Caribbean Migration Spaces and Transnational Networks: The Case of the Haitian Diaspora

Cédric Audebert

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Abstract

The Caribbean region's cultural and spatial borders mirror its underlying identities: shifting, fluid and constantly changing. The Caribbean migration experience provides a dynamic platform for renewed understandings of boundaries as shaped by transnational reticular territories. This chapter explores the extent to which states must integrate their diasporas as part of their economic and diplomatic policy, given the huge impact of exiled communities on their homelands' growth and international outreach. Haiti and its diaspora are the most illustrative textbook case, when it comes to such contemporary dynamics. Such a differentiated spatial system acting as a network should encourage us to review our analytical categories and representations of borders and identities; Haitian identities are constantly being reshaped both in and out of the country.

Keywords: Caribbean – Diaspora – Haiti – Migration – Territory - Transnationalism

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the deep-rooted structural crisis underlying the economic, social and political alienation of the vast majority of the Haitian people has reached an unprecedented magnitude—thereby unveiling the diaspora's crucial role in Haiti's economy and local social structures. Given the diaspora's demographic weight and influence on the local economy, culture and politics, challenges to the Haitian society's future can no longer be tackled separately from the spread of its population beyond national borders. As a result of systemic insecurity affecting all aspects of daily life—especially in the economic, political and environ- mental spheres—emigration gradually spread across all social classes and regions in Haiti throughout the twentieth century.

The two million Haitian nationals that currently live abroad account for about 20% of their homeland's population. The outcome of this dynamics on the transnational

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structure of Haitian social relations is remarkable (Audebert 2002, 2004a, 2012). Pionner research has shown that transnational practices embedded in family, economic, logistic, cultural and informational networks have grown more structured in the context of the development of historical relations between Haiti and the United States, as well as of transnational practices resulting from the multiple identity strategies embraced by migrants according to shifting political contexts in both host and home societies (Basch et al. 1994; Laguerre 1998; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Stepick 1998). However, core Anglo-Saxon sociological and anthropological research on Haitian migration has mainly been limited to the North American context. In other words, it fails to consider the experience of the majority of Haitian migrants throughout the World.

Several collective works have recently attempted to take into consideration the diversity of Haitian migration contexts, mostly through monographies or comparative assessments of their Caribbean journeys (Jackson 2011; Joint and Mérion 2011). Their international and transdisciplinary perspective has undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of the plurality of Haitian experiences abroad. They have but partially fulfilled the challenge of comprehending the global space dynamics and rationales embraced by transnational agents from a diasporic perspective. My research on *the Haitian diaspora* aimed at facing that recurring scientific challenge by looking at the full range of diasporic locations as well as migration territories and transnational networks in view of grasping the uniqueness and coherence of that globalised social body (Audebert 2012). Nonetheless, much remains to be done to grasp the complexity and richness of the processes underway within this diaspora.

Over the past thirty years, social science studies have come to define diasporas based on a minimum of four criteria: geographic dispersion, the existence of a distinctive diasporic identity, an internal diasporic structure grounded on the linkages between its hubs, as well as significant symbolic ties to the homeland (Sheffer 1996; Anteby-Yemini et al. 2000; Ma Mung 2000, 2012; Dufoix 2003; Prévélakis 1996, Hovanessian 1998). Unlike the "transmigrant" figure, whose incentives for transnational ties come down to social status and prestige in the hometown, diasporic migrants sustain relationships that connect them around the world through a strong sense of national belonging (Bruneau 2004). In that light, a geographical approach focused on the diasporic dimension is bound to fill the gaps found in previous research, especially as it allows for a more global and dynamic perspective on how the Haitian migration space and its networks operate over time (Audebert 2012).

While *The Haitian Diaspora* did bring out the connection between global and local scales—not to mention close interactions between cities, migration routes and diasporic structures—it has failed to account for more recent geographical dynamics in Latin America—Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil in particular. Especially after the 2010 earthquake, Brazil has become an increasingly popular destination among Haitian migrants. While the need to establish migration networks involving Suriname and

French Guiana—another major migration destination for Haitians— initially played a significant part in boosting the Brazilian destination, Haitian migration to Brazil is now self-sustaining, as shown by the expansion of labour migration networks that connect the Amazonian states to Sao Paulo, and Brazil's southern states (Silva 2012, 2017; Joseph 2015; Nieto 2014).

By way of a theoretical and conceptual preamble, we will focus on the transnationalisation of Haitian social networks and the spatial system of interactions that characterise it. This spatial model results from a survival strategy that implies uprooting personal, family and collective destinies from Haiti while actively preserving pre-existing core social structures. In that view, the emergence of a collective organisation abroad endowed with a certain continuity in time and space redefines the relationship of the Haitian people to its homeland and to migration. While local social ties paradoxically rely more and more on long-distance connections, migration does not seem to be perceived so much as a fracture—or a hiatus—as a way of expanding one's social networks and living space. Therefore, I examine how diaspora as a territory affects social reproduction, social cohesion and Haitian identity. Hence, it proves crucial to identify the key agents in such a spatial dynamics in order to grasp how not only specific networks but locations affect that scheme. For the originality of the territorialisation processes of Haitians abroad stems from their ability to articulate their migration project and experience on both local and global scales.

The Diasporisation of the Haitian Society: The Spatial Manifestation of An Internationalised "Marooning"?

Originally referring to the West Indian slaves who risked their lives trying to flee the coercive plantation system—the term "marooning" now refers increasingly to the case of Haitian migrants (Hurbon 1987). For most Haitians, their country's troubled history (from the plantation system to the present day) is one of an everlasting quest for justice and freedom. However, the perpetuation of the plantation system after independence, the isolation and embargo that affected Haiti during the nineteenth century, or the State's willingness to extend its commercial, tax and political control to even the most remote rural areas—not to mention the social consequences of US military occupation and Duvalierist dictatorship throughout the twentieth century—have caused economic, political and cultural freedom to continuously dwindle for a majority of Haitians.

Individuals began to leave the country as a result of historico-structural and situational constraints. Haitians have gradually come to construe that "someplace else" as one of the last realms of freedom and growth within their reach, although at a heavy price. Their international dispersion has taken place in the dual context of the home country's

complicated political and economic course along with the international division of labour implemented by the United States in the Caribbean.

Declining Living Standards, US Interventionism and Mass Migration

Economic and political choices made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sowed the seeds of exponential mass migration flows throughout the twentieth century. The plantation-based economic system, designed to maximise short-term profit, caused severe damage to both the work- force and natural resources. The depletion of lowland soil resources caused by the extension of sugar cane plantations, and deforestation in hilly areas as an outcome of the development of coffee plantations, have come to epitomise the country's early environmental decay and engendered severe poverty levels among peasants. At the same time, the surge in export agriculture at the expense of subsistence farming, fuelled by the State's dire need for currencies, went hand in hand with the militarisation of the countryside and the expansion of coercive labour. Hence, peasant mobility within national borders became a matter of survival and freedom, while also foreshadowing later migration dynamics.

Besides historical and structural circumstances, the direction and essence of early twentieth-century migration flows are embedded in the geopolitical context which enabled them. Haiti entered the era of mass migration as US economic interests began pervading the Caribbean through interventionist strategies. The first large-scale Haitian migration waves to neighbouring countries coincided with US military occupation (1915–1934). As a matter of fact, foreign supervision of the Haitian nation-state, massive land expropriations and forced labour meant to boost large plantation farming models, as well as the deterioration of rural living conditions. Hundreds of thousands of peasants migrated in response to massive evictions from their lands.

In parallel, half of the Dominican Republic's plantations had been transferred to US capital by 1925, following a decade of military occupation—while North American sugar-related investments in Cuba proved a hundred times superior to similar investments in Haiti (Lemoine 1981). Hence, peasant migration was fostered by Haiti's new position in the US backyard: a bountiful and cheap labour pool expected to work in North American-owned plantations across neighbouring countries. Under US occupation, an estimated 200,000 Haitian peasants thus left to work in the Dominican Republic and twice as many in Cuba (Anglade 1982; Lundhal 1982).

Present-Day Political and Economic Insecurity and the Diversification of Migration Flows

The specificity of present-day migration compared to previous migration waves lies in the diversification of both the geographical direction and social makeup of these later flows, which contributed to making Haiti's international migration arena broader and

more intricate. The joint political terror and economic slump that characterised the second half of the twentieth century resulted in two socially distinct migration waves. As of the late 1950s, Duvalierism, which featured absolute political control over the social, economic and cultural aspects of Haitian society, fuelled political paramilitarisation, persecution of the opposition as well as tensions along class and colour lines. It was during that period that the country recorded its first massive migration waves of both wealthy and middle social classes. During F. Duvalier's dictatorship, 50,000 of them officially migrated to the Northeastern coast of the United States, and 3600 more emigrated to Quebec. These official statistics widely underestimate the actual scale of migration flows towards both nations. An estimated 300,000 Haitians were living in New York by the end of the 1970s (Stepick 1998).

The dictatorial reign of his son, J. C. Duvalier, further strengthened emigration as all of the country's regions and social groups became affected. In the wake of earlier emigration waves involving well- off, urban and educated populations, the 1970s would thus see new flows of low-income, rural and urban populations depart towards the United States. The diversification of both destinations and migration patterns— epitomised by the exodus of at least 200,000 boat people to Florida throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century— mirrors the sharp decline of living standards in Haiti. The spread of soil erosion, land deprivation and wealth redistribution at the expense of peasantry had plunged the countryside into poverty. The ensuing rural exodus and expansion of shanty towns aggravated the decay of urban living conditions. In the 1990s, the post-Duvalierist transition paved the way for renewed political instability, worsened the economic down- turn and revived emigration. As a result, lower-income populations who could not migrate to North America built or reopened other migration streams towards mainstream regional destinations such as the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas or later on, the neighbouring Turks and Caicos archipelago as well as the French overseas territories.

An International Migration Space Characterised by Dispersion

The past century's constant migration flows have thus widened and diversified Haiti's international migration space, gradually embedding neighbouring Caribbean countries followed by North America and more recently, Europe (France). New migration networks have built bridges between specific Haitian provinces and destination countries. Once these networks were set up, the associated flows thrived, barely affected by the changing labour demand in destination countries—except in Cuba. Thus, while Haiti's Southern, Southeastern and Northeastern provinces have established migration fields for at least a century, the Northwest has only been part of the international migration scene for about two generations, through the emergence of migration networks with the Bahamas and Florida.

On a global scale, new migration dynamics also capture the geopolitical reality of Haiti's more or less ancient and shifting relations with the outside world. Haiti's destiny is still governed by its position within the United States' political, economic, geostrategic and cultural sphere of influence—and the resulting communication and transportation networks. A powerful neighbour whose multifarious presence did not, however, hamper the conservation of cultural ties—inherited from the colonial and post-colonial era— with the former French metropolis and its overseas territories across the region... nor the simultaneous emergence of relatively structured networks involving the rest of the Caribbean. The extraordinary dispersion of Haitians abroad thus equally echoes their desire to escape harsh living standards at home, the rise of migration networks, and the multiple ways in which Haiti relates to the outside world.

Also, the extent of Haitian presence abroad is still hard to assess due to the extent of non-formal migration schemes and significant statistical variations from one host country to the other. Nonetheless, cross-checking various official sources (US Census American Community Survey 2011–2014; *Statistiques Canada Enquête Ménages* 2011; INSEE RGP 2010, consular estimates) reveals three significant geographical clusters underlying this two million-strong international migration space: the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe. About 650,000 Haitians have moved to neighbouring Caribbean countries—half a million of which have crossed the border into the Dominican Republic, while an additional 200,000–300,000 Haitians were born in the Dominican Republic. The remaining 150,000 migrants are scattered across the region; from the Bahamas, French Guiana or the Turks and Caicos archipelago, to the French Antilles. The ultimate goal of many migrants in the Caribbean region, North America hosts 900,000 natives of Haiti: 810,000 of which are officially registered in the United States—two-thirds in Florida and New York—and 80,000 in Canada. The 100,000 Haitians that are officially registered in Europe live in France for the most part, and to a lesser extent in Belgium and Switzerland. These statistics consistently underestimate the actual volume of Haitian migration. For instance, according to Haitian associations, mainland France alone is thought to be home to at least 70,000 individuals. However, the Haitian diaspora's latest and perhaps most dynamic front lines are in Latin America. Before the new millennium, Haitian presence in that region was limited to territories hugging the Caribbean Basin— French Guiana, Surinam and Venezuela. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, migration from this country expanded quickly to other countries further south, especially Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil. While national censuses reported barely a few hundred legal Haitian workers in each of these countries in 2010, the situation changed noticeably in the years that followed. While Ecuador's role in this migration scheme is more of a transit country, Chile and Brazil stand as the "next frontier" of the Haitian diasporic journey. Between 2011 and 2015, 10,000 Haitians were granted permanent residence in Chile (Migraciones Chile 2016), in addition to 50,000 in Brazil (Conselho Nacional de Imigração 2015, cited by CNIg 2017); thus accounting for the country's leading economic migrant community, ahead of the Portuguese. Over 200,000 Haitians now live in Chile and around 100,000 reside in

Brazil. This remarkable geographic dispersion requires a reflection on the very nature and dynamics of social ties with Haiti, and of those that link the scattered poles of the diaspora.

Migration Routes as Baselines for Diasporic Networks

The Haitian migration space is a shifting and polycentric system characterised by a wide range of settlement locations, whose impulse centres are no longer solely based in the homeland. Many Haitians are neither recognised as permanent economic migrants nor political refugees upon arrival in host countries. In response to this legal limbo, they have developed informal migration network. The inception and subsequent diversification of new migration routes set the stage for various network structures whose participants have sometimes been labelled "diasporic citizens" (Laguerre 1998).

Migration Routes as Bypass Mobility Strategies

With somewhat limited academic, professional and financial capital to offer, considering their host societies' standards, most Haitian migrants fail to meet the requirements of increasingly selective immigration policies that favour educated and qualified workers. Besides, general misconceptions of Haiti abroad, cultural stereotypes affecting its population and the scale of migration flows—especially to small island territories—some- times generate contingent hostility within host societies. In keeping with the public's opinion, local authorities tend to consider but the economic aspect of migration and prove reluctant to grant Haitians a refugee status—which sometimes contradicts their democratic values (Stepick 1998). The challenge of obtaining legal status and a work permit abroad keeps immigrants in situations of dire economic precariousness that result in abusive layoff practices, employment insecurity, non-compliance with labour legislation and human rights as well as arbitrary deportation.

In response, local and transnational networks have emerged within and between diasporic locations in order to by-pass institutional barriers and discrimination, as well as to improve the living standards of migrants and help them provide for their families' basic needs in Haiti. In the face of economic and migration policy shifts in host countries, family and hometown strategies rely as much on the exploitation of migration channels already open as on the creation of new migration fields. This self- structuring process has brought the Haitian diaspora to gradually develop an internal dynamics that is distinct from the homeland's, as shown by migration routes or the functional specialisation of migration spaces, and more generally speaking, individual mobility. Haitian settlements across the Caribbean act, in fact, as transit spaces as well as immigration locations. Spatial mobility and/or chain migrations are designed as both survival and social mobility strategies by the people who experience them.

Genesis and Reconfiguration of Haitian Migration Routes in the Caribbean

Accordingly, the Caribbean basin displays three established patterns of Haitian migration. The first route, originating from Northwestern and Northern Haiti, developed in the 1950s towards the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Fishermen who were already trading with those territories and operating in their territorial waters started settling there with their families to escape the rural economy's meltdown and the environmental degradation plaguing Northwestern Haiti. Actively involved in the agricultural and tourism-related construction sectors in Nassau and the Family Islands (Bahamas), their settlements propelled the emergence of migrant networks connected to the same Haitian localities: in the 1970s, three out of four Haitian migrants came from the Northern provinces (Marshall 1979). With the Bahamian independence in 1973, the ensuing repression of immigration flows and increasing abuse against foreigners from Haiti, Haitian communities expended their migration field and began to consider Florida as a desirable destination. During the second half of the decade, 50,000 of them used the Bahamas as a transit hub on the path to Florida, where they worked in tourism, agriculture, construction, household services, transportation and security while also developing ethnic entrepreneurship (Audebert 2006).

However, other networks developed in response to increased control of boat people flows by US Coast Guards: The Interdiction Program launched in 1981 was extended to Bahamian and Haitian territorial waters. Hence, an alternative route emerged, via several islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles with the ultimate goal of settling in New York or Miami—which entailed a swift rearrangement of migration strategies. As a matter of fact, Haitian migrants travel to Puerto Rico through Dominican networks before attempting to enter the United States. However, increased control of the Coast Guard in the Mona Canal and constant Immigration scrutiny in Puerto Rico have led Haitians to embed the Lesser Antilles into their circuits: the US Virgin Islands and Saint Martin have thus become attractive as both transit and settlement locations given the strong local demand in cheap labour in tourism and construction in the 1980s and 1990s.

French Caribbean Networks: Economic Rationales and Cultural Affinities

The third route, which originates from Southern Haiti combines two consecutive migratory steps with the first stop in Suriname or the French West Indies, before settlement in French Guiana and a possible continuation towards Europe. It stems from a renewed need for unskilled labour in the service-oriented economies of the neighbouring French territories. Among foreign communities living in French Guiana, Haitians workers are most represented in the least skilled positions in farming and construction (Audebert 2004b). Initial flows were quickly structured along broader transnational lines revolving mostly around the area of Aquin in Haiti, which counts a large number of natives in Cayenne. The relative cultural—and linguistic—proximity

could also explain that these flows redirected towards the French Caribbean, where speaking Creole and French eased the newcomers' cultural adjustment and contact with local populations. Official estimates of the Haitian migrant population for these territories were around 50,000 individuals in 1999—24,000 of which had kept their original citizenship (*ibid.*).

As the migration policies of the countries of the North tightened up, transit destinations gradually converted into permanent settlements playing an ever-larger part in attracting, structuring and redirecting migration chains. Hence, a complex hierarchy of settlement locations within Haiti's international migration space has emerged, based on attractiveness.

Shifting Migration Routes Within Host Countries: The Case of the United States

In the United States, an initial route towards the Northeastern United States involved relatively well-off educated migrants, mostly from Port- au-Prince and with extensive experience in the US education system, institutions and employment market. After settling in New York or Boston between the 1950s and 1970s, they have been prone to moving to Florida over the past thirty years. In addition to the appeal of better weather, two rationales underlie their choice. Well integrated, these long-established migrants are entering a new life cycle in which access to homeownership is becoming a priority in view of retirement—and given the increasingly unlikely prospect of returning to Haiti. Moreover, real estate in Florida is 40% cheaper than in Brooklyn and Queens, where buying a home is prohibitively expensive for many Haitian immigrants.

Also, Florida's unique appeal to these middle-class Haitians in the 1980s and 1990s was predicated on the emergence of a significant demand for specific services (health, administration, the institutional and legal defence of migrants, ethnic entrepreneurship) as a result of the rapid growth of an underprivileged Haitian boat people community. Over the past thirty years, the Miami metropolis alone has thus welcomed an annual average of about one thousand Haitians from the Northeastern United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Florida has now become the preferred destination for Haitians migrating to North America.

Over the past two decades, 300,000 Haitians have gained legal immigrant status in the United States, 45% of whom have settled in Florida. However, this permanent spatial dynamic displayed by the Haitian diaspora can also be noted on a smaller scale. While Haitians in Florida have long settled in Miami, it is home to only 40% of them approximately, for many are increasingly attracted to other "pioneer" locations across the state (Boca Raton, Orlando, etc.).

Brazil and Chile, The New "Frontiers" of Haitian Migration?

As aforementioned, several Latin American countries have recently been integrated in Haiti's international migration sphere. Brazil and Chile's growing presence in Haiti since the 2000s stems from their participation to the MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) in addition to various Brazilian NGOs thriving across the country and Brazil's positive image when it comes to football and culture—not to mention Brazil's rise as a place of economic opportunities for Haitian migrants.

Over the last decade, Panama, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia have become established transit territories towards Brazil, as well as Chile where over 200,000 Haitians now reside. In 2013, with 14,000 admissions, Haiti was among the top 20 countries fuelling migration flows to Ecuador. 80% of these newcomers were working-age men passing through the Quito and Guayaquil airports. Almost all newcomers from Haiti entered with a temporary tourist visa, valid for three months. However, less than 8% of them returned to Haiti, as most aimed to reach Brazil via Peru through the Iquitos region in particular.

The States of Acre (Brasiléia) and Amazonas (Tabatinga) have thus become the main gateways into Brazil for Haitian migration, spawning several new patterns in the process. One route rallied Cayenne via Amazonas (Manaus), Para and Amapa, while another route emerged via Amazonas, Rondônia (Porto Velho) and Mato Grosso (Cuiaba, Rondonopolis) towards the country's economic heartland: Sao Paulo—and even further South to the States of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul (Albertin de Moraes et al. 2013; Joseph 2015; Silva 2013, 2017). In Brazil, the volume of Haitians with a legal work permit increased from 800 to 14,600 between 2011 and 2013—a rise experienced by no other nationality in Brazil. Over the recent years, Haitians have become the primary labour migration force in the country—ahead of the Portuguese—and account for 40% of all permanent residence permits delivered to immigrants in Brazil. In the manufacturing sector, Haitian workers are now twice as numerous as Bolivians, whom they have been gradually replacing in Sao Paulo factories. The Haitian migrant workforce is also experiencing a rapidly growing presence of craftsmen and unskilled laborers in the manufacturing industry. Three out of four Haitian workers fall into that sector—while it barely employs about a quarter of all other foreign workers (Cavalcanti et al. 2014). This explains, to a large extent, why the Sao Paulo industrial area may have proven so appealing.

Haitian Migration: A Polycentric and Network-Based Space

Transnational family and community structures seem to be the pivotal frames of this network-based and polycentric space. However, does the continuity of these multifaceted ties across borders indeed mirror the dawn of a network-based society?

A Global Space Structured by Transnational Community Ties

The strong metropolisation of the Haitian international migration space has clearly improved migrants' access to modern transit and communication technologies in large cities embedded in global networks: 87% of Haitians in France and Quebec live respectively in Paris and Montreal, while 73% of Haitians in the United States live in the New York and Miami metropolitan areas according to the latest official censuses. Improved as well as cheaper transportation and communication technologies have fostered ties with the homeland and between migration clusters, thereby preserving and strengthening family ties. Along with the growth of immigrant communities and emergence of new markets abroad, new TV channels (*Haitian Television Network*), radio broadcasters (*Radio Haiti International*) or digital media (*Haiti Global Village, Haiti On Line*) have also come forth on transnational lines, enabling an unprecedented, daily and collective dissemination of Haitian identity.

On a meso-social scale, the multipolar geographic structure that characterises a growing number of Haitian families enables full information flows connecting relatives back home and abroad, as well as the various diaspora communities. Our survey among 164 Haitian families in Miami revealed that 90% of our contacts still had close family in Haiti, and 27% of them had close relatives in other US cities and 13% in other foreign countries—with the Bahamas, Canada and French territories being the most prominent ones (Audebert 2004a).

Haitian churches and entrepreneurship also tend to operate beyond borders, drawing on each migration hub's specificities. Haitian churches abroad are transnational in that they replicate a familiar cultural environment at mass—based on the homeland's music and cultural codes—and host community events. Re-enacting the original social networks abroad is a significant stake, as church followers often come from the same Haitian hometowns or neighbourhoods. The church then becomes akin to a large family whose members have enough in common to allow for periodic solidarity campaigns meant to benefit specific localities back home. In addition, emigration hubs are strategic locations from which Haitians may expand their transnational trade networks. The *madan sara*, who initially travelled between Haiti and Miami or Haiti and the Dominican Republic, have thus extended their reach to the entire Caribbean and currently operate destinations such as the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Saint Maarten, Curaçao, Panama and the French West Indies.

Circular Migration, Network-Based Rationales and Enduring Ties with Haiti

The networks woven by this wide range of actors underlie strong flows of population, goods, capital and information. Thus, Haiti annually records 300,000 visits of its nationals living abroad, while 70,000 Haitians legally go to the United States for short periods—11,000 of which, for business trips. However, it seems irrelevant to examine such flows separately from non-legal migration strategies, which account for a substantial part of Haitian international mobility. According to official reports issued in several destination countries, an estimated 30,000– 40,000 Haitians attempt non-legal emigration each year—half of which target the Dominican Republic. At the same time, most legal migrations occur within the family circle: half of all Haitian admissions into the United States over the past two decades fell under family reunification schemes.

Transnational families and entrepreneurship also appear as preferred settings for the circulation of goods and capital between the diaspora and Haiti. Mobility routes established by the *madan sara* typically assign a given "value" and role to each place abroad. Their business transnational space take position in the most profitable supply locations (Panama, Curaçao) and in marketplaces that offer a wide range of opportunities for global trade (Miami). The functional specialisation of informal, transnational trading locations builds on the demand for certain types of products: cosmetics, household goods and clothing in Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico; rice, alcohol, used cars and electronics in Miami; jewellery and luxury goods in Panama. Estimates for annual remittances (related to informal transnational trade) to the country's financial institutions account for $30 million, while family remittances amounted to $3.2 billion in 2019 according to the World Bank—which represents a third of the gross national product.

Besides measurable transactions, money transfer locations reveal a polycentric structure in which a handful of global cities seem to structure the diaspora's ties with the homeland. It also mirrors spatial and income distribution within the migrant community: the Haitian banking network thus established five money transfer agencies in Northeastern United States, two in Canada and two in Florida. The diaspora enjoys higher living standards as well as better coverage in New York and Quebec than in Florida where migrants are more numerous but are also poorer. Caribbean poles, where poverty levels are highest among Haitian communities, are almost unaccounted for— which suggests that they are no priority for Haitian banks striving to advantageously channel the remittances of the diaspora.

Diasporisation and Societal change in Haiti

At this stage, it seems necessary to engage in a broader reflection and ponder to what extent diasporic networks may help tackle societal challenges in Haiti—especially when it comes to fostering economic well-being and the emergence of a democratic society.

Because few opportunities exist locally that match their level of education, Haitian graduates are most likely to consider and use diasporic spaces to get a fresh start. Estimates suggest that over the past four decades, emigration has affected 30% of Haitian workers with a secondary level of education, and 84% of those with a university level of education (Docquier and Marfouk 2005). The brain drain is all the more tangible in critical fields like education and health—to such an extent that nowadays, more physicians of Haitian descent can be found in a city like Montreal than in Haiti.

Haitian transnational networks thus act as "pumps" that deterritorialise the country's brainpower and part of its workforce. As current European and North American migration policy tends to favour skilled immigration, these dynamics are bound to endure in a Haitian context where professional prospects are close to naught. In return, however, the volume of financial remittances to Haiti has been multiplied by ten over the last two decades. More than regulating the "brain drain", what is indeed at stake for the future is the diaspora's commitment to building a more stable, more prosperous and above all fairer society. Brokering the terms of that commitment is a crucial aspect of the Haitian challenge (one that both the Haitian government and the diaspora are accountable for). Following the earthquake, increased NGO presence and renewed foreign interference in Haiti (Schuller 2012) may thus hamper the diaspora's potential reach and opportunities to help the reconstruction process.

Ultimately, Haitian migration and international mobility go hand in hand with the outsourcing of original social and trade networks, which now operate along both transnational and interpolar lines. But is the fact that living spaces have gone global and multipolar as a result of migrant communities being driven and disseminated by multifaceted transnational networks sufficient to consider the collective Haitian experience abroad as a diasporic one? As mentioned by M. Hovanessian, "diasporas are no longer measured solely in terms of spatial dissemination and migratory mobilities but in terms of identity projects" (Hovanessian 1998). Thus, one may wonder to what extent these specific social structures and the resulting solidarities and regular interactions, might generate one (or more) original collective identitie(s) likely to capture both the homeland's legacy and the full range of migration experiences.

Haitian Identities: The Diasporic Shift

Considering the difficulties underlying Haitian migration—including settling abroad and gaining legal status in the host society—it is essential to examine how and to what extent Haitian identity lives on away from the homeland. In that view, we must take a closer look at the core of Haitian identity awareness within the diaspora, and at ways in which cultural traditions are being revisited in host societies whose socio-institutional systems are significantly different.

Pillars of Haitian Identity Awareness in Diaspora

The relative conservation of shared cultural traditions and permanence of community ties abroad seem to have fostered the emergence of diasporic identity awareness. There is no better reflection of that heritage than the use of Creole: it remains the primary medium of communication for 80% of Haitian households in Florida (Audebert 2006) and over half of them in Quebec. Musical and culinary traditions also put that shared Haitian cultural heritage on display. One of our investigations thus revealed that half the migrants we met in Florida recognised Haitian religious music and *konpa* as their favourite genres, while four-fifths continue upholding their homeland's culinary traditions—even after several decades spent in the United States (*ibid.*). The most famous Haitian orchestras typically perform on the diasporic scene—which their names (*Afro Combo de Boston*, *T-Vice* named in reference to 'Miami Vice') or song titles (*New York City* by Tabou Combo) strongly echo—while the most common theme in Haitian music is, besides love, that of geographic dispersion. Moreover, ethnic businesses hint in myriad ways at that identity aware- ness: in Miami, 30% of all storefronts highlight Haitian history and culture and/or use their homeland's tongues (Creole or French), arts (Haitian murals) and colours (the national flag's blue and red).

Conservation of the homeland's cultural heritage and the subsequent development of identity awareness rely on material means facilitating the exchange of information with Haiti but also between the diaspora's various poles at both individual and collective levels via Internet. The *Haitian Television Network* broadcasts Haiti's National Television news daily in the United States, while the magazine *Haiti en Marche* has sales outlets in five major North American and European diasporic centres. Awareness of their specificity as a community is also rooted in the memory of key historical events such as Haiti's early and singular independence in 1804, or more recent events such as the Duvalierist and post-Duvalierist repressions—which triggered significant migration flows. At the same time, the Haitian community's solidarity was moulded by resistance to a US migration policy that has been all but favourable to them. Hence, diasporic identity awareness is also political, and therefore shouldered by institutions striving to defeat dictatorial rule in the homeland (*Veye Yo*) or to improve migrants' rights and integration in host societies (*National Coalition for Haitian Refugees*, *Haitian Refugee Center* in Florida, *Movimiento Socio Cultural de los Trabajadores Haitianos* in the Dominican Republic).

A Cultural Heritage Revisited in the Diaspora

The overall assertion of a diasporic identity should not, however, obscure the fact that its shape and scope vary from one immigration context to the other. In Metropolitan France, where Haitians are relatively few, and republican principles do not encourage the expression of cultural differences in the public domain, this heritage is mostly confined to family and associative settings. While growing more tangible through new

Haitian and Afro-Antillean evangelical churches or the nascent ethnic entrepreneurship found in the Paris metropolitan area, the strength and substance of Haitian diasporic identities diverge significantly from one end of the Atlantic to the other.

In the United States, where particularistic community rationales facilitate official recognition of cultural differences, and where citizenship is rooted in ethnic claims, migrants and their children use their Haitian heritage as a collective gateway to resources, power and prestige (Stepick 1998). Thus, in Miami-Dade County, Haitian Creole was promoted to third official language alongside English and Spanish in 2000, while public schools have proven instrumental in celebrating Haitian culture and history—a prime example of how the Haitian community has been benefiting from such multicultural policy in terms of social recognition.

However, even in this socio-institutional context, diasporic identity is by no means a carbon copy of the homeland's identity: neither rigid nor essentialised, but reshaped to adapt to the host society, and based on how individuals go on to embrace its cultural values and patterns. The second-generation's self-identification tendencies mirror that complex and nuanced cultural process: nearly a quarter of the students interviewed in Miami public schools claimed a hybrid Haitian-American identity in 2000 (Audebert 2006).

In the Caribbean, attempts at conveying that identity and re-enacting the homeland's culture have been widely influenced by the migrants' status. In the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos archipelago, where Haitians make up a quarter of the local population, they are mostly undocumented, stigmatised by local populations and living in relatively separate communities. However, the fact that they continue to pass on their cultural heritage and to sustain ties with their Florida relatives has fostered a diasporic culture. In the Dominican Republic, Haitian migrants have had to deal with the consequences of difficult bilateral relations, colour prejudice and the perception of Haitian immigration as a threat to local identity and economy—all of which are echoed in the political arena and the media. As a result, although a third of Haitians now live in Santo Domingo and its vicinity, 45% of the estimated half a million Haitian migrants still live either near the border with Haiti or in plantation areas (often in *bateyes*), with implications on the conservation of cultural practices inherited from Haiti. However, unlike the situation in North America, the latter has not typically engendered networks connected to other diasporic poles, due to the general isolation and low economic and technical resources of migrants living in the Dominican Republic.

Collective Memory Outlets

The fact that scattered communities are upholding shared cultural specificities and mutual ties in a transnational networking context does not trump the importance of location in the structuration of the diasporic space. Diasporic identity stems from the

linkage between disbanded spaces of Haitian migration. That identity's territorial markers express the diaspora's collective memory as well as social and political endeavours meant to improve its people's integration into host societies. These endeavours unfold mainly in the religious, associative (cultural, professional, housing), educational and electoral fields.

Thus, two key groups of players embody diasporic identity on a local scale. The former show strong symbolic value for they preserve Haitian collective memory. They are mostly churches with two distinct ways of construing and embedding location in their endeavours: Protestant churches display—safe for rare exceptions—a block- or street-level influence while Catholic churches radiate on a district or city scale. Churches stand as preferred locations for the Haitian community's social events and cultural traditions. Ethnic entrepreneurship also helps maintain collective memory through storefront aesthetics: with signs referring to Haitian history (including migration), using Creole or French, colours of the Haitian flag, etc. (Audebert 2006). The second category is embodied by institutions striving locally to improve migrants' integration into their host society. For instance, the participation of Haitian- American political organisations in the US political arena includes the creation of ethnicity-based electoral territories—Miami-Dade, Brooklyn, Connecticut, Massachusetts in particular (Audebert 2009).

Furthermore, the names given to specific settlement locations also mirror the existence of a diasporic territory: districts (*Little Haiti* in Florida), streets (*Avenue Felix Morrisseau-Leroy* in Miami), churches (*Notre Dame d'Haïti*) or yet schools (*Toussaint Louverture Elementary School*) bear the mark of the homeland's history and culture. In sectors with a robust Haitian presence, symbolic territorialisation resonates with preferred settlement locations based on shared origins: since the 1970s, *Little Haiti* has thus sheltered large numbers of migrants from Port Salut on 72nd Street and Port-de-Paix on 59th Street. Social reproduction, as captured by such settlement strategies, therefore nurtures attachment to places of origin based on the replication of their original social networks. The new territories occupied by these re-enacted communities thus assert themselves as memorial arenas, and the diaspora's relation to geographic location translates into a dual relationship between settlement locations and home localities.

Conclusion

Substantial and steady migration flows, fuelled by Haiti's challenging economic and political situation and the resulting (family, religious, trade) networks, contribute to preserving and reshaping the linkage between the diaspora's multiple clusters. The stakes of its diaspora's exponential demo- graphic, economic and political weight are well known to Haiti's public authorities who, after seeking to discredit that influence,

now wish to build on it in view of channelling its economic power while also using it as a diplomatic weapon in the global arena. Haitian migrants, however, did not wait for the Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad to be created, nor for the revision of Haitian nationality policy to be debated, to grow a collective diasporic awareness fostered by institutions set on defending migrants abroad. The question of how sustainable that diasporic identity and solidarity should still be raised, as it appears that the Haitian diaspora's reality comprises myriad different experiences and issues related to each host society's integration scheme, the migrants' social status, migration seniority or the overall integration of immigrants and their children.

Acculturation is ubiquitous despite rising forms of ethnicism and host societies being increasingly open to apparent cultural differences. However, differentiated acculturations—as a result of migrants having to adjust to very diverse social and institutional contexts in host societies— have generated a culturally heterogeneous diaspora. Strong endogamy endures, within Haitian communities—while also allowing for relatively recent interethnic dynamics to emerge; which again raises the issue of intergenerational cultural legacy. Likewise, the fact that new generations are growing noticeably more prominent in several diasporic locations— accounting for 40% of the community in Quebec, 35% in the Dominican Republic, and 24% in the United States— makes it difficult to replicate the more traditional forms of Haitian-ness. It is fading in New York or Miami, for instance, where younger generations are constructing their identities based on select cultural codes drawn from other communities (especially the United States' Black community). Last but not least, the stagnating political and economic situation and ever-growing feeling of hopelessness as to Haiti's future—not to mention the unprecedented trauma generated by the earthquake of 12 January 2010— have further dwindled the likeliness of permanent return projects. In this context, the Haitian diasporic bond is bound to rely more than ever before on the continuity of large-scale migration flows feeding multiple locations at once.

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