

UNIVERSITY OF FRENCH GUIANA (UG)

Humanities and Social Sciences Department (LSH Department)

Two-day conference, June 16 and 17, 2016

« Circulation of Individuals, Knowledge and Cultural practices in the Guiana Shield »

This conference is the first organized by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (LSH Department) of the new University of French Guiana (UG), officially fully effective since January 2015. It aims at gathering scholars from different disciplines to better understand spacial reorganizations in the Guiana Shield and their links with circulation flows. This two-day conference seeks to study not only the movement of individuals but also that of the knowledge, practices and representations which characterize them. If the « circulation » prism can today be defined as an “academic leitmotiv” conveying a certain conceptual vagueness, it is nevertheless relevant to question the prevailing approach in the Social Sciences and more generally in the Humanities, which consists in naturalizing national borders to account for social, political and cultural phenomena such as migration processes, the diffusion of models of good governance or the spread of some cultural practises (Vauchez, 2003). Therefore, the analysis in terms of « circulation» intend to go beyond the too linear or dichotomous approaches which comprehend social, cultural and political circulation processes in terms of emission/reception, departure/arrival, dominant/dominated (Saunier, 2005; Cortes & Faret, 2009).

However, if the circulation paradigms focus on the migrants as agents and on their characteristics, as well as on the influence of local configurations and translation processes (of knowledge and practices), it tends to concentrate on central spaces or territories. Yet, Louis A Perez Jr. warns against the limits of the “transnational turn” in Social Sciences when it leads to a mere internationalization of the history of some countries, especially the United States (Perez Jr., 2002). This conference organized by the LSH Department of UG falls in with the perspective of operative thinking on circulations; it intends to study the circulatory phenomena through the prism of a specific territory: the Guiana Shield. Rather than following what Homi Bhabha labels as

“global cosmopolitanism” which, never fails “to celebrate a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies”, the organizers of this conference would focus on a “vernacular cosmopolitanism” and encourage critical debates on the practices and the theoretical discourses about these practices.

The Guiana Shield which spreads on six countries is a heterogeneous space characterized by common processes: migration, trans-border cooperation, intense cultural and linguistic exchanges, and mutual literary and artistic influences. All these phenomena will be analysed and discussed during this cross-disciplinary conference which is conceived as the opening of a series of scientific meetings and conferences. This year, we are particularly interested in how migrants reconstruct or reconfigure their own space, as well as their social, cultural and political life. We are also interested in the ways these practices are thought, theorized and represented. We welcome both analyses based on field research and more theoretical proposals reviewing notions and concepts related to circulation.

Thus, these are the two main approaches which can be followed to answer this call for proposals: understanding the circulation *practices* of individuals, knowledge and traditions in the Guiana Shield, and discussing through the prism of the Guiana Shield, the *theoretical concepts* linked to the theme of circulation in the current research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences.

I. Understanding the circulation practices of individuals, knowledge and traditions in the Guiana Shield raises questions about:

- The constitution of circulation patterns (the combination of movements linked to various reasons for the individuals, or the way mobility practices spread in the individuals’ social network...). Indeed, some migratory practices come from a long tradition of boundaries crossing like those of the Bushinenge between Surinam and French Guiana (Price & Price, 2003)
- The way these practices might contribute to reconstructing the Guiana Shield, by the transformation of the living spaces they create, notably in the

urban territories with the apparition of cross border dipoles, as between Saint-Laurent and Albina.

- The circulation and dynamics of knowledge and practices in different domains: description and analysis of traditional handcraft, of skills linked to the environment (hunting, fishing, picking, agriculture), to health, culture (carnival, oral literature, culinary practices, music, clothing...) but also the mode of grasping the territory and cohabiting.

Responding to these issues, papers on literature creating a dialogue with Social Sciences and Humanities might also explain the representation at stake in the texts, the local languages and their mutual links, just as much as they could inform about the actual circulation of books and written documents or pay attention to the digital issue.

II. Discussing, through the prism of the Guiana Shield, the theoretical concepts linked to the theme of circulation in current research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences encourages:

- Proposals that will examine certain notions arising from postcolonial studies such as "flux", "ethnoscape" (Appadurai, 1996) or "hybridity" (Bhabha 1994, Agier 2013) as part of a literary, sociological, anthropological or historical analysis of the circulation phenomenon in the Guiana Shield.
- Communications on public policies transfers in the Guiana Shield and the noticeable influences between Nation states, regions and local authorities in those territories.
- Papers on law reviewing the history of movements and evolutions related to the legal codification of circulations or papers offering analysis on comparative law.

Considering "gender" and the issue of sexuality in this context could also be of interest and raises the question of how circulations sow "gender trouble" (Butler, 1990) or constitute a defensive strategy against exclusion and discrimination.

The gathering of cross-disciplinary scholars in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, (literature, law, history, linguistics and anthropology) will contribute to a clearer understanding of the complexities of migratory phenomena in the Guiana

Shield but will also open new perspectives for research and exchange projects. The aim is to strengthen and combine research in the area and give ground to common reflections on population's mobility within the Guiana Shield. In this sense, this scientific event is closely related to the life, teaching and research objectives of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and also to the creation of new research laboratories (EA, MINEA, USR, CNRS) at the University of French Guiana. The discussions and thoughts of this first conference will prepare the organization of the international conference planned in 2018 on the same theme.

Proposals (no longer than 300 words) and a short biographical presentation should be sent before March 21, 2016 by email: circulation.guyanes.lsh.ug@gmail.com.

Notification of acceptance will be given by April 15, 2016.

Organizing Committee :

Linda Amiri, Maître de conférences en histoire (DFR LSH, Université de Guyane)

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