

**ABSTRACT****Civil Society Participation in Trade Negotiations: A Caribbean Case Study**

Annita Montoute

This new phase of globalisation spawned a reconfiguration of the global economic architecture. A paradigm shift in global trading rules from preferences to reciprocity, the expansion of the scope of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the increasing number of North/South trade Agreements are all features of this new economic landscape. These changes have triggered a myriad of concerns from civil society organisations, including concerns about a reduction in domestic policy space and increasing disparities between developing and developed countries. While work has been done on civil society participation at the global level, this has not been matched by work at lower levels. This research fills this gap by examining civil society participation (Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), trade unions and the private sector) in the preparation for trade negotiations at the national and regional levels in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The study utilises qualitative and quantitative methodology and a multi case study strategy (St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados). It draws from the theories of participatory democracy, interest group theory, public choice theory, elite pluralism, civic voluntarism and perspectives of political efficacy to investigate whether civil society participation is

democratising trade negotiations in CARICOM. The research addresses the way in which civil society is engaging in the preparation for trade negotiations and the difficulties being faced in meaningfully engaging them in the process. The research provides policy prescriptions for addressing these challenges for both government and civil society actors.

**Key Words:** Annita Montoute; civil society; participation; democracy; trade negotiations; NGOs; trade unions; private sector; CARICOM; St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago; Jamaica; Barbados.