Working Papers

Paper No. 168

State Expansion, Mobility and the Aspiration to Stay in Western French Guiana

Mathis Osburg

MADE project paper 17

The IMI Working Papers Series

The IMI working paper series presents current research in the field of international migration. The series was initiated by the International Migration Institute (IMI) since its founding at the University of Oxford in 2006. The papers in this series (1) analyse migration as part of broader global change, (2) contribute to new theoretical approaches and (3) advance our understanding of the multilevel forces driving migration and experiences of migration.

Abstract

This paper explores how processes of social transformation since the 1980s have impacted on mobility patterns and migration aspirations in Western French Guiana. The French state showed little interest in the development of this scarcely populated region until the arrival of refugees during Suriname's War of the Interior (1986–1991), which triggered rapid population growth and pressed the state to provide services. With the expansion of formal education, young people's life aspirations shifted away from rural economic activities and were increasingly mismatched with locally available opportunities. In line with mobility transition theories, these social transformations diversified and expanded mobility patterns: whereas grandparents relied on short-term circular mobility along the Maroni river to perform agricultural activities in the region's interior, today's young people engage in permanent rural-urban and overseas migration in order to access educational facilities and economic opportunities. Despite these 'instrumental' aspirations for migration, the analysis of 31 interviews revealed that young people have an 'intrinsic' preference to stay in Western French Guiana. Many remain closely attached to their familiar socio-cultural environment and families; at the same time, the French state provides basic economic stability which facilitates staying – e.g. through paid professional training and social benefits. In fact, young people find themselves in a situation of 'in-betweenness'. They cannot achieve their life aspirations locally but do not aspire to migrate. This finding shows that migration aspirations do not automatically increase with levels of 'development'. Instead, this paper highlights the ambiguous effects of developmental processes, especially state expansion, on people's migration aspirations.

Keywords: Development, state expansion, education, family, social transformations, migration aspirations, mobility transition, French Guiana

Author: Mathis Osburg (University of Amsterdam)

Acknowledgements: The research leading to these results was part of the OYAMAR project at the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) in Cayenne, French Guiana. The author thanks Marion Comptour, Simona Vezzoli, Frédéric Piantoni, Franck Temporal, Clémentine Leservoisier and Adelaide Jeanney for their support during fieldwork. This Working Paper was made possible by the MADE (Migration as Development) Consolidator Grant project, receiving funding from the European Research Council under the European Community's Horizon 2020 Programme (H2020/2015–2020)/ERC Grant Agreement 648496. The author thanks Hein de Haas, Simona Vezzoli, Dominique Jolivet, Kerilyn Schewel, Siebert Wielstra and Naiara Rodriguez-Peña for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Contents

1 Introduction **4**
2 Theoretical framework **5**
2.1 Migration as a part of larger processes of change 5
2.2 Migration as a function of people's aspirations and capabilities 6
3 Methodology and the places of fieldwork **8**
4 Social transformations and diversifying mobility patterns **11**
4.1 Social transformations since the 1980s 11
4.1.1 Demographic transition 11
4.1.2 Economic restructuring 12
4.1.3 Cultural transformation 14
4.1.4 State expansion 15
4.2 Diversifying mobility patterns 16
5 The aspiration to stay in Western French Guiana **20**
5.1 Low but existing capabilities to migrate 20
5.2 Perceptions of the 'good life' 21
5.3 The French state as a provider 23
5.4 Aspiring to stay but intending to leave 24
6 Conclusion **25**
References **27**
Annex **31**

1 Introduction

Until the 1980s, the French state only showed intermittent interest in the development of the Maroni River Basin in Western French Guiana (Guyane).[1] Saint-Laurent du Maroni, the region's[2] main urban centre, served for almost a century (1857–1949) as a penal colony to absorb the 'unwanted' in French society (Coquet 2013). Since the 1950s, the French state has gradually extended its presence in Western Guyane (Grotti 2017) but the region has remained scarcely populated and its economy continued to depend on slash-and-burn agricultural practices. These rural economic activities relied on the Maroni River as an axis of transport for short-term circular mobility between the coastal areas and the region's interior – mobility types that are commonly associated with pre-industrial societies (Vezzoli 2018; Zelinsky 1971).

Since the 1980s, Western French Guiana has experienced profound social changes. The arrival of refugees during Suriname's War of the Interior (1986–1991) triggered significant population growth and a continuous trend of high natality (INSEE 2016). This has contributed to the rapid expansion of urban areas and the emergence of a large young cohort (INSEE 2016). Urged on by this rapid demographic growth, the French state increasingly stepped in as a provider of services – such as health care, public housing, welfare, education and the construction of road and utility networks. In turn, state expansion promoted an economic shift from agriculture to a weak tertiary economy strongly dependent on public employment and social benefits (INSEE 2017). Although agriculture remains important to this day (INSEE 2017), new economic opportunities have emerged in the informal sector, such as jobs in transborder trade or construction. However, these opportunities remain limited and do not match the rising educational levels of young people.

This paper explores how these profound social changes since the 1980s have affected shifts in mobility patterns and how they are shaping young people's migration aspirations today.[3] The findings contribute to research on 'migration transitions', a concept that suggests that developmental processes are strongly associated with shifts in mobility (de Haas 2010; Skeldon 1997; Zelinsky 1971). According to Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition model, which associates shifting mobility patterns with demographic transition, the rapid population growth in Western French Guiana should correlate with an overall increase in migration. However, we know that demographic variables alone cannot explain migration (Skeldon 2018). The Gulf countries, for instance, demonstrate low migration levels although their population is very young, while Eastern European countries are subject to high emigration but low or even negative demographic growth (Castles *et al*. 2014: 29). Moreover, development can have ambiguous effects on migration. For example, technological progress, such as better road and transport infrastructure, may reduce the costs of migration but can also facilitate commuting which, in turn, absorbs migratory movements (Rodríguez-Peña 2020; Vezzoli 2020; Zelinsky 1971). Finally, the effect of development on migration depends on the level of analysis: high migration volumes at the national level can hide wide variations in migration trends within countries (for an example, see Pelican 2013). In fact, regional differences in migration aspirations can be greater than disparities between countries (Carling *et al*. 2012; cited in Carling and Schewel 2018).

---

1 'French Guiana' is the official English denomination while 'Guyane' is the French name for this French overseas department. I use both terms interchangeably. The latter is not to be confused with 'Guyana', the ex-British colony.

2 I use the term 'department' (from the French: *'département d'outre-mer'*, or overseas department) to refer to French Guiana in its entirety. The 'region' refers to Western French Guiana, namely the territory administrated by the *Communauté de Communes de l'Ouest Guyanais* (CCOG). The CCOG unites the eight municipalities of Western French Guiana in one administrative entity.

3 In this paper, I use the terms 'mobility' and 'migration'. The latter refers to movements which entail a (semi-) permanent change of residence. 'Mobility' is used in two senses: to englobe all types of spatial movement and to refer to non-migratory movements in particular.

Western French Guiana is a particularly interesting case to explore the complex relationship between development and migration. On the one hand, the region presents socio-economic aspects commonly associated with developing countries, such as a strong informal economy and an early stage in the demographic transition (Vezzoli 2018). On the other hand, it is part of an economically advanced Western European state which stabilises the region by providing public employment and services (Vezzoli 2018). This contradictory *status quo* is reflected in the lives of the local inhabitants, who retain links to both France and Suriname and engage simultaneously in the rural and the urban and the formal and informal economy.

This case study focuses on the Maroni River Basin, the border area between French Guiana and Suriname. Compared to the more urban areas around French Guiana's capital, Cayenne, the population in the Maroni Basin was rooted, until recently, in a forested environment with limited connections to state-driven activities. While demographic growth is particularly rapid in this region, the average level of income is considerably lower than in the rest of French Guiana (INSEE 2017). Given these circumstances, one might expect the population to have high aspirations to migrate to Cayenne or overseas, especially if we consider that migration from French Guiana to metropolitan France technically constitutes a form of 'internal' migration with few legal constraints. However, qualitative fieldwork in Saint-Laurent du Maroni and two villages along the Maroni River revealed that young people have strong aspirations to stay in Western Guyane.

This paper explores this paradox using a two-pronged theoretical approach. At the macro level, I use the social transformation framework to analyse how mobility is shaped by various structural changes (de Haas *et al*. 2020), focusing particularly on the political, economic and cultural dimensions. At the micro level, the aspirations and capabilities framework is useful in understanding the ambiguous – and sometimes counter-intuitive – effects which these macro-level changes have on people's decision to migrate (de Haas 2019a). The guiding question in this paper is:

- How have processes of social transformation since the 1980s shaped mobility trends within and from the Maroni River Basin?

This general research question entails sub-questions at the macro and micro levels:

(i) At the macro level, how are economic, cultural and political transformations perceived to have influenced shifts in mobility patterns?
(ii) At the micro level, how do young people perceive migration today and how can we explain their strong aspirations to stay in Western French Guiana?

After presenting the theoretical framework and methodology of this study, Section 4 will answer sub-question (i), outlining the perceived economic, cultural and political transformations in the Maroni Basin since the 1980s and how they contributed to a diversification of mobility patterns. Subsequently, Section 5 will answer sub-question (ii) and show how cultural factors and state support may reduce migration, creating low migration aspirations among young people. The conclusion will sum up the theoretical insights which these results produce concerning the relationship between migration, development and the state.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Migration as a part of larger processes of change

Despite its shortcomings, Zelinsky's hypothesis of the mobility transition provides a flexible framework in which to understand shifts in migration as an intrinsic part of larger global

processes of change. According to Zelinsky, 'there are definite, patterned regularities in the growth of personal mobility through space-time during recent history, and these regularities comprise an essential component of the modernization process' (Zelinsky 1971: 221). While this statement makes it easy to associate his idea with economic development, Zelinsky's original hypothesis was primarily demographic. He believed that mobility patterns change in relation to a society's stage in the 'vital transition' (Zelinsky 1971). The latter assumes that societies shift from a phase of little population growth coupled with high fertility and mortality, through a period of decreasing mortality and rapid growth, to a 'final' stage of minor population growth with both low fertility and mortality (Skeldon 2018: 395). Western French Guiana is currently experiencing the second phase of 'vital transition' which, according to Zelinsky's model, is characterised by an increase in all mobility types, namely a sharp rise in international, 'frontierward' and rural to urban migration, as well as rises in intra-urban and circular mobility (Zelinsky 1971: 233).

However, the mobility transition model is grounded in a very deterministic conceptualisation of 'development'. Zelinsky assumes a designated and unilinear path through predefined stages of 'modernisation'. Yet Western French Guiana constitutes an exemplary case to illustrate that development is anything but linear (Chambers 2003). In fact, the region never experienced industrialisation as such. Instead, we observed a direct transition from agriculture to a service economy strongly dependent on state funds (INSEE 2017). Indeed, states are central actors in development (Skeldon 1997; Vezzoli 2015) but find little recognition in Zelinsky's hypothesis. Arguably, Skeldon (1997) was the first to integrate the role of the state in the mobility transition framework. He argued that high levels of development and state formation lead to both global and local migration, whereas low levels produce mostly local movements (Skeldon 1997). However, Skeldon's theory does not seem to consider that a state in the later stages of its formation process can also reduce migration, e.g. by providing public employment and services that facilitate staying.

To capture the role of the state in migration, this paper uses the social transformation framework (de Haas *et al*. 2020). Castles (2010: 1576) defines *social transformation* as 'a fundamental shift in the way society is organised that goes beyond the continual processes of incremental social change that are always at work'. This framework is helpful in associating shifts in migration with structural change in multiple dimensions, namely the demographic, economic, cultural, political and technological (de Haas *et al*. 2020). Changes in these dimensions unfold at varying paces (de Haas *et al*. 2020). For instance, the expansion of the French state in Western Guyane seems abrupt but cultural norms and values might change more slowly. Moreover, different dimensions of social transformation interplay (de Haas *et al*. 2020). In Western Guyane, the most relevant social changes enabling us to understand shifts in mobility are state expansion, economic restructuring and cultural transformation, all three of which go hand-in-hand and often reinforce each other. To analyse the micro-level effects of these macro-level shifts, I rely on the aspirations and capabilities framework.

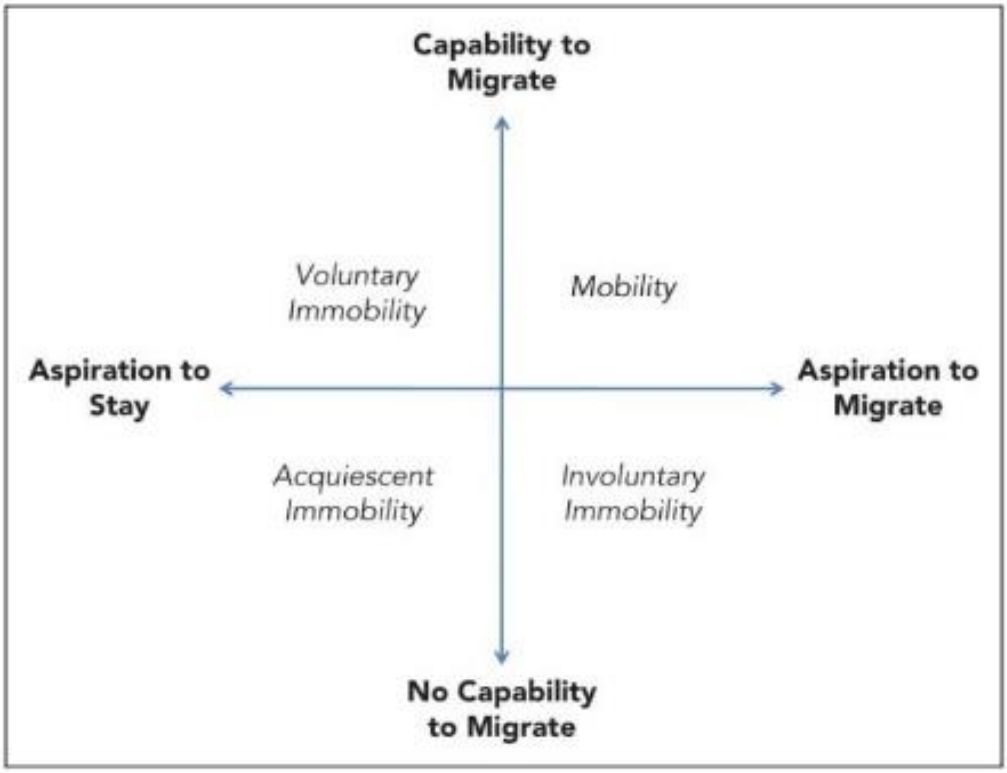
2.2 Migration as a function of people's aspirations and capabilities

The aspirations and capabilities framework allows us to move beyond simplistic explanations of migration as a direct consequence of structural change. Rather, migration is a function of people's capabilities to migrate, namely the absence of obstacles as well as the personal resources needed to overcome constraints (Carling 2014; de Haas 2014) and people's willingness to migrate (Carling and Schewel 2018; de Haas 2019a). While structural forces affect people's migration aspirations and capabilities, individuals can still make use of their agency to decide how to adapt to these changes. For instance, economic and infrastructural development usually expands access to resources and lowers the costs and risks of travelling, thereby enhancing people's capabilities to migrate (de Haas 2014, 2019b). However, people's

migration aspirations still depend on their perception of the 'good life' (Mabogunje 1970) and how they imagine this life to be possible at the place of origin and destination (de Haas 2014, 2019b). Finally, migration aspirations and capabilities are interdependent. For example, if migration is perceived to be very difficult – e.g. because it involves important financial costs – this can lower its desirability (Mata-Codesal 2018). *Vice versa*, high constraints such as a border wall may fuel the feeling of being imprisoned and increase the aspiration to leave (de Haas 2014).

The aspirations and capabilities framework proposes a rich categorisation of possible (im)mobility outcomes (see Figure 1): '*mobility* (i.e., having both the aspiration and the capability to migrate), *involuntary immobility* (i.e., having the aspiration but not the capability to migrate), *voluntary immobility* (i.e. having the capability but not the aspiration to migrate)' (Carling 2002; cited in Schewel 2019a: 334),[4] and *acquiescent immobility* (i.e., having neither the aspiration nor the capability to migrate) (Schewel 2019a: 335). The aspirations and capabilities framework helps to conceptualise *mobility* and *immobility* as two outcomes of the same migratory agency (de Haas 2014). In fact, migration of one family member can enable another member of the family to stay put (Stark 1991) or, *vice versa*, immobility can be a necessary condition for others to leave (Mata-Codesal 2015). Moreover, migration followed by return can be perceived as a means to stay put in the long term (Mata-Codesal 2018).

Figure 1. The mobility outcomes proposed by the aspirations and capabilities framework



Source: Schewel (2019a: 335)

Rather than introducing *voluntary* and *involuntary* mobility as separate categories, the aspirations and capabilities framework proposes that we think in terms of a spectrum of possibilities in between these two ideal types (Schewel 2019a: 336). The less there is the aspiration to migrate, the more the migration outcome would be *involuntary*. *Vice versa*, the

[4] In her article, Schewel (2019a) uses Carling's original term 'ability' (Carling 2002). De Haas replaced the term 'ability' with 'capability' (de Haas 2003, 2010; Schewel 2019a).

more there is the aspiration to migrate, the more the migration outcome would be *voluntary*. Theoretically speaking, there is no clear line that divides these two categories (Bakewell 2007; Carling 2002; Castles 2003). However, there is a wide spectrum of possibilities between close-to-no migration aspirations – e.g. when people flee from conflict – and very high migration aspirations – e.g. in cases of Erasmus student mobility. By categorising all these different types of movement under the label *migration aspiration* or simply the 'conviction that migration is preferable to non-migration' (Carling and Schewel 2018: 946), we miss out on a more realistic conceptualisation of distinct attitudes towards migration.

One way to overcome this difficulty is to distinguish between *intrinsic* and *instrumental* aspirations to migrate although, in practice, people may have both (de Haas 2014). *Intrinsic aspirations* relate to the idea that migration is an aspiration in its own right because people perceive it as a valuable or joyful experience (de Haas 2014). While the migration literature refers to the intrinsic values of mobility mostly in regard to 'privileged' movers (de Haas 2014), such as tourists or 'lifestyle migrants' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), research has shown that motivations like 'adventure' (de Haas 2014) are also present among more vulnerable migrant groups (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2011). *Instrumental aspirations*, on the other hand, receive more attention in migration studies (de Haas 2014). They refer to migration as a means to an end – for example, to secure 'higher incomes, higher social status, better education or protection from persecution' (de Haas 2014). For such types of migration, a person's aspiration to migrate might be less harmonious with his or her ideal life aspirations.[5] In Western Guyane, contextual factors could make us think that people want to leave; however, the young people in this study actually imagine their ideal life on-site. Nevertheless, we will see that some young people still decide to migrate for *instrumental* reasons, at least temporarily.

3 Methodology and the places of fieldwork

To address the role of both structure and agency in shaping mobility, I rely on existing literature, statistical evidence and interview data acquired through fieldwork in Western Guyane from February to May 2019. To capture the potential impact of past and present policy initiatives on people's mobility, I interviewed representatives of eight public bodies, including the municipal, regional and federal governments, as well as urban planning and youth support institutions.[6] Moreover, I use INSEE statistics (French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies) to sketch out demographic and educational developments, as well as current economic and migration trends. Finally, to better understand the evolution of socio-economic conditions since the 1980s, I relied on existing literature (Piantoni 2009; Redfield 2000; Troussier 1976) and the information provided by elderly interviewees.

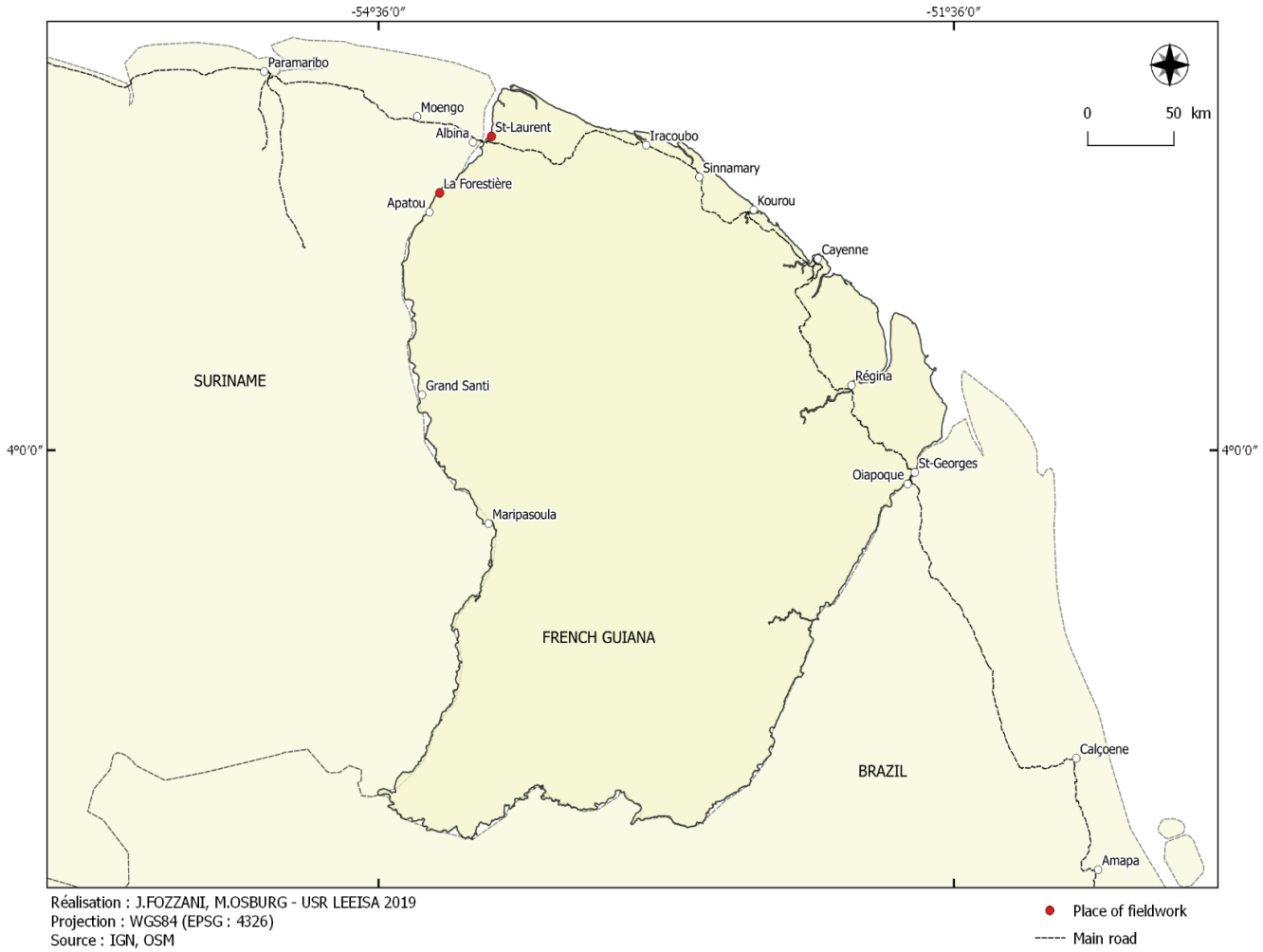
To examine the relation between these contextual conditions and people's life and mobility aspirations, I conducted 31 interviews focusing on two age groups: young people (from 16 to 30 years) because they usually constitute the most mobile cohort of a population (Bogue 1959; de Jong and Fawcett 1981) and (grand)parents (usually above 50 years old) because their data allow me to analyse intergenerational shifts in life aspirations and mobility patterns (see Figure 6 in the annex for the participants' characteristics). The interview questions traced back the economic activities which people exercised – as well as their mobility patterns, frequencies, motivations and aspirations – and how they are perceived to have changed over time. Moreover, I collected the life stories of three participants, of which I use extracts to illustrate the research

[5] Thanks to Kerilyn Schewel for bringing up this thought.

[6] I conducted interviews with representatives of the DEAL (*Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement*), the CCOG (*Communauté des Communes de l'Ouest Guyanais*), the municipal urban planning department in Saint-Laurent du Maroni, the RSMA (*Régiment Service Militaire Adapté*), the EPFA (*L'Établissement Public Foncier et d'Aménagement de la Guyane*), the CCAS (*Centre Communal d'Action Sociale*), the *Maison des Adolescents* and the *Mission Locale.*

findings in more detail. Finally, I analysed and coded the accumulated data using Nvivo. I conducted thematic analysis, based on a mix of deductive and inductive codes. The deductive codes, grounded in the theoretical framework of this study, captured macro-level economic, political and cultural changes. The inductive codes derived from the interviews themselves.

Figure 2. Map of French Guiana with places of fieldwork marked in red



The fieldwork took place in Baka Pasi, an informal suburban neighbourhood of Saint-Laurent du Maroni, and Anaoela Ondo and La Forestière, two immediately neighbouring villages along the Maroni River, about 45 minutes by car from Saint-Laurent du Maroni and 15 minutes from Apatou (see Figure 2 above). By conducting interviews in both an urban and a rural setting, I aimed to uncover diverging mobility patterns and aspirations. The French state has a stronger presence in town and is only just beginning to extend its services to the villages of La Forestière and Anaoela Ondo. At the moment of fieldwork, the villages still lacked basic utility networks (water, electricity, sewage), internet or phone service. A recent change was the construction of the road connecting Saint-Laurent du Maroni with Apatou in 2010 (Feuilly 2008). This proposed a faster axis of mobility to the inhabitants of the villages who, until then, had been dependent on the Maroni River for circulation. However, there is no public transport and informal collective taxis are expensive and inconvenient. In fact, the river remains central in people's lives, not only for fishing and washing but also for moving about. For example, children from the villages commute by pirogue to Apatou for primary and middle school. For high school, young people usually have to move to Saint-Laurent du Maroni but remain connected to their village through regular visits at the weekends. While these circumstances

make mobility a fundamental necessity for young villagers, we could assume that their close contact with urban lifestyles increases their desire to move to town permanently.

Inhabitants of Baka Pasi, on the other hand, have greater access to basic utilities and state-provided services, which might lower their migration aspirations, at least within the region. Informal neighbourhoods like Baka Pasi are particularly interesting for research because they represent an increasingly large share of the population in Saint-Laurent du Maroni (Colombier *et al*. 2017). Lacking affordable housing solutions, informal neighbourhoods mushroomed in the suburban areas of town since the 1980s, raising the concerns of the local administration. Today, among the 28,000 inhabitants of 'priority districts',[7] 44 per cent are estimated to live in informal housing (Contrat de Ville 2015). When the first people settled in Baka Pasi in the 1970s, the area was still covered in forest but the town rapidly expanded and, in the future, the neighbourhood might well become a central urban location.

Both Baka Pasi and the villages are almost exclusively populated by Maroon[8] families. Maroons have lived on the French and Surinamese sides of the Maroni River for centuries, although many migrated to French Guiana as refugees during Suriname's War of the Interior (1986–1991). Due to their particularly rapid demographic growth (Collomb and Jolivet 2008), they might already make up the majority of the population in Western Guyane today. In 2013, only 4 per cent of the region's inhabitants were born in metropolitan France; 36 per cent were immigrants,[9] of whom 55 per cent were Surinamese who live predominantly in and around Saint-Laurent du Maroni[10] (INSEE 2017). Concerning the participants of this study, many (grand)parents were born in Suriname and some reside today in French Guiana without regular residence status; however, most of the young people were born in Western Guyane and have French nationality. This composition seems to correspond to the overall population of Saint-Laurent du Maroni, where 50 per cent of all 'heads of households' were born in a foreign country.[11] Besides their administrative vulnerability, the participants of this study often live in precarious economic conditions. About 80 per cent of my interviewees do not have any formal employment, a trend which reflects more general conditions in Saint-Laurent du Maroni. In fact, even research in districts with predominantly formal housing units showed that 70 per cent

---

7 For the period from 2015 to 2020, the authorities in Saint-Laurent du Maroni identified several 'priority districts' for local policy-making. These districts represent approximately half of the town's overall population (Contrat de Ville 2015). They include many but not all of the informal neighbourhoods of Saint-Laurent du Maroni.

8 Maroons are the descendants of Africans who escaped from slavery throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Vezzoli 2015). They are made up of six subgroups: Saramaka, Paramaka, Ndjuka, Aluku, Kwinti and Matawai. The places of fieldwork are predominantly populated by Ndjuka. While different Maroon subgroups speak different languages, Maroons in the Maroni Basin can communicate in Bushi Tongo ('bush language'). Another term for Maroons in French Guiana and Suriname is 'Bushinenge'. Sticking with the practices of anglophone academic language, I prefer the term 'Maroon' because it involves a stronger connection to the history of the group (Collomb and Jolivet 2008: 78). However, both terms carry pejorative and Eurocentric connotations. 'Maroon' derives from the Spanish 'cimarron', its original meaning describing a domesticated animal that became wild again (Collomb and Jolivet 2008: 77). 'Bushinenge' comes from 'Bush Negroes' and is commonly used by young people on the French side of the Maroni River (Collomb and Jolivet 2008: 78).

9 According to INSEE, an 'immigrant' is a person born in a foreign country with a foreign nationality but living in France. A person remains an 'immigrant' even though he or she acquires French nationality by naturalisation (INSEE 2017).

10 One third of the immigrants were from Brazil. Brazilians are usually middle-aged men (from 15 to 49 years) who often pursue gold-mining activities in the region's interior (INSEE 2017). This is why males in this age group are over-represented in the interior of French Guiana (see Figure 3 in 4.1.1).

11 Until 2015, INSEE determined the 'head of household' ('*chef de ménage*' or '*personne de référence du ménage*') depending on the number of people living in a household, their employment status, age and sex. Priority is given to those who are male, active (employed or unemployed) and older than other household members (the exact definition is available at https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1944, accessed on 07 August 2020). In Saint-Laurent du Maroni, 43.9 per cent of all 'heads of household' are female. The data presented here correspond to the average of INSEE's annual population censuses from 2013 to 2017.

of the inhabitants gain their income exclusively from informal economic activities (ADIE 2009). In sum, the participants of this study are certainly part of a vulnerable segment of French Guiana's population, but the findings presented in this paper seem pertinent to the littoral of Western French Guiana[12].

4 Social transformations and diversifying mobility patterns

In Section 4.1, I present interviewees' perceptions of major social transformations in Western French Guiana since the 1980s. While the demographic transition remains a contextual factor for this study, I focus on the profound political, economic and cultural changes that were accelerated by the recent encroachment of the French state in Western Guyane, especially through the expansion of formal education. Section 4.2 shows how interviewees perceive the influence of these structural changes on their mobility behaviour and how mobility destinations have diversified over time: while people used to circulate between rural areas along the Maroni River, young people today often engage in (semi-)permanent mobility to urban destinations – including Saint-Laurent du Maroni, Paramaribo (the capital of Suriname) and, more occasionally, Cayenne and cities in metropolitan France.

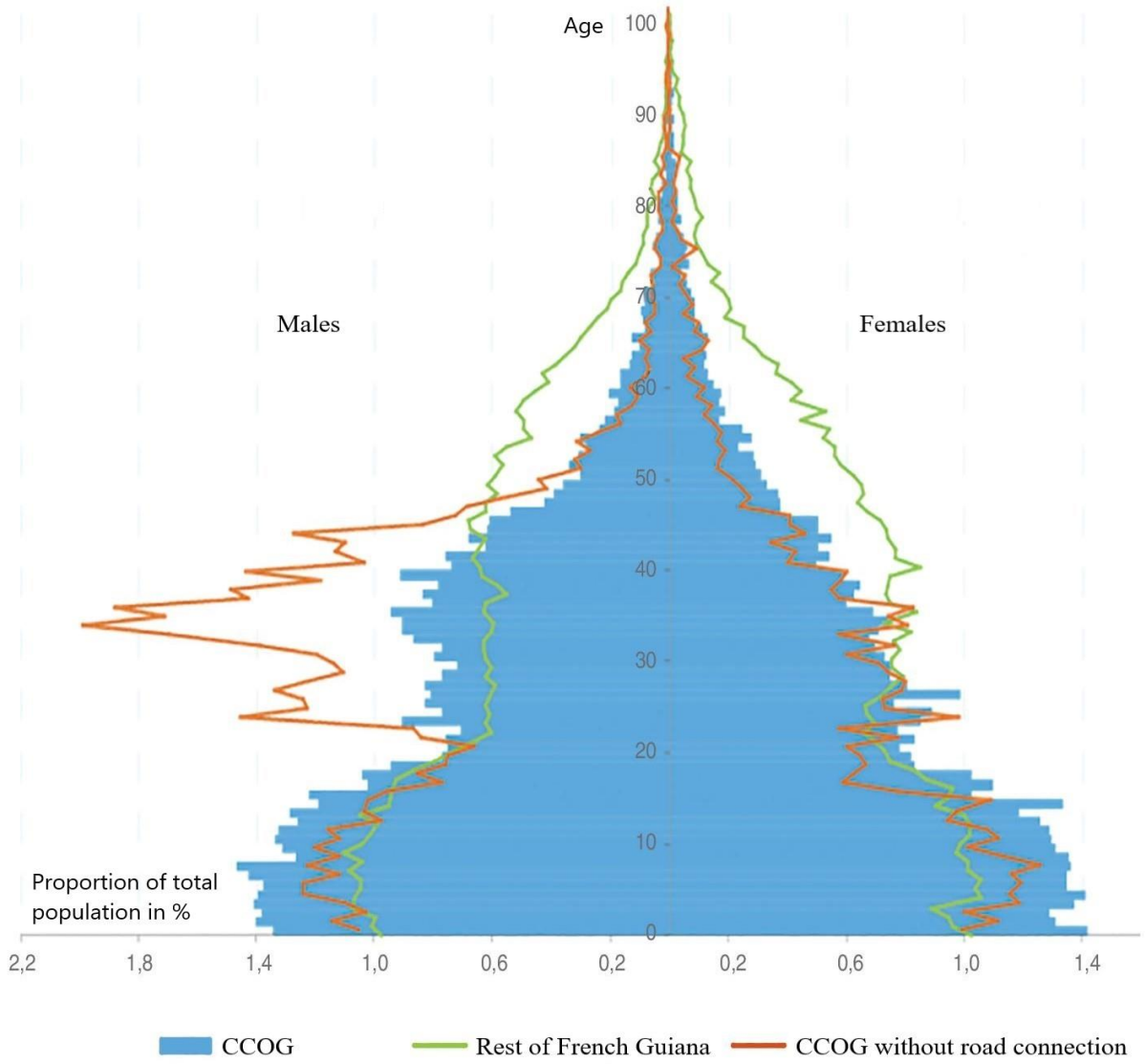
4.1 Social transformations since the 1980s

4.1.1 Demographic transition

French Guiana is one of the largest administrative regions in France but one of the smallest in terms of population size. The great majority of its roughly 290,000 inhabitants live along the coastline. Nevertheless, the population is rapidly increasing and French Guiana has become the youngest administrative region in France (INSEE 2016). This is especially true for Western French Guiana, where over half of the population is under the age of 25 (INSEE 2016). Here, the arrival of refugees from Suriname in the 1980s triggered rapid population growth, initially due to in-migration and later to high fertility rates (INSEE 2016). Consequently, the region's main urban centre, Saint-Laurent du Maroni, has multiplied in size from approximately 5,000 inhabitants in 1968 to 44,000 in 2014 (INSEE 2017). Although fertility rates are slowly starting to decrease, launching another phase in the demographic transition (INSEE 2016), Saint-Laurent du Maroni is estimated to become French Guiana's biggest city and reach 135,000 inhabitants by 2030 (Colombier *et al*. 2017). While this research purposely focused on the large cohort of possibly very mobile young people (Wintrebert 2013), the economic, cultural and political changes are more relevant when explaining shifting mobility patterns in Western Guyane.

[12] The dynamics in the interior of the region are generally very different from those on the littoral, the area close to the coast. Villages south of Apatou are not connected to the littoral by a road, nor do they benefit from the same public services. For example, there is still not a single high school in the interior of French Guiana (INSEE 2017).

Figure 3. Age pyramids



Source: INSEE (2017)

4.1.2 Economic restructuring

Throughout the twentieth century, the economy in Western Guyane has been limited to rural economic activities, particularly slash-and-burn agriculture. Ever since Amerindian and Maroon populations fled from French colonisers into the interior of the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they led nomadic lives and interfered little with the colonial economy (Troussier 1976). Only after the abolition of slavery in 1848 did these populations resettle on the coast and along riverbanks, where they established small-scale agricultural villages (Troussier 1976). While the French state was already an important actor in French Guiana's economy in the 1970s (Troussier 1976), the rural west of the department continued to rely on activities in the primary economic sector, including artisanal fishing, forestry and agriculture. People typically farmed in *abattis*, the itinerant agricultural practice of clearing the forest to create cultivable land (on local agricultural practices, see Demaze and Manusset 2008; Gely 1984). This type of manual farming usually served the purpose of self-subsistence.

As a result of this limited economic base, the economic development in Western Guyane has not been able to keep up with its demographic growth (ADIE 2009; INSEE 2017). French

Guiana's GDP *per capita* – about €14,300 in 2018 – is the highest in the region[13] but remains low compared to the French average of €35,000 (INSEE 2019a). In Western French Guiana, the economic circumstances are particularly precarious. The region's annual average income in 2013 amounted to €9,700, which represents only half as much as in the rest of the department (INSEE 2017). The unemployment rate in the region reached 54 per cent, compared to 26 per cent in the rest of French Guiana (INSEE 2017). Among youth aged 15 to 24 years, the unemployment rate even reached 71 per cent (INSEE 2017).[14]

Despite the low levels of economic development, we can observe profound changes in the economic structure. First and foremost, the economy in Western Guyane has become almost completely dependent on the French state. The great majority of declared employment is supported by the public sector – 70 compared to 42 per cent in the rest of the department (INSEE 2017). The emergence of employment opportunities in the public sector has shaped migration between rural and urban spaces in French Guiana (Piantoni 2009). Their availability in cities has motivated urbanisation since the 1960s, and their growing occurrence in villages and small towns later triggered a movement back to more rural areas (Piantoni 2009: 185). While only one person in my research sample is employed in the public sector, many of the participants' families rely on social benefits. Altogether, 21 per cent of the population in Western Guyane receive the social minima (*Revenue de Solidarité Active*) and the social benefits by the CAF (*Caisse d'Allocations Familiales*) represent a substantial portion of many people's income (INSEE 2017).

These official statistics mask new economic opportunities and engagement in the informal sector. In fact, the informal economy in Western Guyane is well-established and covers all types of services, from local product provision, to transport and entertainment. The revenue from informal activities makes up an important share of people's income in Saint-Laurent du Maroni (ADIE 2009). This is also true for the young people who participated in my study, as they usually secure a basic livelihood with subsistence 'jobs'[15] in commerce or construction. Further, proximity to Suriname encourages local transborder informal trade; traders often sell cheaper Surinamese products in Western Guyane and benefit from the price differences between the two countries (Piantoni 2009). Lastly, drug trafficking is a lucrative and more easily accessible economic opportunity for young people in despair. Most of the young interviewees know of people who smuggled drugs; some were approached to become a 'mule'– that is, someone who swallows and smuggles cocaine capsules on planes from Cayenne to Paris.

Despite this economic diversification, agriculture still remains important in Western Guyane (INSEE 2017). In 2010, 78 per cent of French Guiana's agricultural surfaces were located within the boundaries of the CCOG (see fn 2; INSEE 2017). Many of the interviewees, especially in the villages, maintain an *abattis*. Some sell their own products to gain additional income, while others produce for personal needs or use the *abattis* as a strategy to legitimise their residency[16] (Demaze 2008). Nevertheless, for almost all households, agriculture is no

[13] According to the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook Database (https://www.imf.org/en/data, accessed 07 August 2020).

[14] According to INSEE (2017), the unemployment rate is the percentage of unemployed people in the active population (people in employment and unemployed). The data presented here reflect the results of the population census in 2013. 'Unemployed' are considered as those people (aged 15 or above) who declared themselves unemployed unless they explicitly declared that they were not looking for work, as well as people who declared themselves neither unemployed nor employed but looking for work (the definition is available at https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1479#, accessed 07 August 2020).

[15] 'Job' is the term locals use to refer to any kind of informal work. It describes mostly side or short-term activities without legal working contracts.

[16] In the local context of informal housing, the duration of stay at one's place of residence is important. The longer the stay, the greater is the legitimacy of occupying the given space. In the villages, I was told many times that the *abattis* is the first criteria for the authorities in evaluating the length of a person's residence. If the field is

longer the only source of income or livelihood. Today, people in Western Guyane often engage in both urban and rural economic activities, the latter being perceived as a fall-back option, to be engaged in seasonally or whenever no more-profitable occupation is available (Piantoni 2009). This type of pluriactivity (Efstratoglou-Todoulou 1990; Marsden 1990; Reis et al. 1990; de Vries 1990) results in increased mobility, at least locally, in order to exercise different types of short-term 'jobs'. Zelinsky foresaw similar adaptation strategies in the second phase of 'vital transition' – namely, part-time employment in rural and urban locations or forms of commuting which may precede later phases of more-complex mobility patterns (Zelinsky 1971: 236).

4.1.3 Cultural transformation

Despite the statistical importance of agriculture in Western Guyane, the life aspirations of young people seem to have shifted away from the *abattis* agriculture and from other traditional activities such as the construction of pirogues or the Maroon art, *Tembe*. Young people generally associate these activities with the elderly. While they might still help their families working the land, young people are discouraged by the physically hard labour which *abattis* agriculture demands. As one 21-year-old young man from La Forestière, who plans to create an animal husbandry business in a village along the Maroni River, states:

> *I don't like the way they cultivate. The Bushinenge way, I don't like that! […] It's too hard to cut with the machete, cut all that and then burn, to work alone, it's too complicated for me! […] I won't tell you, but we didn't have enough equipment [refers to his childhood]. When I was doing my CAP [Certificate of Vocational Aptitude], we went for a study visit to Martinique [another French overseas department]. So, I saw the means they have there. And all that we don't have in Guyane […] the machines! […] Well, I don't want to do my thing the Bushinenge way, no! I want to do my thing how the whites do, let's say [laughs]. With machines and all that.*

Agriculture remains a connector to the territory and traditions of Maroon people but the way in which younger generations think about agriculture has changed. For example, for many interviewees, planting constitutes a hobby or a means to produce for personal needs. Young people may also demonstrate interest in more 'symbolic' forms of agriculture, such as small-scale (urban) gardening. Moreover, they repeatedly mention the Maroons' wide knowledge of plants, as in this interview with a 29-year-old mother of six children in Baka Pasi:

> *I*[17] *Compared to your mother's generation, do you think that the situation has improved for finding a job, and the life conditions?*
> *P*[18] *Yes! Before, it was the total abattis! […] The abattis, the, how do you say that, the hunting, pirogues, before it was too difficult, I was not going to survive [laughs]! It's true eh, I was not going to…if it was like this at the time […].*
> *I So, this work [referring to abattis agriculture], you don't like it?*
> *P No, psshh… [deprecative gesture]*
> *I But in the garden you like it [pointing at the plants around her house]?*
> *P Yes, me, I like planting though. I like that. Planting and all that […] As long as it is not too much work […]. We [referring to Maroons], we know well all these plants.*

well maintained (few weeds etc.), cleared and regularly cultivated, this gives the impression of a solid and long-term presence.

[17] Interviewer

[18] Participant

In the same district, a 30-year-old man is trying to establish an association which aims to teach both children and adults about the traditions and knowledge of Maroon culture which, in his words, 'people are unfortunately losing'. Members of the (grand)parents' generation may also worry about a loss of 'traditional' lifestyle, as evidenced by this 55-year-old father of 11 children in the village of Anaoela Onda:

> *The children today live like metropolitans, like white people. They only think about school and not any more about the things of their parents. Well, it's life that changes.*

Many young people expressed the aspiration to engage in professions associated with 'white people' and are aware that the availability of such opportunities is much greater in metropolitan France. This shift of professional aspirations is perceived to engender a change in family solidarity. A 55-year-old mother of eight in Baka Pasi describes how children used to live close to their parents and took care of them whereas, today, boys in particular have to look for jobs and lack the time to care for their families in the way they did before. The new economic setting is somehow perceived to be detrimental to family and community life:

> *Before we didn't worry, we worked in the field [abattis], we didn't search for other work. Today you have to look for work!*

As this quote suggests, leaving the agricultural economy behind can have ambiguous effects on well-being. Certainly, people perceive *abattis* agriculture as hard and difficult work without significant profits, yet it entailed a certain stability. Before, people did not aspire to find other work and lived closer together with their family members. Today, the economic conditions make life increasingly uncertain and precarious. With greater professional aspirations but few local opportunities, people are constantly searching for new economic ways to secure a livelihood. These circumstances require high levels of local mobility.

4.1.4 State expansion

Processes of economic restructuring and the emergence of new kinds of life aspirations are related to the expansion of the French state in Western Guyane. For instance, the state introduced policies that disincentivise people from engaging in *abattis* agriculture because, to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population and to maintain an ecological balance, one would need to intensify agricultural production and prevent deforestation (Menard and Morin 2012). Therefore, the regional government only proposes fixed and comparatively large concessions of land for agricultural exploitation. Yet, *abattis* agriculture depends on the rotation of small surfaces (Demaze and Manusset 2008). These circumstances make it difficult for people to legalise their *abattis*. In fact, the French state's thorough commitment to regularising economic activities in Western Guyane[19] involves extensive bureaucratic procedures which stand in sharp contradiction to the way in which people are used to living and working in this peripheral region.

Besides policy initiatives to formalise the economy, the expansion of the French state comes with a wider offer of formal education. While educational levels in French Guiana overall, and in its western region in particular, are much lower than in metropolitan France, they have nevertheless significantly increased over the past two generations (INSEE 2014, 2017; Marie and Rallu 2008). In 2013, only 25 per cent of the population in Western Guyane (above 15 years old and not in school) had a diploma superior to the *Brevet des Collèges,*

[19] In the discourse of officers working at the DEAL (*Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement*), an institutional representative of the federal state in Saint-Laurent du Maroni, much attention was paid to the need to regularise informal activities such as taxis, pirogues and housing.

awarded after nine years of schooling, compared to about 55 per cent in the rest of French Guiana (INSEE 2017). Due to the absence of tertiary educational facilities in the west, such diplomas are even less common: only about 7 per cent in Western Guyane compared to 20 in the rest of the department (INSEE 2017). However, in 2011, 45 per cent of 18–24-year-olds in French Guiana had a diploma superior to the *Brevet des Collèges*, compared to 35 per cent in 1999 (INSEE 2014). Since these statistics include the interior of the department which, until today, did not dispose of a single high school (*lycée*), we can assume the changes to be more rapid in urban centres along the coast. In Western Guianese towns, the rapidly growing population of young people pressures the French state to construct more schools. Since 2010, two new high schools were built in the region (INSEE 2017) and two more are currently under construction, one of which is in Saint-Laurent du Maroni. The expansion of formal schooling has introduced significant generational differences. While almost all interviewees under the age of 30 went to high school, participants over the age of 50 rarely even attended middle school.

The expansion of formal education also increasingly introduces young people into the socio-cultural model established by the French state. For young Maroons, this raises important questions of belonging. The identification with French culture carries a foreign aspect for many because they remain emotionally connected to their (grand)parents' way of life. However, rising educational levels continue to create higher life aspirations and a wider scope of perceived economic opportunities which, in turn, often requires more complex mobility patterns (Schewel and Fransen 2018). Generally, the greater availability of education is perceived to be a decisive advantage for young people. For instance, most of them acquired fluent French language skills in school which allow them to find work more easily or manage bureaucratic procedures, as witnessed by this 19-year-old male in Baka Pasi:

> *I Do you think life is easier today than for your parents' generation?*
> *P Ehm, me, I wanna say that it's easier. It's easier because before, before they had… well we just have more options. So yes, me, I think it's easier. […]*
> *I For them, it was only agriculture?*
> *P Yes, it was more that [agriculture]. But we have school, we have school and all that. Voilà, more chances than them. Some of us don't realise how lucky we are. When we look back, we see the chance we have now. But some of us, the young people, don't think and turn away from the educational system. After all, we have more liberty than them [the parents' generation], yes. Because I have my uncles and aunts saying, 'If I had known, I would have continued my studies' or 'If I had known, I would have done training to speak French'. […] That's already something, to speak French!*

4.2 Diversifying mobility patterns

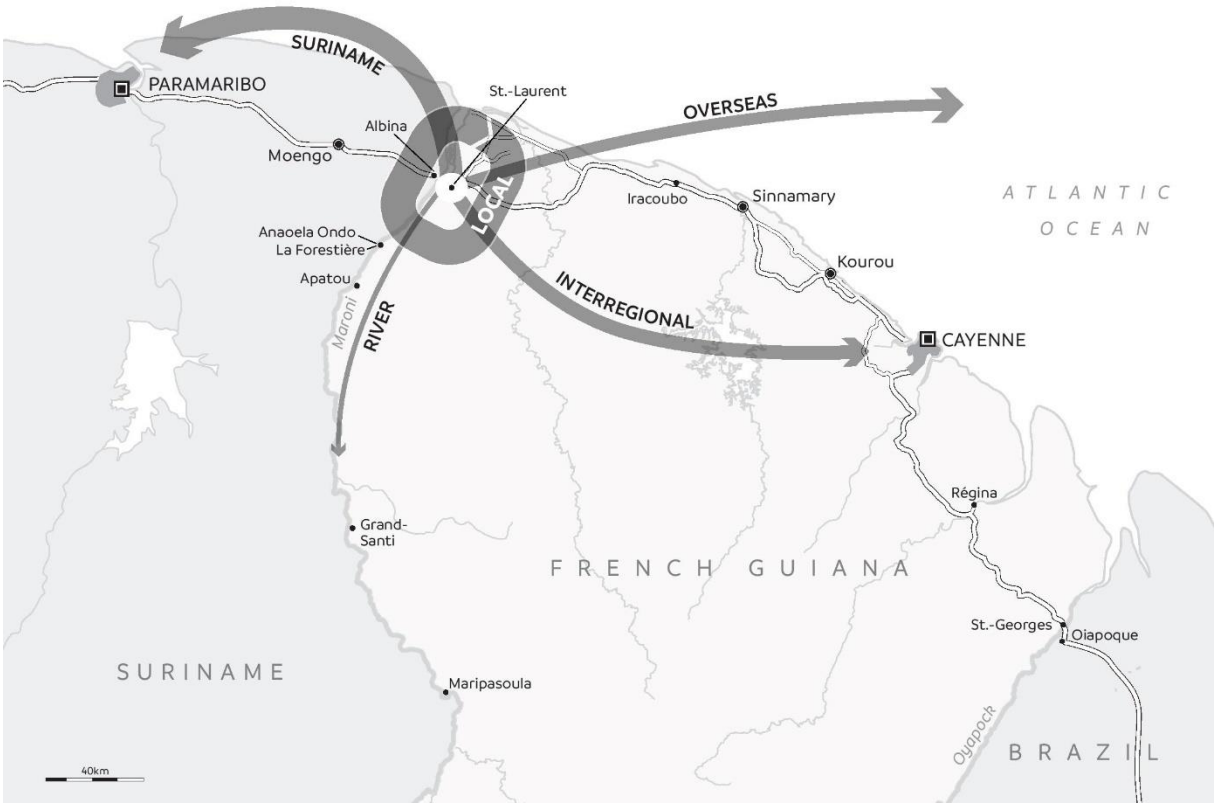
Since the 1980s, Western Guyane has experienced a shift from an agricultural economy towards an informal service economy stabilised by the French state. Meanwhile, educational levels have increased and young people have developed new life aspirations. Parallel to these changes, mobility destinations diversified. To analyse shifts in mobility, I use the following typology of mobility patterns (see Figure 4 below):

- *Local mobility* concerns the littoral of the CCOG and the Surinamese banks of the Maroni River up to Apatou, thus also Albina.
- *Mobility to Suriname* takes into consideration travel to the interior of Suriname, primarily to Paramaribo.
- *Interregional mobility* concerns patterns to the Eastern littoral of Guyane, mainly to Cayenne.
- *River mobility* regroups movements to areas along the Maroni River south of Apatou.

- Finally, *overseas mobility* is travel to metropolitan France or other French overseas departments.

Besides a general shift towards more urban destinations, *river* and *overseas* mobility are the two most relevant categories for understanding intergenerational changes in mobility.

Figure 4. The mobility destinations and size of flows of study participants[20]



The Maroni River has served as an axis of transport for centuries, be it among the Amerindian populations (Filoche *et al*. 2017; Grotti 2017) or Maroons whose *abattis* agriculture relied on mobility (Piantoni 2009: 161). However, this concerned mostly circular short-term movements between places of residence along the coast or the river and the interior of the region. Such types of mobility are commonly associated with pre-industrial societies (Vezzoli 2018; Zelinsky 1971). Except for (illegal) gold-mining activities, which still entail this kind of mobility pattern, mobility to the river and the interior has changed significantly. Over the past two generations, the participants in this study have become more and more disconnected from rural areas along the Maroni River. For example, grandparents (usually above 50 years old) still visit the villages of their families' origins in the interior, the 'grand village',[21] even if only for

[20] The mobility volumes illustrated in this map are representative only for the 31 participants of this study.

[21] The 'grand village' usually refers to one of the villages to which the ancestors of Maroons escaped in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Ndjuka, these 'origin areas' are located along the Tapanahoni River, a tributary of the Maroni River (a destination thus classified as *river mobility*). For Paramaka, they are along the Maroni River but closer to the littoral (also *river mobility*). However, for Saramaka they are in the interior of Suriname (thus *mobility to Suriname*) (Piantoni 2009: 169). While, for young Ndjuka, the 'grand village' constitutes a far-away reality, the geographical location of the origin villages of Paramaka and Saramaka is more accessible and young people might have visited there once or twice in their lives.

particular events such as funerals, *Kapiten*[22] nominations or 'whenever there is a problem'.[23] Members of the parents' generation (between 30 and 50 years old), already seem less connected to the river villages, although they still identify with these areas, as this 43-year-old man in Baka Pasi testified:

> *I am from up the hills, Maroni River, Tapanahoni. […] My parents were from there. I grew up in the city [Paramaribo]. I visited once. […] Yes, my parents' family is there. You know, it's a tribe thing: once you're from that tribe you still go to that area. […] Nobody [referring to his siblings and cousins] is really going a lot.*

Most young people (under 30 years) have never even been south of Apatou, the town where the road network ends.[24] For them, the river has become a tourist attraction. Even if their parents were born in river villages, young people only associate this area with very rare and somewhat 'obligatory' family visits.

This change of *river mobility* from circular patterns to very occasional family or touristic visits goes alongside shifting economic and educational circumstances. Whereas people used to choose their place of residence depending on the availability of agricultural land (Piantoni 2009: 161), nowadays young people want to access the economic opportunities and services provided in towns. The effects of education are central to explain this trend. Most children from the villages commute to elementary and middle school in Apatou, while entry into high school often entails a more permanent move (see Figure 5 below) because young people usually stay with family members in Saint-Laurent du Maroni during the week. To facilitate the access to high school for their children, families with sufficient resources may also decide to migrate to Saint-Laurent altogether or at least to create a secondary residence in town. In these circumstances, mothers often move to Saint-Laurent du Maroni together with their children, while the fathers stay in the village. Therefore, pupils witness the assets of urban life from an early age, be they basic services – such as electricity, water or mobile phone networks – or the proximity to school, friends and leisure activities. The absence of such services in their villages creates a feeling of 'relative deprivation' (Stark 1984; Stark and Taylor 1989) among the young, which fuels their aspirations for an urban life and generally motivates permanent rural-urban migration.

The mobility patterns of young people also adapted to the local opportunity structure. Since young people depend on diverse subsistence 'jobs' in the informal economy, they rely on circular *local mobility* within and around Saint-Laurent du Maroni to find and undertake economic activities. For instance, Albina, on the Surinamese riverbank, is an important local destination because of lower prices which allow people to save money or engage in informal transborder commerce. Moreover, intra-urban migration is very common in Saint-Laurent (see Figure 5 below), as expulsions from informal housing are recurrent or people choose to join the household of family members in other districts. The neighbourhood of Baka Pasi, for example, used to be an area where people had their *abattis* but where they later settled because they were kicked out from inner-city neighbourhoods or needed more space for their growing families.

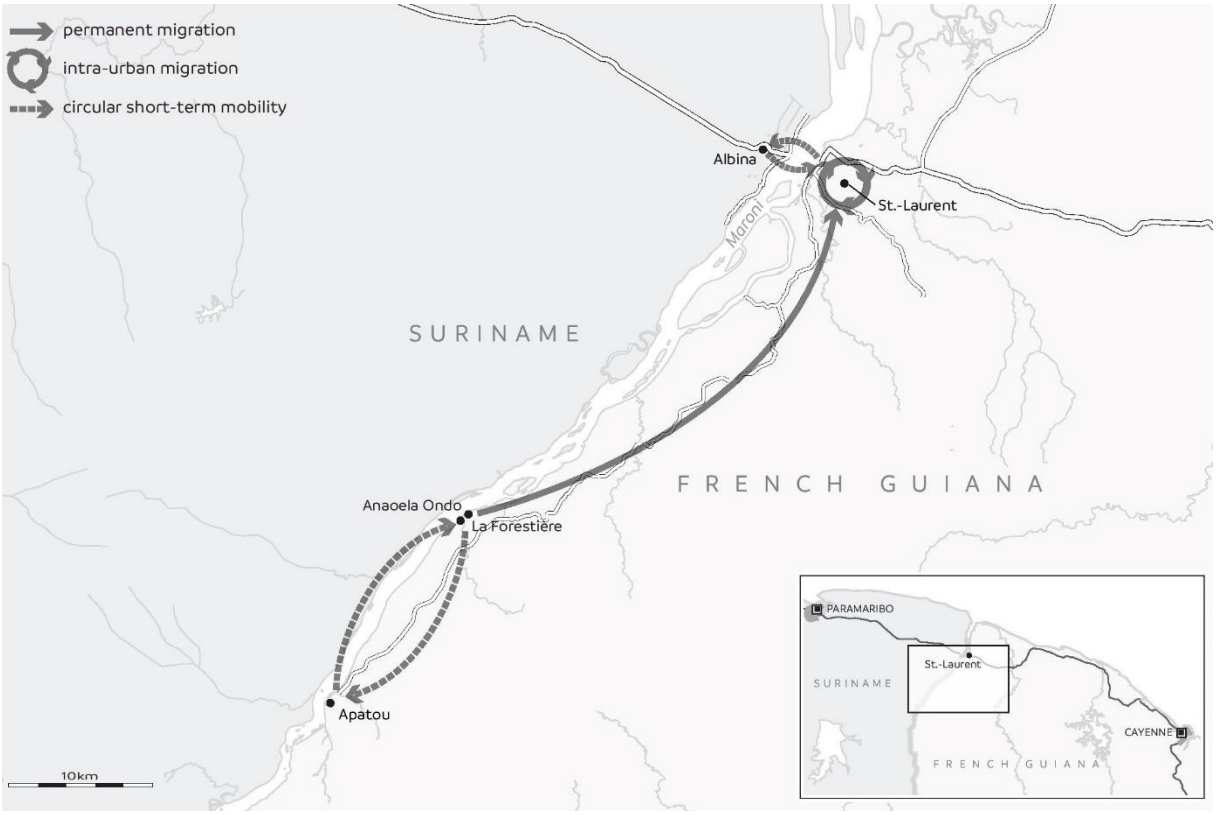
---

[22] A *kapiten* is a leader of a '*kondé*' or Maroon village (Anakesa 2019).

[23] This is a phrase repeatedly used when asked about the motivations of visits to the 'grand village' or to family members in metropolitan France. It suggests that mobility is not aspired to or anticipated but often a response to an urgent situation.

[24] There seems to be a clear difference in volume concerning mobility flows to destinations south and north of Apatou, where the road network ends. This finding led me to consider mobility to destinations north of Apatou as *local* and south of Apatou as *river mobility*. Therefore, movements to river villages between Saint-Laurent du Maroni and Apatou were considered as *local mobility*.

Figure 5. Local mobility patterns[25]



Concerning *mobility to Suriname*, the most common destination for interviewees is the capital, Paramaribo, a place which young people in particular regularly visit for family and leisure purposes. *Interregional mobility*, on the other hand, remained very occasional among my interviewees and among the Western Guianese population in general (INSEE 2017). This type of mobility concerns mostly (semi-)permanent migration for study, work or professional training in Cayenne but is reserved for those who can afford the high costs of living in the capital. For many of the participants in this study, the €40 fee for the four-hour ride to Cayenne, together with possible costs for staying overnight, is financially inaccessible.

Finally, statistics also indicate important levels of migration among young people from French Guiana to metropolitan France (INSEE 2012, 2019b; Temporal, Marie and Bernard 2011). Moreover, the *Migrations, Famille et Vieillissement* survey revealed that, if offered employment elsewhere, 56 per cent of young people (between 18 and 34 years) would be ready to leave French Guiana, with the percentage being even higher in the age group 18–24 years (Temporal *et al*. 2011).[26] In line with these data, my fieldwork suggests that young people develop a greater interest in going to metropolitan France than did their (grand)parents. The latter often had to re-establish a livelihood in Guyane after fleeing from the Surinamese civil war and do not envision migrating again. The young people, however, were mostly born in Guyane and developed life aspirations which sometimes require overseas migration. While there seems to be no significant difference in migration aspirations between rural and urban youth, well-educated young people in particular are attracted by the possibility of pursuing their education in metropolitan France (Temporal *et al*. 2011).

To sum up, mobility in Western Guyane changed from circular patterns between rural areas along the Maroni River to more permanent rural-urban migration. At the same time, new

[25] Figure 5 only shows mobility patterns but not mobility volumes.

[26] The exact question asked in the *Migrations, Familles et Vieillissement* survey was: 'If you had the possibility of getting employment (or more interesting employment for those who already had it) outside of the department, would you be ready to go?'

types of work, especially in the informal sector, required a lot of local mobility in and around Saint-Laurent du Maroni. Lastly, rising educational and professional aspirations also led to an increase in inter-regional and overseas migration. However, the next section will show that increasing migration volumes from French Guiana to metropolitan France seem to hide different perceptions of the value and role of migration in young people's life trajectories.

5 The aspiration to stay in Western French Guiana

The interview data show that this study's participants have high aspirations to stay in Western French Guiana.[27] This is particularly true not only for the older generations but also for young people, many of whom have never been to metropolitan France nor to Cayenne and have little interest in visiting other countries overseas.[28] This might seem surprising given French Guiana's close link with metropolitan France and the belief that economic opportunities are better there. However, the decision to migrate or to stay is not solely determined by economic rationality but by more general life aspirations and how they influence *where* people want to live (Schewel 2019b). This section explores the interviewees' aspiration to stay in Western Guyane in more detail. First, I show how low capabilities for long-distance migration might decrease the interviewees' aspirations to move. Second, we will see how perceptions of the 'good life' nurture the unwillingness of people to migrate. Third, I argue that the French state is central in stabilising the region to an extent that facilitates staying. Finally, I attempt to conceptualise the attitude of those young people who, despite strong aspirations to stay, still intend to migrate.

5.1 Low but existing capabilities to migrate

Given the low levels of economic development in Western Guyane, long-distance migration is financially inaccessible for many people. Statistics show that socio-economically vulnerable parts of the population are less represented in migration from French overseas departments to metropolitan France (Temporal *et al*. 2011). In fact, the poorest parts of a population are often deprived of access to migration (de Haas 2005, 2014). The young people in this study usually lack the financial resources to afford the high subsistence costs in Cayenne or metropolitan France, especially for housing. Their capability to migrate is intertwined with their aspirations to do so. The difficulties and risks associated with migration may reduce its desirability and make young people (like this 19-year-old in Baka Pasi) give up on their idea of gaining further education and professional growth elsewhere:

> *I Why did you quit school?*
> *P Hmm, we'll say, um, financial means [...] The thing is that it's in Cayenne and I have no guarantor for a studio and I got fed up with it and I thought I won't look for one [...] I was supposed to go to university but well […].*
> *I If there was a university here in Saint-Laurent, which one would you prefer?*
> *P Saint-Laurent because my family is here, my wife, I don't want to leave. If it's close by, that would be better.*

[27] Of my 31 interviewees, 27 wanted to stay in Western French Guiana. One 43-year-old man envisioned his future in Paramaribo – his place of birth – while three young people intended to migrate to Cayenne or metropolitan France for work or studies.

[28] The *Mission Locale*, a public youth support institution, reports that the European civil service constitutes a logistically and financially available opportunity that young people are aware of. Nevertheless, many places remain empty every year.

While migration is certainly an expensive endeavour for many young people in this study, this aspect alone cannot explain their low aspirations to migrate. Actually, multiple contextual factors could make us think that their capability to migrate is relatively high. For instance, compared to the neighbouring countries of Suriname and Guyana, both of which face a closed border regime, the legal obstacles to migration for young people from French Guiana to metropolitan France are few. Yet, emigration from the two former countries is significantly higher (Vezzoli 2015). Maybe the legal capability to migrate even reduces people's obsession with leaving (de Haas 2014). Moreover, compared to Suriname, the GDP *per capita* is significantly higher in French Guiana (INSEE 2017). Although this study's participants are socio-economically vulnerable, we could suppose that they still dispose of greater financial means to cover the cost of migration than do people on the Surinamese side of the Maroni River. Finally, the participants in this study usually had family members who had migrated overseas. Thus, they could make use of a fairly well-established migration network which may facilitate the move to metropolitan France – e.g. by providing (temporary) housing solutions at destination.

5.2 Perceptions of the 'good life'

More than people's low capability to migrate, it is their *unwillingness* to move that makes them aspire to stay. In fact, immobility is not passive behaviour in light of the high constraints on migration or limited horizons to imagine life elsewhere. Rather, it is an active and well-informed choice for the interviewees. This choice is shaped by the capacity of people to imagine life at the potential destination (Mata-Codesal 2015; Salazar 2011a, 2011b). In this sense, we understand how the close link to metropolitan France, which we might assume to produce more migration, can actually reduce the desire to migrate. Although most of my interviewees had never been to metropolitan France, they regularly obtained information in school or through negative feedback mechanisms from migrated family members (Mabogunje 1970). With this knowledge, they can describe the inconveniences of life in Europe with surprising accuracy. As such, metropolitan France is associated with a cold climate, a fear of facing racism or discrimination and the rapidity of life in big cities which involves living in small apartments, stress and a dependency on public transport. Finally, the ability of interviewees to imagine life in Europe makes 'the rosy image fade away' (Mata-Codesal 2015) as their imaginations do not correspond to what they perceive to be the 'good life'.

The proximity to friends and family members is a crucial part of people's perceptions of the 'good life'. Fears about social isolation may discourage migration because destinations like Cayenne and metropolitan France do not offer the support of family and friends in times of loneliness and other difficulties. Moreover, Cayenne and Kourou suffer from a negative image as they are perceived to be subject to much higher criminality – which makes them 'dangerous', as this 20-year-old woman from Anaoela Ondo fears:

> *I If, for example, there was a university here in Saint-Laurent, would you stay?*
> *P Yes, absolutely!*
> *I Why would you stay here?*
> *P Because I think it's easier when you're not, when you're… For example, if I am in Saint-Laurent, there are my brothers and sisters. […] I have two brothers who live there, there is my aunt… If I need something, I can call them. But, for example, if I am in Cayenne, and I am at the hospital, I have nobody, how will I do it? […] Cayenne, it's a bit dangerous. I am not saying that metropolitan France is not dangerous, but Cayenne, my God, the boys, hey [laughs][…] they come to rob you at home even if you didn't do anything […] Just like that. You walk in the street there,*

you're dead! You can't even walk around with earrings or necklaces and all that, you can't!

Just as many young people fear to be alone in new places, they are also unwilling to leave their families behind at home. The usually large family networks constitute an important resource for young people – e.g. to get support for housing, financial aid or to find jobs through family connections – but they also involve responsibilities, because young people need to take care of elderly (grand)parents and younger siblings. Finally, the wish to live in proximity to other family members, be it their partner, child(ren) or (grand)parents, usually discourages young people from long-distance and permanent migration. Distance becomes an even greater obstacle if one considers the few means of transportation and the important travel costs, which render regular family visits more difficult once having migrated, as this 22-year-old male from Baka Pasi explained:

If something happens here [referring to his parents' health], what do you do [if you are far away]? It's complicated to go far away. For six months [the time of his upcoming professional training in metropolitan France] that's still alright. However, if you have to go for two years [like his friend], that's very complicated! You have to think about coming back! […] And also to spend the holidays here!

Both this study and the *Migrations, Famille et Vieillissement* survey (INSEE 2012; Temporal *et al.* 2011) found that migration aspirations are strongly linked to the will to return. In the survey, 60.4 per cent of those young people who would be ready to leave French Guiana for employment, condition this departure with the ability to return. The interview data showed that semi-permanent migration to metropolitan France or Cayenne is perceived to improve a person's reputation and employment prospects upon return to French Guiana.[29] This shows that, even though the initial migration is not a move up the social ladder, physical mobility can still be a means to achieve upward social mobility at the place of origin (Favell and Recchi 2011). Moreover, the aspiration of young people to migrate and return illustrates that mobility and immobility are two sides of the same coin (de Haas 2014; Mata-Codesal 2015, 2018). In fact, migration to Cayenne or metropolitan France may be perceived as a means to stay in French Guiana in the long term.

While overseas migration is usually perceived as economically gainful, sometimes staying put is an economically rational decision (Schewel 2019a). Considering the important financial resources needed to live in Cayenne or metropolitan France, migration may be economically less profitable than staying in Saint-Laurent, which provides the possibility of informal job and housing prospects and family support in securing a livelihood. From my fieldnotes, I illustrate below a period in the life of the translator I worked with, a 22-year-old man from the village of La Forestière but living in Saint-Laurent:

After many years of making a humble living off informal jobs in Saint-Laurent, Mathieu[30] was lucky enough to find formal employment as an electrician, his field of expertise, in Cayenne. With a heavy heart, he decided to leave his friends and girlfriend behind to live with a future co-worker, someone he knew from high school, in the capital. After barely one month of hard physical labour on a minimum wage, conflicts with his colleague pushed Mathieu to look for a new housing solution. Considering the costs of rent and living, he decided that the little economic profit was not worth the big sacrifice

[29] This perception goes together with a feeling of relative deprivation as well as with a sentiment of unfairness. Young people do not usually find it fair that return migrants have better chances on the local job market just because they stayed overseas.

[30] Names were changed for the purpose of anonymity.

of living away from home. After six weeks, Mathieu moved back to Saint-Laurent, into a social housing apartment which his big sister rents, and started to look for informal jobs in order to save up for the traditional celebration of matrimony with his girlfriend.

5.3 The French state as a provider

The French state provides economic opportunities and services that – albeit limited in type and quantity – make it easier for young people to secure a basic livelihood locally. For instance, the state sponsors professional training opportunities through *Pôle Emploi* (the French employment office) and the RSMA (*Régiment Service Militaire Adapté*), a branch of the French army. Although traineeships at the RSMA are often perceived as a last resort when there are no better opportunities available, they nevertheless bring with them several practical advantages,[31] be they free housing, transport, meals, monthly pocket money (approximately 340€) or slightly improved job prospects,[32] as well as the possibility to enlist in the French army afterwards.

Furthermore, the state provides services, such as health care, public housing, free education and social benefits, some of which were mentioned by (grand)parents as reasons for immigration from Suriname; we can assume that they are important stabilising factors that facilitate remaining. Young people are also aware that socio-economic conditions in Western Guyane are better than in Suriname, for example because of higher salaries or free public schools. In a way, this created a feeling of 'relative endowment' among my interviewees (Vezzoli forthcoming 2020), the feeling that they are better off than people on the Surinamese side of the Maroni River, which could possibly discourage them from further migration.

While state-provided services and opportunities may reduce migration, the French state also sponsors overseas migration through predefined channels. For example, enlistment in the French army and also traineeships at the RSMA or LADOM[33] can involve overseas migration. Yet, the existence of state-funded migration opportunities can have ambiguous effects on young people's aspirations to migrate. On the one hand, they render overseas migration more accessible for socio-economically vulnerable young people. In fact, many of the interviewees' siblings and family members in metropolitan France migrated for an employment or traineeship in the French army. On the other hand, the awareness that migration can be sponsored, supported and organised by the state decreases young people's willingness to engage in long-distance migration whenever it involves greater risks and uncertainties (Vezzoli 2015). Finally, this creates a context in which young people rarely consider engaging in migration spontaneously, as this 19-year-old from Baka Pasi explains:

I Would it be possible for you to live in France?
P For a good reason, yes, but just like that, if I have no motivation to go there, no. I prefer to stay here, in the warmth [laughter].
I What would be a good reason to go?

---

[31] Some young people join the RSMA for the sole purpose of getting their driver's licence sponsored at the start of the traineeship. In order to avoid early dropouts, the RSMA now grants driving licences only to those who finish the entire programme.

[32] According to statistics provided by the RSMA, 60.39 per cent of their trainees were inserted into 'durable employment' in 2018. However, a closer look reveals that more than one third of them signed a work contract at the RSMA itself.

[33] LADOM (L'*Agence de l'Outre-mer pour la Mobilité*) provides financial support to young people from French overseas departments to complete professional training in metropolitan France. The participants in this study, as well as professionals from the *Maison des Adolescents*, a public youth support institution in Saint-Laurent du Maroni, consider LADOM to be very selective and, therefore, out of reach for many young people in Western Guyane. This level of selectivity also decreases young people's aspirations to apply for a traineeship financed by LADOM.

P *I don't know. Work, study, one of the two, but I can't go there like ... we'll say on a whim. Going there to do nothing would not be possible for me. I prefer to stay here without doing anything [laughs].*

5.4 Aspiring to stay but intending to leave

This study's participants' strong desire to stay in Western Guyane seems to contradict statistics which indicate high and rising levels of migration from French Guiana to metropolitan France among young people (INSEE 2012, 2019b; Temporal *et al*. 2011). The interview data might simply reflect the reality of a particularly vulnerable segment of French Guiana's population. Indeed, research among more-privileged young people could reveal higher migration aspirations. Yet, many of this study's participants have siblings who migrated to metropolitan France. Moreover, fieldwork in Cayenne uncovered comparably low migration aspirations among young people, especially if migration involved any difficulties like the need for a visa or finding housing at destination (Vezzoli 2015). This suggests a broader trend in French Guiana, where many people are averse to the risks and inconveniences involved in long-distance migration (Vezzoli 2015).

Some of the young interviewees are caught up in a situation of 'in-betweenness' – they cannot achieve their life aspirations locally but perceive migration as a risk to their personal, family and community well-being. While limited migration capabilities and the desire to live close to friends and family produce a setting in which they do not want to or cannot migrate, some young people are not able to stay if they want to pursue their professional or educational aspirations. Finally, young people rely on the French state to sponsor their migration or to provide opportunities that make it easier for them to remain at home. Actually, neither migration nor immobility are easily accessible to them. This shows that both mobility and immobility are resources or forms of 'capital' (Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye 2004) which are highly political due to their unequal accessibility (Cresswell 2010).

Nevertheless, some of my young interviewees *intend* to migrate to Cayenne or metropolitan France. For them, migration does not represent an *intrinsic* aspiration; rather, it is an *instrumental* resource to achieve their life goals (de Haas 2014). This conclusion is not surprising as such, because migration often constitutes a means to an end rather than an aspiration in its own right. However, the young people in this study actually have strong aspirations to stay in Western Guyane and few aspirations to leave, yet some of them end up migrating. Although these two categories seem oppositional, I argue that the same person can have both *aspirations to migrate* and *aspirations to stay* but to different extents and for different reasons. For example, while a young man in Western Guyane might perceive overseas migration as a difficult and expensive endeavour and strongly desires to live within his familiar socio-cultural environment, he might nevertheless *intend* to migrate, at least temporarily, because he lacks the opportunities to satisfy his professional or educational aspirations locally.

To describe such an attitude towards migration, the concept *migration intention* can be useful. An *intention* to migrate expresses merely the *intent* or *plan* to move, while an *aspiration* to migrate, at least in a more colloquial sense of the term, refers to a *wish*, *hope* or *desire* to move. In this sense, *intention* is a more 'neutral' concept than *aspiration*. Since it relates to 'planning', which involves a more concrete step taken towards migration than 'wishing' or 'desiring', migration intentions can be used for people irrespective of their aspirations to stay or to leave. For Western Guyane, this concept helps to describe attitudes when migration takes place in contexts of low aspirations to migrate and high aspirations to stay, because somebody might *aspire* (as in 'desire') to stay put, but still have fairly strong *intentions* (as in 'plans') to leave ('Do you *want* to move?' or '*Will* you move?' are two different questions to ask). Such

types of movement relate to a more 'reluctant'[34] form of migration on the spectrum between *voluntary* and *involuntary* mobility.

This type of 'reluctant' migration illustrates the ambiguous relationship between developmental processes and the formation of migration aspirations. In fact, 'development' does not necessarily increase the *intrinsic* desire of people to move but tends to change people's more-general life aspirations which might but do not need to involve a change in residence. If local development does not keep up with the pace of changing life aspirations, the need for mobility rises and migration may become an *instrument* with which some people can achieve their objectives elsewhere. However, in Western Guyane, local development intercepts out-migration, especially because cultural values and therefore people's life aspirations seem to change more slowly. The two-fold socio-economic reality in the region explains such a difference in pace: while the encroachment of the French state was abrupt and triggered profound economic changes, young people remain attached to the traditional family structure and the land and lifestyle of their ancestors. This partly explains why migration aspirations seem low at the moment; yet it might simply take more than one or two generations to develop professional and educational ambitions which correspond to the opportunities young people from Western Guyane could possibly take advantage of in Cayenne or metropolitan France.

6 Conclusion

In line with Zelinsky's mobility transition model (Zelinsky 1971), this study suggests that processes of 'development' since the 1980s have led to a diversification of mobility patterns in Western French Guiana. Whereas (grand)parents used to circulate on the Maroni River to carry out agricultural activities in the region's interior (Piantoni 2009), today's young people only frequent the *river* for rare family or touristic visits. Instead, they often move *locally* to pursue diverse job opportunities – quite regularly to *Suriname*, especially Paramaribo, for family and leisure visits. (Semi-)permanent *inter-regional* and *overseas* migration to Cayenne and metropolitan France has also become more common, mainly because of the better educational and professional prospects there. Besides economic restructuring, this paper highlights the dual importance of education to explain these shifts in mobility (Schewel and Fransen 2018): while access to schools requires pupils to commute or migrate to urban centres, the close contact with urban life and rising educational levels durably change their life aspirations. Today, young people aspire for an urban future away from agricultural and other rural economic activities. Zelinsky predicted this increase in aspirations by a 'widening range of options for locating and patterning one's life' (Zelinsky 1971: 222) that derive from 'development'. In fact, rather than stopping migration, this confirms that 'development' tends to boost the aspirations and capabilities of people to migrate over longer distances (de Haas 2019b).

However, this paper also shows that migration does not *automatically* increase with 'development'. In fact, the impact of 'development' on migration seems to vary according to the level of analysis. While political and economic transformations led to a diversification of mobility patterns at the macro level, the analysis of micro-level data has shown that the young people in this study have strong aspirations to stay in Western Guyane. In other words, while migration flows might increase with 'development' (de Haas 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2019b; Hatton and Williamson 1998; Skeldon 1997), people in some places show unexpectedly high aspirations to stay. This paper proposed two main explanations for why, in times of 'development', the young people in my study display so few aspirations for long-distance migration. First, while cultural change is well under way, it seems to be slower than the profound economic and political transformations which Western Guyane experiences. On the one hand, young people remain very attached to their familiar socio-cultural environment,

[34] Thanks to Kerilyn Schewel for bringing up this term.

especially to their family, which contributes to an aspiration to stay in Western Guyane and makes life elsewhere seem less attractive. On the other hand, young people developed higher educational and professional aspirations than their (grand)parents, objectives which cannot be met in the seemingly stagnating local economy. This explains why some young people still *intend* to migrate to Cayenne or metropolitan France but also why they want to return to Western Guyane in the long run. Migration is an *instrument* for them to improve their career prospects at home, and finally to achieve their *intrinsic* preference to remain in Western French Guiana.

Second, especially in times of profound economic restructuring, the state can provide a safety net that may reduce migration (Vezzoli 2020). In Western Guyane, the economic opportunities and services provided by the French state contribute to the stabilisation of the region and offer the socio-economic security for people who wish to stay. However, the impact of state expansion on migration is more ambiguous, especially depending on the type of migration under consideration. For instance, while the provision of public services may discourage overseas migration, they nevertheless continue to motivate rural to urban migration within the region (Grotti 2017; Piantoni 2009). Moreover, the expansion of welfare may provide the socio-economic security encouraging people to stay (Kureková 2011; Mahendra 2014); however, generous social benefits can also attract immigrants (Borjas 1989, 1999, 2001; for a study that contradicts this theory see Ponce 2018). Still, for others, receiving social benefits may be a way to eventually afford overseas migration (Osburg 2019). Finally, although access to education tends to increase migration to urban areas (Schewel and Fransen 2018), the greater availability of local educational opportunities can also motivate people to stay, at least in the short term. In fact, all young people in this study confirmed that they would prefer to study in Saint-Laurent du Maroni if there was a university there.

The social transformation framework makes it possible to address the ways in which states shape migration beyond migration policies *per se*. In fact, states primarily influence migration through a wide range of unintended activities, such as state formation processes (Fitzgerald 2006; Skeldon 1997), the attribution of identity documents (Torpey 1998) or, as we saw in this paper, through the provision of economic opportunities and public services – and above all formal education. In this sense, we understand that migration is not an exception or an anomality but an intrinsic part of larger processes of political, economic, cultural, technological and demographic change (de Haas *et al*. 2020). The social transformation framework is useful in analysing the interaction of changes in these dimensions as well as their differential sequencing. For instance, this paper has shown that cultural values and norms often adapt more slowly and may attach people to their current place of residence. Finally, the aspirations and capabilities framework allows us to understand the ambiguous effects of macro-level changes on individuals' decisions to migrate or to stay. As we saw above, the expansion of public services encourages rural-urban migration within Western Guyane; however, the socio-economic stability guaranteed by the French state also discourages people from long-distance migration, while state funds also provide the necessary resources for some people to engage in overseas migration.

Given the importance of the French state in shaping 'development' in Western Guyane, the future of migration in the Maroni Basin heavily depends on the actions of its government. We can easily imagine that rising educational levels will continue to increase people's life aspirations. It is fair to assume that this will also reinforce integration into the French system and accelerate cultural changes. Taken together, these trends are likely to increase migration aspirations in the future, possibly even for new overseas destinations. However, until today, the presence of the French state seems to have prevented large emigration peaks from French Guiana (Vezzoli 2015). It is possible that, by proposing more economic and educational opportunities locally, the French state can continue to intercept out-migration, at least temporarily.

References

ADIE 2009. *Le Travail Indépendant Informel En Guyane. Rapport d'Étude*. Paris: Association pour le Droit à l'Initiative Économique.

Anakesa, A. 2019. "Les Bushinengé – Nèg Mawon de Guyane". Pointe-à-Pitre: HAL Université des Antilles https://hal.univ-antilles.fr/hal-01969598/document (accessed 21 August 2020).

Bakewell, O. 2007. "Editorial Introduction: Researching Refugees: Lessons from the Past, Current Challenges and Future Directions." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26(3): 6–14.

Benson, M. and K. O'Reilly, eds. 2009. *Lifestyle Migration: Expectations, Aspirations and Experiences*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Bloch, A., N. Sigona and R. Zetter. 2011. "Migration Routes and Strategies of Young Undocumented Migrants in England: A Qualitative Perspective." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34(8): 1286–1302.

Bogue, D. J. 1959. "Internal Migration." In *The Study of Population: An Inventory and Appraisal*, edited by P. M. Hauser and O. D. Duncan, 486–509. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Borjas, G. J. 1989. "Economic Theory and International Migration." *International Migration Review* 23(3): 457–485.

Borjas, G. J. 1999. "Immigration and Welfare Magnets." *Journal of Labor Economics* 17(4): 607–637.

Borjas, G. J. 2001. *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Carling, J. 2002. "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28(1): 5–42.

Carling, J. 2014. "The Role of Aspirations in Migration'. Oxford: University of Oxford, International Migration Institute, paper presented at the conference Determinants of International Migration, 23–25 September.

Carling, J., H. de Haas and E. Ersanilli. 2012. "Men, Women and Migration Aspirations: A Comparative Analysis of Sixteen Areas of Origin." Paris: Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED), paper presented at the conference Comparative and Multisited Approaches to International Migration, 12–14 December.

Carling, J. and K. Schewel. 2018. "Revisiting Aspiration and Ability in International Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(6): 945–963.

Castles, S. 2003. "Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation." *Sociology* 37(1): 13–34.

Castles, S. 2010. "Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36(10): 1565–1586.

Castles, S., H. de Haas and M. J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (5th edition).

Chambers, R. 2003. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. London: ITDG.

Collomb, G. and M.-J. Jolivet. 2008. *Histoires, Identités et Logiques Ethniques: Amérindiens, Créoles et Noirs Marrons en Guyane*. Paris: Édition du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques.

Colombier, R., B. Deluc, V. Rachmuhl and C. Piantoni. 2017. "Relever Le Défi de l'Habitat Spontané en Guyane: Une Expérimentation à Saint-Laurent-Du-Maroni." *Territoire En Mouvement* 36.

Contrat de Ville 2015. Municipality of Saint-Laurent du Maroni. https://www.saintlaurentdumaroni.fr/Le-Contrat-de-Ville-2015-2020-de-Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni-version-telechargeable_a3878.html (accessed 09 September 2020).

Coquet, M. 2013. "Totalisation Carcérale en Terre Coloniale: La Carcéralisation à Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni (XIXe–XXe Siècles).". *Cultures & Conflits* 90: 59–76.
Cresswell, T. 2010. "Towards a Politics of Mobility." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28(1): 17–31.
Demaze, M. T. 2008. "Croissance Démographique, Pression Foncière et Insertion Territoriale par les Abattis en Guyane Française." *Norois* 206: 111–127.
Demaze, M. T. and S. Manusset. 2008. "L'Agriculture Itinérante sur Brûlis en Guyane Française: La Fin des Durabilités Écologique et Socioculturelle?" *Les Cahiers d'Outre-mer* 61(241–242): 31–48.
Efstratoglou-Todoulou, S. 1990. "Pluriactivity in Different Socio-Economic Contexts: A Test of the Push-Pull Hypothesis in Greek Farming." *Journal of Rural Studies* 6(4): 407–413.
Favell, A. and E. Recchi. 2011. "Social Mobility and Spatial Mobility." In *Sociology of the European Union*, edited by A. Favell and S. Giraudon, 50–75. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Feuilly, H. 2008. "Désenclavement de Villages Du Maroni: Impacts Sur Le Foncier Agricole et Forestier." Nancy: AgroParisTech-ENGREF, unpublished Master's dissertation.
Filoche, G., D. Davy, A. Guignier and F. Armanville. 2017. "Constructing the French State in Guiana: The Challenge of the Amerindian Peoples' Mobility." *Critique Internationale* 75(2): 71–88.
Fitzgerald, D. 2006. "Inside the Sending State: The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control." *International Migration Review* 40(2): 259–293.
Gely, A. 1984. "L'Agriculture sur Brûlis chez Quelques Communautés d'Amérindiens et de Noirs Réfugiés de Guyane Française." *Journal d'Agriculture Traditionnelle et de Botanique Appliquée* 31(1): 43–70.
Grotti, V. 2017. "Childbirth on Europe's Ultra-Periphery: Maternity Care, French Universalism and Equivocal Identities on the Maroni River, French Guiana." In *Boundaries Within: Nation, Kinship and Identity among Migrants and Minorities*, edited by F. Decimo and A. Gribaldo, 75–91. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
de Haas, H. 2003. Migration and Development in Southern Morocco: The Disparate Socio-Economic Impacts of Out-Migration on the Todgha Oasis Valley. Nijmegen: Radboud University, PhD Thesis.
de Haas, H. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: Myths and Facts." *Third World Quarterly* 26(8): 1269–1284.
de Haas, H. 2007. "Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration." *Development and Change* 38(5): 819–841.
de Haas, H. 2010. "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective." *International Migration Review* 44(1): 227–264.
de Haas, H. 2014. *Migration Theory: Quo Vadis?* Oxford: University of Oxford, International Migration Institute, IMI Working Paper No. 100.
de Haas, H. 2019a. "Migration as Development: A Social Transformation Approach." Amsterdam: De Trippenhuis, paper given to the KNAW Academy Colloquium entitled Renewing the Migration Debate: Building Disciplinary and Geographical Bridges to Explain Global Migration. 16–18 October.
de Haas, H. 2019b. *Paradoxes of Migration and Development*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, International Migration Institute Working Paper No. 157.
de Haas, H., S. Vezzoli, S. Fransen, K. Schewel and K. Natter. 2020. *Social Transformation*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, International Migration Institute Working Paper No. 166.
Hatton, T. J. and J. G. Williamson. 1998. *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact*. New York: Oxford University Press.

INSEE 2012. "Migrations, Famille et Vieillissement: Défis et Enjeux Pour La Guyane." *Antianéchos* 21, https://www.epsilon.insee.fr/jspui/bitstream/1/14221/1/aechos19.pdf (accessed 21 August 2020).

INSEE 2014. "L'État de l'École En Guyane : Des Progrès à Poursuivre." *Analyses Guyane* 4, https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1285586 (accessed 21 August 2020).

INSEE 2016. "Poursuite de La Transition Démographique En Guyane, Légère Inflexion de la Natalité." *Analyses Guyane* 12, http://www.epsilon.insee.fr/jspui/bitstream/1/39213/1/IA_GUY_12.pdf (accessed 21 August 2020).

INSEE 2017. "L'Ouest Guyanais. Concilier Développement Économique et Transformation Sociale: Un Enjeu Pour l'Ouest Guyanais". *Dossier Guyane* 7, https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3284208 (accessed 21 August 2020).

INSEE 2019a. "Comptes Économiques 2018 de Guyane L'Investissement et La Consommation Portent Le Redémarrage de l'Économie." *Analyses Guyane* 42, https://www.epsilon.insee.fr/jspui/bitstream/1/108625/1/gy_ina_42.pdf (accessed 21 August 2020).

INSEE 2019b. "Insertion Professionnelle Des 15–29 Ans: Beaucoup de Jeunes et Peu d'Emplois." *Analyses Guyane* 39, https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4183267 (accessed 21 August 2020).

de Jong, G. F. and J. T. Fawcett. 1981. "Motivations for Migration: An Assessment and a Value Expectancy Research Model." In *Migration Decision Making: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Microlevel Studies in Developed and Developing Countries*, edited by G. F. de Jong and R. W. Gardner, 13–58. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kaufmann, V., M. M. Bergman and D. Joye. 2004. "Motility: Mobility as Capital." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28(4): 745–756.

Kureková, L. 2011. From Job Search to Skill Search: Political Economy of Labor Migration in Central and Eastern Europe. Budapest: Central European University, unpublished PhD thesis.

Mabogunje, A. L. 1970. "Systems Approach to a Theory of Rural-Urban Migration." *Geographical Analysis* 2(1): 1–18.

Mahendra, E. 2014. *Financial Constraints, Social Policy and Migration: Evidence from Indonesia*. Oxford: University of Oxford, International Migration Institute, IMI Working Paper No. 101.

Marie, C.-V. and J.-L. Rallu. 2008. *Les Tendances Démographiques et Migratoires Dans Les Régions Ultrapériphériques: Quel Impact Sur Leur Cohésion Économique, Sociale et Territoriale ?* Paris: Institut National d'Études Démographiques.

Marsden, T. 1990. "Towards the Political Economy of Pluriactivity." *Journal of Rural Studies* 6(4): 375–382.

Mata-Codesal, D. 2015. "Ways of Staying Put in Ecuador: Social and Embodied Experiences of Mobility–Immobility Interactions." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41(14): 2274–2290.

Mata-Codesal, D. 2018. "Is It Simpler to Leave or to Stay Put? Desired Immobility in a Mexican Village." *Population, Space and Place* 24(4): e2127.

Menard, J.-N. and G.-A. Morin. 2012. *Foncier et Installation En Agriculture En Guyane*. Paris: Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt.

Osburg, M. 2019. "French Guiana in Transition: (Im)Mobility Patterns in the Maroni Basin." Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, unpublished Master's dissertation.

Pelican, M. 2013. "International Migration: Virtue or Vice? Perspectives from Cameroon." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(2): 237–258.

Piantoni, F. 2009. *L'Enjeu Migratoire en Guyane Française*. Matoury: Ibis Rouge Éditions.

Ponce, A. 2018. "Is Welfare a Magnet for Migration? Examining Universal Welfare Institutions and Migration Flows." *Social Forces* 98(1): 245–278.
Redfield, P. 2000. *Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Reis, J., P. Hespanha, A. Rosa Pires and R. Jacinto. 1990. "How 'Rural' Is Agricultural Pluriactivity?" *Journal of Rural Studies* 6(4): 395–399.
Rodriguez-Pena, N. 2020. *State Expansion, Development Imaginaries and Mobility in a Peripheral Frontier: The Case of Caracaraí, Brazil*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, International Migration Institute Working Paper No. 165.
Salazar, N. B. 2011a. "Editors' Note." *Identities* 18(1): 1–23.
Salazar, N. B. 2011b. "The Power of Imagination in Transnational Mobilities." *Identities* 18(6): 576–598.
Schewel, K. 2019a. "Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies." *International Migration Review* 54(2): 328–355.
Schewel, K. 2019b. Moved by Modernity: How Development Shapes Migration in Rural Ethiopia. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, PhD thesis.
Schewel, K. and S. Fransen. 2018. "Formal Education and Migration Aspirations in Ethiopia: Formal Education and Migration Aspirations in Ethiopia." *Population and Development Review* 44(3): 555–587.
Skeldon, R. 1997. *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective*. London: Longman.
Skeldon, R. 2018. "A Classic Re-Examined: Zelinsky's Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition." *Migration Studies* 7(3): 394–403.
Stark, O. 1984. "Rural-to-Urban Migration in LDCs: A Relative Deprivation Approach." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 32(3): 475–486.
Stark, O. 1991. *The Migration of Labor*. Cambridge, Mass/Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Stark, O. and J. E. Taylor. 1989. "Relative Deprivation and International Migration." *Demography* 26(1): 1–14.
Temporal, F., C.-V. Marie and S. Bernard. 2011. "Insertion Professionnelle des Jeunes Ultramarins: DOM ou Métropole?" *Population* 66(3): 555–599.
Torpey, J. 1998. "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement'." *Sociological Theory* 16(3): 239–259.
Troussier, J.-F. 1976. "La Guyane en questions." *Tiers-Monde* 17(67): 721–737.
Vezzoli, S. 2015. *Borders, Independence and Post-Colonial Ties: The Role of the State in Caribbean Migration*. Maastricht: Boekenplan.
Vezzoli, S. 2018. "Saint-Laurent Du Maroni: A Space of Transnational Encounters and Rapid Social Change." Paramaribo, Suriname: Paper given to the conference Slavery, Indentured Labour, Migration, Diaspora and Identity Formation, 19–23 June.
Vezzoli, S. 2020. *State Expansion, Changing Aspirations and Migration: The Case of Cisternino, Southern Italy*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, International Migration Institute Working Paper No. 158.
Vezzoli, S. (forthcoming 2020). *Hope and Migration in a Brazilian Frontier Town: The Case of Caracaraí, Roraima*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, International Migration Institute Working Paper.
de Vries, M. W. 1990. "Pluriactivity and Changing Household Relations in the Land van Maas En Waal, the Netherlands." *Journal of Rural Studies* 6(4): 423–428.
Wintrebert, R. 2013. *Les Jeunes Adultes En Guyane: Démographie et Mobilité*. Cayenne: Centre de Ressources Politiques de la Ville de Guyane.
Zelinsky, W. 1971. "The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition." *Geographical Review* 61(2): 219–249.

Annex

Figure 6. List and general characteristics of the study's participants (the three individuals of whom I collected life stories are marked in red)

N°	Neighbourhood	Sex	Age	Maroon subgroup	Administrative status in French Guiana	Birthplace	Level of education
1	Jean de la Fontaine	F	17			Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
2	Baka Lycée	M	35	Paramaka	No regular residence status		High-school graduate
3	Baka Pasi	M	50	Mixed		Albina	
4	Baka Pasi	M	34		French nationality	Saint-Laurent	No schooling
5	Baka Pasi	M	22	Paramaka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High-school graduate
6	Baka Pasi	M	48	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	
7	Baka Pasi	F	23			Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
8	Baka Pasi	M	35	Non-Maroon	No regular residence status	Paramaribo	
9	La Forestière	M	26	Paramaka	French nationality	Apatou	High school (15-18 years)
10	La Forestière	F	60	Paramaka	No regular residence status	River (Suriname)	Middle school (11-15 years)
11	La Forestière	M	60	Ndjuka	No regular residence status	River (French Guiana)	No schooling
12	Anaoela Ondo	F	19	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
13	Anaoela Ondo	F	16	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
14	Anaoela Ondo	M	53	Ndjuka	Residence permit (2 years)	Albina	No schooling
15	Anaoela Ondo	F	55	Ndjuka	French nationality		
16	Baka Pasi	M	29	Ndjuka	Residence permit (10 years)	Saint-Laurent	
17	Baka Pasi	F	30	Saramaka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	No schooling
18	Baka Pasi	M	19	Saramaka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High-school graduate
19	Baka Pasi	M	50	Saramaka	Residence permit (2 years)	Brokopondo (Suriname)	
20	Baka Pasi	M	43	Ndjuka	Residence permit (2 years)	Paramaribo	Middle school (11-15 years)
21	Baka Pasi	F	65	Paramaka	No regular residence status	Paramaribo	
22	Baka Pasi	F	29	Paramaka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
23	Baka Pasi	F	27	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High-school graduate
24	Baka Pasi	F	55	Ndjuka	French nationality	Providence (River)	
25	Anaoela Ondo	M	55	Ndjuka	French nationality	Apatou	No schooling
26	Anaoela Ondo	M	63	Ndjuka		Tapanahoni River	Middle school (11-15 years)
27	Anaoela Ondo	F	20	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	Diploma Advanced Technician (in progress)
28	La Forestière	M	21	Ndjuka	French nationality	Saint-Laurent	High school (15-18 years)
29	La Forestière	M	22	Ndjuka	French nationality	Tapanahoni River	Diploma Advanced Technician (in progress)
30	Paul Isnard	M	21	Paramaka	Residence permit (1 Year)	Paramaribo	High-school graduate
31	Baka Pasi	F	36	Non-Maroon	No regular residence status	Paramaribo	Middle school (11-15 years)