



INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

ABACONIAN LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Our research showed that family is a very important source of knowledge for the participants. Many different skills, which are necessary for succeeding in everyday life, are taught and communicated from one generation to another by family members. Also, there is a certain gender bias, as boys are more likely to learn about fishing, whereas girls receive knowledge about medical plants and traditional bush medicine more often.

BAHAMIAN BUSH MEDICINE

The use of locally grown plants and herbs for medical purposes is a tradition that mainly gets passed onto the younger generation by family members. Our research showed that this happens almost invariably by oral transmission from one individual to the other and by shared practical experiences. As per our survey more than 80% of the respondents were able to identify locally grown plants and herbs. Cerasee or Aloe Vera are typically used in Bahamian bush medicine as a treatment against the cold or skin injuries. The survey showed that respondents are familiar with the environment they are living in. However, the impact on daily actions remains unclear.



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RESEARCH PROJECT

**ABACO —
ADAPTABILITY OF A SOCIAL-
ECOLOGICAL ISLAND SYSTEM**





CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH



ABOUT THE PROJECT

FACTS AND FIGURES

Title: "Adaptability of social-ecological systems. Environmental knowledge, learning and governance on small islands from a complexity theory perspective. The Caribbean as a case study."

Researchers: Prof. Dr. Beate M.W. Ratter and Lars Bomhauer-Beins (University of Hamburg, Germany)

Funding agency: German Research Foundation (DFG)

Duration: 2015 – 2018

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

First question: How do individuals and society respond to natural and/or anthropogenic pressures and stressors such as natural disasters, invasive species or climate change?

Second question: How are risk and environmental knowledge produced and employed to strengthen social adaptability and resilience in a social-ecological island system?

PHASE 1 - FINISHED

From **January to March 2016**, we surveyed 125 Abaconians in different communities of the island and interviewed various Bahamians and external researchers on New Providence and Abaco. We tried to identify the characteristics of the perception of nature, awareness of environmental problems and the knowledge of the local environment of the people on Abaco. In addition, we analysed the island's history related to economy, ecology, politics and society.

PHASE 2 - CURRENT

In **June and July 2017**, we focus on a concrete case study of knowledge, learning, governance and resultant behaviour working with multiple research methods like observations, interviews and a questionnaire. Namely, we analyse the example of the Queen Conch as a national marine resource.

PHASE 3 - COMING

In **January 2018**, we will organize a workshop on Abaco for exchanging thoughts and ideas about potentials and pitfalls with interested locals. The central question will be "What can we - Abaconians - learn from this research?".

WHAT EXACTLY...

... IS A SYSTEM?

A system is a collective of single elements, which interact with each other. It can be, for example, a society, an ecosystem or, as it is in our research, the island Abaco.

... ARE SHOCKS AND PRESSURES?

A system is confronted with shocks and pressures. These can be internal and/or external. In case of Abaco, the system is confronted with hurricanes, erosion processes or invasive species (like the red lionfish).

... IS ADAPTABILITY?

Adaptability is the capacity of a system to flexibly adjust to changed situations or circumstances to influence its own resilience in a positive manner. This raises the question of how Abaconians cope with the external stressor red lionfish.

... IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience means the ability of a system to withstand shocks and pressures without losing its operational functionality or identity. Integrating the red lionfish into daily business as a food fish or in the context of derbys shows resilience.