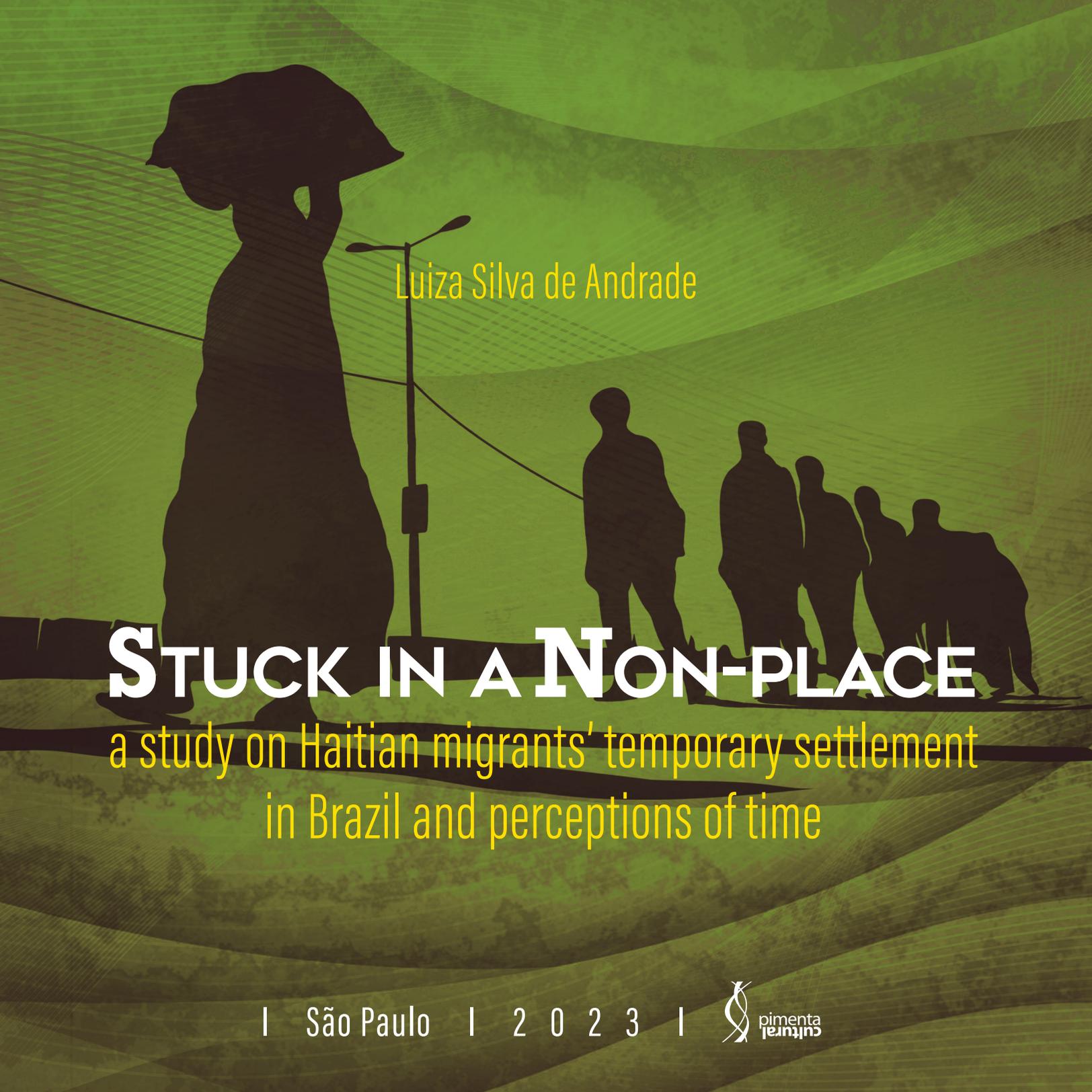


The background is a vibrant orange with wavy, textured patterns. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes. On the left, a large silhouette of a person wearing a wide-brimmed hat stands next to a street lamp. To the right, a group of five smaller silhouettes of people are walking away from the viewer.

Luiza Silva de Andrade

# STUCK IN A NON-PLACE

a study on Haitian migrants' temporary settlement  
in Brazil and perceptions of time

The background is a vibrant green with wavy, horizontal lines. In the foreground, there are black silhouettes. On the left, a woman stands with her back to the viewer, her hands raised to her head. To her right is a black silhouette of a street lamp with two arms. Further right, a group of five people are silhouetted, standing in a line. A thin black line, representing a fence or barrier, runs across the scene, passing behind the silhouettes.

Luiza Silva de Andrade

# STUCK IN A NON-PLACE

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| São Paulo | 2 0 2 3 |



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# STUCK IN A **N**ON-PLACE



*"Think we, or think we  
not, time hurries on  
With a resistless, unremitting stream"  
Robert Blair, The Grave.*

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## PREFACE

This preface is reserved for expressing my appreciation for all the great deeds and small gestures from people who have helped me through this intensive year of Masters program and, especially, during the three months of fieldwork in Brasiléia, Acre. Many people deserve my gratitude for supporting my endeavors in the previous year. However, I am afraid that, for safety reasons, some names had to be omitted, and others might have simply been unjustly forgotten.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fleeing from social and economic problems in their homeland, since 2010, thousands of Haitians have been making their way through a long journey of insecurities to Brazil, in search for a place where they can build a new life. Instead of actually arriving at the place of destination, however, these migrants get stuck in a temporary shelter at the Brazilian border, where they have to wait for a visa and a work permit to be emitted. Yet, this waiting period has been lasting far longer than expected, with migrants staying over four months. There, living conditions are often worse than those faced in their homeland. Even with constant political instability, social disregard and economic crises in Haiti, most migrants had roofs over their heads, beds, and basic hygiene conditions back home. In the shelter, over 600 people share a space for 200, with too few mattresses to sleep on and often times no food or clean water.

My research is focused exactly on that period of waiting, this gap in which they have fallen during the process of migration, and from which they are desperate to leave. There, I wished to understand how migrants interpret their life investments, as either temporary or permanent profits. I wanted to know if all the social, labor, economic and cultural skills and knowledge they had previously acquired in their homeland would still be useful in the new settlement, where they sought the opportunity to (re)build their lives. In order to reach this conclusion, I first reflect on the insecurities they face on a daily basis, and how they differ from the ones they faced back in their homeland. Secondly, I analyze the strategies they use to deal with these insecurities. And, thirdly, I research their aspirations for the future. Regardless, although the shelter is meant to be temporary, the long waiting period seems to force migrants to develop strategies to survive the dire

circumstances and attempt to find ways to leave the premises as soon as possible. These strategies they have to come up with to survive in the shelter are different from the ones migrants usually depend on once having reached a permanent settlement – the place where they are migrating towards. Furthermore, having their minds always busy with strategizing and undergoing dire living circumstances, migrants in the shelter seem to have a hard time sharing their memories of the past. Moreover, their abilities to strategize concrete plans and foresee possible outcomes for the future in Brazil seem to have been blurred by the circumstances in the shelter and its temporary character.

As a conclusion, this research suggests that contemporary migration can be interpreted as a rite of passage from one context to another. Furthermore, it frames the temporary character of the shelter as an inherent trait of supermodernity, in which space, time, and ego, are overabundant, resulting in an everlasting confusing network of connections (and disconnections) between places inscribed with meaning and 'non-places' - areas of transit marked by a contradictory communal feeling of solitude. The shelter, thus, a non-place, is a stage of interplayed survival strategies and social dynamics which bring about constant displays of anxiety, frequent claims for recognition of individual identities and growing feelings of despair. In search for new life securities, these migrants end up falling into period of far more insecurity; and that seems to be the (often unrecognized) case in similar temporary migrant settlements around the world.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

In this section of the Thesis, I introduce the social and historical contexts that underlie the recent migratory flux from Haiti to Brazil, the central theme of this research. The focus of this project will be explained, followed by brief reflections on ontological insecurity (Caple James, 2009) in Haiti and the Brazilian presence in the country, and a section on the social and scientific relevance of this research.

## 1.1. "I CAN'T EAT THE ENGLISH..."

Imagine yourself at the age of 24. Having graduated from the university, and having already found a job that pays you well enough for you to support yourself and help your family in times of need. One may assume that the imagination of your "24" is different from mine, or from everyone else's. Of course, there are infinite context possibilities in the world, and you just imagine yourself in the one that is closest to you. So, let's give you a little more context:

Imagine yourself at the age of 24, on a Monday, in 2010. Having graduated from a University in foreign languages, in a country with paradise-looking beaches, and unbelievable natural sites, where tourism is of most importance to the economy. Since you speak five languages (fluently), you are sure to get a decent job. And that is exactly what happened last year. You found a couple positions in language schools, in a country that is informally trying to specialize its people to better receive all those tourists. Against all odds, in a context where much of the population has no access to secondary education, many don't even know how to read or write, you have succeeded in completing the "study" phase of your professional career.

Now imagine yourself on a Tuesday, a sunny afternoon of 30 degrees Celsius. As you leave one of the language schools with a folder under your arm, and a blue pen in your pocket, you think about the delicious dinner you will have with your family later that day.

It is now almost 18:00 hours, and you walk through the streets, as the sunrays are reflected on the windows to your left, and you can still feel it's warmth on your arms. The air is moist, and you walk along the streets with a small grim on your lips; having completed your tasks for the day, and still satisfied with the progress your students are making. "It's funny... the power of education. Who would have thought that a simple pen would mean so much for the process of learning," you think to yourself.

Fast-forward your imagination to 20 minutes later that day. As you look around, your eyes seem weary. Everything seems to move slowly, and daylight is starting to fade. Smoke fills the air, but there seems to be no fire around. Buildings have collapsed around you, and you skim through your thoughts, trying to grasp what just happened. You left the school only 10 minutes ago, and you wonder if your students are still in the building. A million thoughts rush through your mind: Your students, your workmates, your friends, and your family. You wonder if they were all indoors.

Making your way through the smoke of debris that covers the street, you try to get home as soon as possible, but, on the way, people are asking for help. Their families and friends are stuck under huge blocks of cement. You drop your folders on the ground. And, as you try to help one and another on the way, you are already close to home. A dear friend stops you on the way: "My mother is still in the house", he says. He pulls you by the arm, as you walk towards something that doesn't quite look like a house anymore. You start digging through debris, as you work hastily, but in silence. The noise of the tragedy is playing on loop, as you skim through thousands of thoughts overlapping on your mind, seeking to find a priority. You can't seem to decide which person you will look for first. Suddenly, you realize you lost your pen. "It must be caught under a pile of debris", you think to yourself, not knowing, right then, that this would be the same feeling you would carry towards your life for many months to come.

## 1.2. LOCAL BACKGROUND

This is the true tale of a survivor of the earthquake that hit Haiti on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Honoré<sup>1</sup> was 24 years old and fresh out of college, working as a foreign language professor when the worst earthquake in the last 200 years<sup>2</sup> happened in Haiti. Honoré lost his house, job, a couple friends and several relatives. For months in a row, he found himself sleeping on the streets, as all possible shelters risked collapsing. But he wasn't the only one in that situation. In a matter of days, the tragedy in the capital of Haiti had left 220,000 people dead and another 1.5 million people homeless. Three years have passed, and not enough has been rebuilt in the country<sup>3</sup>. Tens of thousands are still homeless, living in shelters made of frayed tarpaulins or tin sheets, jobless, with little access to food, water, sanitation or education<sup>4</sup>; thus deprived of future prospects.

- But did you leave Haiti because you wanted to?

"I didn't. I did really well in my country. But, after the earthquake, it was a mess... Negligence... I was forced to leave. I left because of life circumstances. You might be intelligent. But the much knowledge you might have, without the basic needs, like food and money; you can't do anything. Like me... I speak English. But, without any money, I can't eat the English. I can't eat my Russian. I can't eat the languages I have. I have to exercise them in order to eat. And I couldn't do that there"

Honoré Clerjuiste, 03/04/2013

With the ongoing lack of ways to make ends meet, many Haitians decided to pack whatever they could carry and leave for

- 1 All names of informants were replaced by codenames in this research for their own safety.
- 2 Ker Than, National Geographic, (2010), MINUSTAH (2012). For links, see references.
- 3 MINUSTAH, 2012.
- 4 Amnesty International, 2013.

other countries, where they expected a better chance at rebuilding their lives, getting a job and accessing education. High influxes of migrants, thus, made their way into the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Brazil - interpreted as 'the country of opportunity' by many Haitians. In the last three years, over 10,000 Haitians have made their way across the Brazilian border, entering the country firstly on illegal terms, surpassing border control, and being "legalized" once they are registered by the Federal police<sup>5</sup>.

### 1.3. PACKING UP THE AGENCY

At first sight, a small piece of luggage seems to be all the Haitians have brought from home into their new lives as immigrants in Brazil. Regardless of the few objects they have carried to make the journey more comfortable (or remind themselves of their lives back home), it seems these migrants have brought through the migration process much more than simple pieces of clothing and a couple pictures. With the luggage, they have packed agency, to undergo change, and will, to adjust to new contexts.

When they reach Brazil, although having come from a context of social and economical problems caused by natural disaster, they are not considered refugees. Instead, they are granted the Brazilian Humanitarian Visa. This visa allows access to work, health and education, but does not grant them any kind of refugee aid. Though having come from a context of generalized natural destruction, material, physical and existential insecurity (Caple James, 2009), similarly to refugees, Haitians are left to fend for themselves. They have to conclude their own pathways, through their own means, in order to reach

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Declaration from the Ministry of Justice to the Press, as published on 04/29/2013, by G1.com. See references.

aspired destinations. In the shelter, one could see that, to get out, they were willing to start fresh, regardless if the job positions offered were more demanding, or more demeaning<sup>6</sup>, when compared to the ones they held at home.

Worries about getting work and stay permits are only the firsts of many obstacles the Haitians have to overcome: So, you have a visa. Where to start? There is no established “Haitian community”<sup>7</sup> where they can look for support when reaching the country. It is also noteworthy that although many migrants carry university diplomas, their abilities and formal education are often disregarded in the new context. University professors, schoolteachers, architects, engineers, and journalists, amongst others, are being inserted in new jobs that require lower levels of formal education - such as cleaning positions or loading trucks with heavy boxes. The most educated are often chosen to migrate by members of their families, who believe that they have a better chance of getting a job<sup>8</sup>. However, as this research indicates, that is often not the case for the hiring companies. Similarly to other migration fluxes<sup>9</sup>, there seems to be a downward mobility in social and work related positions, revealing a situation in which life investment in education<sup>10</sup> are disregarded, and “lost” through the process of migration.

Regardless, the situation in which Haitians find themselves at the shelter differs from most migratory movements. Generally, the migrants leave a ‘place’<sup>11</sup> and go through

6 According to their own perceptions.

7 As proposed by Fourn & Glick-Schiller (1990) on their account of Haitian migration to the United States. See references.

8 See Carvalho, 2012; Romero, S., Zarate, A. 2012; Takahashi, 2012, Pedrosa, 2012.

9 See examples in Bal, E.; Sinha-Kerkhoff, K. (2010); Fourn, G., Glick-Schiller, N. (1990); Halfacree, K. (2004); Theije, M, & Bal, E. (2010).

10 Here interpreted as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

11 These concepts will be further discussed on chapter 5.

a short period of transit, passing by 'non-places, until reaching the 'place' of destination, where they may settle (Augé, 1995). In this specific migratory movement, however, it seems the migrants find themselves to be stuck in a "transitory" situation, a temporary settlement much similar to the situation found in refugee camps.

The "transitory" and "temporary" circumstances in which these migrants are found in Acre has, however, been lasting much longer than expected. In the temporary shelter, they cannot settle – they can't get a job (with a long term contract) or build up the feeling of "being home. The small space provided by the government is shared by way too many people. Although they are all from the same nation, the shelter gives out a feeling of competition, rather than that of a community. All the migrants want to leave, but only those who are selected by the companies (or those who have money) get to do so. Some even end up getting some sort of work, such as painting jobs for local houses. However, little money comes out of these opportunities. The investments on pursuing livelihood (Jacobsen, 2002) are thus different from those displayed in a context of permanent settlement. In the shelter, the migrants have to develop strategies to survive, eat and spend their time without "losing their minds", to share an expression used by them<sup>12</sup>.

With that in mind, the goal of this project is to further understand the dynamics of (re)settlement, (re)building of contexts and use of capital by recently arrived Haitian migrants in Brazil, while anchoring contexts to their own perceptions on the temporary settlement on a 'non-place' - the shelter. The research focuses on the migrants' perceptions of insecurities faced during migration, and how they may differ from those perceived back in their homeland. Furthermore, the project aims to understand if and how these insecurities, and the

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The expression was frequently used informants during interviews and informal chats.

migratory movement, may influence the way migrants perceive their life investments<sup>13</sup> as either temporary or permanent in their lives.

## 1.4. GETTING THERE

Investigations from the Brazilian Federal Police indicate that migrants are attracted to Brazil through networks of 'Coyotes' – groups involved in human trafficking through international borders<sup>14</sup>. For an amount of around USD\$2500, the migrants are promised a straight and safe journey across the borders, through the Amazon region. The journey starts with a flight to Ecuador, where laws on immigration are not as strict as in other Latin American countries. Then, migrants take buses or cars all the way to the Peruvian or Bolivian borders with Brazil<sup>15</sup>. If Haitians were to wait for a legal visa in their own country, they would wait for months. According to a declaration from the Brazilian Minister of Justice, Luiz Paulo Barreto, many Haitians don't even have the papers needed to formally require a visa or a passport, as much has been lost in the earthquake (Giraldi, 2012).

With the growing influx of Haitians requiring a work permit, the Brazilian government took emergency measures and, in January 2012, instated a "humanitarian" visa, to allow these people to pursue better life conditions<sup>16</sup>. As a complementary measure, however, the

13 Here, investments are interpreted as forms of capital, as proposed by Bourdieu (1986). This will be further discussed on chapter 4.

14 The official governmental press issued a statement regarding the Humanitarian Character of the decision to put an end to the limit of 100 Visas per month to Haitians. In the declaration, it is mentioned that the limit was eliminated to try to protect Haitians who wish to migrate from human trafficking networks, also referred to as "Coyotes".

15 Information retrieved both from declarations from Haitian migrants who have gone through immigration through the networks of human trafficking, as well as from governmental agents, whose names were purposely omitted in this research.

16 Diário Oficial da União, National Immigration Council - Normative Resolution No 79, 12/01/2012.

government established a limit of only 200 a month, until the end of 2012. According to the minister of justice, Brazil was, thus, safeguarding not only its own job market, but also the lives of many Haitians who might decide to migrate, going through the dangers of an international human trafficking scheme only to find that there are not as many job opportunities in Brazil as they hoped.

However, the influx did not stop. On the contrary, it only grew. One week after having already left the field site, in the beginning of April, the number of migrants in the shelter (a space with a full capacity of 200 people) rose considerably, reaching 800. A week after that, the number reached a peak: 1300 migrants were living in the shelter - this time not only Haitians, but other nationalities as well, such as Nigerians, Senegalese and Bangladeshi. Henceforth, the state's government officially declared a state of "Social Emergency", lacking funds to aid the migrants further.

## 1.5. ONTOLOGICAL INSECURITY

The history of Haiti has never displayed long-lasting periods of peace and development. Since its independence from France (1804), the country has been stage to frequent military, economic and humanitarian interventions. (Caple James, 2009). Having been pioneers in ridding themselves from colonization, Haiti started its periods of "freedom" by owing enormous sums of money to their former colonizer, a debt that would never be paid (Coupeau, 2008). In its recent history, the country has been manipulated by 30 years of Duvalier dynasty. The period is known as a time of terror, with insurgents and oppositionists being silenced and brutally murdered. In 1986, with widespread hope of becoming a democratic country, the dynasty came to an end. Jean-Claude Duvalier stepped down from the government and power was taken by the military, which

instated yet another decade of dictatorship. In 1990, a democratic president was elected. However, Aristide's term was soon interrupted. Power was overtaken by the military and the coup led to another international intervention, by the United States, bringing Aristide back to office in 1994 (Ibid, 2008).

Based on research done amongst Haitians in their homeland, Caple James (2011), a psychological anthropologist who has lived in the country and studied Haitian inhabitants for over a decade, explains that ongoing cycles of political social and economic ruptures in Haiti have established an ontological state of insecurity in the country, leaving the people inserted in a context in which trauma has become a constant existential reality, rather than a temporary experience (p.157). Instead of providing Haitians with opportunity to pursue certain securities, conflicts and governmental changes have further developed long periods of existential, physical and material insecurity for its population<sup>17</sup>. In an unfortunate coincidence, Haiti is geographically placed in an area of natural instability, with a history of earthquakes and storms with ravishing consequences.

Through cycles of uncertainty, low investments and periods of widespread fear of the government, the country's development was downplayed by internal conflict and international intervention. The earthquake that took place in 2010, for instance, was quickly followed by an international mobilization for rescue and disaster relief for the Haitian population. Currently, there is an ongoing debate arguing both in favor and against international aid strategies in Haiti. However, as this is not the focus of the project, for the moment, I will only elaborate on the humanitarian presence of the Brazilian State on the left side of the island.

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A similar situation can be found on Henrik Vigh's account of the life of locals in Guinea Bissau, where "[...] uncertainty has gained an air of constancy." (2010, p.421).

## 1.6. BRAZILIAN PRESENCE IN HAITI

The United Nations have been involved in Haitian political and social contexts since 1990, when the UN Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH), was present at the elections. In 2004, a series of internal conflicts propelled by insurgent groups quickly spread waves of violence through national territory, being interpreted by the UN Security Council as a “threat to international peace and security”<sup>18</sup>. The UN, thus, authorized the employment of Multinational Interim Forces (MIF) and the establishment of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)<sup>19</sup>. Since then, all military operations from the 19 countries contributing to the UN in Haiti have been supervised and monitored by the Brazilian military. Over 13,000 Brazilian soldiers have served in Haiti; the personnel still being the largest in the country<sup>20</sup>.

Brazilian presence in Haiti has been highly publicized in the Brazilian media with reports and documentaries about the services of Brazilian military in assisting the people and the government on its recovery from the damages caused by the 2010 earthquake. After the natural catastrophe, the little stability that had been built in the country since the coming of MINUSTAH collapsed. Moreover, the destruction of infrastructure caused the rise of epidemics, such as cholera, whose contagion is spread by the most basic human need: water<sup>16</sup>. With an initial displacement of 1.5 million people and the death of another 220,000, two years later, in 2012, numbers still accounted for 390,000 internally displaced persons, living in 575 displacement camps (Amnesty International, 2013). Reports published by the UN and Amnesty International indicate that living conditions in Haiti have improved very little since international aid reached the country.

18 UN Security Council resolution 1529, 2004, p.1.

19 UN Security Council Resolution 1542, 2004.

20 MINUSTAH official numbers, 2012.

Although there are no official numbers of people who have lost their jobs, undergoing a downturn in economic activities, migration is still seen as a viable option for pursuing livelihood.

## 1.7. SOCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Anthropological knowledge is threaded by ideas and thoughts in an everlasting quilt of theoretical elaborations, which can thus be compared, juxtaposed, questioned, or reinforced (Gay Y Blasco & Wardle, 2007). Notwithstanding, this study is not just another piece added to one of the ends of the threaded quilt of anthropological knowledge. It provides us with a part that was missing in the middle; a spotlight that has been lacking in the migration studies, a focus on temporary migrant settlements.

Elaborating on Gennep's (1960) theory of Rites of passage, Turner (1974) states that rites of passage are inherent to situations of transition in societies, and they express the dichotomy between stability and transitory structures (p.56). According to the author, rites of passage are composed by three phases: separation, transition, and incorporation, and are usually accompanied by a "parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another" (p.58). With elaborations on the different phase of rites of passage, Turner helps us to better understand the complex process of migration, here seen as a form of rite of passage<sup>21</sup>. Through the process, migrants are isolated from their former structure, go through a transitory period of 'liminality', during the journey to reach the aspired destination, and, finally, rejoin a structured society, in a place of permanent settlement,

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The phases of migration have been derived from analyzing differences and similarities between scenarios on other migration studies such as the following: Theije & Bal (2010), Bal & Sinha Kerkhof (2010), Vigh (2009a, 2009b), Fourn & Glick-Schiller (1990), Levanon (2011), Jacobsen (2002), Benson, M. (2012), Jansen (2008).

where they are thought to have the opportunity to rebuild their lives, re-establish capitals and develop new ways of pursuing livelihood.

For the Haitian migrants in Brazil, however, there is an extra phase in this process. The “temporary settlement”, is found between leaving homeland and arriving in the place of destination, as a gap in the phase of transit from one place to the other. This phase of ‘still transition’ (where movement is absent) is the focus of this research. In the temporary settlement, living dynamics, social navigation strategies, and the uses migrants make of capital are different from what is normally found in permanent settlements. Moreover, being considered as rather unpleasant by the migrants – as will be further discussed in the following chapters – the context of the temporary settlement seems to influence the migrant’s perceptions of time, smudging their abilities to foresee possible futures and hindering their access to (or willingness to share) memories of the past.

This research, thus, engages in the anthropological dialogue by making use of Turner’s thoughts on rites of passage to contextualize a contemporary example of ‘non-place,’ which allows us to reiterate and further elaborate on the theory of supermodernity, as proposed by Marc Augé (1995). Understanding this dynamic of temporary (re)settlement sheds further light on a migratory movement that seems to carry symptoms inherent to supermodernity, such as individuality, and solitude. It also features a contribution to the scientific dialogue on human security: By using anthropological methods to elicit migrants’ subjective interpretations of a collective social issue (migration), this thesis argues for the importance of accounting for existential perceptions of insecurity in collective environments.

That being said, the choice of using the “aquatic metaphor” (Kalir, 2013) – using the words ‘flux’ and ‘flow’ to refer to migratory movements – serves the purpose of indicating its value to understanding migrants’ own perceptions of how they are seen by the government. Critics of this metaphor have stated that “(It) seems

too often to wash away an important distinction between the many losers and few winners among those who exercise mobility" (Ibid, p.). However, with the results of this thesis, it is possible to argue that It is not the metaphor itself, but the governmental authorities who wash away these differences. The aquatic metaphor is simply a grammatical representation of a situation which is far more tacit than academic narrative discourses. It has an important value for migration studies as, in this specific research case for instance, it allows us to perceive how the migrants themselves interpret the government's view of their presence in the country and their migration movement. Thus, I hereby argue that, contrary to what has been suggested by Kalir (2013) the very metaphor serves as grammatical aid to reach migrant's subjective perceptions in the context of the temporary settlement, thus being able to do what the author has claimed for in his article; "[...] 'bring in the state' as people experience it" (2013, p.325).

Finally, this migration influx might represent a future tendency for Brazil. The country does not have a recent history of dealing with large migratory influxes, as do many European States. Concerns about migration had not been under media focus in a long time. Now, however, in the prominent position of the sixth largest world economy (Inman, 2012), and with so many job positions unfilled by the Brazilians themselves, it seems the country has gained space on international migrants' agendas, becoming one of the most sought migration destinations in Latin America.

# 2

## METHODOLOGY

In this chapter of the thesis, you will encounter a detailed description of the research scene – the field site and the people. I will also introduce the main question and the supporting sub-questions, as well as a description of the methods used for collecting data during fieldwork. Each method is followed by a reflection on its usefulness and importance for this research. Sections on awareness and restrictions during fieldwork can also be found on this chapter.

## 2.1. RESEARCH QUESTION

As a guideline for the theoretical development and fieldwork related to this research, the following research question was developed:

How do Haitian migrants in Brazil, who have fled from economic problems after the 2010 earthquake and its consequences, (re)shape their social capital and navigate through the insecurities of the experience of migration and how does this experience influence their perceptions of the past and aspirations for the future?

To better organize the research in order to reach the aim of the main question, the following sub-questions were proposed:

1 - What insecurities do Haitian migrants in Brazil face on a daily basis? Do these insecurities differ from the ones they faced in Haiti before migration?

2 - What strategies do the Haitian migrants in Brazil develop to navigate through the insecurities brought about by the experience of migration?

3 - What strategies do Haitian migrants make use of to reshape social capital in the new context? What aspects of social capital have they brought with them through the migration process?

4 - How do the Haitian migrants perceive their past, when compared to their present social positions and contexts?

5 - What aspirations do they have for the future? Are they any different from the plans they had before the earthquake?

## 2.2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION & FIELD NOTES

"A first glance of the house reveals pieces of clothes, left to dry on wires spread all over the porch, colorfully reflecting rays of the sun. Shoes are kept above the door, not to get dirty, it seems. A map of Brazil has been placed by agents of the Secretary of Justice and Human Rights of the state on the corner walls of the porch. I never see Haitians looking at the map, and when they ask me where I'm from, I try to point at the map as a reference, but it doesn't seem to catch their attention. They don't seem to mind the map or to really want to know where the city is located." (Field notes, 16/01/2013)

During the period of fieldwork, I spent most of my journeys in the migrants' shelter, browsing around, chatting with informants, interviewing and observing their living dynamics. Participant observation was, thus, a method constantly used for gathering information on the migrants' journeys and their behaviors in relation to the space and the people with whom they were forced to live.

As suggested by Stone Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2007, p.19), being inserted in the contexts of the informants is essential for better grasping an emic perspective. Participant observation goes further than simply placing the informants' words on paper. It allows the researcher to grasp many other types of contributions to data gathering, such as the context settings, informant's daily routines, behaviors, as well as relationships amongst informants or between them and the environment in which they are inserted.



Accompanying the informants in their daily routines was indeed a great source of information for observing strategies for social navigation (Vigh, 2009), gathering information on forms of capital and specific values shared by the informants and better understanding the migrants' interpretations of the new social context in which they are inserted. The data collected was recorder in two field diaries. One used exclusively for notes on direct observations, sketches, questionings, commentaries and reflections on the context. The second was used as a diary, carrying personal entries, episodes, reflections on cultural comparisons, feelings and thoughts the act of field working (Emerson, Fretz & Shauw, 1995, p.75-77).

Furthermore, participant observation as an eliciting method was a useful tool both to gain informants trust as well as to make them more comfortable with the researcher's presence in the field site. By being there on a daily basis, it was possible to get to know some of the informants with small talk, which provided me with the opportunity to open the pathway to more focused interviews.

## 2.3. INTERVIEWS

In his account of twenty-five strategies for developing a great interview, Hermanowicz suggests that the main point of developing an in-depth interview is to find meaning and "[...] capture fine-grained levels of significance [...]" (2002, p.484) in the informant's speech as well as his behavior. The level of information retrieved from in-depth interviews developed during fieldwork for this project certainly agrees with Hermanowicz's approach to the usefulness of in-depth interviews. This method was fairly useful in understanding background and contexts of the immigrant's lives before the migratory movement. However, due to certain aspects further described in the restrictions, only few informants were willing (able) to share

a deeper and more personal level of information regarding past and future. Out of the twenty-seven main informants, eleven were willing to develop a longer and deeper dialogue with me during my stay in the field site. Of those, seven interviews were recorded in mp3 format and transcribed into paper. The remaining four interviews were carried out freely, without the presence of a recorder but only with the help of scribbles of key words or sentences into a notebook. After these interviews, I engaged in concentrated writing processes, which generally took a couple hours and a lot of memory.

### 2.4. MAPPING EXODUS & GROUP DISCUSSIONS

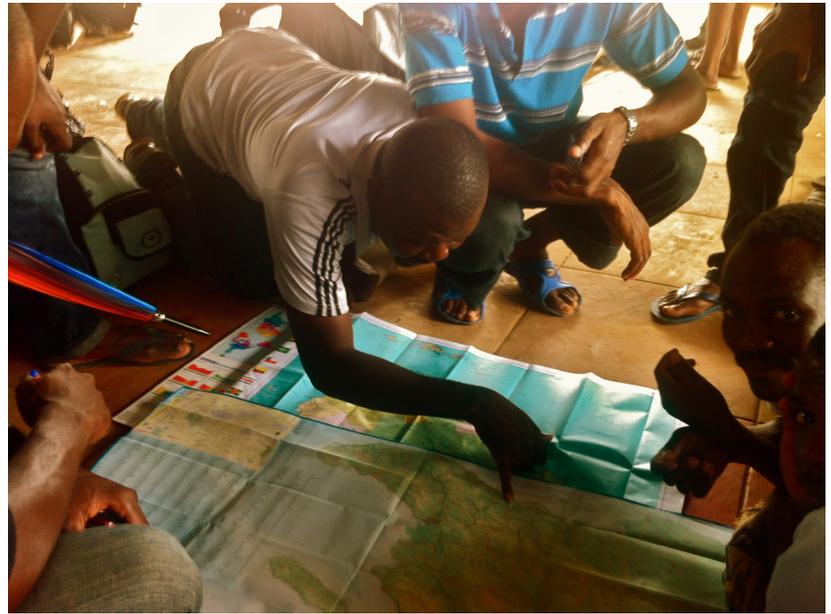
There isn't much to kill time in the shelter besides being lost in your own thoughts. Perhaps that is why they are so interested in the map when I open it on the dirty cement floor of the new shelter. None of them seem to recognize the Haitian geography. When they mention their city of origin, they rarely know if it is located in the north or south of the country. It takes them up to five minutes to find some of the cities, even the bigger ones. It is as if they were looking for needles in a pile of hay, carefully going through each and every single one of them, until the correct name pops up.

Fieldnotes, 02/06/2013

Mapping exodus from Haitian cities was a useful strategy to raise certain subjects regarding the history and past of Haiti, which culminated in a lot of small talk and some informal group discussions. Information on both economic and social background could be derived from these discussions. Furthermore, this group dynamic was a useful source of access to new informants. Intrigued by the open map on the shelter's floor, many came closer in order to satisfy their curiosity and understand what was happening. This gave me

the much-appreciated opportunity to meet them, creating opportunities for in-depth interviews and further observations.

**Figure 1** - Informants observe maps during group dynamics in the shelter



*Source: Luiza Andrade*

Making the maps both of Haiti and of Latin America available to the Haitians in the shelter was also a way of “giving back.” With access to the map, many Haitians took the opportunity to ask questions about the neighboring countries and several cultural, economic and social aspects about Brazil. In these moments (on a daily basis), the parts seemed inverted: I was suddenly the source of information, while they were the ones asking questions.

With the geographical map of Haiti open on the ground, I set aside two colors of pen, green and red. Whoever approached the map was asked to point out the city where they were born, as well

as the city where they lived right before migrating to Brazil. The map is two sided, with Haiti on one side, and Dominican Republic on the other, thus composing the entire island.

Of a total of a one hundred and nineteen Haitians who registered their hometown on the map, sixteen (13%) had come from *Port au Prince*, while thirty-two (26%) had come from *Gonaives*. A random scan of the Haitians in the shelter thus shows that the number of migrants who had left from Gonaives is twice the number of Haitians who had come from the capital. Eight red dots are placed in the Dominican Republic, representing Haitians who lived there before migration. In *Cap Haitien*, there are fourteen registers. *Jacmel*, a province to the south, carries five red dots. The dots on the map do not serve me as precise data of exodus, but help clarify and break assumptions commonly seen in the Brazilian media, such as the idea that most immigrants coming through the border left from the capital, destroyed by the earthquake in 2010. This was important for clarifying the migrants' backgrounds.

## 2.5. RESTRICTIONS

Gaining access to the Haitians was an easy task, as they were gathered in the migrants' shelter provided by the government. However, there was a sort of social barrier from the Haitians towards governmental workers and, as an attachment, to myself. Since I was often seen along the sides of governmental agents and recruiters (an association I could not avoid due to fieldwork conditions), I was often wrongly interpreted as one myself.

One can only speculate reasons for Haitians to keep their past experiences or future plans from governmental agents and myself. This barrier was further enhanced by the temporary character of the



shelter – with stays ranging from a couple weeks to four months, depending of the government’s ability to absorb the influx and register them as legal citizens. For those who decided to wait for a job opportunity in the shelter, the stay varied depending on the availability of job positions. Therefore, creating trust ties was a difficult task. With numbers varying from 400 to 700 Haitians possible informants, it was also difficult to choose my informants; as I often wondered whom I should approach, considering I needed to choose those with a higher chance of staying longer, which would facilitate the process of developing trust ties. Moreover, I was often interpreted neither as a researcher nor as a student, but as an opportunity to make their way out of the shelter (Malkki, 1992, p.29). Many of the interviews and chats I had with informants were permeated by small cues or large displays of interest in my ability to help them “escape” the situation. The very focus of this research, insecurities in the shelter, made it difficult to interview informants. Often left without information on the process of establishing new lives in Brazil – with about 30 Haitians arriving daily – Haitians showered visitors in the shelter with questions, hoping to better understand the procedures<sup>22</sup>.

The shelter space was open and Haitians rarely left the premises. Thus, after a couple minutes in the warehouse, we (the informant and I) were surrounded by dozens of migrants. They would simply approach us and observe our dialogue, as if they could not be seen, or perhaps because they did not share the need for privacy during conversations. As proposed by Hermanowicz (2002, p.482), the revelation of intimate thoughts can only take place in situations in which the interviewee feels comfortable with the interviewer. In the shelter, thus, privacy was an issue that hindered the flow of interviews. On that note, language barriers were sometimes a problem. Not all the Haitians spoke French, since many had not had the privilege to receive formal education. Many only spoke Spanish, which

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This idea will be elaborated further on the following chapters.

I understand but am not fluent in, and others only understood French, but responded in Creole.

## 2.6. AWARENESS: HUGGING THE WORLD WITH YOUR ARMS

As I looked for interesting topics to research, I found myself in an ocean of possibilities. Having come from a background of engagement in the news, as a journalist, and in social causes, by having done a share of volunteer work back in Brazil, I sought a topic that mattered not only to my own conscience, but also to Brazilian society as a whole. Little did I know, back then, that in the scientific dialogue every topic matters and serves a purpose of filling gaps and connecting threads of knowledge. However, as my mother used to say, I wanted to “hug the world with my arms”, a pretty impossible task, considering the size of the world and the shortness of my arms.

As I walked into the field, I thought I could play both the part of an anthropologist, and that of an engaged citizen. I wanted to help. I had dropped journalism, for believing it would clash with my ethics as a researcher, but I believed engaged anthropology was the way to go, and that a great aspect of anthropology was its engagement on improving life in communities, according to their own perceptions. I was wrong. I was mesmerized by the abstract power of knowledge, thinking that it was an easy combination to be both in the understanding position as well as in the engaged position. In the field, I felt hopeful, chocked, lost and, then, found; in my place as, firstly, a knowledge builder and, secondly, an amateur social worker.

After having been through some hard times, and heavily tried to resist the fact that there is only so much a person can do to help, I still believe this research can help improve the lives of informants,

or those they represent – people in similar migration contexts throughout the world. Help will not come as directly and as instantaneously as I hoped. "*Il faut avoir de la patience*", as the Haitians would say. Now, I see anthropology as an everlasting and often influencing dialogue of ideas and well-articulated reflections on the world; and I know (I hope) that this contribution to knowledge will somehow reach these informants' lives.

Still, as a journalist at heart, I feel that I might be able to speed up the process of circulating information to reach the people in need. Thus, I have decided to write this thesis with an accessible narrative, making it interesting not only for anthropologists, but for the non-academic public as well. That being said, it is important to mention that I am aware of the restrictions within the construction of anthropological knowledge. It has been long criticized as a science for its methods of data collection and interpretation, which are found to be quite subjective at times. However, the proposal of this research is not to provide readers with objective ethnological inventory descriptions, but rather to present you with knowledge that was built through relationships and dialogues.

I do not think it is possible to seek "the truth", since the concept of truth is, in itself, abstract. We each carry our own versions of the truth as we have different standpoints of the world we live in and the episodes we go through. Regardless, I must also point out that although the perceptions I wish to display, here, are those of the informants, they have been mediated by my own perceptions, as well as my writing. With this research, thus, I do not seek the "absolute truth of the matter", but a reality as it is built through the relationships developed throughout fieldwork. As Kristen Hasrup (1994) argues on her account of the relationship between social experience and anthropological knowledge, Anthropologists do not study the unmediated world of 'the other', but the world built through mediation between themselves and 'the others'.

## 2.7. THE RESEARCH SITE

Walking through the red-dirt streets of the small city as we approach the quarter of the improvised shelter, the smell of sewage grows stronger and stronger. At the entrance, an old and torn wooden gate painted in worn-out green separates their temporary territory from that of the permanent city inhabitants. The right side bends down to the ground, in what seems to be an expression of tiresome. Although half-broken, the gate is usually open, (as is the Brazilian border, I thought to myself) and serves as a leaning spot for the Haitians to rest their arms while standing. At the shelter, shades are scarce, and there is barely any space to take refuge from the burning sun.

The entrance pathway goes from the main gate to the porch and is covered in cement, splitting the yard into two areas. To both sides, there is a spacious garden. Since there are only 4 rooms inside, the house is reserved for women and children. The men sleep on the porch, seeking refuge from the rain. The self-proclaimed chief of the Haitians in the shelter also has a room in the house; the former kitchen is now his abode.

The space looks dirty. The garden is covered in dirt or mud, depending on the how hard the rain decides to fall. Dirt-coated bags and suitcases are spread all over, occupying the hallway inside. It is nearly impossible to pass by the corridor without tumbling on one of the suitcases, the small containers that have carried representations of a lifetime into the future homeland.

Fieldnotes, 01/15/2012

The shelter referred to in the field-note entry above is located in Brasiléia, a small town in the state of Acre, on the Brazilian border with Bolivia and in the proximities of the border with Peru. Because of the easy access and the lack of police vigilance at the border, the majority of Haitians who wish to enter the country come in through this city, reaching its area usually at night, by using the service of

shared taxis that charge from 25 to 100 dollars to follow the road from Peru or Bolivia to the Brazilian side of the border. Although the city houses around 21,000 inhabitants and occupies a space of 3790 square meters<sup>23</sup>, the migrants do not find themselves to be scattered around urban spaces, but mount up in a small environment where all the immigrants share too few old mattresses, carton paper beds, governmental meals (when there is still budget), three toilets and two showers.

The house mentioned in the entry had been rented by the government to serve as shelter for the Haitians when the number of immigrants was still lower than 400 people. Since the number rose considerably, some days reaching 700 Haitians, the Secretary of Justice and Human Rights of the state of Acre (SEJUDH-AC) decided to provide the immigrants with a new temporary shelter, a warehouse – also known to locals as the abandoned health club facilities. The new space (rather old-looking and torn) was an attempt to enhance the poor living conditions in which the migrants found themselves in the beginning of the fieldwork period, in January. In the shelter there is a little more space and the air circulates better. All sides are open, as the area is only surrounded by a garden fence. Since it is more spacious (with a full capacity for 200 people) the Haitians now spend their days and nights inside the premises, leaving only rarely. There, they find themselves stuck in a two-stage waiting process: Firstly, waiting for the Brazilian humanitarian visa to be issued – which can take up from 1 to 8 weeks. Secondly, waiting for a company recruiter to show up, hoping they would be the next selected for working positions in other Brazilian states, which would mean leaving the shelter without spending any money. However, being recruited can take up to 3 months. Thus, many are afraid to spend time out of the shelter and miss the recruiters' visits. Constantly concerned, they stay inside throughout whole days, laying on the mattresses, thinking

about life, confabulating, playing cards and even (some) using their skills – hairdressers and barbers – in exchange for a couple Real bills (the local currency).

**Figure 2** - Haitian migrants await information on the Temporary Shelter, where a capacity of 200 is shared by over 400 people



*Source: Luiza Andrade*

## 2.8. THE PEOPLE

A feeling of anxiety seems to often accompany the informants in the temporary settlement. Although having a shared nationality, the Haitians in the shelter don't seem to relate much to each other. They are rarely seen in groups bigger than two or three people, and often seem not to care about their peers if it means getting ahead

in line for a job or for any other aspect considered beneficial – an aspect that will be further considered in the following chapters. They are generally dissatisfied with the living conditions and often mention their situation by referring to “refugee status”, clarifying that they had never been in such a complicated living situation before reaching the shelter. There is a generalized feeling of shame and embarrassment among the informants in the shelter, and only rarely do they mention the status of their living conditions to friends and relatives who wish to migrate to Brazil – as they were not warned by their friends and families who had undergone this experience<sup>24</sup>.

Purposes for having reached Brazil are often the same: working opportunities, fleeing from prejudice in Dominican Republic, lack of social and economic stability in their homeland or other Latin American and Caribbean countries, with few exceptions relating motifs to witchcraft or fear of violence. Many were the informants’ mentions of having no friends in the shelter, or of not wanting to live or stay close to other Haitian migrants in their aspired permanent settlements. Decisions (as well as complains) are made mostly on an individualistic approach<sup>25</sup>, and conflicts often come up from this behavior. At first glance, the living conditions in the shelter seem to influence the development of traits of individual survival rather than communal wellbeing within the Haitians. They rarely share food, hygiene products or even beds. On certain occasions, the need of others is seen as an opportunity for profit (by those who have enough to spare), as will be illustrated by episodes from the field on chapters three and four.

Most inhabitants in the shelter are male, with a proportion of one Haitian woman for every 30 Haitian men. While the majority of men have migrated alone, most women migrated with their husbands – and often with small children. However, there are rare cases

24 This information is retrieved from personal interviews with some of the key informants, as well as informal chats with other migrants in the shelter.

25 This point will be further discussed in the following chapters.

of women who migrated alone, leaving their children in Haiti. When that is the case, they are the only providers in the family, having no husbands back in their homeland. Women who have migrated pregnant or with small children are rarely able to leave the shelter either hired by a company, or on their own. The few who managed to do so are supported by their also migrant husbands<sup>26</sup>.

Twenty-seven Haitians, of whom only three are women, compose the group of main informants. Out of the entire group, twenty informants were aged between twenty-one and twenty-seven. The remaining seven were thirty or older. Of these, only two were over forty (both are forty-two year-old males who seek an opportunity to better support their family). Of the group of twenty-year-olds, 45% (nine) were college students, and aspired finishing their studies in Brazil. The other eleven were of varied professions (stonemasons, high school professors, journalists, and accountants, to name but a few). The majority of the group (twelve) graduated in technical courses or has only finished basic or secondary education. Five out of the twenty-seven main informants have a diploma of higher education. A detailed matrix of the key informants can be found in the appendices.

Many migrants had already left to other countries in pursuit of a better life before going to Brazil. Main previous destinations were the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Peru, in order of popularity. Of the main informants, six (22%) were living in the Dominican Republic before this migration. Of the twenty-one informants who remained in Haiti after the earthquake of 2010, around 50% (eleven) left from the city of *Gonaïves*, the second largest city in the country. Six had come from *Cap Haitien*, the third largest city and one of the most

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There was only one case of a pregnant migrant who left the shelter for another temporary shelter specifically directed towards pregnant women in Porto Velho, in the bordering state of *Rondônia*. However, the shelter was closed for lack of funding. She left, meeting up with her husband in the same state, where he was working. There were also cases of women with small children having left the shelter with the help of their husbands and even women who had to return to Ecuador, when realizing they would not find a job in Brazil.

historical tourism sites in Haiti. Four had come from the capital, *Port au Prince*. Of the ones who lived in the Dominican Republic, three were originally from *Port au Prince*. The number of immigrants in the shelter fluctuates on a daily basis. When I first reached the field-site, in January 2013, there were about 400 Haitians. That same week, the number rose to 600. A month into the field, and it went down again to around 240. Many Haitians had been recruited and “taken away” by companies, and others (who were not so lucky) decided to leave on their own. Many borrowed more money from relatives in their homeland, in order to go look for jobs in one of the bigger cities in the country, such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro.

In the following chapter, I will present the insecurities felt by the Haitian migrants both in the shelter, as well as back in their homeland, thus providing an overview of their rationalized reasons to migrate and the urgency to leave the temporary settlement. To better structure this train of thought, differences between temporary and permanent settlement will be clarified, and the lens of human security will be further explained.

**3**

**“ONE MUST CLOSE  
HIS NOSE TO DRINK  
STINKY WATER”**

In this section of the thesis, I introduce the insecurities faced on a daily basis by Haitian migrants both during and before the migration process and highlight a reflection on the differences between insecurities which inspired migration and insecurities developed as a consequence, or as part, of the migratory flux. Throughout the chapter, I argue that life in the temporary shelter carries the weight of fairly many insecurities from which the migrants are not being protected as proposed by the UNDP declaration of 1994. In addition, the human security approach, which underlies this research, will be explained and further discussed.

## 3.1. "THIS IS MY FIRST TIME LIVING THIS KIND OF LIFE"

What kind of life, do you mean?

I mean like three weeks away from... not touching money, but in frustration... like being despised. You understand? And not knowing what to do, where to go, whom to talk to, 'who' to call... With no ways, no opportunities... I know those Haitians are my countrysiders, but I know how they are.

Honoré Clerjuiste, 03/04/2013

He stared at the table, as he paused the speech about the Haitian shelter. Honoré looked tired. It was almost five in the afternoon, and he hadn't eaten lunch that day. There was a fight while forming the line to receive governmental food. The number of meals is based on the registration of entrances and leaves of Haitians in the shelter – a list written in blue pen on a notebook, kept by one of the Haitians themselves, 'Le dirigeant.' He plays the role of the organizer or 'Haitian representative' in the shelter. The numbers seemed correct, 511 meals for 511 migrants. When the government is still on budget,

the meals are served three times a day. If more Haitians arrive during the day, however, some are left without food, as the numbers are computed in the morning, before counting the pieces of bread and liters of '*pingado*', a mixture between milk and coffee.

No one had arrived that morning. By the time it was Honoré's turn to receive the food, however, they were out. Some had picked up two meals instead of one, and others were left hungry. With so many people in the shelter, it is hard to keep track of who had already been in the food line. It's always a mess, with people pushing each other to move faster, or to cut in. The loud noise of their voices echoes on the high ceiling of the shelter, and fills the whole space with the atmosphere of a full street on a Sunday market. Haitians themselves act as watchmen, pointing out people who are trying to sneak in a second time. When '*Le dirigeant*' is in the shelter, he oversees the distribution, making sure no one will take an advantage of the situation. Two or three other Haitians who have become friends with '*Le dirigeant*' also help out. One of them often carries a wooden bat, threatening to hit whoever displeases the organization proposed by '*Le dirigeant*'. Regardless, once they have their own meal in hand, no further attention is paid to the organization of the food line. They walk back to their mattresses or paper carton beds to sit and enjoy the meal. There are no forks or knives, so the lid of the individual aluminum-packed meals is folded into improvised spoons – not the most efficient tool for cutting chicken or rolling threads of pasta.

Honoré was frustrated that day. He was frustrated most days. He felt lost and out of place; "away from civilization", he said. In the shelter, he felt he couldn't trust his countrysiders, in spite of feeling a slight nationality-related tendency to do so. On his first day in Brazil, when arriving in the shelter, another Haitian tried to sell him a sleeping mattress that had been formerly used by a man who had already left. "He came to me with two options", he remembers. The man offered him a ragged mattress for BRL\$50.00 or a carton paper box for BRL\$4.00. However, Honoré had no money, and couldn't even

afford the box. "I wasn't going to buy it anyways", he explained. "It was a matter of principles". He did not agree with the guy's behavior, and was not willing to participate in such "corruption", as he classified it. This was not the first time the interpreter had seen his countrysiders selling beds. After the earthquake of 2010, he remembers, his neighbors negotiated tents received from international aid in exchange for money for food and clothes.

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Two days later, as we sat on a sidewalk far from the shelter – but close enough so that he could monitor the entrance and keep track of companies recruiters that might show up – Robert Elouis talked about how he felt that people in the shelter are selfish. "There was a fight yesterday", said the 22-year-old. He had come to Brazil to help support his family. The young man was chosen between his five siblings as the one with the highest amount of skills (he was the only one who finished secondary school, and was thought to have better chances at finding a job). "A man got angry because someone had cut in line to get food". The former had a blade in his pocket, and threatened to cut the latter. The argument lasted a couple minutes, and both men were raging. Fortunately, no one got hurt, but it wasn't the first time blades threats had occurred in the shelter.

"The refuge is full of criminals", he warned me. As we walked back to the shelter, Robert pointed out three men who, according to him, were well-known criminals in Haiti. "He is a kidnapper. Everyone knows that. Even 'Le dirigent' knows. He makes noise at night, doesn't let people sleep, threatens everyone, takes two plates of food... All that because 'Le dirigent' is scared he might do something to his family in Haiti", he concluded. As he pointed out the man, I felt uneasy. Instead of looking like the media stereotype of a criminal,

he looked like that of a refugee, sitting on his ragged mattress; his gaze lost in space, as if his thoughts were far away from the shelter.

Criminals or not in their homeland, when receiving the humanitarian Visa in Brazil, all Haitians are treated the same<sup>27</sup>. The shelter serves as a space of refuge and equality. However, although having the same nationality, the migrants have come from different social and economic backgrounds. This creates a series of conflicts and generates animosity between them. They often argue and offend each other referring to economic statuses and access to social spheres.

They are going to sell you like a slave! You are nothing here...  
Me, I'm not waiting for a company to come. I can leave whenever I want to, but you, they are 'gonna' sell you like a slave.

Honoré frowns as he tells an episode he witnessed in the shelter the day before. He explains that in the presence of Brazilians, such as myself, Haitians seem much nicer (more polite and less aggressive) than they usually are. When left alone, however, there is no respect amongst each other, as "Haitians don't obey Haitians", he concludes. The language professor told the story of the previous day as an example of how they are constantly offending each other in the shelter. During the argument, although not having directly participated, he also felt offended. The reference to slavery is still a touchy subject for the people of a country that had not only been colonized and explored for several years, but also been the first country in which a slave revolt culminated in colonial independence, in 1804.

These references were also common amongst company recruiters. While some did not feel comfortable with the hiring

27 According to governmental sources, in 2010, in the beginning of this migratory influx, the Brazilian government would see it that the criminal records of the migrants were analyzed before the Humanitarian Visa was granted. However, with the growing number of immigrants, it became impossible to screen each single migrant. Currently, thus, the procedure is to grant the Visas with validity for six months. During these six months, the Federal Police analyzes the criminal records sent by the Haitian Government. If the migrant presents a problem with the records, the revalidation of his visa for the next five years is denied and he is deported.

situation, “As if they were at a slave trade market”, as one of them put it, others laughed embarrassedly. One of the recruiters, for instance, told us during a dinner that he was advised (by friends in his hometown, in a traditionally agricultural state) on how to look for good workers amongst Haitians: “You have to look at the thinness of their ankles”, he concluded.

At first, you think... Well, that is not my case. He is talking about that other guy. But, after you are stuck here for two or three weeks, you start to wonder... maybe he was right. Maybe I am waiting to be sold like a slave.

Honoré Clerjuiste, 01/03/2013

The word frustrated came up frequently when Haitians talked about the shelter. The parallel they made between slave trades and the refuge indicates that psychological and even physical insecurities related to the feeling of powerlessness during hiring processes was shared by most of them. They felt uneasy at the thought of being “traded”, not having a say in the working conditions, the salary or the hiring process. After not being selected, they seemed to try to convince themselves that this was not the case. They talked to each other, criticizing the company and the job conditions. Often they came to talk to me, cathartically sharing a feeling of desperation. “Je suis mal a l’aise”, said Willerot, a couple times. The 24-year-old driver from *Gonaives*, who had not finished school, explained that the only thing that kept him sane was the thought of his baby girl (about one year old). He carried what seemed to be a permanently sad expression in his face, which could draw us to almost sharing his anxiety, desperate to leave the shelter.

After each hiring process, the ones left behind displayed traces of frustration on their faces and body language. Some would cry when they had felt a real chance of being selected, or when the job was precisely the kind of work they used to do back in their homeland. The disappointment of having missed a chance (as they

thought could be the chance of a lifetime) brought an even stronger feeling of insecurity and misplacement to the Haitians – the feeling of not having been at the right place at the right time. Others would make statements such as “I didn’t want that job anyways, I want something that pays better” or “They didn’t offer access to Internet, I need that to talk to my family back home”. However, during the hiring process, these very men battled each other for the attention of the recruiters, throwing pushes and even punches, if necessary. Often they begged to be taken from the shelter, shedding tears to appeal to the recruiter’s humanitarian side.

### 3.2. “IT’S BETTER YOUR ARM HURT, THAN YOUR MIND HURT.”

Even more evident than insecurities related to powerlessness and the anxiety to leave the shelter, were the physical problems faced in the refuge. Lack of hygiene, for instance, was commonly mentioned as one of the main issues by informants. As I was talking to Helénice, a second-year medicine student who dropped out of college and decided to try to pick up where she left off in Brazil – her parents couldn’t afford her college tuition on the Dominican Republic any longer – she sat in a ragged mattress on the floor, about four meters from the bathroom doors. I sat on the raw cement and listened to her, while another Haitian woman braid her hair with threads of thick black wool during our interview. The mattresses were aligned horizontally. There were eight ragged beds along the line, all the way to the back wall of the shelter. The ones closest to the wall were in disadvantage, as they got constantly wet when wind brought in the rain through the open space between the wall and the ceiling – the shelter was formerly an open warehouse.



While she told me about life in the Dominican Republic, and checked her image in the broken mirror that was kept close, as she had her hair done, I found it hard to concentrate. The smell of feces mixed with bleach was flowing out of the bathroom, right onto the first line of mattresses. I noticed the door was closed, but water flew through a gap in our direction. An older Haitian man about 60 years old held a broom and repeatedly swept the water out of the bathroom and onto the garden, creating a new pathway for the stench not to reach the mattresses. The bathroom was obviously flooded, and I could hear people complaining about the hygiene conditions in the refuge. One of the men approached me later about the toilet. There were plumbers in the shelter, he said, but none of them were willing to work for free.

Two or three meters from where the water was being directed in the yard there was the water well. It's digging was "donated" by one of the company men who had come to visit the shelter a few weeks before. He was appalled by the lack of access to water for the migrants and left BRL\$500 with the governmental agent. The money was used to pay for the material and the work force. Finding the water was not difficult, and the workers only had to dig six meters in depth to reach the groundwater. However, with the dirty water coming from the bathroom, and the accumulation of soap from clothe-washing activity near the area, the well is at constant risk of contamination. Having developed an accurate sense of hygiene in medical school, Helenice was skeptical about how healthy that drinkable water could be. It is noteworthy that Haiti had recently been a focus breakpoint of cholera, a disease transmitted by contaminated water. Helenice's insecurity regarding the drinkable water was certainly not unfounded.

A couple weeks living in the new shelter, and some Haitians started presenting signs of skin problems. They were often itching and full of rashes. A laboratory was hired by the governmental agent to run tests on the Shelter water. What they found out was

surprising<sup>28</sup>: There was no water contamination, but an excess of chlorine (a substance used to keep it bacteria free). As the Haitians were not used to chemically treated water, their skin reacted to the chemicals, indicating that the chlorine, which represents security against germs in Brazilian water, actually meant physical insecurity for these migrants.

Besides the poor hygiene conditions, physical insecurities were also found in the lack of privacy, which represents a constant worry for the Haitians in the shelter. The warehouse is composed by only one big open space, where all the inhabitants had a clear view of the rest of the group at any time. There is a general feeling of discomfort regarding the shared sleeping space and lack of privacy for changing clothes, caring for one's own hygiene and going through one's own luggage. On that note, there is also a general fear of being robbed of one's belongings while being away from his luggage. Helenice, for instance, rarely left her mattress, and was always close to the only small bag she brought along, distancing herself from her personal belongings only when it was time for food or the shower. One's mattress seems to serve the purpose of delimiting the personal space. Although the shelter is public and the area is formed of a common shared space, Haitians seem to avoid sitting on each other's mattresses. Stepping on them, however, as they move around the shelter, is not a concern, although it usually upsets the "owner" of the mattress.

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By "Better your arm hurts than your mind hurts," Honoré explained how the physical suffering from the earthquake of 2010 is not comparable to the psychological suffering in the shelter. "After the earthquake, it was physical", he says. "If your arm hurts, you can take

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This information was first presented by the governmental agent and later confirmed by the secretary of Justice and Human rights of the state of Acre, during a non-official conversation in the shelter.

pills for it. You can endure that until you find remedy for it. Once your mind is out of control, it affects the body, your environment. It affects the society you are living in and your origin." After the earthquake, he explained, although many had lost everything (houses, family members, jobs) they were all in the situation together. "We were all victims, [...] suffering together, supporting each other, and receiving praise from the government...from international aid. They said 'Hey, cheer up! You will get through this! You are a good people, with lots of future prospects!' Now, no one is together. It's every man for himself and, on top of it all, we have to listen to governmental agents putting us down, calling us stupid and saying even dogs are smarter than us, because if you tell them not to come, they wont, but 'Haitians just keep coming'", he concludes.

Honoré referred to episodes in which the governmental agents both in the shelter and at the Federal Police department, where they are registered to get the Humanitarian Visa, talked to them in demeaning manners. For the 26-year-old, as well as for other Haitians in the Shelter, the physical problems faced daily were not the worst aspects of being in the shelter. The psychological pain they felt from being demeaned, cursed at, seen in a "refugee" situation, as they often mentioned, was felt as worse than having to share a dirty space and drink chlorine water, as many thought that was simply part of the 'deal' they made when choosing to migrate. This can also be inferred from the Haitian proverb at the start of this chapter "One must close his nose to drink stinky water", in Creole "*Ou Bouche Nen w' Pou w' bwé dlo santi*". It not only shows their perceptions of the time they spend at the shelter, but the whole experience of weighing insecurities throughout the process of migration. In order to reach a place where they expect a better chance of pursuing livelihood (Jacobsen, 2002, p.98) and building a more comfortable life, these migrants have to undergo this experience of constant frustration, physical discomfort and mental suffering. They might complain about the insecurities they are forced to face but, in fact, it seems they have accepted the conditions as being part of the process of migration.

While talking to Helenice, a clear demonstration of this standpoint came up. Still while getting her braids done and now seldom checking the broken mirror, I asked her if anything bothered her at the shelter. Helenice said yes, and gave me a list of physical and psychological problems she had been facing daily. However, by the end of her list, she concluded by saying “But it doesn’t matter. I won’t be here for much longer. And this is like a contract. It is the way it is, and I accepted it when I came here. I just have to endure it until I leave.” Helenice saw the insecurities as “part of the deal”, and so did other Haitians. Jameson Flaubert, a 29-year-old businessman who lived in Santo Domingo, for instance, also referred to a sort of abstract “agreement” the Haitians had with the conditions in the shelter. During our interview, when asked the same question, he firstly answered “Nothing.” I insisted, “Nothing bothers you?” Finally, he explained “Well, a lot of things bother me, but it’s part of the deal, and soon I will be gone, and these things won’t bother me anymore.” He later specified hygiene conditions, lack of sleep and not being able to send money to his children as the main problems he faced at that moment. Regardless, he also saw the insecurities in the shelter as something temporary and, thus, bearable, or as stinky water that, “to drink it, all we ‘gotta’ do is close our noses for a little while”, as explained by Honoré. However, the stay in the shelter often takes longer than expected; thus leaving the immigrants with an enhanced feeling of anxiety.

### 3.3. TEMPORARY SETTLEMENT

The Shelter does not represent a permanent settlement for the Haitians. From statements as the ones mentioned in the previous section, one may infer they see the shelter as a “passage way”, a period inherent to the migratory movement to Brazil through which they have to go in order to be legalized in the country, thus receiving

the rights that come with the Humanitarian Visa<sup>29</sup>. When reaching the premises, migrants expect to stay only for a couple days, until they can get their visas and work permits. They know they are only passing by, and do not wish to stay. Rather, they make constant references to the need to leave as soon as possible, not only to rid themselves of the poor living conditions, but also to reach the aspired destination of the migration. Some, however, have no specific destination in mind, having gone to Brazil in a hastily decision<sup>30</sup>.

It is also worth noting that the warehouse is referred to as the “temporary shelter” or “temporary refuge” also by governmental agents and the city inhabitants. During one of the daily visits to the shelter, I witnessed a conversation between two prominent governmental agents with clear instructions not to better the living conditions in the shelter, so as not to attract more migrants and influence them into leaving the premises as soon as possible. The space was officially established by the government after *Brasiléia* was flooded with more than 1000 Haitians, in January 2012. At first, cheap hotel rooms were provided and paid for by SEJUDH-AC, who saw it as their humanitarian duty to aid the migrants. However, with the rising number, the hotel capacity was over flooded. There were cases of families of four living in a tiny bathroom and people sleeping in the hallways and the public square.<sup>31</sup>

The main reasons why these migrants have to stay in the city for so long bring us back to bureaucracy. When they reach Brazil, they are considered illegal immigrants. Thus, they have no right to

29 The Humanitarian Visa granted by the government to Haitian nationals who have entered Brazil since the earthquake of 2010 allows access to a working permit, public health and public education in Brazil for a period of up to five years. However, the stay permit has to be renewed after the first six months.

30 Many informants revealed not having come up with a plan of action when deciding to migrate. Often they chose migration to not be “left behind” by their friends who were migrating.

31 Information retrieved from news reports of Bandnews, and BBCNews.com, which can be found on the section regarding references.

access public health, the formal job market or education systems. Curiously, differently from other migrant, the Haitians do not want to simply find their destination and remain illegal in the country. They choose to endure the waiting period until their temporary documents are ready. More importantly, through the TV and newspaper broadcasting of the situation of Haitians in Acre, many businessmen and company recruiters have interpreted this situation as an opportunity both to help the Haitians as well as to help themselves. A network of entrepreneurs has been informally built between the SEJUDH-AC and mainly the south and southeast regions of the country.

The companies contact and explain the working conditions to SEJUDH-AC, who sees it that no human rights or labor laws are being violated, and negotiates extra perks for the Haitians. For instance, most companies who recruit in the shelter offer from three to six months of free housing and full daily meals, which is not something they provide to all workers. Recruiters, then, set an appointment to visit the shelter and start a selection process with the Haitians<sup>32</sup> – usually lasting from one to three days, depending on how many workers they wish to hire. There have been cases of companies selecting only three, but also of others leaving with two full buses, more than 100 Haitians.

In 2012, the influence of this network grew considerably. According to the SEJUDH-AC, there were weeks in which the shelter was emptied of over 200 Haitians, all of whom left with work contracts. During fieldwork, the first question I was asked before I even crossed the shelter gates was “Is there a company coming today?” Most Haitians expected to leave with a job contract. However, as fieldwork was conducted in the beginning of 2013, the number of companies showing up weekly had fallen considerably, varying from four to one per week. Often they sought only two or three workers,

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According to SEJUDH-AC, these perks are agreed upon in order to facilitate their settlement.

leaving the Haitians feeling even more frustrated with the growing pressure of the recruiting competition.

The Brazilian Federal Police speculates that these migrants are being attracted to Brazil through a network of coyotes – human trafficking groups – still in Haiti, who assure them that, once in Brazilian soil, they will not only be legalized and receive a residence permit, but also leave the shelter with a guaranteed job position.<sup>33</sup> Although the governmental declarations indicate that investigations are still being carried to find out if this is true, the fact is that all the migrants in the shelter expect to be hired by a company and leave with a work contract, free housing for the first couple months and daily meals. They get this information either in Haiti, or once they reach the shelter. Regardless, these expectations culminate in a longer wait at the shelter and, as a consequence, a higher number of migrants having to share the space.

Because their stay is only temporary, the migrants are unable to develop certain means of surviving. They cannot find a permanent job in the city and seem to avoid establishing close relationships with locals or with each other – once they know they will probably be separated after leaving the shelter. The pressure is further raised by the fact that, due to the living conditions, they all want to leave, but only a few get chosen by companies each week. This means they are not colleagues, but rather competitors. They compete for the food (not to be left hungry), for the governmental agents' and the company's attention, for the space to hang their clothes to dry, for a place to sleep, for time in the bathroom in order to perform their hygiene rituals, and for other basic daily needs.

In this section, I have discussed, through collected data, the insecurities perceived by the migrants in the temporary settlement. In order to further clarify these insecurities and how they differ in permanent and temporary settlements, I have organized Table 1, which can be found in the appendices.

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This information is derived both from governmental public statements (Agência Brasil, on 21/06/2012) and from personal communications with governmental agents.

### 3.4. THROUGH THE LENS OF HUMAN SECURITY

Be it physical, social, economic or political, the insecurities faced by the Haitians in the shelter often result in psychological discomfort, as illustrated earlier by Honoré's example. As references to physical problems and mental discomfort were constantly present in the narratives of the informants, in order to better grasp the importance of the daily struggles in the migration process, we have identified them here as "insecurities", framing the context through a lens of human security.

Many have been the elaborations on human security; and since the term's first public appearance, in the 1994 Human Development Report, elaborated by Mahbub ul Haq, definitions have varied widely. A central aspect, however, seems to have remained untouched in Human Security: its focus on the security of the people, rather than of the state. Definitions of the kinds of security encompassed by this framework have ranged from personal, environmental, economic, political, health and food security, in the UNDP (1994); to means of survival in daily life and assurance of human dignity, as proposed by Sen, (2000); to Freedom from wants and fears, as proposed by Hampson, (2002); or assurance of life as bodily health, integrity, senses, imagination, emotions, affiliations and control over one's environment, as in Nussbaum (2000), to mention but a few (Alkire, 2002, P.49). The variety of existing notions for the term reflects the criticisms that the idea of human security has received in the scientific dialogue; sometimes being perceived as too broad to fill the gaps of subjective accounts of security, and others as too subjective to be able to generate any sort of policy (Des Gasper, 2005, pp.221-235).

Thus, to clarify how the human security framework has been applied to this project, I must first state my agreement with Des Gasper's (2005) interpretation of human security not as a concept or as a

term that can be applied to different fields of knowledge, but rather as a boundary object (p.235). Through this standpoint, Human Security comprises much more than single aspects of insecurity that can be found restricted to certain bounded fields, such as sociology, geography or political sciences. Knowledge is a human conception formulated to translate the world into something more intelligible. Though the separation, collection and applicability of knowledge have been around since ever history can remember, they were organized *by men* in order to make the world more intelligible. Knowledge fields are, thus, intertwined and constantly interpenetrated, as if they were clusters of topics which get mixed up in the air.

Here, Human Security serves the purpose of a malleable boundary that can be shaped into combining various fields and their specificities according to people's needs (ibid, 237). Thus, I do not propose human security as "labels for threats", but rather as a discourse that can help us understand interpretations of insecurities while context bound. That being said, I believe that context plays an important role in defining subjective interpretations if insecurity and establishing priorities when it comes to weighing insecurities in pursuit of the best outcome. That is why, in this research, I follow Bal & Sinha-Kerkhoff (2010) on their elaborations on Hindustani migrants in The Netherlands, in using a conception of human security that is more subjective as follows: "(Human security) can be determined by people's ability to be protected from the physical destruction of their lives and way of life. At its maximum, it can mean a totally threat-free environment as defined by the peoples and communities themselves" (p.90).

By mentioning "people's ability to be protected", instead of "the government's ability to protect the people", this conception shifts the focus to not only subjective needs, but also subjective empowerment. It is fair to say that this definition pulls back to the roots of the capability approach and, thus, I am using, in part, the very definition of human security from the UNDP Human Development

Reports (Alkire, 2002). However, this approach goes farther onto the subjective interpretations of insecurity. Many of the issues faced by the informants in the shelter were not expected as part of the migration process, as can be inferred from frequent statements implying that they had never been inserted in such a context before. Furthermore, the Haitians' perceptions of the gravity of living conditions in the temporary shelter are often present in their narratives. The situation is often referred to as "pandemic" "catastrophic", "inhuman" and "unbearable".

### 3.5. "OPPORTUNITY DOESN'T PRESENT ITSELF TWICE"

Although none of the informants expected such dire conditions in the shelter, when inquired on their decision to migrate, they presented the context of their homeland as also flooded with insecurities which hindered their social and economic developments, thus hampering the pursuit of livelihood. By "pursuit of livelihood", here, I use the definition as proposed by Jacobsen (2002), which refers to "...the means used to maintain and sustain life" (p.98) As means, we may read ways of reaching or creating opportunities, such as resources, assets and social networks.

*"Il n'y a pas d'encadrement",* said Fremiot, while describing life in Haiti. The expression relates directly to the government's inability to deal with development, job creation, economic growth and public education. The informants that had finished school or higher education<sup>34</sup> seemed to persist on this argument when explaining why they had left the country. The French word *"Encadrement"* – in English translated as "frame" – in the context represents the informant's perceptions of

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Other informants (Tilbert and Gabriel, for instance) also used the expression on separate occasions.



the Haitian government's neglect towards social and economic development that would benefit its people. Although the issue of lack of job opportunities was often present in their narratives for migration, many informants were, in fact, working before they left for Brazil. However, only three out of the twenty-seven main informants had formal working contracts (paid labor taxes). Two of them, it is worth mentioning, were working as professors in secondary schools, and the third one worked for a local government as a public health agent. The majority of Haitians in the shelter made money before migration through trade work (reselling products to neighbors, or on the streets) or taking up small short-lasting non-contract jobs as painters, masons, drivers, and plumbers, among others. However, they seemed to be dissatisfied with the instability of this non-contract life.

Jameson Monavis, a 42-year-old Haitian “plumber / electrician / driver”, approached me on a Friday afternoon to ask for help. He wanted me to talk to the governmental agent (on his behalf) about French speakers in the shelter. Since there were many Haitians that only speak French, they were not able to communicate with governmental agents or recruiters and, therefore, felt they had less chances of getting hired. The man, who was short, although strongly built, constantly carried a tiresome expression on his face and body language. He explained that he had four children and a wife back in Haiti. “My chances of supporting my family in Haiti are ending”, he sighed, in the revealing tone of a confession. Jameson didn't have a steady job, and lived of all non-contract moneymaking small opportunities he could find. However, as he didn't feel young anymore, opportunities were less and less frequent. On top of that, his children were growing “fast” and he needed to find a viable option for investing on their education. According to informants, in Haiti, private schools are expensive, and there is no room for all students in public schools, which generates a well-known corruption network based on purchase and reservation of seats in the public schools by those who can afford it. So, having heard that the Brazilian border was “open”

to Haitians, Jameson quickly gathered some money, selling the few assets he had, and headed towards migration.

He was not the first (nor last) to mention the “open border” and the influence of “opportunity” in his decision to migrate. The Haitian proverb that titles this section was repeated a few times during fieldwork. “*Ou pa Jwenn chans 2 fwa*”, in Creole, represents exactly the feeling demonstrated by the migrants when asked about their decision to migrate. Having lived for years in a context of difficult access and hindered opportunities to pursue livelihood, the informants seem to cast a great deal of light on the power of opportunity. Their migration flux to Brazil is, thus, not characterized by long term planning or a great deal of information about the place of destination. To most the informants, the decision to migrate was made abruptly, and the movement didn’t take place months after having decided, but rather only in a few-weeks-time.

It was fairly difficult gathering consistent information on how the informants developed the idea of the “open border”. Some – mostly the ones with higher levels of education – made references to the news and the Internet. Jameson, for one, had pleasant meetings with Brazilian officials from the MINUSTAH corps. He referred to them as being friendly towards Haitians, and thus, he figured, “in Brazil we would be well received”. Many others already knew friends or “a friend of a friend” living in Brazil for months (even years), and took their examples as successful cases of migration, since they had steady jobs and were already sending money to support their families in Haiti.

While salaries in Haiti are rather small, families are generally big – ranging from four to eight children, given the example of my informants. “There is no job in the country that allows people to support their families”, said Honoré. Through examples, he explained that a person has a hard time supporting a whole family only with his single salary. Because of this context, Haitians seem to develop

a network of family aid that works top-bottom. The parents help the first child get through his schooling years and, if they can, through college. When the first-born has graduated and can finally find a “good job” (in theory), a large part of his salary goes not only into helping support the family, but also aiding the next sibling (the one closest in age) pay for his studies. Once the second child is set for work, his salary will contribute to the family life and to the next sibling, and so on. This is the case with almost all the informants of this research. Through migration, they carry the heavy responsibility of helping their families back home, adding fuel to this chain of family support. Rare are cases in the shelter of Haitians who have migrated for reasons that would financially benefit only him/herself.

When the chain is not supplied, for instance when the parents fail to support the children, they fear for the future. Jameson Flaubert, who had been in the shelter for almost three months, expressed his frustrations with the impossibility of supplying this chain. “I haven’t sent money to my children in three months. That is what worries me; that I can’t help them now. I have to help them now, so that they can help me when I get old”, he explained. Jameson showed concerns about his economic situation in the future, while relying a great deal of his support on his children. “I won’t be young forever. And I don’t want to work for other people forever. I have to start my own business in Brazil, as I did in the Dominican Republic”.

### 3.6. LIVING ON BANK TRANSFERS

In order to better explain the enhancement in income for the families of those who have migrated to Brazil and have already found job positions – sending money back to Haiti through bank transfer – I will display a short calculation of the purchase value of Brazilian Money when compared to the Haitian currency. In Haiti, Gourdes or Haitian Dollars are used as street currency. Five Gourdes are worth

one Haitian dollar. And each eight Haitian dollars are equivalent to one US dollar. As suggested by one of the informants, a middle class job, such as a bank teller, or an accountant, usually bears a monthly paycheck of around \$1000 Haitian Dollars, which would be the equivalent of \$150.00 (American) dollars per month. A servant or a Hotel maid, for instance, is paid around \$200 or \$300 Haitian dollars, the equivalent of \$30.00 or \$40.00 US dollars a month.

As, in Brazil, minimum wage is around BRL\$700.00 (more precisely R\$719.48), any job that pays minimum wage represents a salary of around \$USD356.01 (for a rate of BRL\$1.00 to USD\$0.4981, on 11-05-2013); over twice the amount a person could make on a middle class job in Haiti. With this simple math, it is already possible to imagine how financially attractive the Brazilian job market can be to Haitians who feel the lack of opportunities in their own country. Similar family economic enhancement scenarios can be elicited from Fourn & Glick-Schiller's (1990) account on Haitian immigration to the USA (p.334). Though the migration movement has happened years ago, economic aspirations for migration appear to be similar – related to lack of opportunity to develop capabilities.

### 3.7. WEIGHING INSECURITIES

Migration, as we have established earlier, is always permeated by uncertainties and often-unexpected insecurities. As suggested by Bal & Sinha-Kerkhoff (2010) on their studies of Hindustani migrants in the Netherlands; "New securities come with new insecurities [...]" (p.91). For Haitians in the shelter, the pursuit of opportunities to better develop their capabilities and gain further access to social, cultural and economic aspects of life in Brazil has brought along a feeling of anxiety that seems to be further enhanced by the temporary character of the shelter.



The fact that most of them didn't consider possible insecurities through (or as a consequence of) the migration process is frequently present in the narratives of Haitian migrants in the shelter. They make constant references to "never having lived this kind of life" or "living in this pandemic situation for the first time" or even make statements such as "If I had known these would be the living conditions in the shelter, I would not have come"<sup>35</sup>. The possibility of opportunities seems to have weighed more on the informant's decision-making towards migration than the possible insecurities that the process itself might bring. As suggested by Baláz and Williams (2012) on their elaborations on the concept of risk, migration is always permeated by uncertainty, and this uncertainty can come from two different sources: either from imperfect knowledge about current conditions, or it is generated by unpredictability of the future. Therefore, they continue, "individuals act on the basis of expectations, developing ideas about likely outcomes..." (p.168). With that in mind, the scholars differ uncertainty from risk based on the fact that 'risk' is often known and quantifiable, whereas 'uncertainty' is merely a projection of the unknown.

Differently from my assumptions before fieldwork, it seems the informants did not consider possible risks of going to Brazil. The migration process was often misinformed, if barely informed at all. Instead, their decision-making process is permeated by the uncertainty of the unpredictability of the future. However, rather than being interpreted as something dangerous, threatening or preoccupying, this uncertainty is often interpreted as positive; as the attractive possibility of a good outcome, rather than the frightening probability of a bad one. This behavior of "trying one's luck" seems to be common ground to migration movements. On their account of Brazilian migrants in Suriname, for instance, De Theije & Bal (2010), suggest that "(they decided to) exchange a situation of relative certainty in their home

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This phrase was used in personal communications and interviews by Claudia, Helenice, Charles, Eldin, Gabriel, to cite but a few.

country, for a life in an unknown country" (p.69). This very statement could be applied to the Haitian migration to Brazil. In both examples, migrants have preferred to give a chance to uncertainty rather than continue living with the insecurities faced in their homeland.

Although at times misinformed, or uninformed, the migrants still made considerations about the "chances" of living a more comfortable life (free of certain insecurities) in the place of destination. In order to clarify the weight attributed to insecurities perceived by the informants in their homeland and in the land of destination, during their temporary settlement, I have designed Table 2, which can be found in the appendices.

It is worth noting that the insecurities faced in the temporary shelter were often not known of before migration. Surely informants considered certain aspects of insecurities that could come about, such as missing their families and difficulties that could arise when looking for a job in a country of which you do not speak the language. However, most insecurities in the temporary shelter were hidden in the blurred sight of uncertainty which, as mentioned previously, is often interpreted by the Haitians as an "opportunity" or as a "*de la chance*", as they put it in French – in English "luck", or "Fortune". While, from the table, it is obvious that economic aspects have been important in the decision to migrate, we must also consider that, as suggested by Halfacree (2004) in his studies of lifestyle migration, other aspects also contribute to the decision (p.240). Also displayed on the table are fears of being left behind by friends who have already migrated – or plan to migrate – and fear of violence, perceived by informants as significant for their decisions to migrate.

However, we must also account for the fact that social and economic contexts are not detachable from the immigrants' lives. The insecurity that comes from the fear of being left behind by their friends who wish to migrate, for instance, as expressed by Helénice, Claudia, Gabriel and Eldin, has to account for their friends' own decisions to migrate. There, we will most probably find economic

problems and issues of access to education and the job market as some of the reasons. Thus, we must keep in mind that, in reality, reasons to migrate are quite entangled, and can only be separated and fit into a table for means of elucidating more clearly their motivations. Halfacree also argues that, generally, migrants are viewed in scientific accounts as either the “rational economic man” or the “virtual prisoner of his class position” (ibid, p.240), which portrays them as being deprived of agency, acting only as a product of social structure, and not of personal lives. This is certainly not the case with the informants. To illustrate the influence of personal accounts to migration, we may use the example of Walter, a 30-year-old Haitian migrant who was a gardener back in Haiti.

Seven weeks had passed when Walter finally told me his personal reasons for leaving. During one of our long walks back from the shelter to my headquarters, Walter told me it was his birthday. We celebrated for a couple minutes, and talked about possibilities for the future. He did not have specific plans for the future, but was certain that it could be better than his past. Walter explained that he had to leave Haiti because his father was a devil worshiper. “I tried to get him out of it, but he couldn’t anymore.” In Haiti, he explained, many people choose to worship the devil because it can bring material results – such as money and political positions – faster than worshipping God. However, Walter is a Baptist, worshipping God at least once a week, on Sundays. He explained that his father was getting old, and that he wanted Walter to take his place as a devil worshiper when he passed away, as someone had to continue the devil’s dues and he wouldn’t be able to do it anymore.

Through the run down sidewalks and dirty streets of the city, Walter accompanied me, getting his feet dirty because of the open sandals. He told me that for many months he was harassed by his father and by black magic. There were episodes in which he was completely enchanted; “I walked for miles and took a bus to another city by myself, not knowing what was happening. When I came back

to consciousness, I was far away from home. I was enchanted”, he explained. With an everlasting peaceful expression on his face, Walter, who was a gardener back in Haiti, felt safer in Brazil. His brother helped him migrate by lending money. He did not want to leave, but claimed to know that, if he stayed, he would be forever harassed by black magic, until he cave to his father’s wishes. Walter had a fiancé in Haiti. Together they came to the conclusion that it would be best for him to leave. He now wants to bring her to Brazil. Walter was one of the few who participated on the Friday’s religious gathering in the shelter (a few people would read passages from the bible and chant religious songs of hope, asking God for strength and better days ahead).

Walter’s example is only one of the many expressions of personal reasons to migrate. Thus, as proposed by Halfacree, it is important to recognize that there are multiple influences and pressures feeding the migration decision-making process, and see migrants as able to provide multiple reasons for migration, situating migration inextricably within culture (ibid, p.241). Henceforth, we may regard these migrants as people who are full of agency, and, thus, have chosen to pursuit better living conditions in another country.

In this chapter of the Thesis, I have presented insecurities faced by Haitians both in their previous and current contexts. A differentiation between permanent and temporary settlement was made, thus clarifying the presence of uncertainty rather than risk (Baláz and Williams, 2010) on their decision-making process regarding migration. As mentioned before and previously suggested by Bal & Sinha Kerkhof (2010), new securities come with new insecurities, being felt and interpreted in different ways by different people, in specific contexts (p.91). The following chapter focuses on new insecurities that have come up through the migration process. The migrant’s perceptions of the context and their strategies to deal with these insecurities will be presented and analyzed with the help of concepts of Capital as proposed by Bourdieu (1986) and Social Navigation as suggested by Vigh (2009).

# 4

## NAVIGATING INSECURITIES

This chapter presents migrants' strategies to deal with insecurities faced during the migration process and their stay in the temporary settlement. Throughout the following sections, I argue that the concept of social navigation (Vigh, 2009) provides a fluid interpretation of the social relations setting that constitutes the migrant's current context in the shelter; whereas social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) serve as basis for the migrant's strategies to "succeed" (according to their own perceptions) in the social setting.

#### 4.1. "EACH FIREFLY ONLY LIGHTS THE PATH FOR ITSELF"

As we walked along the main street in *Brasileia*, the governmental agent and I were approached by two Haitian cousins. "We are hungry, but we have no money for food", they explained. The men had bruises on their faces and bad cuts and scratches on their arms. They were on a bus accident on the road from Lima to Cuzco. A third cousin had died in the accident, while trying to get to the Brazilian border. They had no money to send the body back to Haiti, so it stayed in Peru while they continued their journey. Money was scarce (they had been robbed by the Peruvian police) and, when the accident happened, they also lost their suitcases. They reached Brazil with only the clothes on their backs, eating out of other people's generosities.

Hunger, however, was not their biggest concern. "We don't have money to pay 'Le dirigent' to put our names on the list", they complained. That, at the time, seemed to be interpreted as more important than food. There were about 500 migrants on the temporary house, and around 20 forms (for applying for the stay permit) were being distributed each day. It was a long waiting list, as they were (supposedly) registered in order of arrival. But 'Le dirigent',

the one holding list, had been laboring for free as the Haitian representative in the shelter. Also without means to make money, he started charging \$5.00 reals – the equivalent of \$2.32 US dollars<sup>36</sup> – for recently arrived migrant's to have their names written on the list.

According to informants, the Haitian proverb that opens this section, in Creole "*Chak Koukou Klere pou Jew*", is well known in Haiti and represents living dynamics of survival. Translated into the temporary settlement context, it points to the relationships people develop with each other and how, in order to succeed in surviving poor living conditions, or leaving permanently, they disregard the needs of others. 'Le dirigent', for instance, made use of his recognized bureaucratic power (as the informal representative) to make some extra bucks. In the process, however, he deceived other Haitians and tried to extort money from them. As suggested by Vigh (2009), decisions on how, when, and with whom, to act in order to get the best outcome of each situation indicate that we must consider a great degree of agency in the migrants. However, the author continues, one cannot say that all choices made depend solely on absence or presence of agency on people's personalities (p.432). To grasp traces of social dynamics in specific contexts, we must to account for the existence of social forces, pressures, plots and projections considered in the relationships between subjects and their actions.

Therefore, the means that migrants find to deal with the insecurities faced on a daily basis are, here, considered strategies for social navigation – strategies they use to navigate the social settings in which they are found. The concept of social navigation combines the idea of negotiation and survival (coping strategies) with the conception of society itself being a "fluid" environment; a seascape, as opposed to a landscape. In agreement with Vigh, I find this concept to be a useful analytical tool, once it takes into consideration that

society is, itself, volatile, changeable, and often unstable, as suggested by Zygmunt Bauman (2011).

The fluid approach to social settings can certainly be applied to the shelter. Not only are the “rules” constantly changing – government guidelines for receiving the visa, the availability of food and hygiene supplies in the shelter, or the varying availability of space –, but the social parts played by the people in the contexts (the Haitians, the locals, the governmental agents, the researchers) are also unstable. People often change parts, assuming different roles depending on the circumstances. The Haitians, for instance, switch roles between “connoisseur of multiple languages” or “conveyer of several working-skills” and “victims” or “refugees”, depending on if they were in the presence of social aid agents or company recruiters. In the temporary settlement, people are always coming and going, arriving and leaving permanently. The faces change rapidly and the functioning of the system has to be (re)explained over and over again<sup>37</sup>.

During fieldwork, much data was collected on social navigation strategies, and many examples could be proposed in this thesis. However, due to a limited space for contextualizing episodes, I have organized social navigation strategies observed during fieldwork on table 3, which can be found in the appendices. It is noteworthy that the table is not proposed as a general classification of social navigation strategies, but as an organization of my own perceptions and the perceptions of my informants in the shelter’s context.

As presented in Table 3, often times I was approached by the Haitian migrants with the intention of serving them as an “influential party” towards recruiters. Frequently, when I interviewed informants, the chat would end with a request from their part. Although I always explained, before starting interviews, that I could not help them; still they acted as if I owed them something for the interview, as is if we

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This “dynamics” will be further explained on chapter five.



had agreed on an exchange of favors. The expectation of exchange could also be derived from Smith's willingness to teach me Creole. At the end of each "lesson", he would pose me questions about companies and the Portuguese language. And, to use an even clearer example, as I chatted with the informants in the shelter one day, a man approached me to show his geography book from school, which he brought to Brazil as reading material. The ragged book printed in magenta carried examples of different "races" and other geographical aspects of Haiti. We stood for a while analyzing curiosities in the book. At the end of our chat, the man insisted on giving me the only reading material he had brought from home. He pushed it towards me and said "Here, keep it. I can get it back from you another day and we can talk more". I interpreted his behavior as a clear example of Bourdieu's thoughts (1986) accumulation of capital and the building of relationships of social capital through the exchange of gifts (p.251).

By giving me the book, the man expected, in exchange, to receive my attention during the time I spent in the shelter. He was both attempting to please me by doing me a "favor" (providing me with information about Haiti, in which I was interested), and to develop some sort of relationship tie with me (by proposing that we talked about it in the future)<sup>38</sup>. However, his investment on my attention came with a price. The group of Haitians that were chatting with me in the shelter, surrounding us as we skimmed through the book, seemed very displeased by his behavior, mumbling words in Creole and making faces at him when he proposed the "exchange". I felt as if they knew of his intentions and disliked his behavior. Of course, I can only speculate about what had been going through their minds during the episode and the man's intentions while offering me the book. This interpretation comes not only from this episode, but also other happenings during fieldwork.

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Bourdieu's concept of Capital and how the concept will apply to this research will be discussed further in this section.



Another common behavior was to approach me while adopting the part of a victim, or refugee, as they often put it.<sup>39</sup> Jameson Monavis first approach me with tears in his eyes, explaining the hard life of refugees in the shelter and whining at a high pitch voice about how he was disadvantaged because governmental agents did not speak French, and he did not speak Spanish (therefore could only communicate his worries through other Haitians). Days later, as his approach did not seem to work to his favor, he re-approached me, presenting himself as a 'work-capable' person, full of energy and abilities. He portrayed himself as a connoisseur of Haitian History and Political scenery. His approach changed, but the requests at the end of our chats was still the same: "Help me."

#### 4.2. "SHE IS WHITE. OF COURSE SHE CAN HELP."

As we sat on the sidewalk and Robert showed me the reading material he had brought from Haiti (a guidebook for youngsters on how to behave properly, published by an Adventist church), we were interrupted by a man who politely inquired if he could "ask me a question". He spoke Creole so, at first, I couldn't comprehend entirely what he was saying. Robert translated into what he called "proper French", and I responded in the same language. The man asked me the same old question: "How can you help me go with a company?" I calmly asked Robert to explain to the man what I had already explained to him (I was only a student and carried no influence with the companies). Robert explained in Creole, which I was

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The word 'refugee' was often used by informants to describe their current statuses. The shelter was also frequently called 'refuge.'

able to understand<sup>40</sup>. The man, who looked a bit frustrated with the answer, responded to Robert with the following words “Yes, I already know that. But, look...” he pointed at me. “I am Haitian, and she is white... of course she can help!”

From episodes such as this, one may infer that I was seen as an influential party by the migrants in the shelter, despite my attempts to demystify this idea. They either saw me as someone who could exert influence on the companies, or someone who could be used as an influence on influential people, such as the governmental agent who helped with the recruiting processes. As Liisa Malkki (1992) suggests, reinforcing Appadurai’s thoughts on the relationship between people and places (1988), “Natives are thought to be ideally adapted to their environments – admirable scientists of the concrete [...]” (p.6). Although both scholars referred to how anthropologists perceived natives, the same perception can be inverted, when the anthropologist is actually the native, and the “foreigners” the very informants. But I was not the only person considered to be influential. As proposed by the Haitian, anyone who looked “whiter than himself” could be a good relationship investment. The ladies that prepared the governmental food, for instance, were also perceived as influential. They were approached by Haitians asking them to “put in a good word” to the governmental agents in their favor.<sup>41</sup> The same happened to the women working at the bakery near the shelter.

Another common strategy attempted for leaving the shelter was to “sell” oneself to the company recruiters by eliciting work skills and intellectual abilities brought from homeland. Often, however, migrants were caught in the act of lying about these skills.

40 Haitian Creole is often times very similar to French. The sound of the words is almost the same, in spite of being written differently. Understanding some Creole and pronouncing the words was a skill Samuel Djean taught me, for which I am grateful to him.

41 The place where the food was prepared was located right in front of the Warehouse that served as shelter to the Haitians. They had constant contact with the people who prepared their food. They often sat on their porch to take refuge from the sun.



In a selection for a veterinarian hospital in São Paulo, recruiters walked into the shelter asking for people who had previous experiences of working with small animals. About ten Haitians came forward swearing to have the qualification. Of those ten, only one could prove it with pictures of his previous job as an animal trainer, and another could show his university ID card that proved he studied agronomy. The other eight went through interviews, questioned about certain procedures, to make sure they actually had had the experience. Half did not know how to answer questions regarding the treatment of animals and were, therefore, disregarded as possible candidates.

Some also lied in order to convince me (or other people perceived as influential) to help them. I was often approached by Haitians complaining they had been in the shelter for months, waiting for the stay permit. Coincidentally, in all cases the CPF's were being distributed within a couple days, so it was not possible for the Haitians to have been in the shelter for more than a week or two. During fieldwork, I also had CPF cards swiftly placed into my pockets (only noticing it hours later), thrown at me at a distance (in the hope I would pick it up and give it to the), or even forcedly slipped through the small gap of the open window when I was inside the recruiter's car.<sup>42</sup>

As one may infer from the table and the examples, strategies to leave the shelter often involved lying and using other people's influences to gather results. Strategies to survive daily life in the shelter, however, were different, mostly revolving around finding opportunities to make money. Working skills previously acquired were sometimes used in the shelter or in the local community to make money to support themselves during their prolonged stay in the shelter. Some painters got offered local temporary (non-contract) jobs on refurbished houses and the local commerce. Besides that, informal

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Due to specificities regarding safety and access during fieldwork, I could not avoid being constantly associated to recruiters and governmental agents. I often accompanied them during recruiting processes and transit around the city.



beauty services were offered (by Haitians, to Haitians) in the shelter. Three women were constantly working on different hair dues, or doing other people's nails. Instruments were often improvised, as the broken mirror used by Helenice's hairdresser to make her costumers feel more at ease. A man also set aside some space for his own barbershop. He used a broken school seat to rest the costumers in one of the open corners of the shelter. There, he spent most his days working a raiser on the faces and heads of other migrants, who needed to look sharp for the registration photo with the Federal Police.

Those who did not have working abilities that could be directly used in the shelter in exchange for money came up with other ways of pursuing livelihood in the temporary circumstances. This can be exemplified by the man trying to sell Honoré a used mattress, or from 'Le dirigent', extorting money from Haitians and selling his influence on the company recruiters or governmental agents to other Haitians<sup>43</sup>. These behaviors left some of the informants feeling uneasy at the shelter. They often talked about having to accept it "because it was only temporary", or because "That's the way it is"<sup>44</sup>, accepting the social structure that included corruption, something they often mentioned as a problem in their homelands. In the temporary settlement, corruption seemed like an escape route for navigating social settings in which legitimate opportunities are scarce or non-existing. If 'Le dirigent', for instance, had chosen not to engage in corrupt behaviors in the shelter, he would probably not have money to buy food, as he had been 'working' as the shelter's representative for over three months. The position required time and offered constant hassles, but was not paid. The same goes for other migrants

43 'Le dirigent' was respected by the agents, and his opinions on other Haitians were often taken into consideration for recruiting processes.

44 This point was detailed in the previous chapter.

who did not possess the working skills for quick economic profit, or did not encounter the opportunity to use their skills<sup>45</sup>.

These skills the migrant's made use of to accumulate economic profit (make money), are a part of what Bourdieu describes as capital. To Bourdieu (1986), the social world is represented by the "structure of the distribution of the different types and sub-types of capital at a given moment in time" (p.241) That is to say that capital (accumulated labor in it's materialized or embodied forms, such as culturally inscribed behaviors and learned or acquired working skills which compose and are composed of habitus) is everywhere.

Bourdieu (1986) suggests that differently from the economic approach, which interprets capital only when related to labor force used to make money, capital should be taken as a broader concept. According to him, the social behaviors and cultural or artistic products are also a form of capital. That is to say that, at its very root, all social behavior seeks profit. However, at its surface, the economic stance is often omitted. For instance, relationships we develop with friends and family, according to the scholar, are also forms of seeking profit. Critics have considered rather harsh to have such an economic interpretation of the world. However, Bourdieu explains, we must distance ourselves from the solely economic interpretations of profit. One can profit from a relationship with the things he learns from it, as well as with the pleasant times they spend together. Enjoyment is a kind of profit, for it brings balance to the body, rest to the mind, and can contribute to economic profit in its roots (Pp.243-246).

By arguing that it is not possible to describe and study the social structures of the world without accounting for other (than economic) forms of achieving profit, Bourdieu proposes that capital presents itself in three different guises: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital, as previously mentioned, represents profit – literally

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As we may notice from Honoré previously displayed statement "I can't eat the languages I have".

“moneymaking.” Cultural capital, the second form, can be divided in three different sub-types: Embodied, objectified and institutionalized. According to the scholar, cultural capital consists of all behavioral and practical skills learned or acquired throughout life and socialization that are either institutionalized or embodied. This way, the institutionalized form consists of formal education and diplomas for technical courses, universities, or any other kind of accumulated capital (labor or intellectual skill) that can be acquired through formalized institutions. The objectified sub-type refers to objects (books, machines, pictures and other material things) that are acquired or developed through time. The embodied sub-type, however, is less related to objects or formal institutions, but more in the sense of acquired or developed working skills and intellectual abilities that did not come from school or materialized things, but mostly from socialization and the influences of the people and the context in which one finds himself (Habitus) (p.244). The third form of capital, social, consists of relationships between people that are developed in specific contexts and time frames. This way, relationships are considered capital, once they bring about the possibility or the opportunities for different kinds of profit.

In order to navigate social settings, thus, the Haitians in the shelter have to make use of their capitals and invest in certain possibilities of profit. Sometimes, the profit can be directly economic, as is the case with migrants who use of their working abilities as hairdresser or barber (embodied cultural capital) in exchange for money. Others invest in relationships in an attempt to make use of the people’s influences to get out of the shelter (social capital). Although getting out of the shelter will not bring them instantaneous economic profit, it will direct their paths towards a more stable economic situation in the future, as well as away from the hazards of the temporary life in the shelter.

### 4.3. RELATING CAPITAL TO SOCIAL NAVIGATION

There seems to be a difference in the use of capital between strategies to survive and to leave the temporary settlement. While, in order to profit by leaving the shelter, they try to make use of social and cultural capital (both institutional and work skills wise), to survive it, they focus more on cultural and economic capital. Table 4, which can be found in the appendices, shows a relation between the forms of capital and the strategies invested, depending on the aspired profit. This classification might seem rather organized. However, we must keep in mind that strategies for navigation and the forms of capital are malleable and often overlapping, fitting into different categories at once. Certain Investments, for instance, can be both cultural and economic for instance, as social settings are fluid.

Bourdieu's ideas on the forms of capital (1986) are interesting because, as proposed by Gauntlett (2011, p.2), his instrumental conceptual framework of different kinds of capital allows us to better grasp different spheres of social dynamics within these specific contexts and time frames, as exemplified by the table. However, Coleman's discourse contributes further on grasping different dimensions of social dynamics specially when it comes to social capital. In his reflection, he brings about an approach of resources being made reachable by the availability of relationships, rather than possession of these relationships (p.3). That is an attractive idea for this research, for it deals with humans in a less objectified and more humanized way than Bourdieu's approach, recognizing their agency and ability to participate or retrieve from certain relationships. It is not possible to possess relationships, since other people's agency are also parts of the relationship dynamics in social spheres. Furthermore, resources can only be made available by the "other person" in these relationships of interest, which distances us even further from the

economic objectified approach and it's idea of possession. Last, but not least, this approach brings us closer to understanding the idea of Social Navigation, since it is thoroughly based on the availability, or the search (quest) to find available, means and resources of "getting ahead" and "profiting". Once again, we must be reminded by the idea that profit does not mean necessarily the accumulation of currency in its primary form, but can also mean the development of relationships or the untangling of situations, which will, at its root, are related to economic profit momentarily or in the future.

Coleman's account of Social Capital is rather optimistic, in the sense that it focuses on people's willingness to "look beyond themselves and engage in supportive or helpful actions, not because they expect a reward [...], but because they believe it is a good thing to do." (Gauntlett, 2011, p.3). However, it does briefly mention "[...] because the benefits of actions that bring social capital into being are largely experienced by persons other than the actor, it is often not in his interest to bring it into being." (Coleman, 1998, p.118). This observation is rather representative of the circumstances in the shelter, where "social costs of a "takedown sweep"<sup>46</sup> are rather small", as explained by the Phd. Foster Brown<sup>47</sup>. For the most part, the subjective and personal interest surpass the collective ones when it comes to defining priorities to obtain or assure their human security, as there seems to be no serious consequences for acts of corruption, and "takedown sweeps" in the shelter. Although here are rules written on a blackboard in the premises, punishment has not been carried for those who transgress the words written in white chalk.

46 "Takedown sweep", in Portuguese known as a "*rasteira*", is the name of a capoeira strike which bings the opponent to the ground.

47 The geologist and researcher of the amazon region diversity is engaged in social and environmental causes in the region and often invests in actions and programs to help Haitian migrants at the border to settle in Brazil.

When Vigh (2009a) proposes the concept of social Navigation, he pays a great deal of attention to the idea of planning, plotting, and trying to “see” the future, in order to make the best possible choices of investments in each action. This is a point that seems to be relevant in all migration movements. For the Haitians in the temporary settlement, however, many of the strategies for social navigation seem devoid of possible outcomes. In the following chapter, this idea will be further discussed through elaborations on conceptions of space and place as defined by Marc Augé, and the feeling of misplacement, as suggested by the informants.

**5**

**FALLING  
IN A GAP**

This chapter focuses on the informants' perceptions of time. Through it, I will conclude my argument that the migrants' interpretations of investments in different forms of capital, and their strategies to navigate the social settings, are influenced by the temporary character of the settlement in the shelter. Being caught in these temporary circumstances, it is hard for them to access memories of the past and develop concrete action plans for the future. Thus, without accessing past or plotting a future, they feel "misplaced", lost in a gap between two scenarios of possible opportunities. This idea will be linked to Victor Turner's approach to liminality and Marc Augé's thoughts on 'non-places,' whose characteristics seem fit like a glove in the scenario of the shelter.

## 5.1. "DID YOU HAVE A PLAN BEFORE YOU CAME HERE?"

I had a plan. I searched on the Internet. I saw *Santa Catarina, São Paulo* and *Rio de Janeiro*. A lot of people said (because I worked in tourism) that I should go to Brazil, since I speak so many languages, and there is the world cup soon. I made a plan for these cities... not only for work, but places where I can also keep studying [...]. I had a plan, for sure. But now there is a lack of money and lack of information. Looking at a map is something, but getting there is completely different.

Honoré Clerjuiste, 03/04/2013

As we talked about plans for the future, I noticed Honoré's action plan was far more elaborate than those of the other informants in the shelter. He had searched online and asked Brazilian co-workers about their country. He had checked maps and sought information about prices and distances. Honoré was prepared for the journey when he left the Dominican Republic, but he was an exception to



the majority<sup>48</sup>. When thinking back to their plans before migration, informants presented specific objectives. Florient saw in the migration the possibility of working in non-governmentally-controlled journalism broadcasting. Eldin and Claudia hoped for opportunities to continue their college studies in a country that could offer them a job position as a professional (lawyer; nurse) in the future. Jameson Flaubert wanted to open up a business and set a retirement account, and Robert dreamed of becoming either a lawyer or a journalist. However, their stay in the shelter seems to have an effect on lowering hopes and smudging specific objectives into fairly abstract plans for the future. When considering possibilities for the future, all the informants mentioned only shared ideas such as “get a job”, “Make money” and “Send money to my family in Haiti”. It is as if their future were suddenly blurred by the context in the shelter.

## 5.2. “NOW I’M LIVING WITH NO ADDRESS. I USED TO HAVE ONE.”

When Helenice lived in the Dominican Republic, she said, she knew that spending time in that country was a necessary investment in education. While studying, the girl planned on graduating and moving back to Haiti, or another country. She did not wish to stay in the Dominican Republic. Helenice considered it a temporary endeavor from which profits (diploma in medicine) would be worth the investment. However, she explained, when she heard about the “opportunity of the open borders” (as she called it) she chose to migrate, hoping to finish her studies in Brazil. As her stay in the shelter grew longer, Helenice started talking about “getting any job” and

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Two other informants fell into the category of exceptions. Both had plans of professionalizing in Brazil and going back to try to “change” Haiti through the fields of business and education.

accepting it as part of the process – again, seeing it as a temporary investment, until she could figure out a way to settle and “get her life back on track”, as she put it. When asked about the possibility of rebuilding her life in Brazil, after having been in the shelter for three weeks, Helenice said:

I don't know yet. I can't know yet, because this place is only temporary. With the grace of God, I will leave by next week. Only then can I consider if I can actually stay here (in Brazil). If not, I will leave, and find another place.

As did Helenice, the informants know the premises of the shelter offer no possibilities of pursuing livelihood and making long-term life investments. Precisely due to its temporary and transitory character, as a space of transition, a pathway (during migration) between places, the temporary shelter falls into a category of spaces inherent to supermodernity, classified by Marc Augé as a ‘non-place’ (1995). The concept of supermodernity as theorized by Augé describes a logic of an excessive amount and excessive speed of information, as well as a growing awareness of the multiplicity of space which permeates late capitalist phenomena. The author makes a clear distinction between supermodernity and Baudelairian modernity, and explains that the overabundance of events, spatial overabundance and the individualization of references are considered the three figures of excess which compose contexts in supermodernity (ibid, p.40).

When Augé theorizes supermodernity<sup>49</sup>, he also details the difference between the concepts of ‘space’ and anthropological ‘place.’ ‘Space’, he says, designates unnamed or hard-to-name ‘places’ that have no specific inscribed history, relations or common symbolic constructions, being devoid of organic societies. (1995, p.82)

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Augé gives a detailed description of supermodernity and the three excesses. However, this overwhelming essay about supermodernity will have to be further discussed in another opportunity. Due to a lack of space for detailing ideas that have been further elaborated by scholars, we will focus, here, only on a simplified version of the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’, in order to reach the concept of ‘non-place’ – rather useful for framing the context of temporary settlement of the Haitian shelter.

The concept refers to an abstract idea of “area”, or a physical representation of that “which there is”, instead of that which “is not there”. ‘Space’ isn’t necessarily inscribed with meaning, as is the case with the concept of ‘place’. Whereas space can refer to the non-symbolized surface of the planet, ‘place’ refers to a specific area to which people attribute meanings, thus being “[...] formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how [...]” (Ibid, p.101)

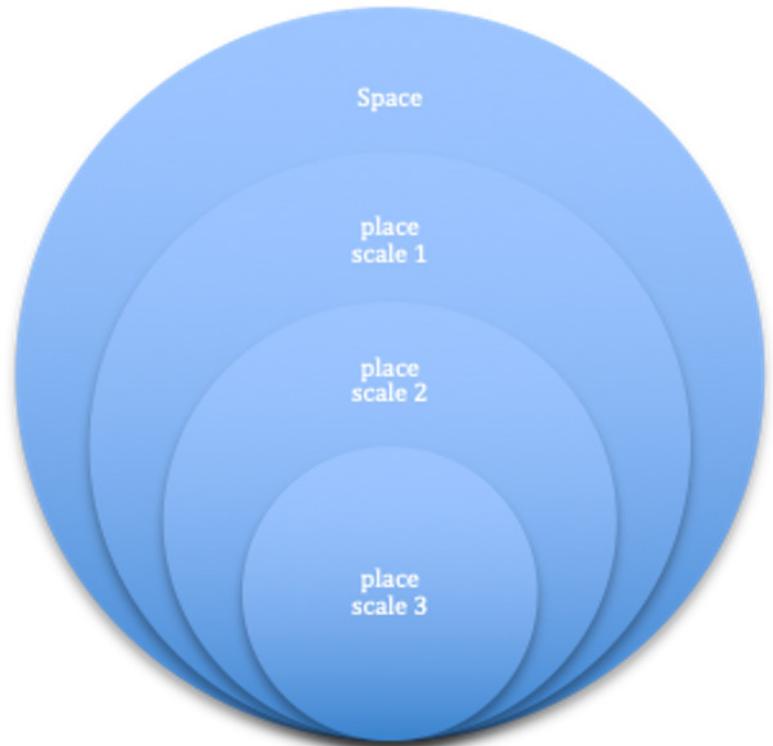
According to Augé, there is a materially temporal dimension of the ‘spaces’ named ‘places’. They usually carry regular intervals, being inscribed in computed time. So forth, time is measured in days of travel and rituals take place on certain dates. These are forms of organization intrinsic to ‘place’ that are not necessarily present in all spaces. And that is, he concludes, what creates conditions for the existence of a memory attached to ‘place’.

Let us not be mistaken by this differentiation. ‘Space’ and ‘place’ overlap and intersect each other. As ‘space’ is a rather abstract notion, in opposition, ‘place’ is a far more concrete one, referring to a geographical area with which (and through which) people develop certain relations, habits and living dynamics. It is also important to keep in mind that a ‘place’ can have different meanings depending on the scale through which it is analyzed and the individuals who relate to it. The author uses the example of a capital of a country, Paris, for instance, to indicate that it represents different relations and meanings for the people that inhabit the city itself and people in the rest of the country (pp.64–67). ‘Space’, however, encompasses all there is, regardless of the meaning attributed to it. Meanings have no symbolic value when it comes to the abstract notion of ‘space’, as can be illustrated in the following scheme.<sup>50</sup>

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Bear in mind it was designed solely for the purpose of better grasping the intertwining character of the concepts presented in this paragraph, and not to represent the full idea of space or place.

**Figure 3 - Notions of 'Space' and 'Place'**



*Source: Created by author, based on field data collection*

Augé (1995) describes 'places' as geographically composed by itineraries, intersections, centers and monuments. He makes detailed considerations of the uses of 'space', how it is constructed and the meanings it acquires and develops in societies. "The organization of space and the founding of places, inside a given society, comprise [...] collective and individual practices. Collectivities need to think simultaneously about identity and relations" (p.51). He explains, then, that places are not only concerned with identity, history and relations, but they carry a minimal stability (p.54).

Nonetheless, there are also spaces in supermodernity – as opposed to the Baudelarian idea of modernity in which the past is superseded by the present (Ibid, p.92) – that are not encrusted with historical monuments, concerned with identity, relations or history. These are, thus, called ‘non-places’ (Ibid, p.78). They are not anthropological ‘places’, but are still ‘spaces’, used in certain ways by people as areas of transit.<sup>51</sup> A ‘non-place’, as defined by Marc Augé (1995) is, thus, a ‘space’ through which people transit indistinctly and on a regular (or irregular) basis. ‘Non-places’ are intrinsic to supermodernity and its growing flow of non-relational communications, networks of transportation, media, excess of information, of spaces, of concepts and so on.

‘Non-place’, he continues, “designates two complementary realities of contemporary life: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (commerce, transport, leisure, transit) and the relations that individuals have with these spaces (p.94). In the case of the shelter, its “end” lies in transit, as the passageway of a migratory movement; whereas the relations that the individuals have with the spaces regard their use of it as a temporary settlement, where they are forced to wait for document regularization, before arriving in the aspired ‘place’ of destination.

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While ‘place’ is opposed to ‘non-place’, the idea of ‘space’ is not opposed to ‘place’ or ‘non-place’, as ‘space’ is an abstract notion that encompasses both.

**Figure 4** - A blackboard at the entrance of the shelter prohibits, prescribes and informs migrants of established rules for using the space



Source: Luiza Andrade

As suggested by Augé, 'non-places' mediate a whole mass of relations with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected to their purpose (here, migration). While 'places' create the 'organically social', he continues, 'non-places' create the 'solitary

contractuality' (p.94). That is to say that the link between individuals and their surroundings in 'non-places' is established through mediation of words or texts, such as "instructions of use". These instructions, says the scholar – which can be prescriptive, prohibitive or informative, and are developed by a higher force or organization, such as the government – establish the traffic conditions of the area of transit.

In the shelter, this link is represented both by the blackboard at the entrance of the premises, with the rules for living in the area, as well as by the governmental forms to be filled, the ID cards that are distributed (and give rights and access to certain privileges), and the booklet of rules and regulations for working in the country, distributed by the SEJUDH. All these "texts" are representative of a relationship between the individuals and the government – the "controller" of the 'space.'

### 5.3. "I JUST WANT A 'BUT' BEFORE ME."

In the temporary settlement, people are always coming and going, arriving and leaving. The faces change rapidly and the functioning of the system has to be (re)explained over and over again. Each and every day, governmental agents are showered with questions regarding the emission of identity cards, meal distributions, immigrant registration process, recruiting companies and guidelines for the use (and distribution) of the shelter's shared space. As the migrants tend to leave in about four to eight weeks, the information has to be (re)enforced, (re)distributed and (re)spread to those who were not present – or have just arrived. This constant reconstitution of the space – the "invention of everyday", as suggested by Augé – is inherent to both 'places' and 'non-places' (1995, p.78).

However, in the case of 'non-places,' as the people are passing through and faces change rapidly, the creation of a shared identity has to base itself on the only things that remain the same: procedures, guidelines and rules. Therefore, 'non-places' create a shared identity of those who inhabit it (even if only momentarily) which is emptied of individuality (Ibid, p.87). There is a relative anonymity inherent to 'non-places' (Ibid, p.101) that, in the shelter, is accompanied by a feeling of solitude and a constant attempt to claim differentiation. There, they are all "Haitian migrants". There is no difference in treatment and, often, no individual traces are considered even during recruiting processes – as was the case with a poultry processing company which selected Haitians based on their order of arrival in an informal recruiting line.

Augé explains, accordingly, that when a person enters a 'non-place,' as a consequence of the anonymity and the 'solitary contractuality,' he is relieved of his detriments temporarily. "He, then, becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of the passenger"(1995, p.103) - in this case, the migrant, or 'refugee,' as they call themselves. However, as the Haitians are being forced to stay in this temporary situation, they seem to struggle daily with the idea of anonymity, and claim to be interpreted by their individuality, as can be inferred from a statement from Honoré, when talking about the negative image<sup>52</sup> of Haitians that (he felt, as so did the others) had reached the recruiters, governmental agents and city inhabitants: "I know Haitians are this, Haitians are that...but... You understand? I just need that 'but' before my name", he expressed cathartically.

Honoré did not want to be interpreted as "one of them", or as "just another Haitian in the shelter". These feelings were shared by all the informants, who displayed a need for having their individuality recognized, be it through naming abilities and skills, family history,

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The informants shared a general feeling of being interpreted as "not hard-working", "lazy", "deceiving" and "ignorant" by the city inhabitants, governmental agents and recruiters.

or through identity traits that differentiated them from “the rest”. Often one could witness Haitians attempting to convince governmental agents to help them leave the shelter based on narratives of difference. Phrases such as “...but I have four kids and a wife, and they (other Haitians in the shelter) are single,” or “...but I am a student in IT, and they (others) are not” reached the governmental agents incessantly during their rounds in the shelter.

It is important, at this point, to highlight that ‘places’ and ‘non-places’ never exist in its pure form. They are like “opposite polarities”, coexisting while “the first one is never totally erased and the second never totally completed” (Augé, 1995, p.78-79). There is, to some degree, a level of relationships developed in the shelter, once they are living in a shared space and all carry a shared identity of “solitary contractuality”. However, as Augé suggests, these relationships seem to go no farther than the urgency and actuality, as “what reigns in the ‘non-place’ is actuality, the urgency of the present moment” (p.104). Even though individuals in transit might still be worried about yesterday or concerned about tomorrow, when they enter the ‘non-place’, they are “distanced from them (past and future) temporarily by the environment of the moment” (p.103).

The solitude previously mentioned, according to the scholar, rises from the co-existing experience of ‘places’ and ‘non-places’. In these spaces, “solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future” (p.87). Here, Augé refers to travellers on their experience of transit, as are the Haitian migrants. The specificity in their case, however, is that their transit is no longer moving. They are stuck in as phase of transit which is physically still. Thus, in the shelter, we have an even more evident form of experiencing the co-existence of ‘place’ and ‘non-place’ – we may even interpret it as a contradictory form of ‘non-place’, in which the main characteristic, the movement of transit, is suddenly still.

## 5.4. IN BETWEEN

When Victor Turner further theorizes van Genep's (1960) thoughts on rites of passage, he brings about the idea of being "between and betwixt", in a period of 'liminality' (1969, p.95). According to the scholar, 'liminality' is a phase of threshold that comes after leaving behind the structures of society, community, and individual identity, and before reaching structure, which will be presented when the rite of passage is over. That is to say that the period of liminality, in which the person undergoing the rite feels disoriented and emptied of his social identity, is anti-structure, juxtaposed to the structure that comes before the beginning and after the end of the rite of passage. "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (1969, p.95). In this period, Turner continues, there is "no status, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows" (1967, 98), meaning that people are interpreted as equals. They are stripped from their social statuses and acquired capitals, and have to obey a higher authority that imposes rules on how to behave (1969, p.96). Moreover, in such a situation of 'liminality', being neither here, nor there, but in between places, the structures of society are temporarily suspended.

While looking at the situation in the shelter from Turner's perspective on rites of passage, it is only natural that we might fit the temporary settlement into the category of the liminal phase of being "in between" structures. The shelter would, thus, be seen as an anti-structure, or 'communitas', as suggested by Turner. Some characteristics of the temporary settlement certainly fit the description of anti-structure, in which social identities are emptied and all subjects are interpreted as equals by a higher order (1969, p.96) – in this case, the government. However, the temporary settlement in Brasília also carries traits that do not completely fit Turner's description of anti-structure, and especially the concept of 'communitas'.

By 'communitas' Turner means a form of community, in which people are interpreted as the same, there is no hierarchy, and certain kinds of structure are organically formed in the very anti-structure. In communitas, he continues, there is a sort of camaraderie, fellowship, homogeneity, humility and unselfishness felt and propelled by the people who are participating in it. In the shelter, however, perhaps due to the fact that the circumstances are rather unpleasant and lasts longer than expected – sometimes giving them the feeling that it will never end – one may see a great deal of selfishness, a fairly low level of comradeship, rarely any fellowship or camaraderie. In the shelter, oppositely to the idea of communitas, relationships are mostly negative ones, as the space often reminds the migrants of the fierce competition they have to face in order to leave this "anti-structure" and finally be on their way, finishing the phase of liminality in order to find a 'place' (a new structure) to be reintegrated to.

It is noteworthy that the existing structure in the shelter was not created by communitas or within it. It follows the structure and laws of the Brazilian government, meaning that structure is not suspended in the shelter, as it is in communitas. Moreover, although it is certainly common for migrants to feel lost and disoriented in the shelter, they are only emptied of their individual identities by the higher order. They do not fell as equals or as fellows. Instead, they constantly claim their individuality, while resisting the government's impositions of equality in the shelter.

Much can be elaborated on the idea of the temporary shelter as a phase of liminality through Turner's theory. However, when seeing migration as a rite of passage, we notice that this specific movement of migration carries an extra phase, a gap in the phase of liminality (represented by the shelter) in which conditions differ from the general attributes of a 'communitas.' Augé's thoughts on non-places are, thus, one step further when it comes to representing the circumstances of the shelter, characterizing it as a space of supermodernity. By this, I do not mean to say Turner's theory of rites

of passage and *communitas* are not valid. The simple idea of rites of passage as inherent to situations of transition and representative of the whole dichotomy of stability and instability in society are fairly important for comprehending migratory movements (1969, p.95). The concepts of non-place and liminality could very well be combined into one theory, attributing Turner's concept of liminality to all non-places. This way, supermodernity could be explained as an everlasting rollercoaster of stability and instability, of going through places and non-places on a daily basis, where the excesses of information, ego and space are both cause and consequence of this dichotomy between structure and anti-structure. Furthermore, Liminality fits the idea of solitude inherent to non-places in supermodernity. It is as if all non-places were places of liminality, given that they are spaces of transition from structure to structure. Non-places would be, thus, seen as anti-structure.

Augé's thoughts on non-places carry an advantage when compared to the idea of anti-structure. In non-places, Augé says, there is structure; a structure which conforms solitary contractuality (as opposed to organically social) provided by a higher authority which has to be obeyed. Let us not be mistaken; when Turner elaborates his theory of liminality beyond rites of passage, he also accounts for the existence of some sort of rudimentary structure in anti-structure: "Liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured [...]" (1969, p.96). Regardless, he mentions that "*communitas* has an existential quality, whereas structure has a cognitive quality" (p.107). By existential, the author means that relations in *communitas* are spontaneously created and molded by the people inserted in it, whereas in structure relations are guided by a set of pre-established (often immutable) rules from a higher authority. What can be found in the shelter is certainly more related to cognitive quality rather than existential, given that there are only rules by a higher party and the people seem to avoid relating to each other enough to create something of common an existential quality.

Furthermore, as he develops liminality farther from the ritual obligation in post-industrial societies, his distinctions between liminality in outsiderhood (as *communitas* created outside of structure, not within it) and marginality (as the lowest cast within society) get mixed up, the only difference being that marginality offers no expectation of resolution, whereas liminality does. And this makes the use of his theory contradictory for the case of the Haitians in the shelter. In that non-place, narratives of expectations, possibility and impossibility of resolution are interwoven and confused. The Haitians in the shelter are both in a state of 'marginality' as well as liminality. While in the temporary settlement, they perceive no possible outcome of either positive resolution or continuity of marginality. That means that two concepts that are interpreted as different by Turner (liminality and marginality) are here overlapping. On that note, the shelter can certainly be seen as a space of contradictions. As it contains characteristics of both places and non-places, as well as both liminality and marginality, it is a hard situation to grasp both through theoretical approaches as well as physically, through the migrant's perceptions in the shelter.

## 5.5. "WE ARE MISPLACED"

Concerned with surviving the shelter and strategizing to leave, Haitians seem to have a handful of worries about the present and, thus, a hard time accessing past memories or making concrete plans for the future<sup>53</sup>. To Marc Augé, this hindered access to past and future arises as a symptom of being in 'non-places,' "Everything proceeds as if 'space' had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last forty-eight hours of news; as if each

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As shown by the previously cited examples of Helenice, Robert and Eldin, as well as other informants.

individual history were drawing its motives, its words and images, from the inexhaustible stock of an unending history in the present" (p.104). Furthermore, we must take into account that it is rather hurtful to think of a past that was more comfortable than a present in which they feel lost and are emptied of individuality, or to make plans for a future which might carry a great deal of disappointment<sup>54</sup>.

On his reflection on the psychological consequences of the temporary character of 'non-places,' Augé suggests that this temporary ridding of yesterday's concerns or tomorrow's worries brings about a "joy of identity-loss, an active pleasure of role-playing" (1995, p.103) – here, as migrant-refugee. However, throughout months of fieldwork, I cannot think back to a moment in which I witnessed traces of "joy of identity-loss" or of an "active pleasure" of playing the role of a refugee. On the contrary, as previously mentioned, the informants often displayed narratives of discomfort and traces of despair.

I dare not say Marc Augé was mistaken. In fact, when the author made his considerations of joy and pleasure in transit, he referred more specifically to travellers (tourists, pilgrims, passers-by) who had *chosen* to undergo the experience on 'non-places'; who felt somehow connected and, yet, disconnected to 'space,' as a symptom of supermodernity (p.87). The Haitian migrants, however, seem to fall into another travellers' category. Much like refugees, they have their experience as "passers-by" hindered by context. Suddenly, after crossing the border, they find themselves to be lost 'in between' (Turner, 1969): they are neither in the 'place' of destination, nor the 'place' of exodus (Augé, 1995). They are stuck in a 'space' that is a contradictory form of 'non-place,' where the fluidity of movement is absent, as both the landscape and the travellers are suddenly still. They seem to have fallen into a gap of supermodernity that does not offer opportunities or pathways to leave, forcing them to fit the category of marginality as proposed by Turner (1969, p.107).

Here, you have to fight for what belongs to you. Do you understand? Things that are yours by right, you now have to fight for [...], you curse people for it, as if it didn't belong to you.

Honoré Clerjuiste, 03/04/2013

Emptied of his individuality, he felt as if all the cultural capital he had acquired throughout the years was no longer useful. He felt he was different from the other and, yet, he knew that in the shelter, he was not interpreted as such. Honoré felt pushed into a corner of his life, where there was no spotlight to identify him in the middle of the crowd<sup>55</sup>. "But I have to be patient", he said. "I have to wait. Because it will pass[...]" As he knew (hoped) his stay in the shelter was only temporary, Honoré tried to comfort himself with rationalizing his situation. "We are misplaced", he concluded.

"It's not because you are ignorant... It's not because you are illiterate... It's not because you don't know... It's because you are misplaced. You are not in the right position... you are not in a good position. You are in a corner. It's not because you might not know (important information)... It's not because they (government or recruiters) don't talk about it (opportunities). It's because you are misplaced that you don't hear about it. Now you don't know anything. Now you... have become... you are part of... the ignorant people or analphabet, though you are not. You are misplaced... that is it." Here, Honoré referred to what he considered to be important information, on job opportunities in Brazil.

What I'm missing now is open doors. I know I have the ways (navigation skills), the means (capital); I have everything. But I am misplaced. I'm in a corner. I'm not in the center. That's why I see things so far from me.

Honoré Clerjuiste, 03/04/2013

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This was the case with most informants. The feeling of having the capitals but lacking opportunities was generalized.

As did Honoré, informants felt the liminal context of the 'non-place' as a 'misplacement,' where their previously acquired capitals (investments in education and professionalization) were close to worthless, and their navigation skills were hampered. With their past being disregarded, opportunities in the shelter (recruiting companies) were repeatedly interpreted as the "only chance", as the 'timelessness' of the temporary settlement hindered their abilities to foresee possible future outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The 'temporary' circumstance in which the Haitian migrants are found at the Brazilian border is not often portrayed in studies that focus on migrants' settlement. In this migration process, there seems to be an extra phase through which migrants go in order to reach the aspired 'place' of destination. The shelter, here, is interpreted as a transitory (liminal) phase (Turner, 1969), a contradictory gap located between places in the context of supermodernity (Augé, 1995). By contradictory, I mean to say the shelter carries characteristics of both a 'place' and a 'non-place', forcing migrants to relate farther than normal to the 'space' of transition, regardless of it being interpreted as a passageway.

This research's focus on this phase of 'still transition' (where movement is absent) provides circumstances fairly different from most permanent settlements. Stuck in the gap of temporary settlement, migrants have to find ways to pursue livelihood that are not based on long lasting relationships, long-term work-contracts or any other kind of permanent ties with local community and other migrants in the shelter. They, thus, develop strategies of social navigation that make use of their previously acquired capital in order to make just about enough to survive and leave, not aspiring future profits from any kind of investments made in this 'transitory' phase. In the temporary settlement, their investments in social capital are not focused on building a new life, but in surviving in order to get to the place where they can actually invest in building this aspired "new life".

As previously suggested by Bal & Sinha-Kerkhoff (2010), the search for human security often comes with new insecurities. That is already expected of permanent settlement. In the temporary settlement, however, they face what seems to be an even greater

amount of daily issues of insecurity than what is often found in permanent settlements – certainly more than the migrants expected to find. Not only is permanent settlement not possible in the shelter – inspiring insecurities related to uncertainty about the future –, but also hygiene conditions and living circumstances are perceived as rather unpleasant by the migrants, making them feel a constant anxiety which seems to grow with the passing of days and the stretch of their waiting period.

Stuck in this gap between places, and having to deal with previously unexpected insecurities that influence feelings of anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, and fatalism, migrants feel emptied of their individuality and misplaced, lost in a space where their acquired capitals and all life investments are disregarded, where they are forced to accept whatever seldom opportunities may arise in the shelter. As one of the informants put it, they feel stuck in a corner, away from the spotlight of “open doors”:

Finally, the liminal circumstances of the temporary settlement, which force migrants to seek new ways of overcoming daily issues of insecurity and pave their ways to leave the temporary shelter, seem to influence the informants’ perceptions of time, smudging their abilities to foresee possible future outcomes and hindering their access to memories of the past.

Contrary to its criticism, the use of the aquatic metaphor to refer to this migration process helped the purpose of reaching the migrants’ subjective accounts of how they are interpreted by the government in the temporary shelter. Starting from these perceptions, the theories of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and social navigation (Vigh, 2009) were essential in this research, as they helped shape a detailed analysis of the data collected during fieldwork on the living dynamics of the shelter. They have provided the basis necessary to shed light on the circumstances of temporary settlement which have been presented in this research. With that analysis, the theory of supermodernity,

along with the concepts of space, place and non-place (Augé, 1995) as well as Turner's elaborations on liminality (1969) made it possible to contextualize the temporary settlement in a contemporary framework, through the lens of human security.

In this thesis, the circumstances of temporary settlement have been portrayed as rather unpleasant, bringing about only feelings of anxiety, disconnection, fears and uncertainty amongst migrants. This seemingly biased negative portrait of the shelter has, however, been based on perceptions and data collected in the field. All aspects were analyzed carefully during the research process and the negative portrait was often reconsidered. However, the final conclusion to which this research has come is that the temporary settlement seems to be a phase that migrants would like to do without, as the state of "liminality" in which they are found at the non-place seems to bring about a great deal of confusion and disorientation.

One can only hope that, as suggested by Turner (1969, 1974), this liminal phase can serve the migrants as an opportunity to reorganize their structures of the self, contributing to the development of their identities, their awareness and new perspectives, and that the structure from the temporary settlement can lead them into new pathways of pursuing livelihood. "Anti-structure can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change" (Turner, 1974, p.65). However, knowing if the outcomes of this extended liminal period in the non-place will be positive or negative is a topic for yet another thesis, one in which fieldwork would have to be conducted in a place of permanent settlement rather than a temporary one.

## AFTERWORD

As previously discussed in 'restrictions', I am aware that this study carries weaknesses. The shortness of the research period and the reduced access to the informants, due to temporary character of the shelter, are but a few limitations which might have influenced the development of conclusions. However, this study does highlight the importance of existential perceptions of security, arguing for subjective accounts and contributing to the scientific debate of human security. Moreover, it engages in the anthropological dialogue of supermodernity, by reiterating and further elaborating on the theory of 'non-places' through the example of the temporary shelter.

Much was left untouched when it comes to possible approaches and further detailing theory that contributed to this debate. Choices had to be made, as there were formal time and space restrictions not only for fieldwork, but also for the writing process. Therefore, I hereby leave an open invitation for reading, printing, spreading and forwarding this thesis – hoping it will contribute to diffusing information – and commenting, arguing, refuting and debating it – hoping it can be used as a stepping-stone for further research on this subject.

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# APPENDICES

**Table 1 – Key Informants Matrix**

<b>Codename</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Charles Vincy	25	Mechanic	Gonaives	Male
Jameson Monavis	42	Mason	Cap Haitian	Male
François D.	35	Economy / Math and Physics professor	Gonaives	Male
Eldin Marré	24	Law student	Gonaives	Male
Samuel Djean	26	Serigraphist	Gonaives	Male
Tilbert	26	Administrator	Gonaives	Male
Claudia	22	Nursing student	Port au Prince	Female
William Morceaux	25	Driver	Port au Prince / Santo Domingo	Male
Jameson F.	42	Mason	Cap Haitien	Male
Man in a hat	34	Stonemason	Port au Prince / Santo Domingo	Male
Gabriel	26	Math professor	Cap Haitien	Male
Walter	30	Gardener / Painter	Gonaives	Male
Helenice Jeanty	24	Medicine student	Port au Prince / Santo Domingo	Female
Floriant	23	Journalist / teacher	Gonaives	Male
Honoré Wiltnus	24	Health agent	Gonaives	Male
Robert Dieufaites	21	Medicine student / Survey worker	Port au Prince	Male
Honoré Clerjuiste	26	Interpreter / Hotel host / professor	Port au Prince / Santo Domingo	Male
Julienne	22	Secretary / student	Cap Haitien	Female
Innocent Olibrice	25	Football player	Gonaives	Male
Santilme B.	25	Student	Saint Michel de L'Atallaye	Male
Jean Louis	30	Topography student	Port au Prince	Male
William Saintilme	27	Accounting student	Port au Prince	Male
Willerot	24	Driver	Gonaives	Male
Julius	25	Student	Cap Haitien	Male
Walterson	22	Student	Gonaives / Santo Domingo	Male
Robert Elouis	22	Mason	Gonaives	Male
Jameson Flaubert	29	Salesman / Shop owner	Santo Domingo	Male

**Table 2 - Living Conditions in Permanent and Temporary Settlements**

Permanent Settlement**	Temporary Settlement**
Expect to stay for a while (from months to a couple years, or even permanently)	Expect to leave as soon as possible (from hours to a couple days)
Are able to have long term work contracts	Are <b>not</b> able to have long term work contracts
Can rely on local immigrant community for support	<b>Cannot</b> rely on local immigrant community for support
Can rely on migrant relatives	There are no migrant relatives to rely on (They have already left)
Living conditions are often better than homeland	Living conditions are often worse than Homeland
Have the possibility of social and economic development	Have no possibility of social and economic development (They make no effort on that direction)
Can establish a new "home"	Cannot establish a new "home"
Can establish long lasting ties with local community	Cannot establish long lasting ties or bonds locally
There are available means to pursue livelihood	There are very few means of pursuing livelihood
There can be privacy	There is no possibility of privacy
Can make friends	Avoid making friends
There can be mutual communal support	There is mutual competition

\*\*The conditions of permanent settlement were derived from differences and similarities between scenarios on other migration studies such as the following: Theije & Bal (2010), Bal & Sinha Kerkhof (2010), Vigh (2009a, 2009b), Fourn & Glick-Schiller (1990), Levanon (2011), Jacobsen (2002), Benson, M. (2012), Jansen (2008).

**Table 3 - Comparing Insecurities**

Insecurities faced		
Homeland	Temporary settlement (shelter)	
Scarcity of work opportunities	No money to reach destination	Fear of being bitten by unknown bugs
Economic Instability	No money for food	Fear or being disliked by governmental agents
Difficult access to education	Fear of being robbed in the shelter	
Fear of street violence	Fear of not being selected for a job	Missing home / families
Fear of getting kidnapped for ransom	Fear of not being granted the visa	Worries about families economic situation at homeland
Fear of not having means to support family / parents / children	Fear or border being closed (relatives and friends on their way)	Anxiety to finish the migration process and reach destination
Fear for the future of offspring (no education or career opportunities)	Fear of having to stay longer	
Fear of natural disasters	Lack of privacy	Fear of disappointing family (responsibility towards supporting them)
Dissatisfaction with corruption in public offices and public schools	Sharing a small (and dirty) space with too many people	Lack of access to hygiene
	Uncertainties regarding future	Not being informed of the process
Fear of the police (Dom Republic)	Not knowing where to go next	Fear of reaching a destination and not finding a job
Prejudice over skin color	Dealing with corruption	
Prejudice over poverty	Fear of reaching a destination and not finding a job	Fear of being seen as "just another Haitian"
Prejudice over nationality (Dom republic)		
Fear of being left behind by friends	Being demeaned by locals and Governmental agents	Fear of being interpreted as "just another Haitian"

**Table 4 - Social Navigation Strategies**

Social Navigation Strategies	
To leave the shelter	To survive the shelter
Try to use the governmental agent's influence to be selected by companies	Sell old/used mattresses to new-comers
Try to use my influence (as a researcher) to be selected by companies	Re-sell food and beverages inside the shelter to other migrants
Try to sell their working abilities to recruiters	Ask those who visit the shelter for money of other kinds of help
Try to sell their intellectual abilities to recruiters	
Try to slip the CPF into the recruiters pockets, purses or even through the car window, hoping they will think they voluntarily collected the documents and forgot about it	Accept corruption on the Shelter (Le Dirigent charges money to point Haitians as good workers and introduce them as family to company recruiters)
Adopt the label "refugee" to be seen as someone who needs help by locals	Try to become friends with Le Dirigent to use his influence with the governmental agent
Pay "Le Dirigent" to be described as hard-working to the recruiters or to the governmental agent	Deceive new-comers into thinking they have to pay to be registered on the stay permit waiting list
Work on the shelter (cleaning or organizing) to be seen as a hard-working person by the governmental agent	Try to take two meals to save one for later or to sell it to those who were not present during the government food distribution
Lie about abilities and job history during recruiting processes	Use working skills to earn money in the shelter or in the local community
Lie about how long they have been in the shelter	

**Table 5 - Relating Capital to Social Navigation**

Forms of Capital used	To leave the shelter	To survive the shelter
<b>Social</b>	Try to use the governmental agent, 'Le dirigent' and the researcher's influence to be recruited by companies	Try to become friends with 'Le dirigent' to profit from favors made possible by his position as the representative in the shelter
<b>Objectified</b>	Try to slip the CPF into the recruiter's pockets, purses or through the car window, hoping they will be confused and think they voluntarily collected the documents  Wear the CPF around their necks, as name tags, to show they are legally fit for recruitment	Bring reading material from homeland to keep their minds busy or entertained  Bring pictures from their families or objects that reminded them of home  Use the Creole/Portuguese booklet distributed by SEJUDH-AC to learn important phrases such as "I need a job"
<b>Cultural</b>	Present Diplomas or ID cards from Haiti to recruiters  Try to sell their intellectual abilities to recruiters	Apply for CPF and fill in governmental forms and requirements  Accept corruption in the Shelter as part of the social navigation scenery  Use working skills to earn money in the shelter or local community
<b>Embodied</b>	Adopt the label "refugee" to be seen as someone who needs help by locals  Try to sell their working abilities to recruiters  Work on the shelter (cleaning or organizing) to be seen as a hard-working person by the governmental agent	Re-sell food and beverages inside the shelter to other migrants  Deceive new-comers into thinking they have to pay to be registered in the shelter and apply for the visa  Ask whoever visits the shelter for money or other kinds of help
<b>Economic</b>	Pay 'Le dirigent' to be described as hard-working to the recruiters or to the governmental agent, or to cut in line on the waiting list	Take two meals and save one for later or sell to others

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **Luiza Silva de Andrade**

Luiza is a Journalist, Researcher and PhD candidate in Linguistic and Literary Studies at University of São Paulo (USP), in Brazil. She holds a bachelor of Communication degree, a Specialist in English Language degree by the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG); and a Master of Social and Cultural Anthropology degree by both the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), having worked and conducted research in the fields of mining, migration and education.

The background is a vibrant orange with wavy, textured patterns. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of a person on the left, a street lamp in the center, and a group of five people on the right. The overall mood is contemplative and evocative.

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# STUCK IN A NON-PLACE

a study on Haitian migrants' temporary settlement  
in Brazil and perceptions of time