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The haitian migratory system in the guianas: beyond borders

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Abstract: The Guianas are an important field in the Caribbean migratory system, whereby goods, objects, currencies, and populations circulate for different reasons: geographical, cultural proximity, climatic, geopolitical and socioeconomic factors. From the 1960s and 1970s, Haitian migration increased in the Guianas. Five decades later, after the January 2010 earthquake, the migratory spaces were intensified in the region, Brazil became part of them as a country of residence and transit to reach French Guiana and Suriname. In 2013, the routes were altered. Some migrants started to use the Republic of Guyana to enter Brazil through the border with Roraima, in the Amazon, or to cross the border towards Suriname and French Guiana. This article is divided into two levels. First, it describes the way in which migrants' practices and trajectories intersect national borders in the Guianas. Then, it analyzes the migratory system, documents and papers, and the problems that the different Haitian migratory generations raise in space and time. The ethnographic research is based on the Triple Border Brazil, Colombia and Peru, but also in Suriname, French Guiana and Haiti.

Key words: Haitian migration; Migration system; Suriname; French Guiana; Brazil; Borders.

O sistema migratório haitiano nas guianas: para além das fronteiras

Resumo: As Guianas constituem um importante campo no sistema migratório caribenho, pelo qual circulam mercadorias, objetos, moedas e populações por razões diversas: proximidade geográfica, cultural, fatores climáticos, geopolíticos e socioeconômicos. A partir das décadas de 1960 e 1970, a migração haitiana ganhou densidade nas Guianas. Cinco décadas mais tarde, após o terremoto de janeiro de 2010, os espaços migratórios intensificaram-se na região, o Brasil tendo se tornado parte deles, como um país de residência e de passagem para se alcançar a Guiana Francesa e o Suriname. Em 2013, houve mudanças nas rotas. Alguns migrantes passaram a utilizar a República da Guiana para ingressar ao Brasil pela fronteira com Roraima, na Amazônia, ou para atravessar a fronteira em direção ao Suriname e à Guiana Francesa. Este artigo articula-se em dois níveis. Em primeiro lugar, descreve o modo pelo qual as práticas e as trajetórias dos migrantes entrecruzam as fronteiras nacionais nas Guianas. Em seguida, analisa o sistema migratório, os documentos e papéis, e as problemáticas que as diferentes gerações migratórias haitianas suscitam no espaço e no tempo. A pesquisa etnográfica articula-se a partir da Tríplex Fronteira Brasil, Colômbia e Peru, mas desenvolve-se também no Suriname, na Guiana Francesa e no Haiti.

Palavras-chave: Migração haitiana; Sistema migratório; Suriname; Guiana Francesa; Brasil; Fronteiras.

El sistema migratorio haitiano en las guyanas: más allá de las fronteras

Resumen: Las Guyanas constituyen un campo importante en el sistema migratorio del Caribe, a través del cual, circulan mercancías, objetos, monedas y poblaciones por diferentes razones: proximidad geográfica, cultural, factores climáticos, geopolíticos y socioeconómicos. A partir de las décadas de 1960 y 1970, la migración haitiana ganó consistencia en las Guyanas. Cinco décadas más tarde, después del terremoto de enero de 2010, aumentó en la región, convirtiéndose Brasil parte de ella, como país de residencia y tránsito para llegar a la Guyana Francesa y Surinam. En 2013, hubo cambios en las rutas. Algunos migrantes comenzaron a utilizar la República de Guyana para ingresar a Brasil a través de la frontera con Roraima, en el Amazonas, o para cruzar la frontera hacia Surinam y la Guyana Francesa. Este artículo está dividido en dos niveles. El primero, describe la forma en que las prácticas y trayectorias de los migrantes entrelazan las fronteras nacionales en Guyana. El segundo analiza el sistema migratorio, los documentos y papeles, y los problemas que las diferentes generaciones migratorias haitianas plantean en el espacio y el tiempo. La investigación etnográfica se articula desde la Triple Frontera Brasil, Colombia y Perú, pero también se desarrolla en Surinam, Guyana Francesa y Haití.

Palabras clave: Migración haitiana; Sistema migratorio; Surinam; Guyana Francesa; Brasil; Fronteras.

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In 1963, the first Haitians arrived in the Guianas, notably in French Guiana with Blan Lily – as the French Lucien Ganot was popularly called, owner of a power plant in the village of Pernerle in southern Haiti – to work on banana plantations. That event would explain the reason for the strong presence of Haitians from the south and southeast of the country in this region. In the same decade, some migrants that were already living in Martinique and Guadalupe went to Suriname to work in the banana plantation industries. Subsequently, the country became a transit place to reach French Guiana (LAËTHIER, 2011b and 2014; JOSEPH, 2015a).

However, already in the late XIX and early XX centuries, the first cornerstones of the Haitian migratory system in the Caribbean were built, particularly in countries such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Haitian migrants occupied a crucial place in the plantation economy during the period in which the American armed forces occupied the three Caribbean countries, Cuba (1906-1908), Dominican Republic (1912-1924) and Haiti (1915-1934). The growth of the American sugarcane industries had produced a certain shortage of labor for work in the plantations of from both islands, this gap was filled, to a large extent, by Haitian peasants framed in specific and temporary policies: “30-40,000 Haitians labourers, known as *braceros* (manual workers), went annually to the Oriente province of Cuba from 1913 to 1931” (WOODING and MOSELEY-WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 36). In 1928, a law officially prohibited the entry of Haitians to work in the plantations, but until 1961 they continued to arrive in Cuba’s Oriente province, to grow coffee. In 1944, this population was estimated at more than 80 thousand people, most of them from the south of the country. In Dominican Republic, “census figures gave a total of 28,258 Haitians in 1920, and 52,657 in 1935.” (idem, p. 37). As Regine Jackson shows:

American interventions helped to create an economy heavily dependent upon North America as a market and Haitian migrants as a subservient workforce. Thus, even in the postcolonial period, nominally sovereign states of the Caribbean region that were never formally colonized by the United States find themselves in relations of dependence, subject to varying degrees of American controls and influence. (2011, p. 7).

In the second half of the XX century, there were major socioeconomic changes and socio-demographic configurations that contributed to the evolution of the dynamics from inside and beyond the caribbean migratory networks. From the 1960s, under the dictatorship of François Duvalier (1957-1971), Haitian emigration was reconfigured in terms of the amplitude, composition and orientation in flows of people from different social strata, generations, and regions (AUDEBERT, 2012). In the 1960s and 1970s, many people from rural areas began to settle in the Caribbean islands and in the Guianas, that were converted into Haitian migratory spaces.

These historical-structural migratory dynamics are constitutive of Caribbean societies and the Guianas and are part of the horizon of its inhabitants spread around the world, which make up a total of 1.8% of the population of international migrants, estimated at 272 million, in 2019, according to official data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)¹.

However, the data from my fieldwork shows that, starting in 2010, after the earthquake, “a fourth great flow of Haitian international mobility” (JOSEPH, 2015a and 2017a) started towards Ecuador (the number of Haitians currently living in this country is estimated at 40,000), Peru (10,000), Argentina (7,000), the Republic of Guyana (8,000), Suriname (15,000), French Guiana (40,000), and especially, Chile (180,000) and Brazil (160,000).² In view of the various types – public, political, socioeconomic, food, educational, including health and basic sanitation – of insecurity all resulting from Haiti's impoverished and precarious situation, that was aggravated by the tragedy caused by the earthquake of January that year, Haitian mobility has gained relevance and volume, bringing out new subjects and circuits in the international migratory space.

The works of Cédric Audebert (2008, 2012) and Maud Laëthier (2011a, 2011b and 2015) favor multiple and/or successive experiences of mobility that interconnect different Haitian migratory spaces, respectively in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, from conceptual approaches of migratory field (SIMON, 1981) and circulatory territories (TARRIUS, 2000). These two concepts enable to observe the set of spaces crossed by people beyond national borders. Those spaces comprise the set of life places for Haitians, not as a succession of spaces with defined borders, but as a plurality of fields, at the same time autonomous and articulated fields, in which the roles appear more effectively in the migratory dynamics.

The notion of a migratory field is useful to understand the international mobility space designed by my interlocutors. Gildas Simon defines it as:

The range of the space traveled, practiced by migrants. The notion of field refers to a specific space, structured by important, significant flows, applied at the international level. It comprises, at the same time, the country of departure and the country of arrival (1981, p. 85).

¹See, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2019/09/1051802>. Accessed: May 14, 2020.

²Ecuador's data were obtained through the *Dirección Nacional de Migración*; Peru's data through the *Superintendencia Nacional de Migraciones*; those in Argentina, through the *Dirección Nacional de Migraciones*; those of the Republic of Guyana, through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; those from Suriname, through the Ministry of Justice and Police; French Guiana, through the Haitian Embassy in Cayenne; those from Chile, through the *Departamento de Extranjería y Migraciones*; those in Brazil, through the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. They must, however, be questioned, since it is almost impossible to measure a world in movement and that, to a large extent, travels on irregular paths.

In defining this notion, Simon proposes an analytical approach, showing dissatisfaction with the notion of classical migratory studies, whose emphasis was on emigration or immigration. “This unilateral, fragmented movement obviously blocks a global analysis of a migratory field” (idem, p. 86). For Simon, the concepts “migratory flows” or “migrant populations” used in these classic studies desconsider the complex relationships of the subjects with the space practiced and lived in the migratory paths, that is, the fact that the complexity of the migratory itineraries varies along their own paths.

It was from the idea of a migratory field that Simon (1995) formulates the notion of a migratory system, uniting different fields on a wide scale that encompasses three systems: “North American”, “European” and “Asia-Pacific”, centralized respectively in the industrialized migration countries such as “United States/Canada”, “European Community/EFTA” and “Japan/Australia”, including a “Mediterranean and Middle Eastern migratory complex”. Yann Moulier Boutang and Demetrios Papademetriou define, in turn, the notion of migratory system as:

By a migration system we mean the particular combination of types of population flow between countries of departure and arrival (which may extend over several generations) with the rules regulating these flows and the institutionalised responses of the agencies concerned with their continuing or coming to a halt (OCDE, 1993, p. 3).

In the Haitian context, several space resources are activated and negotiated to constitute the migratory system. Both places of arrival and departure are multiple and diverse, which characterizes the notion of “multipolarity of migration”, as formulated by Emmanuel Ma Mung (1992), based on his work with the Chinese in France. Through this multipolarity, the “interpolarity of relationships” is constituted. As explained by Ma Mung (idem, p. 187), “these physical, financial, commercial, industrial relations (migration of people) are designed and supported by networks of family and community solidarity, of economic and often converging political interests”.

It is appropriate to understand this Haitian migratory system in the context of the notion of circulatory territories coined by Alain Tarrius. Itineraries and circuits are increasingly complex and globalized and, from them, new unpredictable and unprecedented routes emerge, such as the case of Brazil - in the universe of Haitian mobility. According to the author, “the circulatory territories comprise the networks defined by the mobility of populations that have their status of circular knowledge” (TARRIUS, 2000, p. 125). Tarrius explains that “the notion of circulatory territory confirms the socialization of spaces that, as referred, follow the logic of mobility” (idem, p. 125).

This article is divided into two levels: the first describes the way in which migrants’ practices and trajectories cross national borders in the Guianas; the second analyzes the migratory

system, documents and papers, and the problems that different Haitian migratory generations raise in space and time. Temporally, I analyze two different horizons, but horizons that participate in the same social migratory world: 1) of Haitians who had transited and arrived in Suriname and French Guiana from the 1960s and 1970s and; 2) of Haitians who have transited and arrived in Brazil, Suriname and French Guiana from 2010. In addition to these spaces, I also show how, recently, the Republic of Guyana has come to play a central role, notably, of transit in the Haitian migratory system in the Guianas.

The ethnographic work was concentrated, in a first stage, on the border of Brazil with Colombia and Peru from 2010 to 2013, and in Manaus, between January and March 2012; in a second stage, in Suriname (Paramaribo) and French Guiana (Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and Cayenne), from March to May 2013; and in a third stage, in Haiti (Fonds-des-Nègres and Pèmerle), in July of that same year. As the field research was conducted in these places, the data collected can be analyzed in more depth than in the Republic of Guyana, where ethnographic work was not done. The data for the latter country were gathered from the narratives of Haitian migrants interviewed in Suriname and French Guiana and from analyzed materials.

The first Haitian generations in French Guiana

The first Haitian families to arrive in Guiana, in 1963 and 1965, respectively, traveled by boat with *Blan Lili*, as the French *Lucien Ganot* was called by Haitians. He had become the owner of an essential oil power plant (called the *Blan Lili* society or *Ganot* society) in southern Haiti in the *Pèmerle* village, approximately three kilometers from *Fonds-des-Nègres*. In the 1950s and 1960s, around 100 people worked on the plant, growing oranges and *vetiver*, a plant whose essential oil was exported to Europe, used in the manufacture of perfumes and in airplane engines.

Under the dictatorship of *François Duvalier* (born in April 1907 - died in April 1971), nicknamed *Papa Doc*, *Blan Lili* received a document authorizing the trip with the group. A year before his first trip, in 1962, *Blan Lili* went to Paris, seeking authorization to take Haitians to French Guiana. On this trip, he was accompanied by *Augustin*, a Haitian, his right arm, who would later become a sailor on the boat that was headed for French Guiana, along with the vessel's captain, *Goullier*, a Martinican.

Augustin, born in 1926 in the *Aquin* Commune, in southern Haiti, was employed by *Blan Lili* at the power plant in *Pèmerle*. At the time, when I interviewed him, he was living in French Guiana for 50 years and he lived in the *Cogneau Lamirande* neighborhood. As one of the oldest squatters in the area, he sold lots of land for other compatriots to build their houses. Thus, a

genealogy is possible, weaving a narrative that is both mythical and real of the genesis of Haitian migration in French Guiana. This narrative reveals the over-representation and allows us to understand why Haitians in the overseas Department are mostly from the south of the country.

The year 1963 represents the arrival of the first Haitians in French Guiana after Blan Lili bought a boat in Miami, named *La Croix du Sud* (The Southern Cross),³ to take a group of approximately twelve Haitians to French Guiana, with the objective of opening a farm power plant in Cayenne. This trip is part of the past of Haitian emigration two decades after the process of the French Guiana's decolonization, which became an overseas department of France on January 1, 1947. From that moment on, the local government started to invest in a production method based on agriculture, particularly in banana plantation, as one of the best technical and commercial choices, from the point of view of governance (PIANTONI, 2009).

In 1964, Blan Lili returned with the majority of the group to Haiti, a few months after the passage of Hurricane Flora, which caused thousands of deaths in the country, in the Caribbean and in Miami. A year later (1965), he made another trip with a group of approximately 56 Haitians, on a 57-meter vessel.⁴ This time, the boat left the city of Miragoâne, passing by the Commune of Aquin to pick up passengers from Fonds-des-Nègres and Pernerle. On the high sea, the vessel had a problem. They returned to Haiti to fix the vessel and then continued the trip, of approximately 22 days, with stopovers in several Caribbean islands such as Monserrate, Dominica and Martinique, to supply the boat with gasoline and groceries.

When they arrived in Cayenne they were received by the authorities of the General Council (under the French Government of Charles de Gaulle) of French Guiana and by the local population. At the time, they received a permanent visa, with no expiration date. In the first months, the newcomers lived and worked in Galion, in the Commune of Matoury – where Rochambeau airport is currently located – in the plantation of sugar cane for the manufacture of rum and in the company *Pidègue*, which was dedicated to fishing and export of seafood (fish and shrimp) to Europe.

Mr. Constant's family was one of the privileged interlocutors of the research. I interviewed him, the son and daughter with whom he made the boat trip, and another daughter who later arrived in French Guiana. The latter was the godchild of Eveline Ganot, Blan Lili's sister. There, I met Constant, born in October 1923 in Port-au-Prince – when I did the interview, he was 90 years old, of which 48 were spent in French Guiana. He was an Adventist from Haiti and had studied until the

³In 1967, Haitians performed at the Cayenne carnival with the theme *La Croix du Sud*, the name of the first boat to arrive with migrants of this nationality in the country. They were second place in the competition.

⁴According to my interlocutors, Blan Lili died in Haiti in the 1980s, from an accident at his power plant in Pernerle: a pot that boiled the *vetiver* fell on top of his foot; he was treated at the hospital, but after some time in the hospital, he died.

first year of high school at the Lycée Petion in Port-au-Prince. He was a mason and had worked in the construction of the power plant and the house of Blan Lili, in Pernerle.

In the 1960s, Mr. Constant used to wait for a boat or an acquaintance to go to Haiti so he could send money to his wife, who had stayed there with their children. Constant was invited by Blan Lili to travel in 1965. At the time, he had ten children with his first wife, whom he married at the age of 23 in Haiti: five men and five women. For the trip, he took his two oldest children, Bruno and Joceline. The wife stayed in Haiti with the other eight. Bruno was 15 years old when he arrived in Cayenne. He stayed there for a few years, then went to Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni where he lived until the research period. I met Bruno in that city, on my way back from fieldwork in Paramaribo.

The trajectories of the Constant family allow us to observe the intrinsic relationship between migration and family. As highlighted by Massey, Alarcón, Durand and González (1987), migration originates a process built from individual experiences, which in turn contributes to reproducing the conditions of movement for future travelers. The collective dynamics of mobility deserve attention. Different strategies are used by some families to decide who is traveling, and the order of candidates for the trip. It is not a mechanical or one-dimensional process. A variety of issues are considered by those involved in preparing and financing of the trip.

Regarding this, I agree with Karen Richman, in stating that:

A family's long-term strategy for its collective security differentiates those who will migrate from those who will remain [...]. A son or daughter seen as self less and dutiful might be expected to stay behind, even though these qualities would seem to define the ideal migrant, while another perceived as non reliable burden will be pushed to leave. After migrants start building their "guaranty" at home, they need others willing to stay behind to maintain their investment and mind children left behind until they can emigrate too (RICHMAN, 2005, p. 71-72).

The relationship between people who leave and those who stay is constantly shifting, especially those between husbands, fathers and uncles who travel and women, children and nephews who stay. Mobility shapes the relationship between those who leave and those who remain.

Haitian newcomers to French Guiana

Since the 2000s, the migrant population in French Guiana has represented approximately 37% of the total population. Among migrants, 30.4% were estimated to be Haitians; 25.4%

Surinamese; 23.2% Brazilians; and 106 other nationalities.⁵ In French Guiana, I noticed that before 2010, Haitians were passing by Suriname to reach Cayenne. According to my interlocutors, in 2009, the French Government, under the command of President Nicolas Sarkozy (mandate 2007-2012), requested Suriname to reduce the visas granted to Haitians to control their entry into French Guiana. From the moment that “Suriname closed” (*Sirinam fèmen*) – an expression used by Haitians –, other networks, routes and circuits “opened up” to reach the French Department. In this context, the arrival, in January 2010, of hundreds of Haitians to the Triple Border Brazil, Colombia and Peru (JOSEPH, 2015a) should be indicated.

In Cayenne, Gregoire, my interlocutor, who had also passed by Tabatinga, on the border of Brazil with Colombia and Peru, in 2010, to reach French Guiana, took me to Cogneau Lamirande, popularly called *ti Ayiti* (little Haiti). There he introduced me to Pastor, who I had met in Tabatinga and who had stayed at Gregoire's house when he had just arrived in French Guiana and whose trajectory will clarify on many issues.

Born in April 1986 in Croix-des-Bouquets, Pastor is the fifth child of a couple with 16 children, 12 of them died during childhood. Pastor has a very strong affective relationship with his mother since his youth, when he helped her in her shop, preparing and selling food in Croix-des-Bouquets. When his father passed away in July 1992, Pastor, at the age of seven, was sent to (free) boarding school at the college of the Fathers of the Catholic religious congregation of the Salesians, in Port-au-Prince.

After the earthquake, he heard about a trip to French Guiana. Without financial resources, the faithful of his Church collected money and paid a *raketè* of US\$ 4,000 for the trip.⁶ In June 2010, from Port-au-Prince, he went to Ecuador, where he met his uncle with whom he followed the route, passing by Peru until he reached Tabatinga. In this city, with the permission of Father Gonzalo, who coordinated the local Human Mobility Pastoral, Pastor held evangelical services for Haitians in the hall of the *Divino Espíritu Santo* Church, in front of the large number of faithfuls among the Haitians who arrived at the place.

For Pastor, the generosity of the population of Tabatinga stood out. That attitude was essential for him to remain there until he received the protocol (the document legalizing the

⁵The migrant population is the sum of foreigners born abroad and those who have acquired French nationality. Between 1982 to 1999, French Guiana's inhabitants increased significantly. INSEE data recorded a variation of 115.4%, from 73,022 to 157,274 inhabitants over an area of 84,000 km². 54% of the population live in the Capital, Cayenne, which, similarly to the Haitian, is predominantly young: 43.28% are under 20 years old (PIANTONI, 2009 and 2011).

⁶“*Raketè* is a category used in Haiti that is not restricted to the field of migration and mobility. It serves to designate any person who charges money from another to execute various types of transactions. Generally, *raketè* is considered to be a smart guy who uses many mechanisms and devices to profit from informality or even improperly. The *raketè* that manages the trip is sometimes a family member, a friend or a stranger” (JOSEPH, 2015a, p. 171).

foreigner's situation in Brazil), only after three months of stay. Then he went by boat to Manaus, where he worked as a metallurgist. After saving enough money in that city, he bought a boat ticket to Santarém. From there he headed to Macapá, continued by bus to Oiapoque and by ferry until he reached Cayenne, in September 2010. In French Guiana he had no family members. He stayed at the house of Gregoire, whom he had met in Tabatinga.

In Cayenne, he started working in the metallurgical sector with another compatriot. With the money from the first month, he bought his own tools to work as a self-employed. Over time, he started earning more, rented a house for 500 euros and with another 100 euros, he paid for electricity. When other Haitians arrived with no place to stay, he accommodated them at his home, repaying the generosity he had received before.

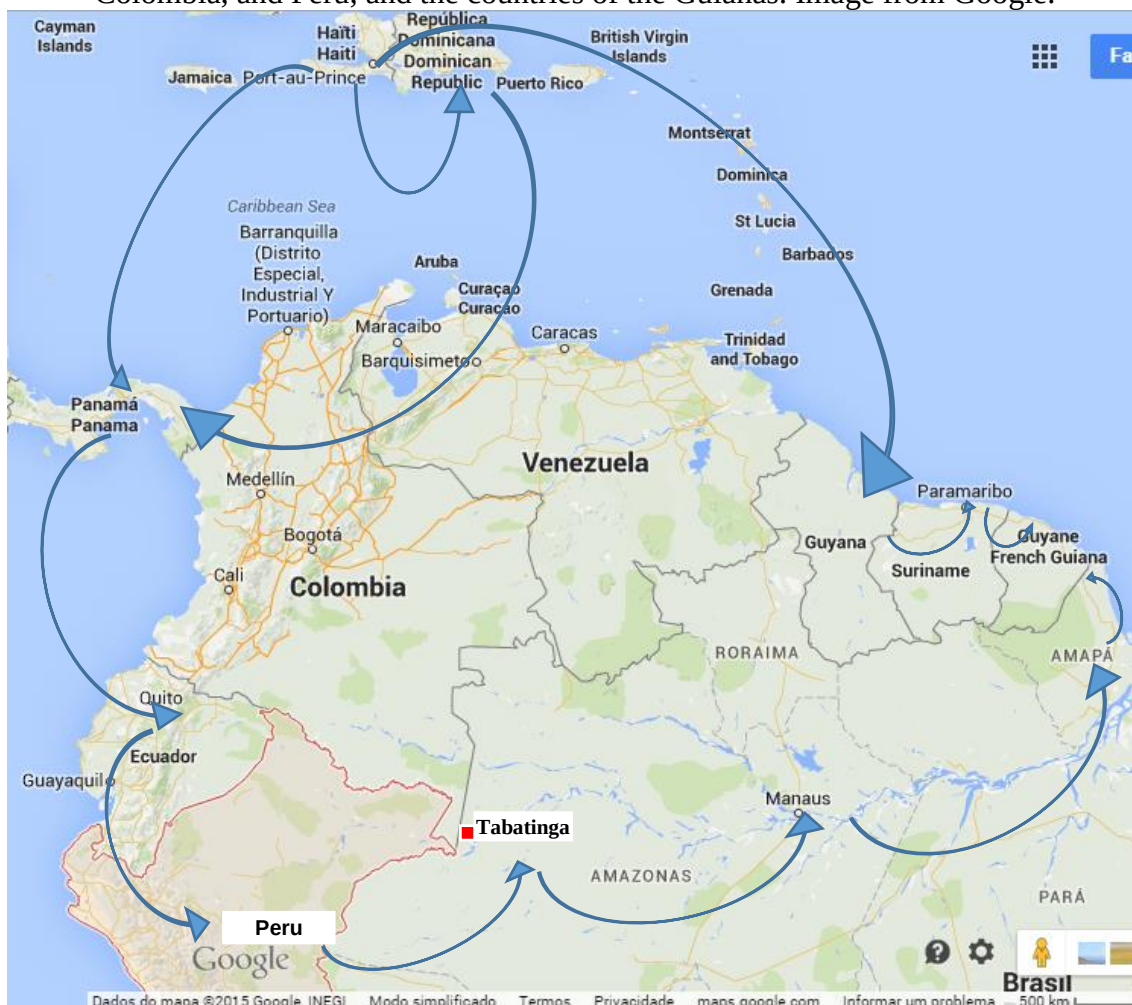
He accepted the invitation to preach in several Evangelical Churches in Cayenne. At the time of the research, he wanted to build his own Church, but he did not have the location yet.

It was from 1990 that the Protestant Churches led by Haitians began to significantly appear in the religious panorama of French Guiana and were attended almost exclusively by faithful of this nationality. Services were celebrated in Creole, with a few words in French eventually. Some represented an extension of the place of origin in Haiti or of a group of families (LAËTHIER, 2011a).

The Pastor's trajectory enlightened the different circuits of Haitian mobilities among those people passing by the Triple Border between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru (from 2010 to 2013). To reach the French overseas department, most people went by boat to Manaus; from there they would take another boat to Santarém; from there, they continued, also by boat, to Macapá and then, (12 hours) by bus to Oiapoque (Map 1). Those people arriving at that time at the Brazil-France border, Oiapoque and Saint Georges were given a visa by the Immigration Police for a few days, they proceeded by bus to Cayenne, where they applied for asylum and refuge in the *Préfecture*. In early 2011, the Government no longer granted this visa to Haitians, which caused a change in the circuit to reach Cayenne: by ferry, they left Oiapoque to reach French Guiana.⁷

⁷When I was in Cayenne, on the night of April 28, 2013, a ferry sank in the sea 15 km away. It carried 25 undocumented passengers (between Haitians, Dominicans and Brazilians) from Oiapoque to the capital of French Guiana. Ten people from the same Haitian family died, among brothers and cousins. At the time, the French government was criticized by civil society and institutions working for human rights, which accused the restrictive border control policies that forced people to choose informal routes.

Map 1: The arrows indicate the routes of Haitian mobility towards the Triple Border Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, and the countries of the Guianas. Image from Google.



Different from Pastor, Emmanuel already had some acquaintances in French Guiana with whom he had contact on his first trip to Grand Turck. These acquaintances gave him information on how to reach Guiana. He bought a bus ticket, from Chile he passed by Argentina to go to French Guiana. Arriving at the Brazilian border with Argentina, in Uruguaiana, he asked for information to a taxi driver who took him to the bus station, got on a bus to São Paulo and, from there, took another bus to Belém. Then he went on a boat to Macapá; by bus to Oiapoque and he crossed by ferry to reach Saint Georges (French Guiana). In this last city, he received a visa that allowed him to go legally to Cayenne. It was at that time, months after the earthquake, that the French Government stopped deporting Haitians from the area and also granted visas to those arriving in Saint Georges and Saint-Laurent-du-Marroni to legally transit in French Guiana.

Emmanuel traveled from Chile to French Guiana in approximately 15 days, jumping from city to city, from country to country, sleeping on buses, taxis and boats. Upon arriving at the overseas Department, in April 2010, the money taken for the trip, spent on transportation and food

along the route, ran out. In Saint Georges, when he took the van to go to Cayenne, he met a compatriot he had met when he was in the Bahamas. It was at her house that he stayed for the first three months he spent in French Guiana. He worked for seven months as a security guard, earning around 1,200 euros a month. Then, with another compatriot, he transported freight, for which he received 500 euros a month. After that, he did some construction services with Frantz and James, his housemates in Chile⁸, in addition to the assistance of 300 euros he received monthly from the French government.

Emmanuel met a Haitian woman who was living in French Guiana for nine years. They started a love relationship and, after a few months, she invited him to live together. When I met Emmanuel in Cayenne, he lived with her, Frantz, and James. He had already been in the apartment for two years. When an acquaintance arrived in French Guiana, they would put a mattress in the living room to accommodate him for a while until he found a place to stay. Emmanuel's girlfriend paid 550 euros in rent. The three men helped in the purchase of food with the money received for the refuge request and, also, when they had a casual job.

At the time of the research, Emmanuel already said that he did not want to stay in French Guiana, he intended to go to Paris. He waited for the *titre de séjour*, the foreigners' identity card, to be able to travel. From his point of view, among the countries he had visited, Chile was the one that best treated migrants, regarding human rights, housing, etc. On the other hand, he believed Grand Turck and Bahamas were the places where immigration policies were the most restricted and where Haitians were most discriminated against, not because they are black, since in both places the population is as black as the Haitian, but by social origin and nationality.

The diverse migratory networks activated by migrants can constitute a set of socioeconomic norms that govern mobility, representing, at the same time, a cornerstone for the material, emotional reception and the permanence of newcomers, because through the networks they can be employed or regularize their situation.

Papers and documents

As it was possible to observe in the trajectory of Pastor and Emmanuel, among Haitians who arrived in 2010, the majority of them requested refuge in French Guiana. When Emmanuel arrived in Cayenne, he quickly handed over a copy of his passport. The agents checked the exit stamp of the

⁸According to INSEE data, the activity rate of Haitians is estimated at 74.3% and the unemployment rate at 59.4% (INSEE, 2006). Haitians are considered one of the groups of foreigners who work the most and also the one with the highest number of unemployment.

last country he passed by before arriving in French Guiana, that is, Brazil. Later, he returned to the place to receive a notebook to fill in with his personal and family details (especially children, spouses, brothers and sisters), information regarding the route taken to reach the overseas Department, in addition to the address of where he was staying.

In that notebook, Emmanuel should choose between two themes to explain his request for refuge. His “story” should address a persecution suffered in Haiti. This part was one of the most important because it directly interfered in him having refuge granted or not, and it must cover political, religious, nationality, or ethnic persecution. Emmanuel should demonstrate three important dimensions in his request: danger, threat, and constant threat. In other words, the danger of death that he faced in Haiti, proving the various threats he had received and that he still continued to receive, even though he was in French Guiana.

When Emmanuel handed over the notebook, it was reviewed by the agents of the *Préfecture*. He received it back with an address to be sent to the administrative sector in Guadeloupe. They demanded that he underwent some medical tests at the Red Cross and, above all, that he was vaccinated. Later, he received a *récepissé*, a protocol of the refugee application that legalized his situation in the territory until the final dispatch of the process. While he waited for the final decision, this document was renewed every three months.

After this first stage, the asylum sector of the *Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Integration* (L'OFII) helped applicants to obtain government-funded accommodation. This was not the case for Emmanuel, who was already staying at the house of the friend he had met in the Bahamas. Generally, the majority of people could not find a place in the refuge (with only 40 places). After four months, L'OFII conducted an interview with Emmanuel via virtual conference with two agents, called *Officier de Procetion* linked to the *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides* (OFPRA).

To conduct the interview, Emmanuel presented himself at OFPRA's headquarters in Cayenne, and agents interviewed him by video conference from Guadalupe. This dynamic started in 2001. In the past, interviews were conducted in Paris, and most people took the opportunity to stay in Hexagonal France. The content of the interview was based on the life story narrated by Emmanuel in that notebook. Sometimes, agents conducted some investigations in Haiti to verify the veracity of the facts narrated by the applicant. When the appeal is dismissed, the person receives an order from the *Préfecture* called *Obligation à Quitter le Territoire Français* (OQTF), that is, the obligation to leave French territory within one month, otherwise the applicant takes the risk of being deported.

Most of the requests are dismissed by OFPRA.⁹ According to the institution, in 2006, Haitians constituted the first national political asylum seekers in French territories. From 2004 to 2005, respectively, 119 and 170 asylum applications were made in French Guiana. In December 2005, the general director of OFPRA declared that 4,718 Haitian applicants delivered the documentation in France, of which 3,348 were in Guadeloupe, 125 in Martinique and 173 in French Guiana.

In 2004 and 2005, two quarters of Haitian requests in Guiana were dismissed. Between 2004 and 2008, throughout the French territory, including the overseas departments, more than 10,000 requests were dismissed (GISTI, 2006). In the case of Frantz, his first request had been dismissed, but he was entitled to *recours* (appeal) against the decision, by means of a letter addressed to the *Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile* (CNDA), created by Article 29 of the law of November 20, 2007. In this second phase, Frantz described more recent facts of the persecution he suffered even though he was outside of Haiti and he also described threats faced by his close relatives living in Haiti.

When I met him, he had made the second attempt, but if his request was dismissed again, he would be entitled to a third. The French government made a lawyer available to defend him in a trial before the *Cour de Cassation Française*. When I was in Cayenne, I interviewed an L'OFII employee to understand the logic of the process, the documentation, and the papers. This employee told me that many stories were repeated, the facts were narrated with the same arguments, therefore, most of the requests were not granted. In interviews, generally, some people contradicted themselves. For people who did not speak French fluently, OFII provided a translator from Creole to French. The same occurred for Spanish speakers.

In 2018, Haitians were the nationality that most requested refuge in overseas departments, representing 74% in French Guiana, 61% in Guadeloupe and 80.5% in Martinique (OFPRA, 2018). From an ethnographic point of view, the process of applying for refuge and asylum in French Guiana was called by Haitians *fè refijye*, literally “making refuge” or “making refugee”. The expression *fè refijye* allows us to understand one of the dynamics of mobility. For people who were not married to a person of French nationality or who did not have a child with them, or did not have a formal job to apply for a work visa or a link with an educational institution to apply for a study visa, the *fè refijye* was an alternative to access the financial resources provided by the French government, to settle (albeit temporarily) in French Guiana and obtain a *titre de séjour*. However, not everyone who appealed to “making a refugee” got the *titre de séjour*, because they were not

⁹The interview considered the legislation of the *Code de l'entrée des étrangers et du droit d'asile* (Code of entry for foreigners and the right of asylum) in France to grant or refuse the asylum application. See the content of this code at: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070158>. To learn more about OFPRA see, <http://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/> Accessed on: June 3, 2014.

always refugees or considered as such, because they did not have or were unable to sustain – before the French authorities – a history of political and religious, racial or nationality persecution (according to the 1951 Geneva Convention). In the asylum application process, some institutions played a key role. Haitians mobilized them as resources to regularize their situation in French territory.

Red Cross and Lacimade are two important institutions regarding the reception and insertion of Haitians when they arrive in French Guiana. The first, for example, provides their address to provide proof of residence, in the forms and in the notebook of the application for refuge and asylum, to receive correspondence. The expression in créole *bay adrès* or in French *domiciliation* (give the address) was used by Haitians to refer to this.

Among the refuge and asylum seekers, at the time, some received a monthly allowance of approximately 300 euros (an average of 11.20 euros a day) from the French government, called *Allocation temporaire d'Attente* (ATA). However, to receive this assistance, it was forbidden to have employment relationship or develop any paid activity, which was not always respected, some people did casual jobs without employment relationship, as in the case of Emmanuel.

Most of the people that I met during my fieldwork received the title *de séjour* on the second attempt, through *recours*. Other people, when they received the negative result of the appeal, made other attempts. The La Cimade institution operated in this scenario,¹⁰ developing solidarity actions in favor of migrants, asylum and refuge seekers. The institution divided services into two centers: asylum and legal permanence. The first was aimed at assisting asylum seekers, helping them in the procedures for applying for refuge or asylum. The second assisted any migrant with doubts or problems related to documentation, but who were not asylum or refuge seekers.

La Cimade offered a range of services to these people: legal support, assistance in preparing appeals when the application for asylum or refuge was rejected, as well as training and promotion of human rights. In addition to these activities, the institution operated at the *Centre de Rétention Administrative* (CRA), located at the Rochambeau airport, created in 1995. In this administrative center, people detained by the *Police d'Administration Frontalière* (PAF), in irregular and undocumented conditions in French territory, were taken. Generally, people who had started a regularization process were released, the rest received an order from the *Préfecture* to be deported within 24 hours¹¹. For that, an administrative investigation was conducted through the service of the

¹⁰For more details see, <http://www.lacimade.org/regions/outre-mer>. Accessed: May 14, 2020. It is a national association with representation in the French overseas departments (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Réunion, etc.). The institution has existed in French Guiana since 2005 and was created in 1939 with a focus on the rights of migrant populations, refugees, and exiles. The association organizes an annual festival known as “Migrants on the scene”.

¹¹ Haitians deported from French Guiana leave the Cayenne airport, stop in Martinique before going to Haiti, sometimes

Office of Foreigners of the *Préfecture*, to verify if the person had a regularization dossier in progress.

At the time of the research, La Cimade's data suggested that three out of five people detained in undocumented condition were Haitians. Some were deported, others received help from the employees of the La Cimade institution that worked in CRA and in legal assistance, trying to prevent people from being deported. The activities of Red Cross and La Cimade were financed by the French government's resources through public notices.

However, many of those who left Haiti without knowing when they would return, sought to obtain French citizenship in French Guiana or Suriname because, once naturalized, it was generally easy to bring those who had stayed in Haiti through the bureaucratic process of “family reunion”. Therefore, over time, some of the travelers opted for naturalization to facilitate the procedures for the “entry” of family members.¹²

Visa documents were different in each country. In Brazil, what the Haitians wanted was the “protocol”, which guaranteed a permanent visa for five years and gave access to the work permit. In Suriname, they wanted “toelating”, a residence visa to be renewed every one or two years and then you can apply for “vestiging”, a permanent visa, which would not need to be renewed. In French Guiana, it was the “titre de séjour”, for a renewable year (or not) and then for ten years. This document gave access to Hexagonal France and the entire European Union. Some migrants, upon receiving confirmation of obtaining the *titre de séjour*, were already preparing their trip to Paris, particularly those who had networks of families and friends in the French capital.

From an ethnographic point of view, the issue of documents and papers goes beyond the administrative and legal dimensions. It comprises the relationships that are built and the meanings they produce and questions the ways of governing mobility, but also, the practices that constitute the trajectories of travelers in social spaces.

It was common to find some Haitians with more than one of these documents in Cayenne. Many had protocols from the Brazilian Federal Police, such as Jimmy, who, despite being in Cayenne and owning a *récepissé*, returned every six months to Macapá, capital of the state of Amapá (Brazil) to renew it. Among those who passed by Suriname, several had *toelating* and the French *titre de séjour*. Obtaining more than one document from different countries meant the possibility of further movement. This ethnographic data converges with the ideas of Coutin (2003),

some of them manage to remain undocumented in that last overseas department. Those who have a Brazilian visa, are usually deported to Brazil are driven by car to the border, in the city of Oiapoque.

¹²See Coutin (2003) for the debate on naturalization. The author analyzed several naturalization processes for foreigners in the United States. Most of the time, the migrant opts for nationalization to facilitate to obtain documents, acquiring relative freedom of international circulation and, at the same time, facilitating the transit of families.

according to which the legal status in one or more countries of residence can facilitate international circulation.

Having more than one document also allowed Haitians to work for a few months in Brazil and the rest of their time in French Guiana, or to travel between Suriname and French Guiana. Others stayed for a few months in Guiana or Suriname and then went to Paris, leaving Europe again during the winter. This practice was not exclusive to Haitians. Some Brazilians I met in French Guiana also spent part of the year working in French Guiana and another part in Brazil, especially those working in the commercial sector and mining. In Haiti it is also possible to find residents in Canada and the United States who return to the country annually, especially in the winter. These passages from one territory to another correspond to the *circulate-knowledge* beyond national borders.

People owning many papers, documents or passports elicit the complexity of immigration policies and laws that do not allow dual nationality or citizenship. It is an increasingly common phenomenon in this global era of new migrants, transmigrants, people in mobility and diasporas. These dynamics provoke new reflections on the migration policies of nation-States, as well as national borders.

Where were Haitians in French Guiana?

Most Haitians I crossed in French Guiana and Suriname were from the south and southeast of the country, from places like Aquin, Fonds-des-Nègres, Fonds-des-Blancs, Jacmel, Côtes-de-Fer, La Colline, Léogane, Les Cayes, Saint Louis du Sud and Miragoâne. There was a small group that was born or long-standing resident of the western and central regions of the country, notably Port-au-Prince. There were some people from Cap-haitien and Croix-des-Bouquets. Few of them came from the north of the country, given that the mobility of northern Haitians is more oriented towards the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Bahamas, Grand Turck, France, Canada, and the United States, particularly Miami, New York, and New Jersey. Southern Haitians also go to these latter places.

Most residents in French Guiana came from the countryside of Haiti, mostly farmers, working on plantations, and raising animals. When I asked what would explain the fact that a person from the countryside, who had never left his own country, decided to travel to Brazil and/or French Guiana, I received the following answer with a smile (because mobility is part of the life of people who see moving as something natural): “You know Haitians love to leave” (*or konnen*

ayisien renmen pati). Mobility appeared as constitutive of people's life trajectory and their horizons of possibilities (JOSEPH, 2015b and 2019a).

From the point of view of those who arrived in the country in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, it was easier to obtain the French Guiana document by simply looking for an employer to apply for a work visa. Nowadays, it is more difficult to regularize the situation in the country, due to the number of Haitians who arrived at the place, requesting asylum and refuge, based on similar and repetitive histories, without consistent evidence of refugee status, from the point of view of state agents, among other factors.

The new generations of Haitians are concentrated in different places of French Guiana, particularly in the cities of Macouria, Matoury, Kourou and Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, but most people settle in the capital, Cayenne. The first generations arriving in the country, in general, settled in Macouria, Eau Lisette, Bonhomme and Balata, which would explain the expressive number of older residents (from 60 to 90 years old) in these places. From the point of view of my interlocutors, those who left Suriname to reach the city of Cayenne, first arrived in Macouria or Balata, thus, a good part of them stayed in these locations, due to the proximity of the sugarcane plantations in which they worked.

However, both Haitians and people of other nationalities – particularly from Suriname, Brazil, and the Republic of Guyana, used to call Cogneau Lamirande *Cité haïtien* (Haitian City), *ti Ayiti* (little Haiti). Currently, the majority of people who arrived after 2010 live in this location, in addition to other neighborhoods and cities, as they already have pre-existing family and friendship networks. Even those without family ties were received by compatriots for solidarity reasons, as observed in Pastor's life story. Cogneau Lamirande is considered one of the most peripheral neighborhoods in French Guiana. The concentration of Haitians in Cogneau not only reflects the situation of poverty that most of them experience there, but also symbolizes their marginalization.

As much as one cannot speak of the existence of a Haitian ghetto in Cayenne, this geographical space is in fact associated with this nationality, and Haitians themselves consider Cogneau as the most representative space of their identities. Several reasons are used to support this argument: spatial concentration and Haitian visibility; community and neighbor solidarity; the reproduction of Haitian traditions and way of life; the ubiquity of the use of Haitian creole and voodoo practices; the presence of typically Haitian churches and businesses (LAËTHIER, 2011a).

The fact that Cogneau is called “ti Ayiti” reminds us that this way of calling neighborhoods of migrants is typical of the North American universe (little Italy, little China, little Havana, etc.). In Miami, in the 1980s, a perimeter of the city where there was a strong Haitian concentration was

named “Little Haiti”. Thus, the “ti Ayiti” of the planet dialogue with the North American diaspora, which is one of the most central ones.

This qualification of places based on a national reference is not new in the United States, it is part of a long historical tradition. Cédric Audebert (2008) shows in his works that, throughout the 20th century, the successive migratory currents of Polish migrants or Russian Jews in Chicago; Italians in New York and Chicago; Chinese in Los Angeles and San Francisco were called place names: Little Italy, Little Odessa, Chinatown. The ethnic and national qualification of a population by public authorities allows collective access to a set of public resources and infrastructure, favoring the social insertion of the migrant population. At the same time, it favors the participatory integration of the group in a context in which political mobilization operates on an ethnic and national basis. In both cases, territorial appropriation is an essential step in the institutional recognition of the group and may eventually take the form of toponymic identification. These qualified spaces with the toponyms of the places of origin, also contribute to the maintenance of networks, allowing the arrival of new migrants, family, friends, and acquaintances.

Haitians in Suriname – Paramaribo

I have lived and worked here for eight years (Jarikaba in Paramaribo). I was in jail for three months and seven days when I arrived here, because I had a problem at the airport. It was a person named Luke (*a raketè*) who organized the trip for me. It wasn't just me, there were twelve of us. I handed over my passport to apply for a visa, but he gave me another passport to travel with. When I arrived at the airport here (in Paramaribo), they caught me when I put the entry stamp. He (the *raketè*) lowered my age, gave me a passport of a person who was 25 years old, that's when they caught me. The passport photo was not mine, either. The policeman looked, saw that it wasn't me, then he told me that I was under arrest. I didn't know the (Dutch) language, I couldn't speak anything. All twelve were arrested. In prison, I cried because I thought of the ten children (three men and seven women) that I have with three women in Haiti. After three months and seven days, they released me, I got a permanent visa and soon I started working in Jarikaba. Now I can go to Haiti and return (Tiffrere, April 2013, Jarikaba/Paramaribo).

Tiffrere arrived in 2005 in Paramaribo. As we saw above, he traveled with someone else's passport. This practice has been common in the area since the 1990s and is called *dekolaj*, in the Haitian universe, a kind of forgery of travel documents, the use of someone else's passport, preferably with similar characteristics. It was not exclusive to this region, it was also used for trips to the United States, France, and Canada.

According to my interlocutors in Paramaribo, some of the people who used *dekolaj*, when they arrived at the airport, were called by the name that was registered in the passport and did not

respond. When asked about their names, they said the real one and not the one in the travel document. These events were frequent and, for that reason, airports increased control.

During the fieldwork in Paramaribo, I established a stronger relationship with Dodo, born in 1945 in the city of Léogane, in southern Haiti, resident since 1978 in the area, founder and President of the Organization of Haitians in Suriname (OHS), created in 1990. He had four brothers and three sisters, some living in Paris and others in Haiti. According to him, the social, economic and political situation in Haiti at the time of the Baby Doc dictatorship, Jean Claude Duvalier (July 3, 1951 - October 4, 2014) contributed a lot to his decision to leave the country. He had been in Guadalupe in 1974, then moved to Curaçao in 1978, from there to Suriname and finally to Cayenne. In that last place, Dodo stayed for two weeks. Due to the difficulties faced in obtaining documents from the Overseas Department, he gave up and returned to Suriname.

Dodo's story in Guadalupe begins when he met a Surinamese who encouraged him to move on to a new destination. Since his arrival in the country in 1978 – three years after the independence of Suriname, on November 25, 1975, he worked at the (English) company *Fyffes* until 2002, then its owner and the name changed, the new name was: *Stichting Behoud Bananen Sector* (SBBS), it was dedicated to planting, cultivating, and exporting bananas to the European Union. 350 Haitians worked at SBBS, which came to be more than 800 Haitians in 1985. For many, SBBS was the first opportunity for formal employment, it allowed them to stay in Suriname and opened up the opportunity to obtain a permanent visa. For others, it was also a passing place, allowing them to save money and continue their journey or return to French Guiana. In fact, in Cayenne, I met Haitians who had passed by Suriname and had worked at SBBS.

The first Haitians arrived in Suriname in 1977, a year before Dodo. Two years after the country's independence, some companies that cultivated and exported sugarcane sent representatives to recruit Haitian labor in the Caribbean country, then also in São Martinho Island, in the northeast of the Antilles. When I met him, Dodo was responsible for his compatriots at SBBS, dealing with bureaucratic matters related to the visa application process, the formal contract, the distribution of wages and the selection of new Haitian employees. I followed his work at the *Ministerie van Justitie en Politie* (Ministry of Justice and Police), forwarding the documentation of the compatriots to apply for a permanent visa and permanent residence in Suriname.

When mentioning Dodo's name in Paramaribo or Cayenne, among those passing by Suriname, almost everyone knows him. He was married, lived with his wife and had six children, three men and three women, some living in Guadeloupe, others in French Guiana, and Paris. He spoke fluent Dutch, learned in daily life. At SBBS, he also helped as an interpreter, particularly for newcomers. He was a pastor, member of the Christian Congregation of Suriname since 1996. He

had already been in Brazil on several occasions at formation seminars promoted by his Congregation. He became a Surinamese in 2000.¹³

My trip to Paramaribo coincided with the trip by ex-President of Haiti Joseph Michel Martelly between March 22 and 24, 2013, at the time, he was President of CARICOM.¹⁴ CARICOM's vice president was the President of the Republic of Suriname. This event was a way for the Haitian government to maintain ties with the Haitian diaspora in Suriname and, at the same time, to strengthen diplomatic ties with that country. Dodo was one of the people who mobilized Martelly's going and meeting with Haitians at SBSS, an event that immediately became a milestone in Haitian history in Suriname: more than 2,000 Haitians were present, culminating in the creation of the first Haitian consulate in the country.

At SBBS, in Jarikaba, each sector had a responsibility: to plant and deal with bananas, cut them, clean them, organize them in batches, and then put them in boxes for export. The activities were organized by gender: most men performed the first activities, while the women cleaned, cut, and organized the bananas in boxes.

Some people who lived outside the city center had *jaden* – a kind of vegetable garden – in their homes in which they grew potatoes, bananas, yams, eggplants, etc. This was a male activity, but nothing prevented women from helping either. For them, agricultural activity referred to a know-how practiced when they lived in Haiti. The rural origin of most people was used to prove the ability to domesticate the space, building their *jaden*, using the knowledge and experiences acquired in Haiti. However, two records can be highlighted. The first is the rural origin of good part of people, which is sometimes linked to certain derogatory stereotypes. In another register, the

¹³ The 1987 Haitian Constitution does not allow dual citizenship. In Haiti, from the point of view of the Law, the naturalized person could not participate in the full political life of the country: to vote, to run for certain political positions, to be appointed minister, etc. The Constitution of March 10, 1987, its Art. 11 says the following: "Every individual has the Haitian nationality of origin if born of a Haitian father or a Haitian mother that are also born Haitians and have not renounced their nationality at the time of birth" (ACHILLE, 2007, p. 21). Later, the aforementioned Constitution stipulates: "That Haitian nationality is lost through naturalization acquired in a foreign country (Art. 13.1), and repeats, that the nationality of origin is lost through resignation (Arts. 91.1; 96.1; 135.1; 157.1; 200-5.1)" (idem, p. 25). Therefore, the "loss" of Haitian nationality is expressed through two different terms, but expressing the same idea, used interchangeably. They are highlighted and underlined in the Constitution itself, "naturalization" and "resignation". But, this idea is nuanced, because there may be differences between what the Law says and real practices, notably in Haiti. As of June 2012, the current President Michel Martelly enacted a constitutional amendment, granting the right to dual nationality, with more than one passport, in addition to voting and running for various electoral functions (JOSEPH, 2015b, p. 56-57).

¹⁴ CARICOM, former Caribbean Community and Common Market, and current Caribbean Community. The member countries are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Granada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. It was created in 1973 to consolidate a block of economic and political cooperation in the Caribbean. In 1998, negotiations began to integrate Haiti as a member of CARICOM, which occurred in July 2002, reflecting its eventual participation in the *Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy* (CSME) which aims at the free movement of goods, capital, and people.

workforce and knowledge of the agricultural sector were driven by them and recognized by others (Haitians from the urban environment, including other nationals) as a value.

The cultivated products were sold in the central market of Paramaribo, but they also formed the basis of family nutrition, as explained by Maud Laëthier in his work with Haitians in Suriname and French Guiana:

Commercial activity in Paramaribo connects with the cross-border economic networks built by other migrants in a regular situation installed in Suriname or French Guiana. From Paramaribo to Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, in French Guiana, but also, from Paramaribo to Caracas and, sometimes, from Caracas to Miami via Port-au-Prince, these traders, across borders, create a trading system that reproduces known strategies in Haiti (2011b, p. 5).

In addition to agricultural products, the author shows that there is a network of Haitian traders and sellers (*machann*) who buy products manufactured in Suriname to sell in French Guiana. When they return, they buy other objects (clothes, shoes, cosmetics) found there to resell in Paramaribo. These are called *revandè* (resellers) (LAËTHIER, 2015).

At the Paramaribo market, a group of men used to arrive three o'clock in the morning with products in bags to sell and then take the bus to work at SBBS. Others grew their vegetables at home, and their wives sold them at the market. Salespeople without financial resources bought products from their compatriots, sold them and then refunded them.

Most of the saleswomen in the market had already worked at SBBS. Some considered the work in Jarikaba to be very hard and, therefore, after a few years, they preferred to sell on the market. They used the money earned and saved at SBBS to buy and sell potatoes, bananas, cassava, carrots, peppers, ginger, eggplant and vegetables at the Central Market. In this same place they bought in large quantities, usually in bags to sell by batches or kilos.

At the fair, traders spoke among themselves in Haitian Creole and, with foreign customers, in Surinamese Creole, *Sranan Tongo* and *Taki Taki* (CARLIN; LÉGLISE; MIGGE and FAT, 2015). In addition to this language, some used Dutch, the country's official language. As most of those people I met had not studied, some learned the local language in the market, talking to customers or when they worked at SBBS in Jarikaba.

Crossing Suriname and French Guiana

A few decades ago, the French immigration policy became increasingly restrictive. As Cédric Audebert (2012) explains in his work on the Haitian diaspora, that the French government encouraged the migration of workers due to local economic needs until the 1970s. From

decolonization to departmentalization in 1946, when French Guiana went from colony to overseas Department, the population policy was the goal for a productive economy, considering the population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants (currently estimated at 296,711).

Since the economic crisis of the 1970s, control of migratory flows has begun. The request of the *titre de séjour* was conditioned to the proof of employment with a formal contract. From that time on, the regularization of undocumented people decreased. In that same decade, Haitian mobilities towards French Guiana intensified, among other factors, due to the increased control of state agents regarding the arrival of Haitians in the United States and Canada and the context of construction of the launch base for satellites of the European Space Agency at the Guyanese Space Center in Kourou, where 300 Haitians worked.

People arriving in that period reported that it was easy to obtain a visa at the French consulate in Port-au-Prince: paying 4,000 francs (French official currency at the time) was enough, that was referred to a *caution* (a bail) to justify the economic conditions to stay in the place. This amount was returned to travelers with interest approximately two decades later. Such mobility was organized by those responsible for air travel to French Guiana.

Those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s were no longer able to get visas as easily as before, and some sent their passports to a family member or *raketè* in Suriname. Upon obtaining the Surinamese visa, they went there and, after reaching the border city of Albina, they crossed the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni river by ferry to enter an undocumented situation in the second most populous city in Guiana: Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni. As Laëthier rightly shows: “The social and territorial universes crossed in Suriname and French Guiana will bring us onto the path of what could be called ‘mobility fields’ produced by the appropriation of territorial practices and the creation of representations” (2015, p. 231).

Between 1982 and 1986, the number of Haitians in Guiana tripled. Political aspects in the context of the dictatorship of Jean Claude Duvalier enlighten the dynamics of this intensification of mobility, from the cyclical point of view. This growth was not restricted only to the overseas Department, but also occurred in other parts of the world. In 1986, with Jean Claude’s exile in Paris and the start of the civil war in Suriname, Haitian mobilities declined in Guiana, besides the use of French national devices for controlling and restricting new entrances to the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni river. Therefore, mobility was a response to socio-political conditions, revealing the dramatic and acute situation experienced in Haiti.

While crossing Suriname, several people lost their lives, throwing themselves into the water and drowning when they saw the police control on the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni River. Others

were intercepted and taken to the border to return to Haiti.¹⁵ Those who managed to pass through the forest, reached Cayenne. However, to do so, they should escape the checkpoint of state agents, between Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and Cayenne, created in 1986 in the Comuna Iracoubo and located 180 km from Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and 70 km from Cayenne. In recent years, several agreements have been reached between the French and Surinamese governments to restrict new arrivals by Haitians. The most recent, in 2019, was the project to create a Police Cooperation Center in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni with the objective of controlling the mobility of these migrants in the region.

There is a double level in the relationship between migration and the border. If, on the one hand, migrants challenge geopolitical borders, on the other hand, the border as a barrier, as a mismatch, is also challenging. Therefore, the migrant is not a being towards the border, but a being beyond the border. For this reason, he is considered an intruder, one who jumps, circulates, unveils and decipher the border, attributing meanings and senses to it. There is no doubt that the border region is a space characterized by the presence of a geopolitical limit, but the interactions of its inhabitants structure and hierarchize the space. The border region is not a reality independent of the daily activities of its inhabitants. From mobility, the border that was seen as an obstacle can be replaced by the border as an opportunity for people who live or transit in it.

On another level, in the 1980s, initially, the Republic of Guyana represented a stage in the trajectory of Haitian migrants to reach Suriname and French Guiana. Due to linguistic issues and cultural differences, few stayed in the country and, for this reason, the number of Haitians there is much smaller than in French Guiana or Suriname. However, some Haitians are teachers in the country, others study medicine, for example. Some operate in commercial and Pentecostal networks. It is common for Haitian missionaries and pastors to travel annually to Georgetown to conduct activities in religious congregations. As noted in the trajectory of Pastor in French Guiana, Dodo in Suriname, and so many other interlocutors, Haitian Pentecostal communities are also part of the migratory networks. More than a space to profess the faith, they are sometimes used to finance the trips of the faithful, or to get a job at their place of residence. In French Guiana, Suriname, and Brazil, Haitian communities have their own churches, the majority have Haitian pastors, usually services are celebrated in Creole, they are a way to maintain ties with Haiti, although they are physically distant.

Since Suriname closed its Consulate in Haiti, the arrival of Haitians in the Republic of Guyana has dramatically increased. The fact that both countries are part of CARICOM, means that

¹⁵Between the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, an estimated 5,039 people were returned to the Suriname border, totaling 9,700 in 2006 (GISTI, p. 206).

Haitian citizens do not need a visa, which facilitates their entry into the country and a temporary installation of up to six months. According to official data from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration approximately 16,000 Haitians arrived at Georgetown Airport, but 8,000 left the country between 2013 and 2019. In 2019, 50 Haitians arrived per day in the Capital.¹⁶ Family members and friends already installed there went to the airport to welcome the newcomers, men, women and children, who paid between US\$ 2,000 and 4,000 to make the trip. Among them, some stayed a few days at the place, took a minibus and continued their journey, passing through the Lethem border to enter Brazil through the state of Roraima. Others crossed the Courantyne River in *catraias* (small boats) to reach Suriname, or the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni River to reach French Guiana. Others chose to stay in Georgetown, especially those who had family and friends there.

In the same period that the country registered the arrival of a bigger number of Cubans and Venezuelans than Haitians, the latter occupied the headlines of the main local newspapers. The opposition party officials sought to draw the attention of the population, using the number of Haitians arriving in the country to accuse and criticize the government, using arguments that they were victims of a human trafficking network, and yet citizenship was granted for them to vote in elections. Such speeches gained space in the main media, such as Guyana Times and Kaieteur News, contributing to the attacks based on the supposed risks that their presence could pose to public health as potential transmitters of cholera and transmissible diseases like HIV, from the point of view of some actors and agencies. Contexts and circumstances help to describe a scenario in which a series of actions and narratives contributed to various political, media and academic discourses, revealing prejudice and xenophobia against Haitian migrants. When analyzing these narratives, it is interesting to note that there is a politicization of Haitian migratory dynamics built as a government “problem” (FOUCAUT, 1994; VIEIRA, 2017). If, on the one hand, there was a humanitarian discourse regarding Venezuelans, mostly of mixed race and white, who should be welcomed in the face of the political and economic situation suffered by the neighboring country – in addition to the fetish in relation to Venezuelan women, as standards of beauty – on the other hand, a nationalist discourse, with a xenophobic and racist character, was also gaining strength, since Haitians, blacks, were considered undesirable, representing a threat to the nation. These speeches occurred in the same period in which both Venezuela and Haiti were going through socioeconomic and political crises, Haiti due to corruption, impunity, PetroCaribe (an oil alliance between some Caribbean countries with Venezuela), inflation (of approximately 20%), the rampant

¹⁶For more details see, <https://haitiantimes.com/2019/08/06/haitian-influx-create-hysteria-in-guyana-brazil-and-suriname/>; <https://www.kaieteurnews.com/2019/08/03/guyana-is-indeed-a-gateway-for-haitians-221-arrive-in-3-days-none-left/>. Accessed: May 14, 2020.

increase in the price of gasoline, food, the devaluation of the Haitian currency (gourdes) against the US dollar – having lost half its value in the last five years – the devaluation of minimum wages, in addition to deaths (34) and people injured (102) during protests, violence and the use of force by the government to maintain political hegemony and power.

From the point of view of Haitians, the Republic of Guyana was the least desirable country among destinations in the Guianas, for economic, cultural, linguistic reasons, and because it is the place where, in general, they have less family networks. However, the economic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the countries of Guianas is characterized by specific local hierarchies and differentiations that, in turn, are reproduced in the universe of Haitian migrants, including those residing in the country, particularly among the older and younger generations, and people originating in rural areas of Haiti and the Capital (JOSEPH, 2019b). Among French Guiana residents, some feel superior to their compatriots living in Suriname, the Republic of Guyana and Brazil, due to the advantageous salary they receive in euros. In 2020, the minimum wage in French Guiana was estimated at € 1,500, in Suriname at \$ SRD 2,434 (€ 299.92), in the Republic of Guyana at \$ GYD 78,101 (€ 345.43) and in Brazil at R\$ 1,045 (€ 280,00).

However, others preferred the busier life of Paramaribo, where there is more leisure. Thus, for those who have a *titre de séjour* and economic stability, it is common to cross the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni River on weekends to enjoy the nightlife and sightseeing in this city. If, on the one hand, some Haitians living in Brazil dream of going to French Guiana, due to the attractive salaries in euros and as a step towards reaching Paris, to become a diaspora person,¹⁷ on the other hand, among those who are in an undocumented situation in French Guiana experiencing precariousness there, some decide to go to Brazil. From their point of view, in Brazil, regularization and getting a job are easier, besides the freedom to be able to walk freely in the streets, without the pressure of the French Guiana PAF, at the risk of being deported to Haiti.

The Haitian migratory system in the Guianas consists of central locations such as French Guiana and Brazil and marginal locations such as the Republic of Guyana and Suriname, which correspond to their position within global and regional geopolitical hierarchies. This argument should be questioned, since some spaces are demarcated as central, from the economic point of

¹⁷“In everyday life, it is used as a noun and adjective to qualify and designate people, objects, money, houses and actions, as in the expressions: “My dream is to be a diaspora” (*Rèv mwen se pou mdyaspora*), “Diaspora, how are you?” (*Dyaspora, ki jan ou ye?*), “This is diaspora clothing” (*Sa se rad dyaspora*), “I have diaspora money” (*Mwen gen lajan dyaspora*), “This is a diaspora house” (*Sa se yon kay dyaspora*), “You act as a diaspora” (*Ou ajitan kou dyaspora*), “You are not just anybody, you are a diaspora person” (*Ou pa nenpòt ki, or if yon moun dyaspora*), among others” (JOSEPH, 2019, p.

233) “Diaspora is, at the same time, a noun, an adjective, and a verb. The term is used in different ways with different connotations: to be diaspora, to have diaspora objects, to do diaspora things” (Idem, p. 234).

view, and marginal from the point of view of documentation, or even culturally and linguistically central, but marginal from the point of view of social life and leisure activities.

Differences between generations

The ethnographic data allows us to analyze some singularities among Haitians who, after passing by Brazil, went to Suriname and French Guiana and those who have lived in these places for a long time. The data suggest that those who arrived after 2010 have a higher level of education than those who arrived between 1960 and 1990. A good part of my interlocutors already had complete or incomplete high school, others had already entered a higher education course.

This new generation of Haitians arriving in French Guiana was not oriented towards the agriculture sector as the first generations, but towards urban centers, in activities related to commerce, in the security sector, as well as in civil construction. Therefore, the urban economy creates new axes for the absorption of Haitian labor in the area.

In the case of women, among those dedicated to commerce in Cayenne, some were self-employed, had their own business, and others sold to their compatriots, earning (weekly or monthly) for the service. Many of them sold products of different natures in the Cayenne market, most typical products of Haiti, spices, food and drinks (rum, liquors, etc.), but also handmade products, typical Haitian painting. Most of the products were made by the sellers themselves, others were bought from compatriots living in French Guiana or brought from Haiti.

The differences between Haitians who arrived before and after 2010 were notable and highlighted by Guianese and foreigners living in French Guiana, indicating changes in behavior and language between different generations. Among the older ones, the majority spoke only Creole. Some, even today, when they go to public establishments where French is spoken, need the help of a translator. Most of those arriving in 2010, spoke Creole and French. In addition to these two languages, some speak Spanish and/or English. Furthermore, the way of dressing is also a sign of distinction between different generations.

The younger generations have the habit of wearing jewelry, new and branded clothes, while for the first generations, it was not seem as a priority. They were more interested in saving to send money to Haiti, and then there they would buy goods, houses, land, raise animals, etc. which does not mean, however, that the younger ones did not think about these obligations either. From the point of view of the older interlocutors, the newcomers were not considered exemplary, especially regarding behavior: they “got into anything” (*Yo fè nenpòt bagay*) and “did not listen to older

people” (*Yo pa tande ansyen yo*). Some of them created their *baz* (including gangs) as a place to meet friends and acquaintances.

Final considerations

The analysis proposed here encompasses local, national, regional and global dynamics, allowing for a critical analysis of Haitian migratory studies, whose approaches deal with geographical specifications in the Caribbean or in the Guianas, through segmentation. Haitian migratory experiences place the Guianas as a migratory field of arrival, residence, departure, transit, and return. Both places of arrival and departure are multiple and diverse, which aims to consider the notions of “multipolarity of migration” and the “interpolarity of relations” of people, objects, currencies that are designed and supported on networks of family and community solidarity, of converging economic and, often political, interests.

The trajectories of migrants show the geographical diversity and the geopolitical and economic changes that have occurred over five decades. Haitian migration suggests a double level that deserves attention: the fact that migration policies react according to the mobility practices of Haitians and vice versa. There is a relationship between the way in which governments think about migration policies and the way in which Haitians in mobility create their mechanisms and practices to facilitate movement.

However, the configurations of Haitian mobilities on a global level, to which Brazil has recently become more intensely integrated, allow an ethnographically based criticism of the migratory theories that supported the unilateral nature of migratory flows between the “southern poles” (poor countries) towards to the “northern poles” (rich, developed countries) or the binary relations established, initially, between the colonized countries and their former colonizers. These configurations also put at stake some criteria used in classical studies, such as the idea that migration only develops when historical ties exist between the provider and the receiver country, besides knowledge of the language of the destination country, or some familiarity with the culture of that place, as is the case between Haiti and French Guiana. Among Haitians in Brazil, Suriname and the Republic of Guyana, despite the linguistic difference, many decided to stay in these countries, considering them “open”, that is, with greater facilities to regularize the situation. The expressions used by my interlocutors: “Brazil is open”, “Suriname is closed” are related to the ease of arriving and entering Brazil, and the restrictions to enter Suriname at the time of the research, in addition to the new opportunities in Brazil: the fact that the country represented the sixth world economy at that moment. In French Guiana, as it was possible to observe in the trajectories of

Emmanuel and Pastor, it is more difficult to regularize the situation or to enter the labor market. In the case of Suriname and the Republic of Guyana, there is an ease of entry, however, from the point of view of my interlocutors, the minimum wage is very low, not allowing money to be sent to family members staying in Haiti, one of the objectives of most migrants.

Thus, the new configurations of mobility on supranational scales are constituted in the form of the national borders opening, a phenomenon that brings up an International discourse on these circulations. While it seems to be easier to leave the place of origin, it is becoming more difficult to enter some countries, with a kind of global governance of the movement of people. These globalizations are inscribed in a contradictory register. States reduce and control the number of visas issued and increase the number of state agents at the borders for policing, security mechanisms and systems. Therefore, they constitute a global mobility control regime, considering the socioeconomic cost of migration. The contradiction also lies in the fact that, in addition to the absence of global governance of migration and the free movement of people, there is an increase in the flow of circulation of goods, capital, information, and services. Perhaps this paradox is never more evident than in the period of global economic crises and unemployment.

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