Panorama de la originalidad desde un Caribe inconcluso

Outlook on Originality through an Incomplete Caribbean

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RESUMEN

En un mundo hiperconectado, el encuentro con la originalidad es raro. Usualmente, el éxito profesional obedece a fórmulas que ignoran la autenticidad. Las soluciones inmediatas producen resultados prácticos pero similares, y los avances tecnológicos prometen innovación, aunque frecuentemente terminan siendo formulados. El presente articulo tiene como objetivo trazar el panorama de la originalidad como legado universal, y se escribe desde el contexto inconcluso antillano, visualizando lo autentico a través de cuatro paisajes caribeños que escapan el *status quo* de los convencionalismos actuales: panorámico, oportuno, recurrente y abierto. Se espera que este ensayo inspire a la academia y a las prácticas profesionales a reencontrar en lo original un punto de partida incontestable.

Palabras clave: apertura, autenticidad, originalidad, panorama, recurrencia

ABSTRACT

In a hyperconnected world, originality is a rare commodity. Successful formulas are celebrated throughout all human professions, but the ability to generate authenticity should still be valued as one of the finest human achievements. The implementation of immediate solutions, prone to create similar results everywhere, is fashionable today, even those efforts which technological advances promise radical innovation have become formulaic. The present article aims to trace the panorama of the originality as a universal legacy, and it is written from an incomplete Caribbean context, envisioning the authentic through four conceptual landscapes that escape the conventional *status quo*. It is expected the present essay could inspire academic and professional practices to find in the original the ultimate breakthrough.

Keywords: authenticity, openness, originality, panorama, recurrence

Introduction

Originality is an intellectual territory of constant cultural adaptations and is a concept where the future can be safeguarded. The 21st century fosters the autochthonous as an eternal manifestation, connecting geographical boundaries through transcontinental intelligences. At times, originality hides behind cultural dispersions, or is found where prosperity, the illicit and the hope for change intersect. The original exceeds contrasts and preserves the innocence that has been threatened to disappear for centuries. Authenticity propels humanity towards exceptional achievements, and this article conceptually harnesses it to understand the Caribbean as an unfinished context that transgresses tangible boundaries.

Several authors have written from and about the Caribbean region, adding to a list of chroniclers and historians through the centuries. Frank Moya Pons (2003) explains the indigenous pre-Columbian culture, emphasizing the origins and legacy of the peoples that defined the autochthonous of the archipelago. *Esteban Prieto* (2008) analyzes West Indian residential architecture, especially that of Quisqueya, unveiling its sources, describing its evolution through the centuries, and arriving at the redefinition of what is conventionally known as vernacular. *Omar Rancier* (2018) explains the realities of current education in the Caribbean context (Santo Domingo) beckoning that there must be humanistic objectives in the teaching of contemporary disciplines, especially in architecture. *Eugenio Perez Montás* (2019) determines the realities of Dominican power structures and their impact on the definition of the Caribbean city in the world today.

Although these authors latently touch on the authentic, this essay aims at tracing the panorama of originality as a universal legacy through four conceptual landscapes: the panoramic Caribbean, the opportune Caribbean, the recurrent Caribbean, and the open Caribbean. The panoramic, because authenticity exists within an intellectual diversity that composes a constantly evolving whole, even though that whole remains incomplete. The opportune, because the original is identified in specific moments that impact the foundations of culture and provides the tools to raise unique perspectives. The recurrent, because the repetition and replication of conventional ideas, usually presented through new formats, is a practice that ironically wishes to achieve originality. The open, as the original exists in the incomplete space, revealing its uniqueness and explaining the impact of its specifics on the future development of the region.

As intellectual experimentation, these four landscapes explore the unfinished innovations that have gone unnoticed due to the superficiality imposed by today's civilization. It avoids the alignment that usually induces the folkloric and constructs a text that can stimulate the imagination of any reader interested in originality, regardless of the cultural context from which it originates.

In this article, these four Caribbean versions are explained separately for educational reasons, knowing that they all happen -almost- simultaneously. All these discoveries are complemented with the perspectives of the conclusion, since it opens new trails of thought based on the ignored esthetic intelligence of the archipelago. In this way, an advanced alternative is finally projected towards a future built on the

cultural, formative, and pro-positive questionings of an unfinished Caribbean.

The Caribbean Panoramic

The panorama of originality is vast and multidirectional, especially if it is perceived from an open context such as the Caribbean. It is possible to move from one scenario to another continuously, noticing changes, identifying events, projecting perspectives into the future and formulating unexpected visions in line with the forward-looking spirit that has always characterized humanity (*Kuenzli, 2006*). The panorama, as a framework of vision, has a scope, is defined, imaginative and invites to transgress the limits of the framework itself. The original landscape inspires to be observed and criticized, it promotes being identified from a conventional plane and can be reconstructed through local discoveries.

The 20th century produced works based on functionality, rationality, abstraction, and the conceptual, reinventing professions, and inaugurating a new era of knowledge (*Guttenberger, 2015*). Those concepts are part of a context dominated by invention (maximum creative evidence), discovering authenticity through fields that drive human development. Just as reason, function, conceptual and abstraction were consolidated inventions in the past, it is necessary to identify ideas that reveal the power of originality. As a panorama, we have arrived at a 21st century that is reborn from ideas created when optimism invaded global enthusiasm in the second half of the last millennium (*Simonot, 2010*), that protects heritage nostalgia, that awakens insecurity when interacting with Artificial Intelligence, but that must avoid the promotion of prejudice when facing the unknown.

The review of originality encompasses the synthesis and application of knowledge and must go to the source when it is found in an unfinished picture. It must go beyond methodologies and processes to reach a radical innovation of the bases that constitute productive activities, since reviewing what makes them unique has a universal impact, for example: to discover original results in the field of work, it is not just a matter of introducing new forms and methodologies of work, or of changing the timetable and the arrangement of the workplace furniture, but of transforming the concept of work itself, of making a fundamental reinvention of it.

The landscape of originality is also discovered in the process of doing things. Usually, processes can pose different phases to achieve authenticity, and that is an advantage if you have as many phases as innovations are posed. And it is expected that this is formulated as an action, because it is now of decision-making that discoveries are unveiled, preliminary intentions are tested, and input is used as a trigger for surprise questioning. A method may be introduced, but the initial methodology is transformed by the new ways of doing that emerge in the process, where the recovery of experiences is combined with the formation of new routes to unexpected results.

In this way it is understood that originality exists within a continuous panorama that is both horizon and foreground. Its continuity includes accents, incongruities, and inflections, and proves that homogeneity is not synonymous with sameness, but with concord between dissimilar elements. The panoramic view can connect the familiar with the unusual, can challenge polarity and can establish

the inclusive. Within this landscape, a timely Caribbean is also identified, as a differentiating landscape and creator of authenticity.

The Timely Caribbean

The opportunity in the Caribbean occurs at the specific moment when originality emerges. For it to be identified, there must have been a monotonous process, which for some reason transgresses the conventional. When moving from the everyday to the original, opportunity does not happen instantaneously, but after the status quo is overcome. In this context, authenticity is presented when the replica is differentiated from the authentic, even in conditions where the copy is disguised as novelty, since the original is incontestable and has no precursors. But what is the point of insisting on originality at times when the conventional still works? Undoubtedly, avoiding imitation is an option, but change is an unfailing creative aspiration, and if it serves as inspiration there will be opportunities to formulate the authentic.

Originality is usually appreciated as an outcome, not as a starting point, let alone a process, but it does emerge between the search and the product on different occasions. Three opportunities can be identified within the flow of knowledge that needs to produce authenticity: source opportunity, breakthrough opportunity, and random opportunity.

a) Origin opportunity: when going back to basics or when going back to the primitive. Going back to the beginning to free oneself from the stagnation of the status quo is an efficiency of change. At this point, extravagances that can deplete creative resources are avoided, eliminating excess or uncontrolled resources. Under these circumstances, one returns to the rawness of the original, rediscovers everything that gives meaning to productive activities and from there, create.

b) Breakthrough opportunity: when the latest available advances are considered as premises of originality. Historically, the latter were manifested by mechanical means, but recently they are identified by automatic resources - computational, if you prefer their recent avatar-; both serve as an extracorporeal extension to perform seemingly impossible actions. In this breakthrough opportunity, the imagination criticizes the exhausted avant-garde, the worn-out novelty, the habitual of the present, the frenetic search for the "new" and instead finds new determinations that help achieve originality.

Random opportunity: when the two previous opportunities are accidentally explored, that is, when primitive foundations meet advanced thoughts. The accident evidences that chaos escapes premeditation, because it simply "happens" (*Virilio, 2009*), it is inconceivable to understand it as an isolated event, and it happens when the unpredictable emerges apparently out of control. And it is understandable that the shock in the collision of opportunities intimidates, leaving a double effect on whoever experiences it: an amnesic one that temporarily eliminates the cause of the collision, and an intimidating one that arises when the unexpected increases the possibilities of creative success or failure. Within the random, originality expands and unveils unique approaches

that hinder the emergence of replication.

These three opportunities suggest that when the original landscape appears one of them can clearly identify originality, even if it is investigated or visualized through conventional results. These three moments are ephemeral interruptions in the action of discovery, which serve to guide the stakeholder in the search for authenticity and new directions. More creative opportunities may arise in the innovative process, as many as imagination and invention allow, but any one of them may arise within a repetitive pattern, revealing a recurring Caribbean.

The Recurring Caribbean

Recurrence, in its reiterative action, does not prevent originality from also existing within the ordinary, even when the latter is dominated by the repetitive. Authenticity can be discovered within a trend, which is itself a form of recurrent expression. Even so, an original result can be produced, since trends, established by repetition and replication, are not systems closed to innovations, for they have the capacity to transform themselves after the conventional exhausts them. Thus, it is understood how the authentic plans a different vision in moments of apparent redundancy.

Within a recurrent process, originality sustains calculated and imaginary arguments that occur almost simultaneously within a field shared by the rational and the imagined. The former is composed of parameters based on the calculation necessary to provoke the imagination. The latter evoke inspirational properties, are attractive, escape precision and disconnect from what is known as reality.

Recurrence uses indispensable resources such as the continuity of the usual, and in any case, originality filters through and escapes the restrictions and reductions imposed by custom. In this situation, authenticity frees itself from the authority of trends, trying to formulate a legacy, highlighting the need for the absence of styles and overcoming the trap of the superficial. This also ensures that originality, while acting alongside the recurrent, can reach the state of being in a kind of permanent present, without claiming to be eternal, for the latter is the antithesis of the original.

Originality, understood within the framework of recurrence, also becomes a prototype. Being the original model, the first of its kind or being the primary phase, is a result that has overcome a process of repetition and must be treated as an early state that announces future innovation. In the beginning, prototypes are not considered authentic until they are confronted with the monotony of trends. In that instance, the experience of being exposed to the openness of the original outweighs the influence of pretense, for it identifies whatever guarantees progression and suggests the intentional refinement of the prototype.

Originality drives the flow of ideas within the recurrent. As a prototype, it is in responsible for giving primitive form to elements that shape later novelties, opening new ways to understand that a legacy is not necessarily something from the past that has become a classic, but it can also be a work in progress (proposal in process) that establishes an evolution. On this basis, the original is not from the beginning a finished product, but an alternative that transforms the recurring phases of creativity.

Originality, in the process of establishing the new, is also intervened by recurrence, and although the latter imposes restrictions, novelty is ironically driven rather than restricted. Creativity is profound and inspires the limitless, and the discovery of new things is always possible, unless intellectual laziness takes over. Ironically, the recurrent ends up provoking change, and leaves glimpses of mixed conclusions between trivialization and the shock of innovation. This works as a synthetic experience that ends up being augmented by the sobriety of the original in primary phase.

Recurrence is found in the very conformation of the Caribbean region, for the sea that gives it its name, that blue strip that can be made out almost immutably from afar is a recurring vision in itself; a panorama that adjusts the inconstancy of the collective imaginary with the cohesion of the seascape. And so, originality arises from the difference between its territories, in which, despite containing similar geographies, each one opens and closes concepts infinitely, revealing the existence of authenticity and resurfacing repeatedly through the surprise fostered by an Open Caribbean.

The Open Caribbean

The Caribbean is incomplete. It is true that the beauty of its nature identifies it worldwide, and although the author of this article recognizes the pristine qualities of the archipelago, said beauty is not exclusively Caribbean, as similar panoramas can be found all along the tropical strip of the world; but it is the attributes formulated by its dissimilar conditions that make it original and demand that it is necessary to understand the region

as a place of openings ready to be explored and augmented.

The Caribbean can be read as an incoherent whole, as a container of open situations and as a collection of habitats disconnected from a disciplinary vision. In it, there are precarious and unplanned places of coexistence, exposed through an appearance without ethics (good/bad) and without universal aesthetics (beautiful/ugly), showing things crudely and avoiding any idealism. Such an existence seems anti-historical, anti-aesthetic, anti-planning, or anti-classification (*Kaijima et al., 2012*).

In this open Caribbean, a non-linear order is discovered, mistakenly described as spontaneous. For example, constructions, roads, and telecommunication wiring, among other components of the collective context, are identified as an apparent chaos, but it is overlooked that this landscape of contiguous and apparently unconnected objects strengthens the image of the adjacent, the true aesthetics of the Caribbean. And it is that condition to which the originality of the region is also directed, one that avoids the seduction of romantic foreign ideas, since the latter ignores the complexities of the current Caribbean scenario. This non-linearity evidences the function of the original, which consists in evading visions drawn from other latitudes that could turn it into another concept conquered by the foreign.

The open Caribbean extinguishes the perfection of life models presented as avant-garde. It is built on common sense and is established on an emotional praxis that guarantees fluidity and functionality to the apparently illogical. In this context, disciplinary coherence disappears, categorical divisions have a tenuous impact, and the

system is based on the aesthetics of the adjacent it is all about empirical manifestations and adaptations exercised on an intermixable product, for Caribbean originality is unlimited.

In the open Caribbean we can speak of aesthetic intelligence. Far from any artificial computational sophistication, in this case, the Caribbean is identified with the automaticity of human survival, that which connects things that would seem impossible to associate with the rationality of other spaces. Applied to the plane of originality, the feelings produced by the experience of interacting with the context are understood, interpreted, and articulated, understanding that a good aesthetic sense is advantageous because it is natural. Likewise, one discovers how the experience resonates with the sensual, stimulating the imagination and connecting people to each other on an emotional level (Brown, 2019).

The rawness is also part of the original legacy of the open Caribbean, as it serves to reject the artificial pre-determinations of "civilization" and to unveil the authenticity within. When it tries to adapt to civilization, the Caribbean responds aggressively without fear of being identified with the savage. Conflict and aggressiveness are reactions to avoid the inoperative of the civilized, since the latter corrupts the pristine, innocent, and innate of the archipelago. Consequently, the concept of originality is instinctively imposed in the region, so that everything foreign that comes in is transformed and adapted through the constant flow of its openness.

Concepts such as the "tradition of the new" exert a significant impact here, as Caribbean originality utilizes any expressive resource that suits it, even if it has processed origins, and forms a variety of syncretic styles that try to adapt to the modern world (Weston, 1996). Everything is absorbed and transformed into something of its own, especially if the result is aligned with what is universally known as innovation. Thus, it is difficult to speak of identity in the Caribbean in a convincing way, although it is often used as a cultural device to position the region in the world of commerce: today, identity is a commercial success.

The Caribbean possesses dissimilar idiosyncrasies and to generalize it could exclude the riches of the region, but this invites to deepen conceptually about it, to treat it with open imagination and to approach the syncretism of the archipelago to what should be original. A conceptual approach is a call to work with abstractions, but we must be careful how they are used in this exercise, because we must understand that Caribbean originality is accompanied by common sense amplified through the concrete of everyday life. It is in that panoramic Caribbean where reality surpasses immediacy, where opportunities arise from the creative moments of the timely Caribbean, where one discovers that repetition can disguise the authenticity of the region in the recurrent Caribbean and where one finally finds a futuristic vision of originality in the open Caribbean.

Conclusion

The Caribbean has been a land of constant cultural adaptations, and it would seem to be the last place where originality could be debated, but as has been explained, the Caribbean is authentic. Added to this is the fact that the region was the base of the most significant cultural expansion of the Western world

-the European conquest of the "New World"-; a land that geographically unifies the two latitudes of the American continent; it has been the site where ethnic groups have converged under struggle and injustice until the extinction of one of them; it is still an environment that remains open to the hope of change; and beyond being a place full of contrasts, it still preserves indigenous vestiges that memorialize a timeless legacy. All this adds up to the uniqueness of the Caribbean which served as a platform to reinvent the different landscapes -panoramic, opportune, recurrent, and open- that inaugurate a different and enriching discourse for the universal thought of the present millennium.

The conceptual background of this article built new useful guidelines for the academic and professional community. The first direction is the need to reinvent existing concepts and transform them into visions of one's own. This practice helps the revision of culture and the expansion of the creative universe beyond the limits imposed by everyday life. The other path is to foster a democratic scenario, where uncertainty and the desire for change explain that today we are not dealing with absolutes, but with a set of adjacent actions, which somehow work in unison and give a visionary sense to the apparent contrast of the region.

Seen through the lens of an incomplete Caribbean, originality overcomes the polarities that have dominated the world for centuries and that have kept human visions in a primitive stage. Today, cultural convictions are based on absolutes which greatly reduce the spectrum of thought that could be found in regions such as the Antilles. It must be understood that in this archipelago thinking is an act linked to instinctive action, and that on many occasions it strengthens other types of intelligence beyond the scientific. There are intellectual and folkloric resources that can establish a new aesthetic intelligence and that can free the barriers that usually keep knowledge limited. The original is part of human nature together with its artificial extension -objects-, and it is expected to diminish the stagnation of the status quo; it is expected to open routes beyond the Caribbean borders; it is expected to transform the rigor of customs into open options and finally, it is expected to prove that the legacy of the Earth belongs to a new chronological conception, free from anthropological time.

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