theory. First, as already implied, this agenda extends in new ways the more general critical traditions of Raymond Williams (1977) and Fredric Jameson (2013); being associated with the everyday 'structures of feeling' that reside in common historical experiences like postcolonial independence, even as those experiences may become incoherent, not be fully realised, or realised as failures (Grydehøj, 2016). Thus, in the case study below 'independence' is not always posited as a conscious feeling or object, but also with incoherent affective atmospheres that, as just noted, resonate, congeal, re-surface, dissipate, and otherwise, through everyday situations and social relations that span both the unconscious and conscious. This running theme throughout the paper also means that the sort of affect theory engaged in this paper differs from other prominent strands of affect theory circulating in contemporary literatures and debates today[iii]. Compared to influential Deleuzian-inspired affect theorists like William Connolly and Brian Massumi, for example, in this paper affect is less about the raw material of becoming and play of substances (that is, less about ontology) and more aligned with the sort of affect theory of Kathleen Stewart (2007; 2011) and Lauren Berlant (2011) – specifically their concern for how people inhabit, dwell in, and find their way through the more enigmatic affective atmospheres of everyday life that cannot always be neatly captured by, or reduced to, coherent conceptualisations of sovereign agency and disciplinary power at work. Thus, another key running concern in the case study is for situations where a sense of coherent sovereign agency (both individual and national) starts to unravel and unfold; even as assertions of sovereign independence continue to remain

constitutive of the affective atmosphere of the situation itself. Although I have said that I am not simply 'importing' Western affect theory into the Caribbean, during the case study Berlant's work will more generally inspire this thinking about how people not only sustain optimism in fantasies of sovereign mastery (as in psychanalytic theory), but also in the forms of sociality, solidarity, and, indeed, ethnography, that can emerge when people have a different relation to their own non-sovereignty. Here the term "non-sovereignty" can specifically be defined as "a resistance to or undoing of the stabilizing frameworks of coherence imposed on thought and lived experience" (Berlant and Edelman, 2013: viii)) – an affective "space of feeling things out" (Berlant, 2011: 62) – even as these frameworks remain constitutive of everyday social relations as such. I believe that such concerns engage what should be a central interest for work on postcolonial, sovereignty and affect, concerning how the unravelling of fantasies sovereignty (individual and national) becomes constitutive of everyday situations, encounters and atmospheres.

Second, despite such initial overlaps with Western affect theory, as noted, this paper has in part been written as a response to how "theorizations of affect have focused largely on Western historical, political and aesthetic contexts" (Da Costa, 2016: 1; Gunew, 2009). Indeed, affect theory is rarely scaled up and reworked to consider not only the fantasy of sovereign individual agency and control in everyday life, but also relations among ambivalent, heterogeneous feelings about postcolonial national sovereignty as well. Developing such themes explicitly in this paper thus contributes something back to leading Western affect theorists like Ben Anderson (2006: 698; 2016), and indeed in the case study below the hope of independence can be similarly understood as a "*type of process* in which something better is "not yet" and

thus has disruptive, excessive qualities even as it is immanent to lived and material culture at multiple scales." But in this paper addressing such concerns through grounded ethnography in the Caribbean reroutes sovereignty and affect through histories of colonialism, independence, decolonization, liberalism and neo-liberalism into contemporary governance structures of postcolonial development planning. This also responds to how affect theory has in the past been criticised for not being grounded (Pain, 2009; Nayak, 2010) or sensitive enough to "'power geometries' and an acknowledgement that these are vital to any individuals' capacity to affect and be affective" (Tolia-Kelly, 2006: 213; Nayak, 2010). But in addition to these concerns for power geometries, as noted, this paper is also very much interested in the more uncertain intuitions and impasses that do not speak to the affective coherences of power, but which are nevertheless also key features of social relation, and how these complicate questions of sovereignty, non-sovereignty and ethnography as well.

Third, central to this is therefore the atmosphere of the ethnographic encounter itself. Here I draw inspiration from Stewart's (2011: 445) *Atmospheric Attunements* which powerfully explores "how circulating forces are generated as atmospheres per se, how they spawn worlds, animate forms of attachment and detachment, and become the live background of living in and living through things." Among other concerns this raises for the ethnographer, as will be seen below, is how the unravelling of the ethnographer's own sovereign agency, understanding and control takes place in situ during ethnographic work; and how, far from being an aside, this unfolding becomes constitutive of the affective atmosphere of the ethnography itself as it takes place. This is about taking an interest in what the richness of that encounter, associated power geometries, as well as decompositional pressures, means for those wider

concerns just noted above with postcolonial sovereignty, sovereignty and affect. Following the powerful work of Helen Wilson (2016), it is about challenging the idea that the encounter is an empty referent, and instead thinking through how encounters should be conceptualised and understood as centrally productive of research itself. As will be demonstrated, among many other concerns, this means that encounters are not experienced as the "effects of distant systems but as lived affects with tempos, sensory knowledges, orientations, transmutations, habits, rogue force fields …" and other affective concerns that make up the atmospheres of the experience (Stewart, 2011: 446). Here I also find affinity with recent questions raised in *Antipode* by Mat Coleman and Angela Stuesse (2015: 2), who, drawing upon Elizabeth Povinelli (2011), are similarly interested in how "more remains to be said, from the standpoint of fieldwork, about how critical researchers can uncover and understand power as something experienced, and constituted, in terms of its everyday spaces and practices." Indeed, for both Stewart (2011) and Berlant (2011: 53), the affective turn in the social sciences and humanities brings us right "back to the encounter" as a central focus for research; hence, in this paper, a recurrent interest in the specificities of my ethnographic encounters. To be clear though, this is not about retreating from larger structures and denying the obvious role of systems and apparatus in post-independent nations in failing "to help the large number of people who still live in dire poverty" (Gupta, 2012:3). As Akhil Gupta (2012:5) says, there is an urgent need for postcolonial studies to concertedly examine why "more effective state intervention [is] not forthcoming to relieve the suffering of millions of the poorest and most disempowered". Rather, within the wider realms of postcolonial studies, my specific interest in the ethnographic encounter and affect theory in this paper engages what James Sidaway (2002: 13) has broadly identified as an interest

in "methods of hearing or recovering the experiences of the colonized". As I have been saying in these introductory remarks, this certainly does not mean constituting an essential sovereign and autonomous subject that could be recovered. Instead, the central thrust of this papers concern with postcolonial development, sovereignty and affect is those heterogeneous atmospheres that put into play and disrupt such neat paradigms of individual and national sovereignty and non-sovereignty at work in everyday life, even as the ideals of independence keep working away as an affectively attuning force.

EVERYDAY AFFECTIVE ATMOSPHERES OF INDEPENDENCE: THE POTENTIAL OF THE MORNING

Since 1998 I have interviewed 60 civil servants from the town planning department of St Lucia (which has 35 staff) and related departments in planning and development, including two years ethnographic work in the field (1998/9, 2003, 2011 and 2014) and observations of how planning works in a range of formal and informal settings. The following records one full and particularly interesting day I spent with some town planners from St Lucia. The day was not so much planned in advance, but as can often be the case in research, events develop, people get enthusiastic about things, and unforeseen situates unfold.

It is 8.30am one morning in April 2014. I am sitting waiting in the reception room of the town planning office of St Lucia, which is located on the waterfront of the capital of St Lucia, Castries. I am watching Mr Bean on the overhead TV with the

receptionist at the desk, whilst trying my best to explain to both the receptionist and a member of the general public who is also waiting to see a town planner that am not a hotel developer but only interested in doing academic research. I'm not sure whether they believe me or not, or perhaps they think it is perfectly possible to be both, when one of the planner's that I have made today's appointment with arrives and invites me into the back offices. I sit down with this planner and his colleague, and it is immediately obvious that something is on his mind. The planner is calm, but after only a few brief pleasantries he quite intensively turns the conversation over to his observation that there is a difference between "old style departments" (town planning) and "new style departments" (environmental and sustainability ministries). He says that "while town planners try and do 'development', I worry that new Ministries increasingly do 'resilience'." This planner does not like what he sees as the "massive proliferation" of Western donor discourses of resilience, saying: "we know all about adaptation in the Caribbean, after 400 years of slavery I wanted more". And within just a few short moments the other planner also interjects and similarly makes the rallying call for St Lucia to be more than "just resilient". He says "our independence was supposed to break with history. Resilience does not do that". As the conversation unfolds these two planners recurrently make the juxtaposition between, on the one hand, contemporary Western development paradigms of resilience – which for them reductively stereotype Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like St Lucia in terms of their vulnerabilities to disasters, catastrophes and emergencies – and, on the other hand, postcolonial ideals of sovereign independence. The planners complain that while the resilient subject "merely rides the waves of catastrophe and change", the subject of postcolonial independence "sought to seize history, and transform it". Indeed, as the foremost critical theorist of

resilience in the Caribbean, Kevin Grove (2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014a; 2014b), has saliently demonstrated, resilience "enacts an immunitary biopolitics", and "[t]he object of this biopolitics is excess adaptive capacity …" Resilience is largely about the ability "to 'bounce back' … [but not] the possibility of the kind of collective agency that might interrupt the naturalization of insecurity" (Henderson and Denny, 2015: 365). Whilst these criticisms of resilience are now more widely made in the academic literature (Grove, 2013a; Pugh, 2014; Chandler, 2014; Evans and Reid, 2014), as noted previously, in this paper I am more interested in how ideals of sovereign independence resonate, congeal, dissipate and otherwise against the backdrop of such concerns. This is a different approach to research from the above authors that examines what concerns like resilience come to stand for in the lives of state agents, as things that play a role in organising state agents' attachments to ideals of independence. Given that such concerns never play out in a vacuum, central here for me, as noted, is the affective atmosphere of the ethnographic encounter itself.

As Stewart (2011: 452) usefully reminds us, "[a]n atmosphere is not an inert context but a force field in which people find themselves. It is not an effect of other forces but a lived affect – a capacity to affect and to be affected that pushes the present into a composition, an expressivity, the sense of potentiality and event". Thus, after protesting about how small islands like St Lucia are constituted on the global stage as "vulnerable SIDs", the atmosphere of my conversation with these planners became more nebulous, but also imbued with a sense of potentiality. Slowing down and lowering his voice, one of the planners said: "there is resilience, and then there is *resilience*". Initially these words did not resonate with clear meaning for me, although it did feel as if they should, as the planner took a great deal of time to

purposefully fix his gaze on me when saying them. But the expression was also deadpan and unreadable. The planner then took the conversation into a long discussion of the troubled history of the independence movement itself in St Lucia, and in particular how St Lucian independence has recurrently and often been associated with feelings of limited and weak island sovereignty. As some illustrations of this, the planner explained how the USA's power over Britain slowed down and at times derailed the process of political independence in the Caribbean, because of the USA's fears over Communism in the region (see also Cox-Alamar, 2009). The planner also discussed how the fragility of banana crops in the 1990s still today reminded him that small islands like St Lucia are often at the mercy of global capitalism (see also Joseph, 2011). And as another illustration of the weak and limited sovereignty of small Eastern Caribbean islands, the planner discussed the USA's invasion of neighbouring Grenada in 1984 and how this still echoes in the mind. But although these examples were being given there was, nevertheless, a underlying niggling uncertainty to the situation I found myself in. Indeed, as the morning past it became increasingly difficult for me to get a clear grasp on what was *really* going on. From the power of the USA, to the power of neo-liberal forces, the illustrative cases being drawn upon by the planner were about the weak island sovereignty of St Lucia, for sure; but his bodily and physical composure made me feel like his comments were being directed at me personally somehow. The atmosphere of this situation and my own personal intuition about what was going on was unclear, and, at times, even felt rather uncomfortable. Caught up in this affective atmosphere, as I now explain, lines of individual and national sovereignty and non-sovereignty became more ambiguous and blurred as well.

Berlant (2011: 5) is useful for our purposes here as she defines a "situation" itself as an event that does not yet have a coherent form or narrative that holds it together, but where there is nevertheless an affective atmosphere of things in the air that *feel* like they need describing, and which may surface at any moment, resonate or congeal into *something*. Indeed, as the morning went on the atmosphere of this particular situation did now increasingly start to feel similar to those that have characterised many other meetings I have had with Caribbean civil servants since the 1990s; specifically how there is often the implication that I am just another Western academic or consultant constituting and cashing in on the vulnerability of SIDs to emergencies and catastrophes. Although the planners I was now with were not explicitly saying such things to me, I did now think that perhaps they too were also wondering whether I was really only in their office because I wanted to exploit them as 'stakeholders', waiting for the moment to draw them into in a large grant application (one that would certainly give a large amount of money to my University, but probably leave little for St Lucians themselves). As I grappled around for an angle on what was going on, my thoughts drifted to other Caribbean civil servants I have known over the years, and now I particularly thought about some that have become so fed up with being 'helped' by Western academics and consultants that they purposefully give them the wrong information ("part resistance, part joke", as one said). Were these St Lucian planners going to do the same to me? Over the years I have purposefully tried not to be involved in large grant applications that take money away from the region. Indeed, at this very moment I knew I was reasonably well known to some other St Lucian civil servants in a nearby government office for a project I developed where the income went to local Caribbean people. But perhaps, I thought, these town planners did not know about that. For as the morning was

coming to a close, and we started to think about lunch, the planners seemed to be returning with increasing frequency to the point that contemporary international development paradigms like resilience not only ride on the backs of the poor; much more than this, they essentially constitute small islands themselves as vulnerable and in need of resilience training by Western expertise (such as that I may offer).

The crux of the matter here for this paper's central focus on how the ideals of sovereign independence resonate and resurface is that it was most often at these points that these ideals also came most prominently to the fore in our conversations as well, emerging as an affective interruption concerning what could be socially and politically otherwise. Sometimes the planners asserted the ideals forcefully, at other times, as just noted, they played out more nebulously, uncertainly and affectively through the ethnographic encounter itself and my role as a British academic within it. Given that I am British, here we are then also talking about an affective space whose contours incorporate a history; one which often seemed to play through the hesitations, anxieties and subversive joking of the morning, but which, unlike the afternoon that I shortly turn to, was often less explicitly invoked. This does not then reduce 'affect' to a coherent sense of emotion, identity or social relation being in play. Rather, as noted in the introduction, the affective atmosphere of this ethnographic encounter is more like a "space of feeling things out" (Berlant, 2011: 62) – from the impasse of a deadpan expression, to my uncertain intuitions about development consultancy, and planners' upwelling of feelings against international resilience regimes. These concerns also blur neat delineations of individual and national sovereignty and non-sovereignty, and do not straightforwardly speak to the coherences of sovereign subjectivity at work in everyday life (something which

further suggests a need to rework our understandings of subjectivity, and this a point I return to as the main theme of the conclusion to this paper). Instead, they draw attention to the often heterogeneous and enigmatic atmospheres which make up experiences of 'independence', even as the affective form resonates and resurfaces in new ways.

EVERYDAY AFFECTIVE ATMOSPHERES OF INDEPENDENCE: INHABITING THE IMPASSE OF THE AFTERNOON

As the day with the St Lucian planners progressed and the morning passed, three more planners joined us in the office. Then we got up and walked to have lunch in a local restaurant in another building. Some more people arrived – civil servants from other offices too – and while walking and talking I caught-up with people I had not seen for a while. We arrived at a locally-owned restaurant, sat down, ate, and the term 'resilience' was chewed over and critiqued further; but the conversation also more forthrightly shifted to the ideals of independence themselves. We discussed how at the time of political independence in the Caribbean, during the 1960s and 70s, ideals of *collective* development were expressed in many island national mottos: Jamaica's "Out of Many, One People'; Trinidad's 'Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve' and Haiti's 'Unity Makes Strength' (Meeks and Lindahl, 2001; Hintzen, 2001). St Lucia's motto is 'The Land, the People, the Light', and we discussed how in particular for town planners this foregrounds the connection between the people and the land. Over lunch, a more forthright and at times heated juxtaposition was made between, on the one hand, how the ideals of independence

were supposed to represent a collective national break with history, and on the other, more contemporary Western donor discourses which reduce small islands to their vulnerabilities and merely adapting to what is thrown at them. This atmosphere was at times quite animated, as the ideals of independence were recurrently invoked and became an affective interruption into what was seen as today's more impoverished international development discourses. But as we finished lunch and walked back to the town planning office the atmosphere changed once more, affect became associated in new ways with the unravelling of the coherences of sovereign agency, even as sovereignty continued to be asserted and constitutive of the atmosphere of the situation itself (Berlant, 2011; Berlant and Edelman, 2013).

Here it is particularly salient then that as we strolled back from lunch the conversations with the planners started to drift toward the Constitution of St Lucia itself as the nation's declaration of sovereign independence. In particular we discussed how since it became independent from Britain in 1979 St Lucia has never adopted a national physical development plan to control development. Nor is it likely to in the near future. One reason for this is because a combination of the nation's Constitution of independence, the legacy of French property rights[iv] and the associated 'total ownership' of land (Liverpool, 1977; Cenac, 1988), strongly supports individual property rights. Indeed, for town planners from other neighbouring Caribbean countries, including Barbados and Trinidad, we have similarly discussed how the Constitutional strength of individual property rights under their own particular circumstances also reduces the chances of developing strong national planning systems there as well. Thus, in an important sense, remaining affectively attached to the ideals of independence as these are articulated in the

Constitution makes it more difficult to control planning for the nation. While previously in the day the tone had been more up-beat and even defiant – the ideals of independence had provided a momentary affective interruption to international regimes of resilience – these ideals now seemed to take as much as they could give. The tone of conversations shifted, becoming more sanguine. As Thomas Holt's (1992) seminal text *The Problem of Freedom* reminds us, "something was amiss in the very project of emancipation, in the very promises on which it was founded" (quoted in Bonilla, 2015: 12). After emancipation, slavery, as an ideology and a system, was supplanted by a broad range of liberal reforms that over time both coerced and worked upon the development of liberal subjects and rights (Scott, 2004; Bonilla, 2015). Emancipation adopted this pervasive language of liberal individual rights that further reduced the possibilities for alternative forms of development too, such as maroon traditions, collective ideas of family land and metayage, a form of sharecropping (Barrow, 1992; Pugh, 2005a). In turn, as Bonilla (2015: 12-13) brings this into the contemporary era:

> "The problem/project of postcolonial sovereignty has similarly entailed the advancement of a particular set of aspirations, attachments, ideals, and desires. The freedom of emancipation became equated with the freedom of the market, the right to work, and the naturalization of a desire for material rewards from toil. In a similar fashion, postcolonial sovereignty became equated with the right to a passport, a flag, a stamp, a coin, and the formation of a native state. It also became associated with a restrictive ideology that suggests that national borders can and should serve as containers for

homogeneous content. This has led to an emphasis upon 'national identity' at the expense of other social projects …"

Contemporary development studies argue that privileged groups in postcolonial countries, such as town planners, no longer imagine their social membership on national terms and are more likely to have atomistic, nonlocated visions of society (Ballard, 2012). Yet, the above quote from Bonilla complicates matters somewhat. Like Holt (1992) and Scott (2004), Bonilla maintains that the legacies of slavery, emancipation and the ideals of independence themselves had already linked postcolonial national sovereignty with a certain form of liberal individualism, and I agree. As we got back to the St Lucian town planning office after lunch, an associated question emerged concerning what it means for planners to remain affectively attached to the ideals of national independence, even as they can take as much as they give. The planners drew my attention to all sorts of things – magazines and papers scattered around the office, the struggles of different types of government department, and the arrival of someone who was possibly a foreign developer – to illustrate the tensions emerging from legacies of independence that give rise to particularly weak national development control. But in foregrounding such concerns I also want to keep in mind the peculiarities of this ethnographic encounter itself. Thus, as the afternoon was drawing to a close, rather than emphasise the similarities between my own British planning system and Caribbean planning, it was increasingly our differences that planners brought into play (see also Pugh and Potter, 2000; Pugh, 2001; Pugh and Momsen, 2006; Pugh, 2013a; 2013b; 2016). Some planners talked about the strength of the Constitution in many Caribbean countries when compared to that of Britain[v]. Others said that the plan-led

approaches of many European countries provide better regulation and control than in the Caribbean. Some talked about how Caribbean town planners are often trained in Britain, but that when they get home the system is very different. Whilst these examples amount to an affective interstice to the prevalent notion that Anglophone Caribbean planning is simply the "[t]ransferring [of] British Planning Law" (Home, 1993: 397) – a notion that sits more generally within the wider caricature of Caribbean democracy as "Westminster adapted" (Payne, 1993) – they also foreground how sovereignty itself is a concept that is projected, subjected and worked through its own decompositional pressures during such ethnographic encounters. As Bonilla (2015: 15) saliently points out, people from the Caribbean "are working within and against the constraints of postcolonial sovereignty" and she aptly describes this as the struggle and tension for "non-sovereign futures" that "break free from the epistemic binds of political modernity, even while still being compelled to think through its normative categories" (see also Potter and Pugh, 2002; Pugh and Potter, 2003; Pugh, 2005a; 2005b; Skelton, 2016; Noxolo, 2016). It is then further interesting to note here that similarly for Berlant and Edleman (2013: viii) "to encounter oneself as nonsovereign … is to encounter relationality itself, in the psychic, social, and political senses of the term". As I will shortly elaborate in the conclusion, critical theory has arguably become too narrow and coherent in its conceptualisations of power and sovereign subjectivity. One of the associated incentives to reading the work of important Caribbean scholars like Bonilla, alongside theorists like Berlant and Edelman, is thus the need to more concertedly explore how people inhabit and blur the contours of sovereignty and non-sovereignty in everyday life. For during my day with the planners sovereignty had been asserted, dissipated and fallen flat, resurfaced, resonated and congealed in all sorts of ways; at times

becoming subjected to its own incoherences and decompositional pressures, and, at others, providing an affective interstice from the onslaught of Western precarity slogans like resilience. Throughout this day such affective attachments, both consciously and unconsciously, had also generated some sense of psychic and social coherence, or otherwise, to proceedings. Indeed, as one planner said, the ideals of independence "work like a life raft in my daily life"; which suggests that they keep him afloat in the wake of independence, rather than necessarily thriving in a coherent direction. They often play out through the more heterogeneous atmospheres of encounters and situations, remaining affectively important in everyday life, perhaps not so much because they are future-orientated, but because remaining attached to them "is a social relation involving attachments that organize the present" (Berlant, 2011: 14).

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECTIVITIES

This paper has suggested and put to use a new research agenda concerning postcolonialism, sovereignty and affect that speaks to a specific context, but also to a wider set of critical debates and literatures. In taking a postcolonial approach to questions of sovereignty, non-sovereignty and affect it has flagged up some broader concerns for affect theory generally and for future debate. The day spent with the planners foregrounds in particular the more heterogeneous and enigmatic aspects of postcolonial sovereignty and affect which could be further explored in other contexts in future research. Notwithstanding the complexities, this case study presented above suggests one clear conclusion for such work. In recent years a prominent

Foucaultian-inspired approach has been developed for critically theorising colonial and postcolonial subjectivities. Reflective this approach David Scott's (1999:89) particularly influential *Refashioning Futures* has said that liberal strategies of reform and independence in the Caribbean have come:

> "to be inscribed into the cognitive-institutional terrain of social and political life, in which power seeks to operate through the shaping of conduct rather than the shaping of bodies."

In order to develop his influential perspective Scott's reading of subjectivity in *Refashioning Futures* engaged important legacies of slavery, emancipation and independence, including the emergence of liberal notions of rights explored in the last section of this paper. Scott (1999) routed histories of emancipation, disciplinary power, liberal reform and subjectivity in ways that have done much to reinvigorate postcolonial political critique more generally, and, indeed, the development of counter-narratives to liberal notions of subjectivity in postcolonial studies as well (Meeks, 2007). I do not therefore want to be too overcritical here. Indeed, Scott's more recent works like *Omens of Adversity* (2014) noted above, and *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004), are powerful attempts to think through affective attachments to ideals like the nation state. Nevertheless, my specific concern here is that his Foucaultian stance in *Refashioning Futures* now needs updating, because in focusing too much upon the disciplinary *coherences* of liberal reform, power and subjectivity, it does not now fully grapple with the more heterogeneous atmospheres, decompositional impasses and pressures of postcolonial independence when biopolitical forces and their constraints do not fully take hold (as in the above case

study). More specifically, if there is now a need to more fully grapple with what it means to inhabit the post-independence impasse generated by the waning but continued affective attachments to older postcolonial narratives, as Scott (2004; 2014) absolutely rightly suggests, then this requires some rather different conceptual and ethnographic frameworks of engagement for these times.

In developing this new argument here I also support Berlant's (2011:96) wider critique of how Achille Mbembé (2001) is reflective of a general problematic critical tradition – from Schmitt to Bataille – which too straightforwardly projects a coherent sense of sovereignty being at work in everyday life and "onto events and decision-making". Berlant (2011:96) sees Mbembé as "exemplary" of this tradition, as when Mbembé says "[t]o exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power". She critiques such reductive understandings of sovereign agency and disciplinary power by saying that "sovereignty described as the foundation of individual autonomy (represented and secured, for some, by the General Will) overidentifies the similarity of self-control to this fantasy of sovereign performativity and state control over geographical boundaries" (Berlant, 2011: 96a). Whilst I do not deny that Mbembé's and Scott's critical perspectives can be politically useful, as I have said, I also now want to develop alternative approaches that do not so consistently foreground the coherencies of sovereign agency, disciplinary power and autonomy. Indeed, with a particular eye upon what it means to inhabit the "*rupture*" which Scott (2014:6) rightly argues has now taken place in older historical narratives of Caribbean postcolonial independence, above I recurrently explored through the case study how a sense of coherent sovereignty (both individual and national) starts to unravel and unfold, even

as the ideals of independence continue to reverberate and have an affective form. This has been the running theme of the paper and it foregrounds the importance of expanding the critical registers of affect theory more widely in postcolonial contexts, so that they now also bring in concerns with postcolonialism and sovereignty in new ways. As Bonilla (2015: iv) also stresses, in the Caribbean there remains a "lingering attachment" to the ideals of independence – however heterogeneous, ambiguous, nebulous, incoherent, or otherwise, this may now be – that remains affectively important in everyday life. With Bonilla (2015: 3) I share this important concern for how these ideals can still today be "subtly rendered through a qualitative analysis of the affective and subjective transformations that characterize political life." Building from these broader concerns, this paper has further suggested the need for new conceptual tools of analysis and ethnographic approaches that better enable us to track how people inhabit and dwell in the more heterogeneous impasses, even as ideals like political sovereign independence continue to charge the affective atmospheres of everyday life.

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[ii] In this paper the term "postcolonial" is used "to describe a condition, referring to peoples, states and societies that have been through a process of formal decolonization" (Sidaway, 2002: 13).

[iii] See Thrift (2004) and Greg and Seigworth (2010) for useful analyses of different approaches to affect theory.

[iv] St Lucia was historically a strategic outpost in the Caribbean fought over and exchanged 14 times between Britain and France.

[v] As Carnegie (1996) says, it "takes but a brief reflection on the Commonwealth Caribbean Constitutions to see that the differences from the characteristics of the system headquartered at Westminster stand out sharply". There is, for example, a difference between the "flexible, unwritten Constitution of the United Kingdom and its contrast with the Commonwealth Caribbean's rigid, written Constitutions" (Carnegie, 1996).