

CELEBRATING THE GUYANAS 3G NETWORK
Ecotones Conference
The Pan-Guyanese Highway:
Cayenne Georgetown Paramaribo
Amsterdam, 1-3 October 2015

ABSTRACTS

Catherine BENOÎT (Connecticut College)

catherinebenoit@mac.com

Border reinforcement on the Maroni river: on transnationalism and the non-circulation of people to French Guiana

A geographical and political border between France and Surinam, the Maroni river is yet a region of intense everyday life circulation and cross-border settlement for the people of Amerindian or Maroon descent who live on both sides of the river. These past twenty years the French government has been engaged in reinforcing the border through police patrols and a set of laws that makes it difficult for people to legally cross the river or to continue living on both sides. This trend is part of a larger French geopolitical endeavor to close the borders of the Caribbean and Indian overseas departments. In this paper I will discuss the specificity of French Guiana by focusing on the Maroni river and addressing comparisons with the Oyapock river. First, this paper will trace the history of the definition of the border in regards to the integration of the Aluku in French Guiana or the ongoing debate on the delivery of civil status certificates. Second, it will discuss the implementation of a French legal system that makes it difficult to cross legally the river and facilitates the deportation of undocumented foreigners. Third, it will analyze the impact of these policies in the way the local populations define their legal identities as nationals, foreigners or “inhabitants of the river”.

*

Peter CLEGG (University of the West of England), Rosemarijn Hoefte (KITLV, Leiden), and Matthew L. Bishop (Institute for International Relations, Trinidad & Tobago)

peter.clegg@uwe.ac.uk

Hemispheric Reconfigurations and the Three Guianas

One of the most striking features of contemporary political change in South America and the Caribbean is the emergence of Brazil as an influential power, both bilaterally and via the creation of new mechanisms of regional co-operation. This comes at a time when other long-standing institutions of integrated governance, particularly in the Caribbean, seem to be undergoing a process of disintegration. For Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana these changes pose particular challenges because they are both Caribbean and South American. They are socially, economically, culturally and politically contiguous with an island Caribbean region from which they are geographically isolated; yet they are physically tied to a continent from which they have long been culturally and linguistically alienated. However, these boundaries are now beginning to break down. The paper looks at newly emergent patterns of hemispheric integration and how they are accompanied by concurrent processes of disintegration, each carrying consequences for the Guianas. The paper then deals with the agential side of the issue. It focuses on Brazil’s emergence, the policy agendas driving its engagement in the wider region, and, in turn, the kinds of responses generated on the part of the Guianas, along with the consequences for them of the brave new regional environment. The conclusion ends by reflecting on the wider implications for how we should understand regionalism and hegemony, both practically and theoretically, in South America and the Caribbean.

Gérard COLLOMB (Institut Interdisciplinaire d'Anthropologie du Contemporain, EHESS/CNRS)

collomb@msh-paris.fr

Mobilizing symbolic resources across the borders: "new" Kali'na musics between French Guiana and Suriname

The eastern Kali'na are settled in French Guyana and Suriname, from Kourou to west of Paramaribo. In the villages, a ritual performed after a mourning period - epekotono – includes songs by men playing drums. This ritual, and these songs, are core Kali'na identity markers.

While the great traditional singers were disappearing, other started to implement changes in the epekotono music. These artists consider themselves as heirs of a Kali'na cultural heritage, but they also borrow from businenge and creole worlds. They develop new musical practices and get involved in new modes of performing, between within and outside, between heritage and creation. Though this process started and grew particularly in Suriname it is documented in French Guiana as well.

These new musical practices highlight ongoing social and cultural changes in the Kali'na society. They show how the ancient cultural and 'ethnic' borders are being recomposed to redefine a new "Kali'na world" across the political border. They are also a way to ensure a cultural and a political voice in the new shared cultural arenas, revealing specific ways to build intercultural/interethnic relations within French Guyana and Suriname.

*

Sabine Gorovitz (Universidade de Brasilia)

sabinegz@gmail.com

Brazilians in French Guiana: Types of bilingual talk in family interactions

In this presentation, *Brazilians in French Guiana: Types of bilingual talk in family interactions*, Sabine Gorovitz will report the linguistic integration of Brazilian families living in Cayenne (French Guiana), analyzing how their family members use the language and the type of linguistic mix they produce. Her research suggests that some speakers tend to produce a particular type of mix that reveals a prototypical mode of switching. Considering extralinguistic factors, they conclude that there is homogeneity within neighbourhoods, which acts as a conservative force that prevents a small mix and linguistic change.

The interaction between linguistic and extralinguistic variables reveals some of the speakers profiles: those who produce preferably in their mother tongue, considering their bilingualism as a factor of social mobility; those who are asymmetrically competent in both languages; and those who have a use of languages divided into functions depending on the specificities of the task, whether at work, school, home, or administration. Thus switching is part of a framework of resources deployed to meet the specific needs of each interaction situation, in which a cooperative agreement regulates the discursive positions and relationships among interlocutors, collectively and individually.

References

AUER, P. 1984, *Bilingual conversation*, Amsterdam: Benjamins.

—. 1998, "From codeswitching via language mixing to fused lects: Toward a dynamic typology of bilingual speech". *The International Journal of Bilingualism*, 3, 309-332.

GARAFANGA, J. 2001, "Linguistic identities in talk-in-interaction; Order in bilingual conversation". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 1901-1925.

LEGLISE, I. & ALBY, S. 2013, "Les corpus plurilingues, entre linguistique de corpus et linguistique de contact", *Faits de Langues*, n°41, 95-122.

- LEGLISE, I. & CHAMOREAU, C. 2013, "Variation and change in contact settings". In: Léglise, I. & C. Chamoreau, eds., *The interplay of variation and change in contact settings*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1-20
- PIANTONI, F. 2011, *Migrants en Guyane*, Paris: Actes Sud.
- DREYFUS, M. & JUILLARD, C. 2001, "Le jeu de l'alternance dans la vie quotidienne des jeunes scolarisés à Dakar et à Ziguinchor (Sénégal)", In: *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 163-164.
- ZIMMERMAN, D. 1998, Discourse identities and social identities, In: ATAKI, C. & SUE, W. (eds) *Identities in talk*, 87-106. London: Sage.

*

Stéphanie Guyon (Université de Picardie Jules Verne)

stephanie_guyon@hotmail.com

Amerindian and Maroons associational participation and transborder circulation in lower Marowijne

Based on long-term ethnographical fieldwork and archival work, this paper deals with Amerindian and Maroons political participation and appropriation of democratic institutions at the local stage in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni. Amerindians and Maroons became citizen and started to vote in French Guyana in the late 1960's and 1970's. They appropriate democratic politics through various instances (relations of patronage, customer relationships and community participation). Over the course of the 1980s, associational participation – whether in the Amerindian movement or in local maroon associations – allowed alternative spaces of politicization. We'll study the local network that frames this associational participation, its relation to local elected representatives, in particular the mayor and association leaders' representation of politics. As many Amerindian and maroon inhabitants of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni immigrate from Surinam and still circulate in a transborder area, their political practices and representations are embedded in their migratory trajectory. We will thus apprehend the circulation of Amerindian and maroon political know-how and representation between the two sides of the Marowijne.

*

Kathleen GYSSELS (Antwerp University)

kathleen.gyssels@uantwerpen.be

Coolitude and the Chinese Mask in Leon-G. Damas' poetry

In his first collection of poetry, *Pigments* (1937), the Cayennese poet Leon-G. Damas (1912-1978) had the generosity of offering several of his militant poems to intellectuals who were on the "barricades" of the négritude-movement. In "Regard", for instance, he writes an Asian portrait of himself which he offers to Jacques Howlett, famous africanist and member of the *Présence Africaine* editing house where *Pigments* would be re-edited in 1962. In strong contrast with the clear-cut Black White symbolism, representative of the Europe-Africa divide, the Amerindian, "fils de trois fleuves" has always addressed the much complex *mestizaje* of his native land, French Guyana.

« Regard »

Quand sur le tard
Quand sur le tard
Mes yeux se brideront

Quand sur le tard
Quand sur le tard j'aurai
De faux yeux de Chinois

Quand sur le tard
Quand sur le tard
Tout m'aura laissé jusqu'à la théorie
Jusqu'à la théorie choir (P 69)

This poem not only displays the typical sarcasm of a poet who also, as an ethnographer, knows the Chinese (Hmong) and Indian ("coolii") component in the population. But there is more to the Chinese mask, as the new posthumous collection of poetry reveals. In my paper I will examine some of the rich resonances of the "ombres chinoises" which the poet more than once brings in as to transcend binaries of race, class, and gender.

*

Ruel Johnson (independent researcher, Georgetown)
ruel.johnson@gmail.com

Creative Industry and Integration – Potential Opportunities for the Three Guianas

The three Guianas represent anomalous spaces in the South American sub-continent. They are the smallest in population, with Uruguay, the smallest non-Guiana, possessing more than twice as many people as theirs combined. They are also linguistic islands, Guyana (English), Suriname (Dutch), and French Guiana (French), of a combined 1.5 million hemmed in by Portuguese-speaking (Brazil) and Spanish-speaking populations of 200 million each.

Even collectively, they do not represent economies of scale sufficient for the sustainable creation and consumption of creative products within the combined marketplace – the difference in language has also compounded challenges related to economic integration. Despite this however, they have enjoyed a close history marked by largely undocumented trade and migration, particularly along the coastal areas.

In 2011, a step towards cultural cooperation, the first Inter-Guianas Cultural Festival, was initiated in Suriname, with subsequent festivals in Guyana (2012), and French Guiana (2013). From a trade policy perspective, Suriname and Guyana already enjoy some level of integration as member states of CARICOM under the CSME. Advances in public infrastructure as well modern information and communication technology present opportunities for functional cooperation in the creation, sharing and commoditization of creative products and intellectual property.

This presentation examines the current opportunities available for an integrated creative industries policy and its execution; the challenges associated with implementation; and possible courses of action to overcome those challenges. For example, opportunities exist for technical cooperation in translation services as a means of expanding publication markets both within and outside of the Guianas.

*

Ellen-Rose KAMBEL (Rutu Foundation) and Emmanuelle LE PICHON-VORSTMAN (Utrecht University)
ellen-rose@rutufoundation.org ; E.M.M.lePichon@uu.nl

The Introduction of plurilingual and intercultural teaching strategies in Suriname: Between evidence and resistance

The objective of this paper is to deepen insight into Suriname's linguistic landscape and the perceived resistance to plurilingual and intercultural education among policy makers and education stakeholders.

After a four year pilot programme to introduce plurilingual and intercultural education in six schools in the Interior of Suriname (2010-2014), follow-up activities of a group of NGOs - including representatives of traditional indigenous and maroon leaders - have focused on organizing a range of activities aimed at broadening the support for bilingual education: a symposium, a Platform for multilingual education and a Language Festival (to be held in 2015). Based on answers to a sociolinguistic survey and interviews with the participants of these fora, our paper will explore the practices, language attitudes and the value attributed to different languages spoken in Suriname (Dutch, Sranan and three indigenous and maroon languages) among policy makers and other stakeholders.

Our aim is, in line with Migge and Leglise (2010), to develop further understanding of the resistance to and attitude towards plurilingual and intercultural education in Suriname.

We will place the debate on plurilingual and intercultural education in the context of international legal obligations of the Suriname, French-Guiana (France) and Guyana who all approved the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) which includes the right of indigenous peoples to provide education in their own language in accordance with their traditions. We believe that more insights into this issue will help us to implement national and international support toward the development of plurilingual and intercultural teaching strategies in Suriname and in the two neighbour countries.

Migge, B. & Léglise, I., 2010, "Integrating Local Languages and Cultures into the Education System of French Guiana: A Discussion of Current Programs and Initiatives", in B. Migge, I. Léglise & A. Bartens, (coord), *Creoles in Education: an Appraisal of Current Programs and Projects*, John Benjamins, 107-132.

United Nations, 2007, Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, United Nations. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

*

Clémence LÉOBAL (Université Paris-Descartes/EHESS)

clemence.leobal@gmail.com

Transborder ways of dwelling and changing identifications in lower Marowijne

Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni lies in the estuary of the Marowijne, the two-kilometer broad river that constitutes the porous border with Surinam. Many pirogues go back and forth all day long, crossing the river in ten minutes, a dense traffic mainly uncontrolled by customs or police. Due to massive migration and civil war in Surinamese civil war, thousands of inhabitants of Marowijne migrated in town, among which many define themselves as belonging to different Maroon groups. Maroons are now a large part of the 50'000 inhabitants of Saint-Laurent du Maroni, in a process of rapid growth and social mutations. Maroons share with other Suriname, Guyanese, Haitian or Caribbean migrants the condition of a class of unskilled workers, often racialised as "Blacks", who are looking for jobs opportunities on both sides of the border. Non-French speakers, with a low literacy level, they speak a common language closely related to Surinamese creole Sranan tongo . Leaving in peripheral neighborhoods, many of them also share aspects of their way of life: they are building wooden houses without authorization, on lands that does belong to them. On contrary to middle class composed of Creoles – descendants of slaves who were freed during the abolition – and metropolitan French employed in local state agencies, that are still dominating in political, cultural and economic fields, these groups benefit from transborder ressources and networks. They dwell and work on both sides of the border. In this paper, I would like to build on ethnographic material to focus on the process of building of transborder urban ways of living that emerge in that context,

taking into account the fluidity of social identifications, at the intersection of national borders, class and ethnic boundaries.

*

Patricia MURRAY (University of London)

Patricia.Murray@sas.ac.uk

“Activating the Ghosts: Cross-Cultural Strategies in the stories of Wilson Harris and Pauline Melville”

Guyana, land of many waters, is also a land of ghosts and the stories of Wilson Harris and Pauline Melville are an attempt to give voice to the drowned, the eclipsed, the deprived and the dispossessed. This paper will explore Harris’s Amerindian stories — *The Sleepers of Roraima* (1970) and *The Age of the Rainmakers* (1971) — reissued in a single volume by Peepal Tree Press (2014) and Melville’s stories set in Guyana in *The Migration of Ghosts* (1998). Located in the cross-border regions of Roraima and the Rupununi as well as Georgetown and New Amsterdam both writers present a version of Guyana that is cross-cultural and connected, though riven by stasis and decay. I will trace the narrative strategies used in the stories to bridge these different worlds and show how both writers to construct a series of journeys that are both cathartic for the reader and optimistic for the future.

*

Hilde NEUS (IOL, Paramaribo)

heneus@sr.net

The Guyana’s: exchange of art in between islands

Suriname, as a member of Caricom, opens its borders for neighboring countries, but mostly these contacts and exchanges are about trade and commerce. There are however some exceptions.

In 2012 the Writers Group '77 organized together with the Dutch department of the Institute of Teachers Training (IOL) a conference initiated by the Association of Women Writers and Scholars in which at least 30 women writers and scholars from abroad participated. This three day activity was joined by 100 students from the Dutch department of the IOL.

The Suriname Museum Foundation set up an exhibition on Amerindians and Maroons together with museums from La Guyane and Brasil. This activity was organized during Carifesta 2013, held in Suriname that year. Both the exchange of information as well as artefacts took a long time of preparation and the execution was often hampered by all kinds of problems.

Mobility, historic memory and hybridity were important factors during both meetings. In this paper I would like to shed light on both these activities, stressing the interactions between the transnational parties involved. Similarities and differences in approach, but certainly also the problems encountered while organizing these two happenings will be discussed and analyzed.

*

Patricia NOXOLO (University of Birmingham)

P.E.P.Noxolo@bham.ac.uk

The 3 Guyanas: ‘community as other than the animism of fate’

In his seminal essay, *Fossil and Psyche*, Wilson Harris talks about the need to “visualize the birth of community as other than the animism of fate”. This forms part of a discussion about drawing on the resources available to the individual – both physical and psychic – in order to find “a genuine ground of relief from abnormal and implicitly embattled polarizations”.

This concern with existing psychic and physical resources seems crucial to the construction of the Three Guyanas as a heuristic community, i.e. as a category of and for thought. Using Wilson Harris’s work as its foundation, this paper thinks with and through the heuristic community of the three Guyanas. The paper attempts to rework Harris’s concept of a temporal ‘hiatus’ - the bounded teardrop moment of relief from the polarizations inherent in linear and circular temporalities – by reimagining the Guyanas as a spatial ‘hiatus’, a heterotopia or other space, not just between the Caribbean and South America, but between the Pacific and the Atlantic, between Africa and Asia, in the Tropics, in the centre of a global space.

In order to think through this spatiality of the Guyanas as a ‘hiatus’, the paper focuses on three psychic and physical heuristic ‘resources’ with global reach: the indigenous, the interior and the waters. Each of these could be looked at in terms of global continuities and connections (within ‘borderless’ environmental discourses), or in terms of the specificities of contemporary Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana (within postcolonial national borders). However this paper explores the specificities of their imagination and embodiment within and across the spatial continuum of the three Guyanas. What can these psychic and physical resources, engaged as a ground of relief, reveal about the potential of the three Guyanas as a heuristic resource?

*

Gert OOSTINDIE (KITLV / Leiden University)

Oostindie@kitlv.nl

The Guianas: South American or Caribbean?

Colonialism created the division of the Guianas in several sub-national entities, and decolonization largely confirmed this splitting-up of the Guianas. So, what defined these territories in the past, and what defines them now? Are there three Guianas, or perhaps four, or five? Should we consider them as Caribbean, or South American, or neither? Will the present national frontiers retain their relevance in the future? In his keynote lecture, Professor Gert Oostindie will address these and other questions – and perhaps answer one or two.

*

Erich PÜSCHEL (Independent researcher)

epuschel@gmail.com

From Dutch to Sranan?

The position of the Dutch language has changed rapidly in recent years. Within the Kingdom of the Netherlands it is now just one of four official languages, and in the Dutch Caribbean most inhabitants choose to speak their own vernacular instead of the language of the former colonizer. This is especially true for Papiamentu (Papiamentu), the creole of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao.

Will Suriname head in the same direction? As far as Sranan is concerned, there is evidence to answer this question in the affirmative. It is de facto the national language, spoken by eighty or more percent of the population. Just as on the ABC Islands the number of users continues to grow, because nearly all newcomers learn the lingua franca, and not the official language. This applies in

particular to immigrants from the other Guyanas who often have family ties or other specific reasons to prefer Sranan.

Taking commonalities and discrepancies between the ABC Islands and Suriname as a starting point, the paper will focus on the latest developments in Suriname itself. Finally, an attempt will be made to draw a conclusion and to predict possible consequences for the communication between the three Guyanas at large.

*

Gemma ROBINSON (University of Stirling)

gemma.robinson@stir.ac.uk

Making Guyana from the Guianas: Edgar Mittelholzer, Martin Carter, Denis Williams on Guyanese national culture

In this paper I argue that a post-war generation of writers and activists in Guyana sought to re-frame the region of the Guianas as essential to a new national practice and poetics. My paper will consider how different insurgent, scientific and indigenous vocabularies were used to present the complex continuities of the past and present Guyanas. Edgar Mittelholzer's reading of regional history for his Kaywana series of novels leads to a controversial critique of his developing nation and the regional and global ethnicities that competed within it. Martin Carter attends to colonial discourses on both the Berbice Uprising and the Demerara Slave Rebellion in an attempt to forge a new poetic sensibility that could condemn and honor the region's plantation past. Reading such work as Edwin A. Wallbridge's *The Demerara Martyr* (1848) and James Rodway's histories of the region, I consider the difficulties of reading for resistance within colonial constructions of the Guianas. In the final section of the paper I turn to Denis Williams's attention to the prehistory of the region, and consider how his archaeological approach to constructing nationhood was regional and indigenous in outlook and method. He writes in *Prehistoric Guiana* 'in the name "Guiana" is enshrined the several mutually distinctive histories of all these [Amerindian] peoples, our spiritual ancestors. There simply is no alternative route to a national self-image'. Thus, throughout the paper I show how re-imagining and recovering a regional colonial and pre-historical past is central to the fashioning of new artistic and national sensibilities.

*

Khal TORABULLY (Writer and filmmaker, Mauritius)

khal.torabully@gmail.com

A path of coolitude between spaces and territorialities of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean

In this paper, I will analyze how the transnational poetics of coolitude engaged in a dialogue between the Guyanas, specially through the paradigm of shared memories via slavery and indenture, primarily.

I will refer to the works of David Dabydeen who "uses the continuum of coolitude" in his work and the dialogue I had with negritude and créolité in Martinique and Guadeloupe, referring to Raphaël Confiant and Aimé Césaire. I will call to attention commonalities and specificities of our poetics and bring out the major points of this continuum through the kala pani paradigm, the coral poetics and the newly classified Unesco International Indentured Labour Route, so as to envisage further avenues of exchanges for the 3 Guyanas and beyond, namely the Indian Ocean.

Simona Vezzoli (International Migration institute)

simona.vezzoli@qeh.ox.ac.uk

The three Guianas as origin and destination countries: an exploration of intra-Guianese migrations

Studies of migration in the three Guianas have primarily focused on emigration towards European and North American destinations. Much less attention has been paid to regional migration and population exchanges among the three Guianas which have occurred in times of political and economic crises particularly in the post-World War II period. Using existing literature and primary evidence from interview data collected in Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, this paper explores migration patterns in the region, focussing on main determinants, strategies and trajectories of migration. This paper shows that migration within the three Guianas produces some advantages, e.g. geographical proximity and quality of life, which research has not fully appreciated but that has contributed to improving the livelihoods of many people in the Guianas. Moreover, intra-Guianese migration is not only the prerogative of those who may not have the possibility to migrate long-distance, as returning migrants from Europe and North America also engage in migration across the three Guianas. Finally, the paper addresses how emigration is gradually overshadowed by increasing immigration from Latin America and the Caribbean, a phenomenon which is strongly observed in French Guiana and slowly increasing in Guyana and Suriname.

*

Michelle YAA ASANTEWA (independent researcher, London)

michellyaa@yahoo.com

Spirits in the Guianas: Guyanese Comfa and the Ndyukas of Suriname

Studies of African-derived religious and cultural practices have focussed mainly on Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and to some extent Suriname. Little is known of African-derived spiritual practices of Guyana. Whilst the major African derived religious practices in the diaspora have a clear link with traditions like the Yoruba Orishas, Guyanese Comfa incorporates spirits of seven ethnic groups which practitioners acknowledge as contributing to the historical, political and economic formation of Guyana. The seven spirits are African, Amerindian, Chinese, Dutch, English, Portuguese and Spanish. Spirit manifestations are defined according to stereotypical traits identified with the ethnicity of each spirit. Comfa is linked historically to West African traditional practices, such as the 'Akom' dance performed by 'Okomfa' (traditional/'fetish' priests). Hence, anyone who becomes possessed on hearing the beating of drums is said to 'ketch comfa.'

The Dutch spirits in Comfa are associated with the 'Ndyukas' of Suriname who are considered highly spiritual, having retained, through maroon societies some intact elements of their African derived practices. Part of an interdisciplinary doctoral thesis about the significance of Comfa to Guyanese cultural identity, this paper highlights the similarities and differences between Comfa and Ndyuka practices, and considers how practitioners refer to these traditions to inform their lives. It will explore opportunities for cross border relations between these 'two Guianas' and how these can be used to enhance cultural cohesion through their respective spiritual and healing arts.