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Mobility, inequality and choice: Circulation on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic

ABSTRACT

The 'mobility' in 'socio-economic mobility' is no mere metaphor. Rather, it is indicative of the intrinsic connection between social status and the circulation of resources. However, it would be a mistake to suggest that mobility is an all-in-one solution to inequality. The question of who benefits from the movement of people, things and information depends on what choices are available to people, how they are able to combine them and whether those choices can be successfully deployed to meet the goals they have set. I show how the relationship between mobility and inequality affects the choices people make in their everyday lives. For Haitians and their relatives living in the border zone of Hispaniola, mobility is a necessary livelihood strategy, but it comes with problematic social and economic implications. First, I provide an overview of the relationship between mobility and inequality. Second, I introduce the field site, a poor cross-border region on the southern border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Third, I demonstrate how Haitians' experiences of mobility and inequality affect their choices. I conclude by discussing how we can build a picture of mobility and inequality that responds more to the complexities of people's lives.

KEYWORDS

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There is a foundational relationship between socio-economic mobility and physical mobility. The *mobility* in *socio-economic mobility* is no mere metaphor. Rather, it is indicative of the intrinsic connection between social status and the circulation of resources. The movement and control of people, things and information is the foundation of socio-economic inequalities and the basis on which people contest them. Just as Amartya Sen (2001) argues that freedoms beget more freedoms, access to some forms of mobility can facilitate access to other forms, such as when labour migration leads to socio-economic mobility.

However, it would be a mistake to suggest that mobility is an all-in-one solution to inequality. There is a tendency to view mobility as always having a positive effect on people's welfare and well-being. This is far from the case. For many people, mobility is not a free choice, but a 'choice of the necessary' (Bourdieu 1984) to sustain their livelihood. Moreover, humans on the move frequently encounter systematic discrimination on the basis of their appearance, dress and perceived cultural identity. The question of who benefits from the movement of people, things and information depends very much on what choices are available to people, how they are able to combine them, and whether those choices can be successfully deployed to meet the goals they have set. The things that make mobility possible or shut it down are not always what we would expect.

In this article I show how the relationship between mobility and inequality affects the choices people make in their everyday lives. For Haitians and their relatives living in the border zone on Hispaniola, mobility is a necessary livelihood strategy, but it comes with burdensome social and economic implications. The case studies shine a light on the diversity of ways that this relationship is harnessed and experienced through presenting a case study of Haitians living on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, drawing upon research carried out between 2010–12. First, I provide an overview of social theory on the relationship between mobility and inequality. Second, I introduce the field site, a poor cross-border region on the southern border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Third, I draw upon my empirical evidence to illustrate how Haitians' experiences of mobility and inequality affect their choices. I conclude by discussing how we can build a picture of mobility and inequality that responds more to the complexities of people's lives.

MOBILITY AND INEQUALITY: A PRACTICAL RELATIONSHIP

The effects of mobility and inequality have been widely recognized by social scientists and economists. In particular, mobility is often viewed as a solution to socio-economic inequality. The promise of mobility is that it breaks down these entrenched social hierarchies and gives people the freedom to move to where they have access to resources. They can either move themselves (economic migration), send objects (trade and gift-giving), or swap information (communications and education).

Migration can open up access to economic and educational opportunities not available in one's own town or country, transforming the lifestyle of migrants and of future generations. It can enhance access to different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural), such as when people migrate to places with better wages or employment rates, or to an area with better public schooling (Bastia 2013; Vertovek and Cohen 1999). The movement of things is just as important: successful trading brings in profit and permits one to climb the socio-economic hierarchy. The mobility of objects, such as gifts, trade stock,

social security payments, remittances, or loans can provide a safety net and a source of capital. Information mobility is also viewed as a leveller of difference, such as when people have access to useful information via mobile phones and the Internet. The assumption is that mobility is good policy because it increases life options, flattens hierarchies and increases wealth overall.

For the most part, these assumptions are correct. But this is just part of the picture. First, inequality and mobility are both difficult to measure. Second, it is dangerous to assume that mobility is good for all people in all times and places. Migration is no blessing when people are forced to move, such as is the case with refugees whose home cannot support their survival due to a lack of resources or the presence of conflict (Simich and Andermann 2014). Even when migration is voluntary, immigrants may find themselves socially or economically ostracized (Vacchiano 2014). For some people, mobile phones prove more of a curse than a blessing, such as when they can place increased social demands on highly limited incomes (Horst and Taylor 2014). Too much information, the circulation of incorrect information, or being on the wrong side of the 'digital divide' can pose a burden to the consumer. Negative effects can also occur with monetary remittances, which are often used to strengthen family ties but which can also limit an individual's autonomy over their income due to pressure from family members to send more money (Singh 2013). The movement of capital can present problems such as security risks or a growing gap between those who receive remittance and those who do not (Taylor and Horst 2018; Hobbs and Jameson 2012).

These examples suggest that the relationship between mobility and inequality is governed by power and choice. We therefore need to understand how the power to enable or constrain mobility is harnessed, distributed and enacted. In whose interests is it to restrict or facilitate mobility? Are some kinds of mobility more difficult to monopolize than others? Why might some people choose not to use the forms of mobility available to them, even when it may well bring them social and economic benefits?

Rather than focusing on positive and negative effects, a better approach would be to look at how a range of personal, collective and structural factors come into play in particular situations, with a range of outcomes. If the relationship between mobility and inequality is governed by power and choice, then it makes sense to examine what theory says about them. As Hayward argues: 'We should define power, not as an instrument some agents use to alter the independent action of others, but rather as a network of boundaries that delimit, for all, the field of what is socially possible' (Hayward 2000: 3).

Migration studies have been asking these kinds of questions for some time with respect to the movement of people (Brettell and Hollifield 2014). More recently, the mobilities turn has shifted analysis to a broader discussion of mobility in terms of people, things and ideas. Growing out of studies on globalization, the mobilities paradigm goes beyond human migration to acknowledge multidirectional flows, not just of people but also of the goods and information that travel with them and separately from them. It focuses on 'the myriad ways in which people and their cultural practices are not confined to a fixed territory but are part of multiple spatial networks and temporal linkages' (Schiller and Salazar 2013: 185–86).

According to Sheller and Urry, the mobilities turn challenges 'sedentarist theories' (2006); that is, the idea that staying put is normal and that migration is an exception. Importantly, it does not privilege the nation or even

people, but rather gets beyond migration to study the mobility of people, things, information and the networks by which they move. Breaking down mobilities into people, objects and information is useful because the movement of different things has varying consequences for inequality. As Salazar and Smart note, 'mobility does not imply that people become more similar or equal. The movement of people may, and often does, create or reinforce difference and inequality, as well as blending or erasing such differences' (2011: iii–iv).

It is clear that different kinds of mobilities are intertwined. Similar to Amartya Sen's (2001) observation that freedom begets other freedoms, mobility begets other forms of mobility. Without knowing something of the conditions of life in another place, one is unlikely to move there. Without the means to transport one's self, goods and information (trucks, motorbikes, feet, containers, mobile phones), mobility cannot occur. Mobility of one thing can also be used as a proxy for another (Horst and Taylor 2014). If you cannot travel yourself, you can still send a gift or make a sale. If you cannot travel or send an object, you can send money.

Yet whether mobility is beneficial or harmful depends upon the extent to which people have control over it, how they use it, and how it is deployed by others. Differential access to mobilities can exacerbate social differences based on race, class, nationality, gender, financial position, health and many other bases of inequality. States and other gatekeepers also play roles in permitting or limiting mobility and choice. The concept of motility is useful for thinking through what Kaufmann and his co-authors call 'the link between spatial and social mobility':

Motility can be defined as the capacity of entities (e.g. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space, or as the way in which entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances.

(Kaufmann et al. 2004: 750)

This is a useful concept in thinking about the relationship between mobility and inequality, since the idea of potential wrapped up in motility speaks to the abilities they have and the constraints that face their choices. In focusing on the potential to move, motility highlights a crucial point, that the ability to move is unevenly distributed.

However, the concept does have a limitation that should be acknowledged: it does not really address how people choose between multiple possibilities. We know that mobility is not always beneficial or desirable. Many people move because they have to, due to a need to find work, escape environmental degradation, because they are dispossessed of their land, or as refugees from war. Similarly, many people choose not to be mobile even when the option is available. What we see emerging is not a division between people who are mobile or not, but people who use different kinds of mobilities to achieve different ends. These choices are limited or framed by a range of inequalities, including poverty, wage differentials, gender, access to infrastructure and services, and discrimination by citizens from both sides of the border. As I demonstrate in the following sections, the effects of these structural inequalities can be significant, especially when considering that the potential of the state to enact its power puts a relatively finite limit on the choices that people can make.

MOBILITY AND INEQUALITY ON THE BORDER OF HAITI AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In a sandstone gully located on the south coast of Hispaniola, a group of Dominican men and Haitian woman sort through piles of used clothing and toys. Known as 'Monte Boutique' (Boutique Mountain), this canyon is the dump for a local factory that discards up to five truckloads of clothes here every day. Every working day, during factory hours, people converge on the dump to scavenge for clothes they can re-sell in markets around the island. They are mostly locals, but sometimes travel from as far away as Santo Domingo. The clothing itself is discarded by US citizens into the nation's charity bins, then auctioned off and transported to the poorer economies of the Americas.

As they search for items they can resell, the young Dominican men entertain each other by dressing up in the more interesting finds: tweed jackets, fur coats, clown suits and Santa hats. The Haitian women sift through the piles quietly, focused on finding high-value branded items: Lacrosse polo shirts, Calvin Klein t-shirts, designer jeans. A factory truck enters the gulley, laden high with sacks with yet more clothing, and the young men run towards it. Before it has a chance to pull into position and stop, they are clambering over the truck, pulling on sacks and balancing skilfully as the tray rises into the air. We are told that some men have been seriously injured by this activity, but it is fun and a way to display their dominance to the rest of the contenders. The truck dumps its load and drives off, leaving the men and the women to scramble for the most promising-looking sacks. At the end of the day, the factory's truck driver will set the remaining clothing on fire, so the collectors must work quickly.

That was July 2010. By March 2012, everything had changed in Monte Boutique, and any modicum of equality that the Haitian women possessed had disappeared. The mad scramble was gone, replaced by management and procedures. Factory management and local politicians, I was told, had implemented a syndicate, comprised of Dominican men, to allay their concerns about safety. Rather than the apparent anarchy of 2010, goods were now distributed in an organized fashion governed by violence. The *sindicato* (union, in this case informal one) leader and his deputies were armed with stiletto knives. When each truck arrived and dumped its load of clothing, each deputy would take ownership of a plot, from which they would sell bundles to the waiting Haitian women and others. Bills of 500 and 1000 pesos (\$11 and \$22 USD) changed hands from the women to the deputies, then to the *sindicato*. If the women protested the arrangement, they risked incurring violence. One woman had her head pushed into a pile of clothing, and a deputy twisted the neck of another until it looked like it would snap.

This is how inequalities are created and enforced. In Monte Boutique, the Dominican men have a range of advantages over the Haitian women. They are stronger, armed and organized. They have the tacit support of local authorities, and they are operating in their home territory. Moreover, they are male and Dominican, features which bestow them with a tacit, yet real enough, social power. If their performance of power is not enough to compel compliance, violence is introduced. Outside of Monte Boutique, however, these men have little real power. They are relatively poor, living in the poorest part of the Dominican Republic, a nation that occupies a situation of disadvantage in the global political economy. Like poverty, power is relative to the context in which it operates (Taylor 2013).

Whether collecting used clothes in Monte Boutique, selling goods in the *Mercado Binacional* (bi-national market), acting as domestic servants in the homes of Dominicans, or working in the construction industry, Haitians whose livelihood depends upon cross-border mobility have few legal protections and even fewer opportunities for redress. The border, as a symbol and as a physical thing, is therefore key to cross-border political relations. This is reflected in the fact that local and national governments in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have shut the border down in response to local or national crises. For Haitians, mobility across the border is a double-edged sword: it provides opportunities for economic arbitrage, but it cannot be entirely depended upon as a livelihood strategy since it can be shut down quickly.

In recent years, scholarship on Haitian mobility has stressed transnational migration to the United States, Canada, Europe and nearby countries in the region (Schiller and Fouron 2001; Richman 2005; Jackson 2011; Pessar 1995, 1997). However, mobility across the national border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti has long been a part of Haitian efforts to seek livelihood. This is due, in part, to its relative accessibility as a migration destination; migrants do not have to source the costs of air plane flights or risk a boat trip across the Caribbean Sea. As far back as the nineteenth century, Haitian labour has supplied bateyes (sugar plantations) in the Dominican Republic, particularly in the far east of the island (Ferguson 2003; Martínez 1995). More recently, Haitians have taken advantage of urban economic growth to work in construction, domestic service and marketing in the major cities (Martínez 1999), or engage in trade (Taylor 2014).

Human mobility across Hispaniola flows overwhelmingly in one direction, from Haiti to the Dominican Republic (Martínez 1995, 1999). This reflects the greater poverty of Haiti, which has a GDP of \$8 billion USD versus \$71 billion for the Dominican Republic (World Bank). Haiti depends heavily on international aid and remittances to prop up a fragile, agriculture-based economy. In contrast, the Dominican Republic is the second largest economy in Central America and the Caribbean, with a well-developed tourism industry and a significant degree of domestic production. Although still poor, its greater wealth means that the vast majority of migration flows from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, not the other way around.

Within this context, families are often distributed across borders, with children sent or left to live with aunts and grandmothers while parents work to support them (Olwig 2013; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). Haitians, in particular, have engaged in migration for economic and political reasons, moving for work, education and to escape political persecution (Schiller and Fouron 2001; Jackson 2011; Orozco and Burgess 2011; Richman 2005). However, the prevalence of mobility and circulation should not be overestimated, either. The situation of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic has always been precarious, irrespective of their legal status. *Antihaitianismo* (anti-Haitianism), and the Dominican state's role in promulgating it, has been well documented by historians, anthropologists and non-profit organizations (see Augelli 1980; Derby 1994, 2009; Gregory 2007; Human Rights Watch 2002; Turits 2002). Deportations occur frequently and without notice, including of children born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents.

In fact, living and working in the Dominican Republic has become increasingly difficult. In 2010, the Dominican constitution was altered to refuse citizenship to children born in the Dominican Republic to 'transient' parents, meaning that the children born to parents who did not have a Dominican

visa at the time of their child's birth are no longer considered to be citizens (United Nations 2013). A 2013 ruling by the Constitutional Court authorized the Dominican government to review records dating back to 1929, opening up the potential for up to 200,000 other Dominicans of Haitian descent to be stripped of their citizenship and left stateless (Gonzalez 2013). This practice reflects the long history of *antihaitianismo* in the Dominican Republic (Grasmuck and Espinal 2000). For Haitian migrants, the Dominican Republic is therefore simultaneously an important source of economic growth, and a constant source of insecurity.

The effects of these asymmetries in economy, materiality and governance are highly visible on the border of the two nations. Thousands of Haitians pass through the 275-kilometre long border daily to work, trade, shop and socialize. Many Haitians have migrated to the border region from other Haitian cities and towns to take advantage of the two nations' proximities and economic differences. The convenience of being able to cross the border on foot is both unusual and valuable. Due to its role in cross-island trade, and its tendency to attract migrants, the border region is essentially a microcosm of mobility across Hispaniola. What makes this movement (cross-border and cross-island) possible is the relative permeability of the national border. The border region, through unifying a small part of each nation, assists in circulation along these routes through expanding access to means of mobility, improving communication, and reducing costs. As we have argued elsewhere, 'while one of the primary functions of national borders is to arrest mobility, *border regions* promote mobility because they provide opportunities for economic and social arbitrage' (Horst and Taylor 2014: 23–25).

Borders are therefore fruitful places to examine the relationship between mobility and inequality. In this article we discuss the towns of Pedernales (Dominican Republic) and Anse-à-Pitres (Haiti), which are located next to one another on the island's southernmost border crossing. Residents of Anse-à-Pitres therefore depend heavily on mobility across the border into Pedernales to sell their labour, trade goods, buy products and use services including hospitals and schools. Occasionally, the Dominican or Haitian authorities will shut down the border crossing for hours, days, or weeks at a time. For example, the Dominican authorities closed the border crossing and the bi-national market for six weeks in 2010 in response to the cholera outbreak in Haiti (Libre 2010; Kushner n.d.). These incidents affect the Haitian residents of the border region the most. When the border shuts down, residents of Anse-à-Pitres find that they cannot get their basic needs met. Even when the border is open, restrictions on the mobility of people and things can make life difficult for residents of Anse-à-Pitres.

CHOICE AND MOBILITY IN THE BORDER REGION: CASE STUDIES

Many of our Haitian interviewees had moved to the border region from elsewhere, or spent considerable time in Anse-à-Pitres and Pedernales to work, trade and visit family members. Some interviewees lived on the Haitian side of the border in Anse-à-Pitres; others lived on the Dominican side in Pedernales. Their reasons for settling on one side or the other differed, but usually we found that Haitians who had lived elsewhere in the Dominican Republic would choose to live in Pedernales rather than Anse-à-Pitres. Almost everyone we spoke with who lived on the Haitian side of the border said that they relied upon being able to access Pedernales. Those who did not work or

trade on the Dominican side needed to cross into Pedernales to buy products or use services that were not available in Anse-à-Pitres. In contrast, virtually no Dominicans lived in Anse-à-Pitres, and many Dominicans we spoke to said they had not been to Anse-à-Pitres since they were a child, despite the fact that it is so nearby. They simply had no reason to go there.

Access to the border expands choices but also makes inequalities visible. The problem we face in our analysis is that these positive and negative effects are not mutually exclusive; rather, they will be experienced to a greater or lesser degree by the majority of mobile people. Moreover, the interplay of mobility and inequality occurs at multiple societal levels: interactions with neighbours, institutions, state actors and so on can all be encountered at different rates depending upon the structure of individual lives. It is therefore difficult to examine and explain the experiences of mobile people in such a way that pays homage to this complexity without being reductionist. I suggest that one possible way to approach the problem is to explore a range of encounters that take place as mobile people interact with different entities in a strange land. While this will not produce a generalizable model, it holds promise as a way of identifying aspects of migrant experience that may otherwise be overlooked. More importantly, it also provides insight into how experiences vary between different social groups and even within the lives of single individuals. The following three case studies demonstrate a range of experiences of mobility, highlighting the choices and restrictions that people face.

Patricia and Jacques

Patricia and her husband, Jacques, are waiting in Anse-à-Pitres for the border gate to open so that they can enter the Dominican Republic and access their market stall. As usual, they have both hired young men with motorbikes to transport themselves and their goods from their home in Anse-à-Pitres to the market in Pedernales. Once inside, they will head directly to their stall in the market and begin the day's trading. It's Monday, a market day, and hundreds of other Haitians are waiting to cross the border from Anse-à-Pitres into Pedernales. They come on foot and motorbike, laden with farm produce, cheap Chinese goods and second-hand electronics. Some, such as Patricia and her husband, have travelled just a couple of hundred metres from the town of Anse-à-Pitres, but many have made the journey from further afield. Their points of departure include the elevated town of Thiotte 40km away, Marigot and Jacmel in the south of Haiti, and even from as far afield as Port-au-Prince. They travel twice per week to trade in the *Mercado Binacional* in Pedernales, taking advantage of the Dominican Republic's far wealthier economy and superior infrastructure.

On the Dominican side of the border, things are markedly quieter. At 8am sharp, the guards open the gate and the crowd streams in, taking a sharp right turn to enter the market, which shares a wall with the fence separating the two nations. Within about twenty minutes, most sellers are in their place and have commenced the day's trading by bargaining with each other. Apart from the guards and a handful of Haitian traders who live in Pedernales and have set up their stalls early, there are few people to be seen. Dominican buyers and shoppers are not likely to trickle in much before 9a.m., and there is not a single person waiting to cross from the Dominican side of the border to the Haitian side. Few Dominicans trade in this market, and they tend to be the bigger sellers: men with large trucks laden with produce who travel from as far away as Samaná on the other side of the island. Even the smaller

Dominican traders, such as a woman who runs a *colmado* (grocery store) and a man who sells hats and shirts, occupy substantial stalls. No Dominican squats with the Haitian women selling their few wares from the dusty ground at the back of the market. Whereas Dominicans have traditionally followed a custom of assigning women to the domestic sphere, female Haitian traders (*Madame Saras*) traditionally run the country's informal market system and therefore travel extensively.

Patricia is a classic *Madame Sara* and a well-established one. She and her husband, Jacques, moved to Anse-à-Pitres from Jacmel seven years ago to take advantage of the wealthier Dominican market. They had no family here and didn't know anyone, but Patricia said that they made a lot of friends very quickly. All their family are in Port-au-Prince, Jacmel and the Dominican Republic. They do not like Anse-à-Pitres as much as Jacmel; they are primarily here to work. Patricia sells clothes and cosmetics from her stall on market days (Mondays and Fridays), and also school uniforms and clothes from her home during the week. Jacques sells medicine and books, sometimes sharing space in her stall and on other occasions putting his stand across from hers. Patricia started selling things alongside her mother when she was a child and living in Jacmel. She would have had 'little money', maybe 50–100 pesos, to buy things to sell every two to three weeks. She explained that things were really cheap back then, and with 500 pesos you could buy a lot. She increased her business slowly and now she has an extensive stock, with boxes of goods piled up in her house. You can charge double of what you buy things for, she said: if you invest 500 pesos, you will make 500 pesos profit.

Every week or two, Patricia and Jacques travel to Port-au-Prince to buy stock from a central depot and the Marche en Fer (Iron Market) downtown. The journey from Anse-à-Pitres is long and arduous. Trucks make the journey daily, heading north through Thiotte, and passengers can pay around 100 pesos to clamber on top of the goods piled up in them. The 138 kilometres trip takes approximately eight hours. A paved road leads as far as Thiotte, but bad roads and missing bridges make the remainder of the journey to Port-au-Prince onerous. Alternatively, people can travel via Jacmel in the south. To do so, they must take a boat from Anse-à-Pitres to Marigot located 60 kilometres away, then a bus to Jacmel and another bus to Port-au-Prince. Motorcycles also travel as far as Belle-Anse, located 40 kilometres west of Anse-à-Pitres, but at 800–1000 gourdes are far more expensive than the 250-gourde boat trip.

Despite the difficulties of travel, Patricia and her husband explain that it is much easier than it used to be. Her and the other two men present began to talk about how much trade routes have changed over the last century. A hundred years ago, there were no trucks, and people would walk or come on horse from Port-au-Prince or Marigot to buy things from Pedernales, then return home to sell them. Marigot is a two- to three-day walk away. In 1972, the boats started moving between Anse-à-Pitres and Marigot, but they did not have motors; people had to row. Compared to that time, travelling now is quite easy.

Like many Haitians they would prefer to be able to make a living in their home town but migrated to access markets. Indeed, they have been quite successful, and are in a much better position than many other Haitians, especially the women who buy clothing in Monte Boutique. They are still vulnerable to incidents in which the border closes, and they must pay bribes to cross the border on non-market days, but they are well enough resourced that they can buffer these challenges. They own their own home, possess substantial

stock, and they can sell in Anse-à-Pitres or elsewhere in Haiti as well as in Pedernales. Moreover, even though they would prefer to live in Jacmel, they are able to continue to live in their home country rather than migrate across the border. While life on the border reflects the greater wealth and power of the Dominican market, overall they are able to capitalize on border life to make the most of both worlds.

Alain

Alain follows a different mobility pattern and has different desires to Patricia and Jacques. Alain, a 34-year-old man, is originally from Saint Marc, where all of his family still live, including eight siblings, his parents, and Alain's 6-year-old son who lives with his mother, a Madame Sara who sells in the Saint Marc market. His father works in agriculture, but none of Alain's siblings have stable employment. Alain first migrated from Haiti to the Dominican Republic in November 1998, when he was 20 years old. Before migrating, he learned a lot about the Dominican Republic by watching Dominican television while in Haiti. When he first moved to the Dominican Republic he settled in Santo Domingo, where a cousin helped him find work and he taught himself Spanish by reading newspapers. He would return home every year to visit his family, and in the meantime send money to his mother regularly using MoneyGram. Over the years he lived in many places in the Dominican Republic, including the far east and in the north, working in hotels, construction and occasionally also cutting sugar cane when there was no other work available.

When his immigration card expired, Alain returned to Haiti temporarily to sort through his options. He visited Port-au-Prince just before the earthquake happened. His family thought he was still there and he may be dead, but he was already in Anse-à-Pitres. He soon moved across the border to Pedernales, where he found work cleaning and doing general maintenance in a hotel part-time, earning 3000 pesos per month. At the time he moved to Pedernales he had never visited it before, but moved there on the recommendation of a friend. He is hoping to save the money to buy a new immigration card so he can return to working in San Pedro de Macoris, in the south-east of the Dominican Republic.

In the meantime, Pedernales is the only place in the Dominican Republic where he can live and work without fear of deportation. Alain can still travel around the Dominican Republic, but at a cost. As a Haitian who does not possess a Dominican visa, he can reliably travel to Barahona or Santo Domingo without identification or a valid visa, but it costs up to 4000 pesos (\$93 USD) in bribes. Rather than do this, he always travels in a private jeep and pays the driver, which is cheaper, more comfortable, faster and less bothersome, as the military do not stop private cars.

Alain likes Spanish better than Kreyol, but would prefer to live in Saint Marc with his family than in the Dominican Republic. He explains:

If I had a house [in Saint Marc], I could stay in my house and do my own work. And live happily. It's that this is the problem between the Dominicans and the Haitians, so poor that they don't have any means with which to live, they come here, they can receive a bad blow today and come tomorrow, but they cannot stay in Haiti. Their food is here, you understand me? A neighbouring country that one can enter on foot is here. You cannot go to Miami by foot.

(Alain)

Alain feels there is a strong cultural difference between Dominicans and Haitians. He says that he can tell the difference between a Dominican and a Haitian just by looking. One feels 'pulled by the blood' and the body language: you can tell that someone is Haitian even if they are white. The way they walk, he explains, is affected by their knowledge of history, including the violence wrought against Haitians in the Dominican Republic from the Trujillo era (1930–61) to the present day. Alain is keen for Haiti to develop so that Haitians don't have to leave, and so Haitians and Dominicans can visit each other's countries as tourists rather than as subordinates.

Fredelina

Haitian descendants living in the border region are also subject to the High Court's ruling. For example, Fredelina lives in Aguas Negras, a small town on the Dominican side of the border. She is a single mother with three children who makes a living through selling beans in the Pedernales market and sweets around her town. She lives rent-free in a vacated house, and she receives a small monthly remittance from her boyfriend, who lives and works in the east of the Dominican Republic. Fredelina and her children were all born in the Dominican Republic, but none of them have the right to apply for Dominican citizenship. So long as she stays in Aguas Negras, her life is unlikely to change significantly, but if her children wish to live in other parts of the Dominican Republic they will have to travel as illegal immigrants.

The primary reason why Fredelina's life would not be much affected if she remains in the border region is because of the flexibility with which state rules are enacted there. On either side of the border, passage is open for the most part, so long as the people crossing do not try to go far beyond the towns on either side. For example, a Dominican can cross at Anse-à-Pitres and spend a day in the Haitian town or nearby areas, but if they wish to stay any longer, or travel any further, they are expected to obtain a visa from the Haitian consulate in Santo Domingo. Equally, Haitians can cross into Pedernales, and in many cases reside there permanently, but if they want to travel further afield, they need to either possess a visa or enough money to pay bribes of approximately 4000 pesos (\$93 USD) to reach Santo Domingo. In a certain sense, then, the further one travels away from the border, the harder it is to cross it. Getting across the Pedernales River is straightforward, but the further one travels beyond it, the higher the risk of getting caught or the total that needs to be paid in bribes.

Some of the most important ways in which features of the state affect the economic and financial status of Haitians have nothing to do with the actual border, nor with surveillance beyond it. These are also crucial to the ability of Fredelina and her children to live in Aguas Negras. Curiously, one important possession that Fredelina has is her Haitian identity card, which she was able to obtain despite the fact that she was not born in Haiti and is not a resident. As she explains:

For example, one can vote in Haiti with the ID card, but I've never liked to vote in Haiti because I don't live in Haiti, I live here. I would like to have my Dominican identity card to vote here, because here is where I eat, here is where I drink, here is where I do everything. As they say, it is very important to have a Haitian ID card. If one wants to go to some place in Haiti, if one has one, one takes it. You see, and also know, that is

they say, because I haven't done it, they say that with a Haitian ID card one can declare a child here, but with a Dominican father, yes, like that, because I haven't declared the child, this could be an important thing.
(Fredelina)

Without this card, Fredelina would need a third party to receive her Western Union remittances from her boyfriend, who lives 300 miles away in the east of the Dominican Republic. The most important services provided by the Dominican state are health care and education, which are universally accessible up to certain limits. Fredelina can use Dominican hospitals and clinics at little to no cost, and has given birth to all of her children in the Pedernales hospital. Her children have the right to attend Dominican primary and secondary schools, but are unlikely to be able to attend a Dominican university. Without Dominican documents, their only option is to pay full fees and obtain a student visa. They may be able to enrol in a university in Port-au-Prince, but even there they face a range of economic, administrative and linguistic barriers. For this family, the living fence in some ways resembles a cage: there is room for movement, but the legal boundaries are firmly delimited by one's ability to pay.

Fredelina has long considered moving to Santo Domingo to work as a domestic servant when her children are old enough to leave them with a relative. But like Alain, this is not her preferred option. She explains:

If I think of leaving but it isn't because I want to go, it's because things are very bad and one can't do business. In this time of harvest when there is coffee, there are beans, after this there is nothing. Like now in this month, or the one just past, there are bad months, there isn't any money and so you can't do business. For example if you make sweets you can't sell them because the people don't have money. And so I have thought about leaving at times to live in another place to look for my *morito* by selling.

Given the increasing difficulties Haitians face in living in the Dominican Republic, it seems increasingly unlikely that this is a choice she will have to make. Ironically, a reduction in choice at the hand of the Dominican state will force her to accept her preferred option of staying at home. But for Fredelina and her children, being denied a mobility that they do not really want reduces their chances of attaining the financial stability that will ultimately help them to make decisions of their choosing. When considering what preferences and choices people have, and how they enact them, we therefore need to consider not only their immediate preferences and possibilities, but also the impact of choice and mobility on their lives in the long-term and on those of the generations that follow.

BEYOND THE BORDER REGION

The border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic acts as a kind of 'living fence' that both limits options and expands choices. The main group who benefit from the border are those who control it. The second most important group of beneficiaries are those who may not control the border, but who can capitalize on it. However, Haitians who fall into this second group of beneficiaries cannot rely on the border as a source of economic or social capital,

as their access is always subject to the whim of those with control. Market forces are ultimately subject to the state. And yet, even when authorities close the border down, it tends to retain a degree of permeability that the state cannot completely control. This is also true, to a certain extent, for Haitians living elsewhere in the Dominican Republic: even during the current citizenship crisis, some Haitians will evade state surveillance and find ways to keep living in their Dominican home towns. For some of those who are deported, residence on the border provides a way to keep access to both worlds.

What can this scenario teach us about mobility and inequality? The main takeaway is the extent to which the relationship between mobility and inequality is governed by a tension between choice and power that is not at all oppositional, but is in fact synthesized. The ethnographic examples demonstrate that even when people have considerable choice, their choices often face soft or hard constraints, such as when they are a 'choice of the necessary' as described by Bourdieu (1984), or the act of choosing between a range of prescribed and limiting options. However, as Hayward (2000) points out, it is a mistake to see power as dichotomous. Power shifts over place, time, and circumstance, and people use it dynamically. To understand the relationship between mobility and inequality, it can be useful to search for the points at which power and choice can be enacted and also the points at which they are arrested.

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