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# How public policies and social capital secure professional insertion and livelihoods? Insights from Haitian migrant farm workers in Guadeloupe

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## Abstract

This article aims at understanding livelihood trajectories of Haitian migrant farm workers and small farmers in Guadeloupe. It questions the processes at play for their resilience/vulnerability. The suggested theoretical grid associates the sustainable rural livelihood framework with an approach in terms of "circulatory-transformative capabilities" inspired by Sen's works. Analyzing capitals and resources' endowment, choices and socio-economic trajectories, the article questions the room for maneuver of migrants in achieving the kind of life they find valuable. It then gives a central place to individual choices that are constrained by social structures at different scales. The paper addresses the ability of migrants to organize their life and to face hazards. Based on a qualitative survey, two major findings are highlighted. First, migrants mobilize, accumulate, and circulate capitals in a transnational space to pursue their livelihood strategies. Second, some resources (regularization, access to land and to nonfarm activities) interfere in their trajectories and question their resilience/vulnerability. The results discuss in particular the specific roles of social capital and public policies in securing incomes, a debate that can be useful in terms of public policies to support migrants in reinforcing their livelihoods.

**Keywords:** vulnerability-resilience, migration, sustainable rural livelihood, capabilities, agriculture

## Résumé

Cet article vise à comprendre les trajectoires des moyens de subsistance des migrants haïtiens travaillant dans l'agriculture en Guadeloupe en tant qu'ouvriers ou petits exploitants agricoles. Il s'interroge sur les mécanismes à l'œuvre dans les processus de construction de leur résilience/vulnérabilité. Le cadre théorique proposé articule l'approche des moyens d'existence durables avec une approche en termes de "capacités circulatoires-transformatrices" inspirée des travaux de Sen. En analysant la dotation en capitaux et en ressources, les choix et les trajectoires socio-économiques, l'article s'interroge sur la marge de manœuvre des migrants pour atteindre le mode de vie auquel ils aspirent. La réflexion menée accorde ensuite une place centrale aux choix

individuels qui sont contraints par la structure sociale qui se décline à différentes échelles. L'article aborde la capacité des migrants à organiser leur vie et à faire face aux aléas. L'analyse s'appuie sur une enquête qualitative menée auprès de migrants haïtiens. Deux résultats majeurs sont mis en évidence. Premièrement, les migrants mobilisent, accumulent et font circuler des capitaux dans un espace transnational afin de poursuivre leurs stratégies de subsistance. Deuxièmement, certaines ressources (régularisation, accès à la terre et aux activités non agricoles) interfèrent dans leurs trajectoires et remettent en question leur résilience/vulnérabilité. Les résultats discutent en particulier du rôle spécifique du capital social et des politiques publiques dans la sécurisation des revenus, un débat qui peut être utile en termes d'action publique pour soutenir les migrants dans le renforcement de leurs moyens de subsistance.

**Mots-clés :** vulnérabilité-résilience, migration, moyen d'existence durable, capacités, agriculture

## **Resumen**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo comprender las trayectorias de medios de vida de los migrantes haitianos que trabajan en la agricultura en Guadalupe como jornaleros o pequeñas granjas. Cuestiona los mecanismos que intervienen en los procesos de construcción de su resiliencia/vulnerabilidad. El marco teórico propuesto articula el enfoque de medios de vida sostenibles con un enfoque en términos de “capacidades circulatorias-transformadoras” inspirado en el trabajo de Sen. Al analizar la dotación de capitales y recursos, así como las opciones y las trayectorias socioeconómicas, el artículo cuestiona el margen de maniobra de los migrantes para lograr el modo de vida al que aspiran. La reflexión otorga entonces un rol central a las elecciones individuales que están limitadas por la estructura social en diferentes niveles. El artículo analiza la capacidad de los migrantes para organizar sus vidas y hacer frente a los peligros. El análisis se basa en una encuesta cualitativa realizada entre migrantes haitianos. Se destacan dos resultados. En primer lugar, los migrantes movilizan, acumulan y circulan capitales en un espacio transnacional para implementar sus estrategias de subsistencia. En segundo lugar, ciertos recursos (regularización, acceso a la tierra y actividades no agropecuarias) interfieren en sus trayectorias y cuestionan su resiliencia/vulnerabilidad. Los resultados permiten discutir en particular el rol específico del capital social y de las políticas públicas en la generación de ingresos, un debate que puede ser útil en términos de acción pública para apoyar a los migrantes en el fortalecimiento de sus medios de vida.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **Introduction**

Guadeloupe, as a French outermost region, has long been a destination for the emigrating Caribbean peoples, especially from Haiti. Haitian born persons are the first group of residing immigrants in Guadeloupe (about 30,000 persons in 2020, following the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division). Haitians mostly work in low-skilled jobs in Guadeloupe, particularly in the construction sector as building workers and agriculture as farm-waged laborers or, in some cases, as self-employed small-scale farmers. The socio-economic integration, living and working conditions of these immigrants working in agriculture in Guadeloupe can be difficult and unstable.

The article proposes an original analytical framework to better understanding livelihood trajectories of Haitian migrant farm workers in Guadeloupe. Those migrants, endowed with unequal resources, develop more or less sustainable livelihood strategies linked to agriculture. The paper then analyzes the life stories of two generations of Haitian migrants who are farm waged earners and small-scale farmers. The survey reveals how their different resources' endowment and choices may or may not allow sustainable livelihoods. The paper aims at answering the following question: what are the processes that allow Haitian migrant farm workers in Guadeloupe to secure (or not) their livelihoods and increase their resilience?

The proposed framework articulates the *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods* approach (Chambers and Conway, 1991) with capabilities (Robeyns, 2011; Sen, 1999). It gives a central place to the capacity of individuals to access, activate, transform, accumulate and circulate resources (i.e. "circulatory-transformative capabilities") that enable Haitian immigrants to be and develop livelihood strategies in more or less constraining contexts. The analytical framework makes it possible to link the weight of choices, constraints and opportunities at different levels that shape decision making, with the capacity for action and reaction of migrants. Based on a qualitative survey conducted among 46 agricultural waged-earners and small-scale farmers of Haitian origin in Guadeloupe and key informants, the results shed light on the processes of evolution of the degree of resilience/vulnerability of those immigrants. Qualitative data, which are seldom used to assess capitals and resources, constitute core elements to understand the process of establishing sustainable livelihood pathways. They allow understanding livelihood in a holistic way.

The paper unfolds in three steps. A first section provides a brief description of the context that shapes individuals' livelihood trajectories and capabilities. A second section presents synthetically the framework that emerged from an inductive approach, grounded in empirical evidences. A third section analyzes and discusses the results of the survey, focusing on the mechanisms of mobilization, accumulation, and circulation of capitals and resources of the Haitian migrants. The results then question the capacity of the different livelihood strategies to reinforce Haitian migrants' resilience or vulnerability.

## **I/ Embedding Haitian migrants' livelihood trajectories in historical, political and macro-social structures**

Guadeloupe has long been subject to strong migratory flows of migrants, especially from other Caribbean countries (Audebert, 2011, 2008). The migration pressure has accentuated in the last decades, along the increasing differences in living standards between countries (Giraud et al., 2009). The national office of statistics of France estimates the foreign population in Guadeloupe at about 19 500 persons (INSEE, 2017), a number probably underestimated since some of them are in an irregular situation. More realistic, some authors estimate that Haitian migrants might account for more than 30,000 persons in Guadeloupe (UN Population Prospects).

As other foreign populations, Haitians migrants mainly access low-skilled jobs in Guadeloupe, in particular in agriculture (Audebert, 2012). Generally, Haitian migrants work as farm laborers. While one generally recognizes that working conditions in agriculture are difficult (arduous work, large working hours, low daily hourly rate etc.), in Guadeloupe and elsewhere, Haitian migrants often accept those working conditions, both as farm workers and small-scale farmers. The political, economic and social context in Haiti, characterized by instability, violence and insecurity (van Vliet et al., 2016), had contributed to make them accept difficult working conditions. In addition, some of them manage to settle as small-scale farmers, renting land or even buying land to produce diversified crops for local markets.

Agriculture was once a leading economic sector in Guadeloupe. In the last decades, it has sharply declined decreasing number of farms, ageing farmers, dropping contribution to the GDP. However, it still plays a significant role in exports<sup>1</sup> (Agreste Guadeloupe, 2022), and more broadly in rural dynamics (social cohesion, landscape conservation) and job creation in a context where the unemployment rate exceeds 30% (three times the average of France) (INSEE, 2020).

Nowadays, agriculture in Guadeloupe is dominated by a small number of large-scale farms (4% of the total, contributing to 46% of the value of the production in 2019) that are specialized in export crops (Agreste Guadeloupe, 2022). Those large-scale farms are generally formal and operate with a great number of farm-waged workers, among which Haitian born peoples. Aside those farms, numerous small-scale (or even very small) farms exist. Small-scale farms are not always formal and administratively recognized (some of them are even managed by illegal foreign peoples, among which Haitians). However, small-scale farms play a significant role in local food systems (Fréguin-Gresh et al., 2020), even if they have been historically marginalized and excluded from public supports. They also contribute to maintain activity in rural areas as they mainly operate using family workforce, but also occasionally, employing farm-waged workers, among which Haitian peoples.

Another important characteristic of agriculture in Guadeloupe is that the sector benefit from a large set of public supports, among which some are enacted at the European level and others at the

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<sup>1</sup> Raw and processed farm products account for about 30% of the total exports, among which a significant share comes from bananas and products from the sugar cane industry

national and local scales. One of the most significant is the *Program of options specifically relating to remoteness and insularity* (POSEI), which supports agricultural production through direct payments to farmers. Evidences show that large-scale export agriculture is the main recipient of the POSEI with about 70% of the value of supports (Marzin et al., 2021). Thus, public supports in agriculture then contribute to maintaining farm waged-work in Guadeloupe, which benefit to migrants' job creation. In addition, even if many of the numerous small-scale farmers, among which the Haitian migrants that settled as farmers, are not eligible to these programs, some of them manage to be beneficiaries and can consolidate their livelihoods, considerably reducing the risks associated with agriculture.

At least, in addition to productive programs, other public policies have important effects in terms of access to employment, and of providing supports and assistance for Haitian migrants.

First, the migration policies in France play a significant role for Haitian migrants. French migration policies have significantly conditioned the trajectories of migrants. Lendaro (2013: 8) summed up their evolution as follows: *“Until the 1980s, migrants were still perceived as individuals passing through, whose legitimacy to reside on the territory was temporary. The crisis of the early 1970’ and the irruption of mass unemployment provided European governments with the justification to officially stop economic migration from 1974 onwards, implying the redefinition of tools for managing the migrant workforce”*.

The 1990’ then marked a turning point due to the difficult socio-economic situation and the increase in mass unemployment, as well as the growing precariousness of working conditions. Migration policies in France have become stricter and sought to select the candidates for immigration according to the needs of the national labor market, linking in addition the validity of the residence permit to the duration of the work contract. Flows were then constrained by higher controls. Consequently, migration policies play a central role in the conditions of travel and entry into the national territory, and provide a broader framework for the living conditions of Haitian migrants when they arrive in Guadeloupe.

Second, Guadeloupe implements number of social programs and aid schemes. Haitian migrants may access social supports in various domains, particularly if they are in a regular situation, but also for some of them, when they are political refugees: health (access and coverage of care), housing, professional activity and its interruption (minimum income, unemployment insurance, retirement) among the major ones. It is well known that social programs help to secure livelihoods for those who manage to access them.

Consequently, Haitian migrants engaged in the agricultural sector in Guadeloupe can benefit from the combined effects of that policy mix, according to their individual situation. Although the conditions of access to policies are diverse, the main trend is the following. Those who enter into Guadeloupe illegally, who mostly work as farm-waged workers in both large-scale farms and small farms, have little access to any kind of public support (neither social or productive programs). Those who enter legally, working as farm laborers, may access some social assistance programs. Those who settle as small farmers barely access productive public policies in agriculture. In all

cases, individuals are unequal in accessing public supports, which therefore reinforces the socioeconomic differentiation and reveals the discriminating role of public policies.

The framework of constraints and opportunities previously described shaped by the macro-social, economic and political contexts in which settle Haitian migrants once arriving in Guadeloupe. That context offers a sphere of possibilities in which those migrants make decisions and take actions to develop a livelihood to lead the life that they find valuable. From there, the choice, stemming from the individual freedoms, allows individuals to engage in a possible livelihood trajectory. That set of constraints and opportunities constitutes one of the core elements of the proposed analytical framework.

## **II/ Grasping resilience/vulnerability through livelihood trajectories and capabilities**

Migration is an important livelihood strategy worldwide that has been widely studied (Bryceson, 1999; Cortès, 2000; de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Foeken and Owuor, 2001). In particular, work in agriculture for migrants is particularly relevant (Michalon and Weber, 2022). We mobilize the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (SRL) framework to analyze trajectories of Haitian residing migrants in terms of socio-professional insertion in the agricultural sector in Guadeloupe.

Based on the pioneer research of Chambers and Conway (1991), largely supplemented by others (Ellis, 1999; Scoones, 1998), the concept of *livelihood* can be defined as follows: "*A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base*" (Scoones, 1998: 5). As in this definition, the paper mobilizes the *capability approach* (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2011; Sen, 1999) that aims at addressing various concerns: (i) individuals are different in their abilities to convert the same resources into valuable *functionings* ('beings' and 'doings'). (ii) Individuals are bale to internalize harshness of contexts. They consider the sphere of possibilities at a given point in the trajectory; and (iii) whether or not individuals take up the options they have, they evaluate actual achievements ('*functionings*' or *livelihood strategy*) and effective freedom ('capability').

Such an approach leads to focus not only on the outcomes of livelihood strategies, but to question the way a person, in specific contexts, is able (or not) to pursue his or her ultimate ends. It also considers the outcomes of livelihoods in terms of *resilience/vulnerability* and not only *sustainability* as such. The literature defines *vulnerability* as exposure to external or internal disturbances (Gallopín, 2006). Vulnerability refers to the exposure to the risk of insecurity combined with a high degree of inability to find alternative strategies, while resilience deals with the ability to cope with adversity, shocks or stresses by withstanding, resisting, absorbing, recovering from, or successfully adapting to them (Angeon and Bates, 2015). *Shocks* refer to high-intensity events, with an unpredictable level of disruption whose impact is immediate. *Stresses* refer to low-intensity, regular, predictable events whose effects are cumulative.

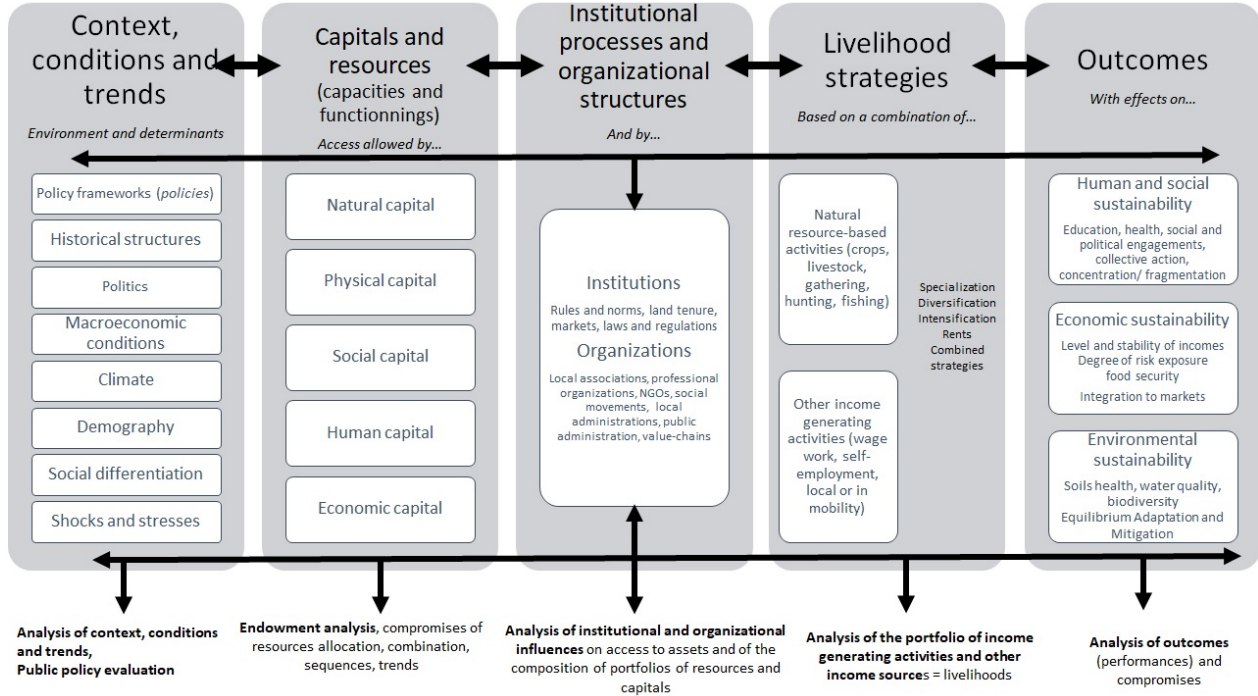
Mobilizing those guiding notions, our approach is grounded in the theoretical evolutions of the SRL framework in terms of *livelihood trajectories* (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; do Rego and de Bruijn, 2017; Sallu et al., 2010). Approaching *livelihood trajectories* allows analyzing socio-economic differentiation following risk perceptions (de Haan, 1999: 43), which aims at considering the outcomes of livelihoods in terms of *resilience/vulnerability*.

To unravel livelihoods, we mobilize other core notions of the SRL framework (see Figure 1) such as *capitals* and *resources*. As per Bebbington (1999), we accept a wide conception of the *resources* that people need to access to develop a livelihood, which leads to consider *livelihoods* in terms of access to various types *capitals* (or assets). Accessing *capitals* is then having means through which individuals make a living, but also “*give meaning to the persons’ world*” (ibid p2022). Then, *capitals* are the means of enhancing the existing ways in which *resources* (that are available or latent) contribute to livelihoods. However, as mentioned by Johnson (1997: 4) “*Like resources, capitals can generate value and productivity for those who have it at their disposal. Its value, however, is defined in terms of its potential. Capital can be accumulated and transferred, but once it is used for a specific purpose, it becomes a resource. [...] Social and natural capital, then, represent stocks of relationships and physical inputs which, when exploited, become resources*”.

The idea of accumulating *social capital* is compatible with the notion of *circulation* of resources, in particular those linked to migration (Baby-Colin et al., 2009; Faret, 2003; Ma Mung et al., 1998). Then, accumulation and circulation of capitals and resources occur within a spatial and temporal matrix that make it possible to set up livelihoods according to existing possibilities and individual choices. Such a conception of resources and capitals, of their modalities of activation and circulation reveals what we call “*circulatory-transformative capabilities*” of individuals. That does not mean that accumulation and circulation of capitals and resources take place without difficulties or tensions, in particular due to the costs of accessing capitals that can be high (and risky). Those difficulties or tensions strongly affect the sustainability of *livelihoods*.



**Figure 1: An adaptation of the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods framework**



Source: Bosc et al., (2021) based on Scoones (1998).

The proposed framework aims at describing a dynamic sequence from the decision-making to migrate to Guadeloupe and settle in that new context, up to the socio-economic insertion of Haitian migrants into the agricultural sector.

At first (before deciding to migrate), individuals are endowed with capitals that depend on the contexts in which they are. Contexts refer here to the historical and macro-social structures at origin in Haiti (social, economic, institutional and security conditions, and public policies). They also refer to migrants' specific meso and micro-social levels, in particular related to social capital. Social capital includes the relations with wider family and other networks at the origin in Haiti and in the transnational space. Those elements of the contexts constitute the transnational spaces of life and activities where individuals are able to take the decision to migrate, as part of their livelihoods (Guillon and Ma Mung, 2006). Thus, at this stage, migrants can potentially convert capitals into resources to pursue a new socio-economic trajectory in migration. One should underline that the incentive to migrate implies assessment procedures, which are specific to individuals: two persons evolving in the same context will not make the same choices because they will not perceive risks and possibilities in the same way (Massey, 1990; Piguet, 2013). The capacity to interpret the framework of constraints and opportunities shapes the spaces in which individuals live and work. The subjective dimension of choice is a component of individual freedom (Sen, 1999) in the sense that it allows the expression of decisions that determine future trajectories and livelihood strategies.

After deciding to migrate, individuals then are able to activate and transform capitals into resources, choosing what they want to be and do in that new sphere of possibilities (modes of expression of their overall freedoms) in new contexts. That process reveals their capacity to activate and transform their potentialities, which means, to mobilize their *circulatory-transformative capabilities*. Those *capabilities* lead to the creation of a new portfolio of activities and incomes in migration that may (or not) allows securing their livelihoods and thus being resilient or vulnerable.

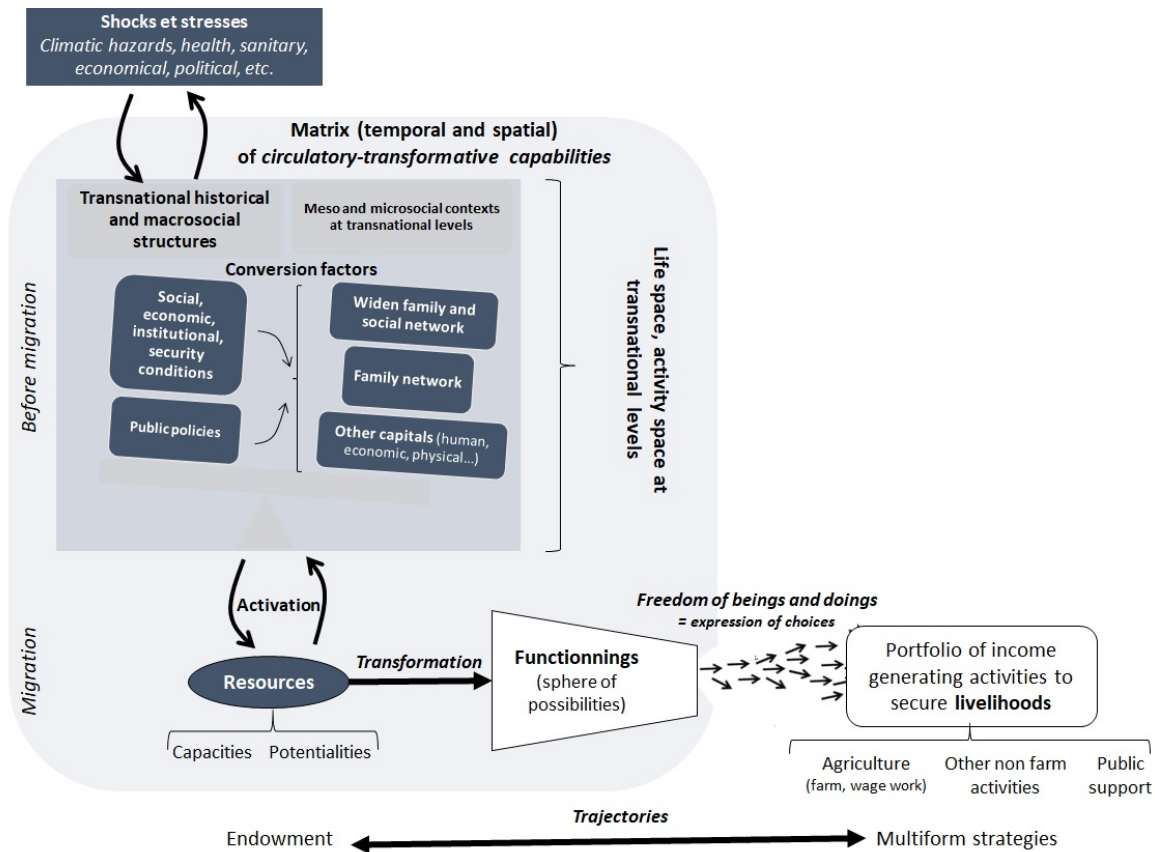
The framework relies on a major hypothesis: contexts at different scales are not given, but evolve and are a social construction. In that sense, the different scales of contexts are interdependent. The contexts at origin and destination, and at the different scales, are a multiform social construction, from the furthest away from the individual (macro social) to the closest (microsocial) or intermediate (meso social) levels, these different scales being interdependent one with each other. The framework highlights the relationships that individuals maintain with contexts both at origin and destination, and at different scales: the micro and meso levels and at the macro level referring to the institutions and organizations within which they set up their strategies.

In line with other research studies (Demazière and Samuel, 2010), the framework considers the contextualization of the trajectories of migrants by paying attention to both individual lives and intermediate spaces (family, friendly and professional relational networks, institutions). This framework of constraints and opportunities offers the migrant a field of possibilities in which to make decisions and take action, translated into livelihoods. From there, the choice, stemming from the individual freedoms, allows them to engage in one or other of the possible trajectories. In particular, it focuses on the role of public policies that can be both a structuring framework and a source of shocks and stresses. The aim is therefore to decipher a temporal and spatial matrix of circulatory-transformative capabilities from which the construction of livelihood strategies takes place, and to explore how this matrix results in increasing resilience or vulnerability.

The proposed framework makes it compatible to both consider the processes of accumulation of capitals and the circulation of resources, that takes place within a social, spatial and temporal matrix and result in interactions between actors that make it possible to achieve individual *functionings*. Such a conception of resources and capitals, of their modalities of activation and their movement reveals the importance of the process of circulatory-transformative capabilities.

That dynamic sequence then explains the degree of resilience/vulnerability, as illustrated in the Figure 2. The case study of Haitian migrants in the agricultural sector in Guadeloupe is relevant to illustrate the framework proposed.

**Figure 2: Proposal for an integrative analysis framework**



Source: Authors.

### III/ Livelihood trajectories of two generations of Haitian migrants in the agricultural sector in Guadeloupe

To understand sustainable livelihood trajectories by considering resilience/vulnerability of Haitian migrants, the research sets up a qualitative survey in Guadeloupe from June 2019 to February 2020.

The empirical data collected for this study was based on interviews. We gathered data in open-air markets and in farms through semi-structured interview guides. The surveys targeted two groups of respondents. In an exploratory phase, we interviewed 11 key informants from the major migrant associations and agricultural unions and organizations, to provide useful information to shed light on migrants' capacities and potentialities at community level but also on the macrosocial structures, they face at destination in their working environment in Guadeloupe. After identifying the main open-air markets and agricultural regions where Haitian workers operate (strategic places), we then conducted semi-structured interviews with 31 hired farm workers and farmers of Haitian origin who were randomly selected using a snowball sampling method. As farm laborers and farmers are mostly males, men mostly form the sample. Face-to-face interviews with migrants were helpful to gather information about their life stories and individual trajectories in Haiti before migrating and

about their working life and situation since their arrival in Guadeloupe. For these interviews, we followed an interview guide centered on their employment status, their working conditions, the resources they mobilize for work, but also on their livelihood outcomes. The data collected is made up of discourses, narratives, life stories that explained Haitians' migration path in time and space. In addition to the fieldwork, we enriched our understanding of Haitian migration context by reading about the evolution of migration policy in France and the contemporary history of migration in Haiti.

The analysis thus relies on a rich empirical material that describe the individual trajectories and the contexts in which they take place (Table 1). This information is referenced with respect to the framework developed. The approach makes it possible to characterize and analyze the importance, according to the period of arrival of migrants, of the intermediate spaces and the historical and macro-social structures (in particular public policies) within which individuals evolve.

**Table 1: Characteristics of the interviewed farm workers and farmers**

Political regime in Haiti and related socio-political and economic situation	Political regime in France and related migratory policy	Gender		Age on first arrival	Current age
		Male	Female	Mean	
Duvalier Dictatorship (1957- 1986) and the Post-dictatorial period of the military junta (1990-1990)	The" Gaullist" Republic with successive right-wing administrations (1958–1981)	8	1	24	64
Socio-political insecurity and repressive system	Immigration is characterised by family reunification, accompanied by a specific policy	2	0	30	68
	Opening of the regime to left-wing administration (1981-1995)	1	0	26	59
The Aristide-Lavalassian period (1990-1994) and the Military coup, followed by a US intervention (1994-2000)	Immigration becomes a political theme in the agenda and is addressed by mass regularization campaigns	2	0	29	65
Instability and increasing pressure on the population (growing organized crime)	The right in power and the emergence of the extreme right (1995–2012)	2	0	35	45
Contemporary period (2004-2019)	The first laws against illegal work and illegal residence of foreigners	1	0	26	49
	Deteriorating economic and security conditions, natural disasters and institutional chaos	3	0	26	43
	In search of new political balances, with an increasing role of the extreme-right wing (since 2012)	1	0	22	46
	The increasing tightening of laws relating to immigration control,	1	0	18	43
		1	0	21	48

the stay of foreigners in France  
and access to nationality

	2	1	25	56
	1	0	26	54
	2	0	29	32
	1	0	28	36
	1	0	32	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>		

Source: Authors.

Results allow a generalization process by questioning and verifying the suggested analytical framework through empirical observations. The robustness of the work relies on the phenomena and processes brought to light. We then pay attention to the regularities of the empirical analysis.

This section presents the results obtained from the survey. The approach makes it possible to characterize and analyze the role of certain elements of the contexts, and the role of capitals and resources endowment which importance varies according to the period of arrival of migrants.

### **III/ 1. Two profiles of migrants with differentiated capabilities depending on the arrival period**

The results show a clear differentiation between the surveyed Haitian migrants in the agricultural sector following the period of their arrival in Guadeloupe. Those findings are in line with other studies in different contexts (do Rego and de Bruijn, 2017; Lendaro, 2013).

The majority of surveyed Haitian migrants that arrived in Guadeloupe until the 1980' were young (17-25 years old), single, low educated men from low-income families engaged in agriculture in Haiti. At that time, the weight of the historical and macro-social structures in Haiti also strongly contributes to their decision-making to migrate. Migrants considered their sphere of possibilities unsatisfactory in Haiti, in a context of lack of local job opportunities or because of political insecurity (time of the dictatorial regime of the Duvalier). All individuals of the sample mentioned those constraints. In addition, the political, economic and social conditions in Guadeloupe (migratory policy, abundance of low-skilled jobs) were also particularly favorable to host Haitian migrants. All the surveyed migrants until the 1980' mentioned arriving in Guadeloupe in a regular situation (buying a tourism visa, with minimum economic guarantees, traveling by plane) and having access to a job as agricultural workers in large-scale sugarcane or banana farms just a few days after their arrival. These benefits allowed migrants to maintain, if not create and improve their economic, human and physical resources. At that time, migrants decided to migrate to create a future for themselves (search of autonomy and emancipation, the main motivation for many of them), but also to help their family and relatives. Migration was thus the result of individual but also collective choices as family and the close social networks funded journeys and visas, as well

as a minimum economic capital to settle in Guadeloupe. In return, migrants send remittances to the origin. The role of the family at origin is a common finding from most of transnational studies (Ancey and Freguin-Gresh, 2015; Baby-Colin et al., 2009; Fréguin-Gresh et al., 2015; Portes, 1999). The belief that one could quickly accumulate resources in Guadeloupe, nourished by migrants who have previously settled, was also important in their decision-making. The weight of their initial individual capitals' endowment was also important: all the interviewed migrants until the 1980' considered themselves as not the poorest before leaving Haiti. They were endowed with economic and physical capitals (such as land, houses, etc.) or had access to sufficient incomes to fund their travel to Guadeloupe. If the surveyed migrants of that period underlined the great diversity of the capitals mobilized to migrate, social and economic capitals were the most crucial.

From the 1990' and especially since the 2000', migration flows from Haiti to Guadeloupe intensified, as a corollary of recurrent external shocks (economic and political crisis, social unrest, natural hazards). Those migrations increased despite the reinforcement of migratory policies in France at the same time. Although dissuasive, the constraints of the macro-social structures in Guadeloupe did not significantly curb the influx of migrants. However, the macro-social structures in Haiti still weighted strongly on the decision making to migrate. Most of surveyed migrants that arrived in Guadeloupe from the 1990' onward had different motivations and capitals' endowments that the migrants of the first migratory wave. Those "new" migrants had a quite different profile: they were still young active peoples, but a little older (23-45 years old, 30 on average), and had often formed a family in Haiti. Some of them were women. If some of them had a previous working experience in agriculture, most abandoned school at the early stages or were not educated at all, had experiences in nonfarm, sometime informal activities in urban areas in Haiti. Second, while this second wave of migrants still mobilized their social capital to leave Haiti, and, while they also considered themselves as not the poorest, traveling to Guadeloupe was more expensive, challenging and risky. Their only option to migrate to Guadeloupe at that time, except for those who already had a family there and could benefit from family reunification, was to arrive illegally. They travelled by boats, through different countries, in conditions that endangered their lives. In addition, costs of travels and the risk of deportation were higher. To finance that uncertain journey, migrants and their families and networks had to mobilize lot of economic resources (selling goods, borrowing within or outside family and friendship networks). The social capital mobilized at that time came from Haiti and Guadeloupe, but also from a wider transnational space.

### **III/ 2. The roles of social capital for all migrants in facilitating an integration marked by stigmatization, irregularity and harsh working conditions**

For all the interviewed migrants, family and friends were the ones who generally welcomed them upon their arrival in Guadeloupe. These networks of people with migratory experience and *circulatory-transformative* capabilities (because they were already settled at destination) were a central support for the social and professional insertion of new migrants who, in turn, played the same welcoming and support roles for those who arrived after them (Faist, 2000; Massey, 1987). Social capital was not limited to their family members and friends, but included individuals met

during the travels to Guadeloupe and in the wider Haitian community circles in Guadeloupe. Those networks relied on mutual aid and sharing, with what that implied in terms of transformation and circulation of resources (Audebert, 2008). However, networks could not always be the panacea: in some cases, family and friends could take advantage of the precariousness of the newcomers and committed abuses, sometimes violence, even sexual. Networks of Haitians in Guadeloupe worked as described by scholars working on transnationalism (Faret, 2003; Léonard et al., 2004; Palloni et al., 2001) that enabled migrants to activate and transform resources to pursue the livelihoods they chose after migration. Social capital was then central to capabilities as it conditioned the sphere of possibilities, articulating the places of departure, transit and destination.

According to interviews, Haitians in Guadeloupe were victims of anti-migrant attitudes (i.e. words and acts perceived as xenophobia towards their community), a phenomenon that was highly perceived by the migrants from the second wave of migration. Those felt more affected by those attitudes than migrants from other origins did. Stigmatization of Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe is a social phenomenon known and described in the literature (Bougerol, 2010; Hurbon, 1983). For Audebert (2012: 47), while the Haitian farm waged worker is both sought after for his low cost and the quality of his work, at the same time, he is seen as *"a risk linked to fantasy, cultural and demographic perceptions whose translation is very real in the local political practices of managing this migration"*.

The status of Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe is a heterogeneous social fact, as evidenced in the interviews that showed the diversity of residence permits from which they could benefit. The notion of regularization is preferred to that of legality, as it is associated with obtaining residence permits that allow access to full residence in Guadeloupe and then, to social assistance (health, housing, minimum income...). Mostly all the surveyed migrants experienced a period of irregularity during their trajectory in Guadeloupe, even when they arrived legally (the case of most of the migrants from the first wave of migration) as their visa could have expired and not been renewed. Some migrants explained their situation as undocumented farm waged workers. The term "undocumented" avoids suggesting that all migrants in an irregular situation are clandestine (i.e. people unknown to the administrative services), with a legal situation alternating for several years between irregularity and regularity. Some surveyed migrants, especially those who entered irregularly after the 2010', can still be in that situation. However, and even irregular, most of the migrants found a job upon arrival as farm waged workers in export plantations. Sometimes, and even with an irregular status, they could access to declared jobs (with health care and access to other social programs). Migrants surveyed perceived irregularity as a rough condition, especially since it sometimes gave rise to hints of violence. This situation had obviously consequences in terms of precariousness, working conditions (arduous work with more worked hours, lower pays than regular workers, labor rules not respected, etc.), but also in accessing jobs (reduced mobility due to the fear of being caught and deported). Furthermore, it increased risk exposure, especially in the absence of health monitoring, while farm waged workers used potentially toxic agrochemicals in bananas' plantations (e.g. Chlordecone). However, regardless of abuses and risks, Haitian waged workers accepted the harshness of irregularity and of farm waged labor for a period

after arriving in Guadeloupe. That resulted from a compromise between accessing to necessary incomes to live (and to send to their families in Haiti) and being in the expectative of a formal higher income-generating job and, ultimately, stable residence permits to capitalize more (and quicker) resources.

### **III/ 3. Bifurcation of Livelihood trajectories toward resilience/vulnerability: the roles of public policies and employment**

All the surveyed migrants considered regularization determinant to capitalize on their initial endowments, as well as to access new resources and engage in chosen livelihoods. Most, but not all the surveyed migrants were regularized in time. However, regularization process was long and difficult due to administrative barriers and stigmatization. Nevertheless, there were differences between the two generations of migrants. Up to the 1980', the surveyed migrants could benefit from regularization campaigns at a time where few peoples were candidates to residence permits. One should note that previous work in agriculture also contributed to facilitate the regularization process, confirming the determinant role of employment (Chauvin et al., 2023). After the 1990', accessing to regularization was perilous, long and expensive. In all cases, social networks played a major role in the process. Migrants adopted diverse regularization strategies. Some migrants became permanent residents through marriage or after having children born in Guadeloupe. Others engaged in a hazardous process involving paid intermediaries to carry out the administrative procedures on their behalf. Others, especially those from the second generation, obtained the status of asylum seeker or political refugee. This status was harder to access after the mid 2000' because of the reinforcement of the conditions of admissibility (Cornuau and Dunezat, 2008).

Once regularized, migrants could diversify their livelihoods thanks to the new capitals they could access (equipment, skills and experiences), which was also facilitated by networks and economic resources. That allowed them to engage in new jobs that they aspired to, as a mode of expression of their freedoms. Regularization also allowed improving working conditions and incomes of farm-waged workers who kept this activity. Finally, and that is surely the most important to consolidate livelihoods, regularization allowed accessing social programs. That issue has long been one of the most controversial topics in the French political debate. While irregular migrants could occasionally receive some kind of assistance (like free coverage of the medical care), regularized migrants could benefit from a wider range of social programs (minimum income, pension system, housing support, unemployment, disability, family support...). In all cases, social supports, working as safety network, enabled them to secure their income basis given the insufficiency and instability of farm wages. They also allowed to mitigate risks and sometimes to ensure an income provision when migrants had to stop working consequently of disability (consequence of years spent working hard as farm laborers) or in case of unemployment. However, some migrants, even regularized, may not have access to information and not make use of social programs.

Contrary to popular belief, Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe are not only farm-waged workers: the survey shows that Haitian migrants can also be small-scale farmers in a context of an ageing agricultural population and a growing disinterest of the youth in agriculture. Some of the migrants



surveyed could access land. In many cases, access to land was in sharecropping after years working as a farm-waged worker for a "boss", owner of large-scale export farms that let them a small plot to crop. Sharecropping relies on a modality of access to land in return for the payment of an annuity proportional to the harvest or its value. In Guadeloupe, it refers to a mode of tenure usually derived from contracts related to farm wage earning. Once again, social capital played a key role for accessing land thanks to contacts and recommendations of other laborers and sometimes, of previous "bosses". Economic resources were also crucial and for that reason, securing incomes basis was determinant. If regularization was not necessary to access land in sharecropping, it was a prerequisite to access rental and ownership. Thus, only regularized migrants could establish a formal rental contract or a deed of ownership as they were linked to identity papers. However, in some cases, migrants, even regularized, faced barriers to access land because of anti-migrant attitudes. Migrants mentioned that becoming self-employed small-scale farmers, especially in rental and property, was an aspiration: even if the working conditions of farmers were also difficult and introduced risks related to agricultural production, they were better than those of farm-waged laborers were. However, the important thing, to them, was the freedoms to be and to do what they aspired to.

## **Conclusion**

This paper analyses how Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe succeeded in overcoming their initial constraints of precariousness and vulnerability to build a new livelihood through farm waged labor and small scale farming. This case study illustrates how an immigrant category with few resources and capitals, manages to forge sustainable rural livelihoods pathways by successfully integrating the agricultural sector. As a result, some Haitians in Guadeloupe turned from marginalized and stigmatized workers into fully included farmers. Small-scale farms hosted Haitians, that hence contribute to the development of local agriculture.

The article shows that the matrix of the Haitians' circulatory-transformative capabilities is in constant evolution. It is the place for the conversion of certain capitals and the activation of resources which, once transformed, can accumulate and circulate in a transnational space of life and activity. The opportunities and constraints in this matrix are different according to the period of arrival in Guadeloupe. Migrants from before the 1990s, who arrived at a period when borders are relatively open and economic immigration is still promoted, integrate quite quickly into Guadeloupian society. While the first wave of migrants is generally excluded from agricultural support schemes for those who have gained access to land, like other small farmers in Guadeloupe, migrants are either integrated into the agricultural sector through their regularization or are declared salaried workers. Under these conditions, it is easier for them to accumulate resources (economic, human, natural and physical) permitted by their activation strategy and their social capital, after consolidating their income through social assistance. The migrants of the second wave remain in a more precarious situation: they can remain illegal and undeclared workers for a long time, sometimes with abusive working conditions. They are excluded from public policies, most of them (except for political refugees) from social assistance, which does not promote their integration.

The situation after the 1990s is a framework of constraints particularly weighing on the fate of the second wave of migrants. The tightening of migration policies generates uncertainty, insecurity, precariousness and risk-taking, which are key features of the current migration context in France. It affected the paths to professional integration and working conditions, which have become more difficult and precarious. For these two generations of migrants, the surveys highlight the central and permanent role of social capital, which is indispensable for the formation of circulatory-transformative capabilities and their subsequent mobilization. It is meta-capital, in the sense that it enables the activation of other capital and the multiplication of resources both in time and space (Guilmoto and Sandron, 2000; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2007; Palloni et al., 2001). The notion of network is thus a key to understanding how migrants construct their trajectories (Hagan, 1998). The article also underlines the decisive role of public policies at pivotal moments in the life of migrants: in the process of regularization, in access to social benefits and, to a lesser extent, to agricultural subsidies. However heavy this framework of constraints may be, the results insist on the room for maneuver of individuals and show that the number of people they have is not determined. Far from being passive, migrants are agents of their own trajectories (Séhili and Zúñiga, 2014). They thus demonstrate the constructed part of vulnerability-resilience.

Endowments evolves in time along livelihoods trajectory and their mobilization depends on individuals and collective choices, even if affected by contexts. Thus, opportunities and constraints are different according to individuals' evaluation of risks, but time and space matter.

The proposed analytical framework allows a generalization of the results, as it identifies two central elements: (i) the importance of the initial context at several scales and the capitals endowment it carries along, which can be converted, and activated, by migration; (ii) the differentiated potentialities and capacities of migrants to transform, multiply and circulate again the resources generated. In this process, the role of social capital and public policies is crucial.

For further developments, one should explore two lines of research. First, one should address the issues of socialization of the outcomes of livelihoods trajectories, and the legacy of the learning process between generations. That could thus question the existence of social determinism or bifurcations and their conditions of emergence. This field of study is approached by the literature on "segmented assimilation" (do Rego and de Bruijn 2017). That could also allow analyzing the perimeter of the temporal and spatial matrix of the circulatory-transformative capacities and the social contours of transnationality. Secondly, one could enrich the analytical framework to question how circulatory-transformative capabilities upscale and out scale at territorial levels. Since individual livelihoods fit in a transnational space, underlining the plurilocalized character of the matrix, conversion, activation and transformation or resources provoked by migration should have territorial effects.

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