Heritage as an Anchor:

Understanding Immobilities in Disaster Scenarios - Case Study of Guadeloupe

Photo by Lenaxation

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ABSTRACT

Frequent disasters, exacerbated by climate change, damage infrastructure and disrupt lives in the Caribbean, including Guadeloupe, where residents show low mobility despite vulnerabilities. This study challenges the notion that populations are merely "trapped" by economic or physical constraints. Instead, it argues that immobilities can be a voluntary, culturally rooted response shaped by heritage. The research shows how Guadeloupeans choose to stay, supported by inherited or shared cultural, spiritual, emotional and social bonds that normalize exposure to disasters, and shape their behaviors. Colonial legacies reinforce place attachment and identity, anchoring people and rendering relocation unthinkable, while climate change alters people's sense of safety, leading them to prioritize familiar, culturally significant places. Additionally, younger generations exhibit new patterns, further reforming the im/mobilities paradigm. Ultimately, my research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of disaster responses by presenting immobilities not solely as a constraint but as an active choice influenced by heritage. It calls for disaster management policies to engage with the complex social, historical, and cultural dimensions of im/mobilities, as failing to recognize these underlying factors risks reinforcing rather than reducing vulnerabilities.

RÉSUMÉ

Les catastrophes fréquentes, exacerbées par le changement climatique, endommagent les infrastructures et perturbent les vies dans les Caraïbes, notamment en Guadeloupe, où les habitants présentent une faible mobilité malgré leur vulnérabilité. Cette étude questionne l'idée selon laquelle les populations seraient simplement « piégées » par des contraintes économiques ou physiques. Elle soutient au contraire que les immobilités peuvent être des réponses volontaires, ancrées culturellement, façonnées par l'héritage. L'étude montre que les Guadeloupéens choisissent de rester, portés par des liens hérités ou partagé, culturels, spirituels, émotionnels et sociaux qui normalisent l'exposition aux catastrophes, et façonnent leurs comportements. Les héritages coloniaux renforcent l'attachement au lieu et l'identité, ancrant les individus et rendant la relocalisation impensable, quant à lui, le changement climatique altère la perception de la sécurité et pousse à privilégier des lieux familiers et culturellement significatifs. De plus, les jeunes générations présentent de nouveaux schémas, réformant d'avantage le paradigme des im/mobilités. En définitive, ma recherche propose une compréhension plus nuancée des réponses aux catastrophes, en présentant l'immobilité non pas seulement comme contrainte, mais comme un choix actif influencé par l'héritage. Elle invite les politiques de gestion des catastrophes à intégrer les dimensions sociales, historiques et culturelles des im/mobilités, car ignorer ces facteurs risque de renforcer les vulnérabilités plutôt que de les atténuer.

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATIONS

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

LAC – Latin America and the Caribbean

TRANSLATIONS

Antillais – West Indians

Carême – Lent

Metropole – Mainland

Saison des Alizés – Season of trade wind

Saison des Hivernages – Season of wintering

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing increased frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events (IPCC, 2023). For instance, in 2023, there were 399 recorded disasters, higher than the annual average of 369 between 2003 and 2022 (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters et al., 2023). Disasters like cyclones, earthquakes, and floods have caused widespread disruptions to societies and ecosystems. While human casualties from disasters decreased due to improved disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies, such as early warning systems and better infrastructure (Ritchie et al., 2024), these events still pose severe threats to life and cause extensive damage to infrastructure and economies (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, et al., 2023). The 2023 IPCC report highlights that the frequency of significant tropical cyclones (Category 3–5) has likely increased over the past four decades. With 1.5°C of global warming, more intense heatwaves, flooding, storm surges, and extreme rainfall are expected, especially in coastal and low-lying areas such as the Caribbean (IPCC, 2023).

Dealing with the aftermath of disasters is complex. When people lose their homes and belongings due to disasters, it can have severe economic and psychological impacts, leading to displacement. While there has been a widespread belief that climate change will cause extensive migration due to climate change and more frequent disasters, recent research instead points to many people being either unable to move or who choose not to relocate, even in situations of risk (Black et al. 2011; Zickgraf, 2021; Adams, 2015; McMichael et al. 2021). In fact, between 2008 and 2016, about 85% of those threatened by disasters did not relocate, demonstrating that migration isn't the primary response (Mallick & Schanze, 2020). The emerging "immobility paradigm" explores the reasons for people to remain in risk areas, highlighting various barriers to mobility, including physical, sociocultural, and legal obstacles, as well as economic constraints and limited social networks in alternative locations. Yet, it also considers immobility as an active choice with people's experiences of climate change and disasters, and desires to move or remain, shaped by subjective factors like culture, norms, and emotions, alongside objective considerations such as economic conditions and demographics (Tripathy Furlong B. et al., 2022; Black et al., 2011; Borderon et al., 2018; Adams, 2015; Wiegel et al., 2021).

However, little to no attention has been paid to the role of heritage in these processes of immobility. Heritage is a dynamic concept that encompasses both tangible and intangible cultural elements, shaped by social, political, and historical contexts (Vecco, 2010; Kuutma, 2009). My research aims to explore immobilities in relation to heritage through key concepts, such as place attachments, spiritual beliefs, colonial legacies, and community, which are expanded upon later on (Mallick et al., 2023; Ashsan et al., 2022; Paviol, 2023; Bellanger, 2023; Claeys et al., 2017) Building on these concepts, my thesis argues that heritage, and its underlying cultural and identity aspects, plays a critical role in shaping decisions to stay in the context of disasters.

The Caribbean region, particularly Guadeloupe, exemplifies the complexities of immobilities in the context of recurring disasters as it represents a multi-hazard and multi-risk location with limited mobilities (Krien et al., 2015). This French overseas region is highly vulnerable to multiple hazards, including both fast-onset events like cyclones, volcanic activity, earthquakes, and slow-onset events such as rising sea level and increased heat (Leone et al., 2020; OCHA, 2020). Over the past century alone, the island has faced devastating cyclones, including significant events in 1928, 1989, 2017, and 2022 (Météo France). The annual cyclone season in Guadeloupe, which lasts from June to November, has a significant impact on people's daily lives. They must prepare for these recurring threats and their potential economic, infrastructure, and human losses.

Despite these challenges, Guadeloupeans tend to remain on the island, with only temporary and local displacements occurring for a few days following the disaster. This tendency to stay could be attributed to the crucial role of heritage and the strong connections it unfolds, binding residents to their cultural roots through family, community, and land. This observation leads to the research question that this thesis aims to address: How does heritage shape the immobilities of the population of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, despite the repeated disasters they experience?

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Heritage is a dynamic, multi-layered, socially constructed concept encompassing tangible and intangible cultural elements shaped by historical, social, political, and spiritual contexts (Vecco, 2010; Konsa, 2018). It can include, among others, traditions, belief systems, collective memories, material items, and inherited knowledge passed down through generations. Understanding heritage is essential in disaster risk and im/mobilities studies, as it profoundly influences how individuals and communities perceive, interpret, and respond to climate threats. Heritage is far from being static, it is intertwined with broader societal structures and values, shaping people’s sense of identity, belonging, and resilience in the face of crisis and risks (Vecco, 2010; Josefsson and Aronsson, 2016; Kurmo Konsa, 2018).

In this context, heritage manifests through key dimensions such as colonial legacies, spiritual beliefs, place attachment, intergenerational risk culture, communal support systems, etc. These elements, which will be expanded upon in the theoretical framework chapter, play a fundamental role in shaping how risk is understood and navigated by individuals and communities.

This study addresses a significant gap in disaster and im/mobilities research by analyzing how heritage, through all its interlocking dimensions, influences decisions to remain in high-risk areas. Despite being routinely exposed to the threats of hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, Guadeloupeans predominantly choose not to relocate. Focusing on an in-depth case study of Guadeloupe, a French overseas territory in the Caribbean, this research argues that immobilities are not merely a matter of

economic constraint, personal incapacity, or state neglect but often a deliberate, culturally grounded, and identity-affirming response to risk influenced by heritage.

The existing literature has largely emphasized involuntary immobilities and the limitations that can explain this phenomenon. However, this research argues that such perspectives reduce individuals as victims of larger issues rather than rights holders and changemakers who can voluntarily and actively make their own decisions and remain. Although the idea of voluntary immobilities is gradually gaining visibility in this framework, research still globally overlooks the cultural, historical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of why people stay. By examining these factors, this study offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how people experience, behave, and enact immobilities in disaster contexts with a concrete case, Guadeloupe.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this thesis, I aim to contribute to the study of immobilities in the context of disasters by examining how heritage, influenced by cultural, historical, and social factors, affects the decision to remain in disaster-prone areas in Guadeloupe. By analyzing factors such as inherited risk cultures, spiritual beliefs, and colonial legacies, I aim to explore how immobilities are shaped not only by limitations but also by proactive choices influenced by identity, heritage, and, in some cases, resistance. Through this examination, I intend to demonstrate that immobilities are not merely the result of external constraints but a complex interplay of agency, history and emotional ties.

A central aim in this research is to observe and understand how the Guadeloupeans' heritage shapes people's immobilities despite the repeated disasters they experience. This brings me to the following main research question:

- How does heritage shape the immobilities of the population of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, despite the repeated disasters they experience?

This central question will be answered by exploring several sub-questions, which will be introduced after the presentation of the theoretical framework.

1.3 READING GUIDE

Through this study, I contribute to the growing research on immobilities in the context of disasters. To analyze this phenomenon, I adopted the Mobility and Immobility Paradigm (Tripathy Furlong B. et al., 2022; Black et al., 2011; Borderon et al., 2018; Adams, 2015; Wiegel et al., 2021) and the Heritage framework (Vecco, 2010; Josefsson and Aronsson, 2016; Kurmo Konsa, 2018), all of which are explored in the following theoretical framework chapter.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the study methodology, presenting the methods that were used to complete this research. I first explain the reasoning behind these choices and emphasize the advantages of these methods. In Chapter 4, I provide a study background for my case study, beginning with a global focus on the Caribbean and then a specific focus on Guadeloupe. This chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of the island's social, historical, cultural, political, environmental, and economic contexts, essential for grasping its current implications and influences on the findings.

In Chapter 5, I begin to present the results of my research, first by focusing on how inherited and established bonds influence people's decisions to remain in disaster-prone areas. I argue that immobilities are also influenced by deeply rooted cultural and social ties, including risk culture and community support. Chapter 6 examines how faith and fate affect attitudes toward disasters. I demonstrate how various spiritual beliefs and perceptions of life, shared by individuals and families, shape their understanding and response to risk.

In Chapter 7, I explore identity, geographical, and historical factors, arguing that colonial legacies continue to influence social conditions and personal choices. Additionally, strong ties to land and cultural identity deeply foster a sense of belonging that discourages mobility. Chapter 8 focuses on evolving perspectives on im/mobilities with the growing conviction that nowhere is safe, reshaping traditional understanding of movement and stillness, and with younger generations more open to moving and gradually dismissing the heritage they inherited.

Chapter 9 initiates a broader discussion on the im/mobilities paradigm while linking my findings to literature and presents the limitations of this study. Finally, Chapter 10 presents a conclusion of this thesis, encompassing responses to the main research questions and the implications.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I present the theoretical background necessary to encompass the meaning and focus of my research. First, I outline the mobility and immobility paradigm to demonstrate how people can use relocation or stillness to cope with climate change and disasters. This paradigm allows a clear understanding of movements or their absence and of their complexity: When, where, how, and why do people move or not? While some populations will relocate in response to climate change and disasters, others will remain in areas prone to disasters. Secondly, in this chapter, I will explore the framework of heritage, which is multifaceted and continually evolving, taking on various forms and representations. I will examine heritage as an active notion influencing the population's daily lives, choices, and behaviors, including in risk contexts. Additionally, this section introduces diverse factors encountered in previous literature that can be mobilized to help explain immobilities and directly present a distinctive link with heritage.

2.1 IM/MOBILITIES PARADIGM

The mobilities paradigm provides a comprehensive and multidimensional framework for understanding people's movements and immobilities across various scales and contexts, particularly in response to climate change and disasters. This perspective challenges traditional views of migration that depict individuals as a uniform group driven solely by environmental factors and moving linearly from danger to safety (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and emphasizes the complexity, relationality, and diversity of mobilities experiences (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Boas et al., 2022). According to Sheller, this paradigm incorporates "not only physical movement but also potential movement, blocked or paused movement, immobilization and forms of stillness, dwelling and place making" (2020, "Carceralf Archipelagos and Im/mobilities", para. 3).

In contrast to alarmist narratives that predict mass, cross-border climate migration, which often rely on overly simplistic push-pull models, most climate-related movements are local, temporary, and embedded in everyday patterns (Boas et al., 2022; Lassailly-Jacob & Michel, 2012). Often these movements are circular, with people returning, rather than permanent relocation, and are influenced by relational factors. The mobilities paradigm challenges simplistic models by showing that people's decisions to move or stay are shaped by multiple factors: economic resources, physical ability, social networks, political regimes, and power dynamics (Wiegel et al., 2019; Cresswell & Uteng, 2008). Furthermore, immobilities can be a conscious choice rooted in cultural or emotional ties, rather than merely a sign of incapacity (Boas et al., 2022).

Understanding the interconnections between climate change and displacement is particularly important in regions like Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where climate-related disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, frequently lead to displacement. In the Caribbean, more than two million weather-

related displacements occurred over the last decade, mostly temporary and internal, with people often returning home after a crisis (UNDP, 2024). Yet, in Guadeloupe, the representation of the phenomenon of climate mobilities is limited, as for now, no data can be found displaying displacements, not even on the IOM displacement tracking matrix, where Guadeloupe doesn't even appear on the map. Those who are displaced quickly find housing through local social support systems (Lassailly-Jacob & Michel, 2012) or receive support from family and community.

Such disparities in data, from one region to another and from one island to another, raise questions about inequalities in access to movement. Who has the ability to leave? Who is left behind? Particularly from marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds, vulnerable populations face the most barriers to migration and adaptation (Boas, de Pater, & Furlong, 2023). In many cases, immobility reflects profound disparities in political power and access to resources. Naser (2023) emphasizes this point in his analysis of policy responses to environmental non-migration and argues that policy shouldn't imply that everyone facing climate risks must migrate and rather should focus on local adaptation capacities, community support systems, and providing resources for those who stay.

Additionally, the overrepresented "trapped populations" narrative often misrepresents immobility as helplessness, stuck, a failure to adapt, a sign of vulnerability, and victimizes individuals. However, scholars such as Tripathy Furlong et al. (2022) emphasize that immobility can reflect resilience and informed decision-making. Indeed, immobilities are not inherently negative or involuntary. It can be a deliberate and active strategic choice (Wiegel et al., 2019). Kerilyn Schewel (2020) critiques the prevailing "mobility bias" in migration research, which tends to connect agency with movement and interprets immobility as a failure. Additionally, her work differentiates between voluntary and involuntary immobilities, implying a more individual context-dependent response. Caroline Zickgraf and others expand on this by showing how people who do not migrate often engage in micro-mobilities—short-distance movements for work, education, or resources—demonstrating that mobility and immobility are not systematically opposite, but rather deeply interconnected (Zickgraf, 2021; Blondin, 2022).

In their work "I can migrate, but why should I?" on coastal communities Mallick et al. (2023) demonstrate that people exposed to climate risks choose to remain in place because of strong social networks, community resilience, and a lack of alternative livelihoods elsewhere. Findings similar to, Ahsan (2022), studying coastal Bangladesh, with people rejecting migration influenced by a strong attachment to their land, its cultural significance, and a lack of viable alternatives. In Chilean Patagonia, residents in vulnerable areas, chose to remain and considered it as a normal and significant aspect of their lives and cultural identity (Boas et al., 2022). These examples, although far from exhaustive, highlight the importance of viewing immobilities as a strategic choice, rather than as a passive incapacity to adapt, that is rooted in cultural values. More than a choice to stay, Carol Farbotko (2023) introduced

the term of anti-displacement mobilities to further contribute to the understanding of voluntary immobility and the inclusion of cultural factors.

Emotional and psychological perceptions of safety also influence mobility decisions. In their work "Safe from What?", Wiegel et al. (2021) highlight that, for some populations, staying in a familiar environment can feel safer than relocating to an unknown area, even if that new location is at lower risk from environmental threats. Local knowledge, community resilience, and mutual aid play central roles in how populations cope with climate risks without migrating (Wiegel et al., 2021; Ahsan, 2022). Recognizing agencies within mobilities and immobilities challenges portraying communities as vulnerable or passive victims. As Sheller notes, those living through environmental crises frequently display "altruism, resourcefulness, generosity, and collective mutual aid" (2020, "Introduction : Im/mobile disaster", para. 2). These traits are central to local adaptation strategies and deserve more attention in climate policy and DRR.

Furthermore, movement and stillness must be understood within broader sociopolitical and economic systems. Vulnerability is a product of environmental exposure, historical marginalization, governance failures, and systemic inequities (López-Marrero, n.d.). Those with fewer resources are less likely to relocate and more likely to suffer the consequences of environmental risks. At the same time, choosing to stay may reflect a strong sense of identity, history, or cultural continuity.

Ultimately, the im/mobilities paradigm reshapes the "climate migration" framework by challenging traditional notions and reframing migration as one of several possible responses to climate and disaster risk. It offers a more nuanced understanding of how people navigate climate threats influenced by various factors that involve movement and stillness, autonomy and limitations. Whether through relocation, staying in place, or engaging in short-term, cyclical movement, the im/mobilities paradigm highlights the need to ensure that these choices are based on personal agency and respect human rights and emphasizes the importance of developing context-sensitive adaptation strategies.

2.2 DEFINING HERITAGE

Historically, heritage has been perceived as materiality and conserving of tangible artifacts and monuments (Vecco, 2010). However, contemporary studies have challenged this traditional view to expand and include intangible heritage such as oral traditions, social practices, ritual, languages, and the knowledge passed down through generations (Vecco, 2010; UNESCO, n.d.). Additionally, Josefsson and Aronsson (2016) advocate for including life values, based on both personal and collective experiences, that form everyday practices with meaning, as defining heritage. The term "cultural heritage" itself is ambiguous: as it combines the concepts of "culture," which implies creativity, progress, and movement, and "heritage," which means legacy, inheritance, and the weight of the past (Josefsson & Aronsson, 2016). This illustrates how heritage rather than neutral or retrospective is a

living, interpretative act continually being constructed in adaptation to the present representing what is chosen to be remembered, celebrated, or contested.

Kurmo Konsa (2018) describes heritage as a form of social construction shaped by cultural mediation and influenced by societal values and power dynamics. The political process of "heritagization" often conveys dominant ideologies while marginalizing alternative identities, and mirroring broader societal conflicts (Kuutma, 2009). Cultural diversity and hybridity further shape these processes, highlighting heritage's fluid and evolving nature (Josefsson & Aronsson, 2016). In this view, heritage can best be understood as socially negotiated and influenced by power relations, identity politics, and cultural memories.

Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996) evoke dissonant heritage, reflecting the conflicting interpretations of heritage that emerge when different groups attribute diverse or opposite meanings to the same cultural elements. Josefsson and Aronsson (2016) highlight how heritage is deeply subjective and plural and can be contested when communities face uncomfortable or traumatic pasts, such as legacies of colonialism, war, or forced migration. Heritage in this view isn't unifying but rather fragments and creates competition regarding memories and interpretations. These findings show that cultural memory is not a monolithic entity, but a plurality marked by negotiation, exclusion, and power struggles over representation (Josefsson and Aronsson, 2016). As Smith (2006) argues in The Uses of Heritage, heritage is often controlled by an "Authorized Heritage Discourse", legitimized and managed by state institutions, cultural experts, and elite voices, privileging monumental, visually dramatic, and historically narratives while marginalizing every day, dialect, or minority cultural expression.

As Macdonald (2010) points out, heritage is a source of tension, with "difficult heritage" which includes memorials, museums, and historical narratives related to atrocities, genocides, and other morally ambiguous pasts. In these instances, heritage becomes an instrument for remembering, reconciliating, and moral reflection, and a representation of societies, depending on how they choose to narrate or omit these events. In this context, heritage in Guadeloupe serves as a reminder of the island's colonial past throughout history and the complexities behind its cultural identity.

Contemporary studies of heritage advocate for a shift towards a more participatory, community-centered model of heritage. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (n.d.) reflects this shift by emphasizing the role of local communities in identifying, maintaining, and transmitting their cultural expressions. This approach recognizes that heritage is not only about the past but is shaped in the present. It also acknowledges the role of cultural diversity in producing hybrid forms of heritage where identities are formed at the intersections of multiple cultural influences (Josefsson & Aronsson, 2016). In an increasingly globalized world, these mixed approached to heritages offer a powerful lens through which to understand identity, resilience, and adaptation.

Heritage and identity are deeply intertwined. Heritage not only reflects who we are but also constructs narratives of belonging, continuity, and distinction, shaping both our identities and aspirations (Kurmo Konsa, 2018). In the case of Guadeloupe, which has been marked by centuries of colonial dominance, it is crucial to examine indigenous heritage. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) argues, Indigenous heritage cannot be separated from histories of colonialism, where cultural knowledge has been devalued or destroyed. She emphasizes the need to decolonize heritage discourse by centering Indigenous peoples' authority in defining, preserving, reclaiming, and transmitting their cultural values, practices, knowledge and identities. According to her, heritage is a living legacy, rooted in relationships, oral history, community well-being, and resistance to colonialism. Heritage represents a right to self-representation and the ability to determine what constitutes knowledge and memory. Shawn Wilson's work (2008) defines knowledge as relationships between people, land, ancestors, and the cosmos, and heritage as a ceremony that establishes a perpetual connection between the past and the present. To him, heritage is a living, spiritual, and communal process. This aligns with Gregory Cajete's (2000) work, which also incorporates notions of ecological knowledge, storytelling, deep relationships with place, and intergenerational teachings. Recognizing these approaches contributes to a more inclusive and decolonial understanding of heritage, especially in contexts like Guadeloupe shaped by colonial histories and environmental vulnerabilities.

Ultimately, heritage is not merely about preserving the past but engaging with the present and envisioning the future. It is a deeply contested domain, shaped by social values, political contexts, power structures, collective minds, emotions and legacies of the past. Recognizing that heritage is subjective, dynamic, and sometimes displeasing allows for a more inclusive, critical, and sensitive approach to cultural legacy. Rather than treating heritage solely as a collection of physical objects or historic legacies, it is understood here as a lived and transmitted set of cultural values, beliefs, and social practices

This thesis argues that heritage is not merely about preserving the past; it is a living influence on how people interpret risk, navigate uncertainty, and maintain a sense of belonging. It involves transmitting knowledge, values, and cultural practices, with family and communities playing a crucial role. These inherited and conveyed bonds shape how communities perceive environmental risks, relate to their land, and decide whether to stay or relocate in the face of disaster. This understanding of heritage moves beyond static preservation and embraces its active role in shaping responses to crisis. Heritage's influence often makes individuals prioritize cultural identity and community ties over the perceived benefits of leaving high-risk areas. By focusing on heritage in disaster research, we enhance our understanding of immobility's emotional, and cultural dimensions, highlighting that staying in place is an active expression of resilience and identity for many.

2.3 INTRODUCING IMMOBILITIES FACTORS

The existing literature on climate migration often overlooks the cultural, historical, and emotional factors that influence migration decisions. Through the relatively recent work of scholars, we can deduce factors that address this gap. Factors such as risk culture, attachment to land, community support, and colonial legacies play a significant role in the choice to stay, which quantitative risk assessments may not fully capture. Recognizing and researching these elements as potential influences on risk decisions and responses is crucial for developing policies that respect the experiences of affected communities.

In this section, I will briefly present the diverse factors that scholars have previously identified, providing a solid foundation of concepts that can shape immobilities in relation to heritage. By conceptualizing these factors, I aim to introduce elements that are of interest to the comprehension of immobilities. The goal here isn't to present all the research previously done on these factors, but rather to submit a premise for reflection to orient the research for the case study of Guadeloupe, which will be evoked and questioned throughout the interviews.

2.3.1 RISK CULTURE

Risk culture is a proactive and deeply ingrained societal approach to understanding and managing risks, particularly in disaster situations. Rather than being a reactive outcome, risk culture should be viewed as a people-centered approach and preventive measure that involves older generations educating their descendants from a young age and generating an awareness of the inevitable risks they may face (UNDRR, 2016; UNESCO, 2024). Fostering a culture of prevention at both national and local levels is crucial to ensure that populations can identify and mitigate risks, thereby protecting themselves and others. Besides intergenerational learning, schools and communities must participate and provide all necessary tools to build resilience (UNESCO, 2024). The UNDP highlights school's role by advocating for the conduct of drills and training, which not only empowers and prepares youth but also has a multiplier effect as they share their knowledge with families and others (UNDP, 2023). By incorporating knowledge and preparedness strategies early on, individuals develop a sense of readiness, resilience, and acceptance of potential disasters, which in turn shapes how communities collectively respond (Benitez et al., 2020; UNDP, 2023). As Carol Farbotko (2023) argues, local understanding of habitability and the desire to stay or resist climate mobility reflect a deeply rooted, place-based knowledge system that is often overlooked. These communities possess agency and crucial knowledge in how to face and respond to disasters, demonstrating a collective awareness of disasters, shaped by repeated experiences spanning centuries.

Despite the population's habits of experiencing disasters, some residents can still underestimate the risks, even after surviving previous events (Benitez et al., 2020). On the contrary, they believe that prior experience equips them with the necessary knowledge to survive future ones, undermining the fact that they can intensify. The sense of safety perceived by the community may differ from scientific and

governmental risk assessments, reflecting some places' unique cultural and social dynamics (Wiegel et al., 2021). This influences who they trust for information, how they interpret the causes of hazards, and how they respond to them (Wiegel et al, 2021). According to an ontological security perspective, the perception of safety can override factual risks: “the worst has already happened, now there is no need to move away” (Wiegel et al, 2021, p.9). A strong risk culture in Guadeloupe could imply a certain level of acceptance or over-confidence among these populations, leading to the belief that disaster risk is an inherent part of island life and something to be accepted, lived with, or which can be overcome rather than fled from through mobility.

2.3.2 COMMUNAL SUPPORT

Strong social ties, mutual aid, and collective resilience play a central role in how communities recover from disasters. Instead of focusing on individual survival, this perspective emphasizes the strength of community traditions, bonds and unity, making relocation seem unnecessary or unthinkable. Communities rely on shared resources, labor, and emotional support to rebuild, with practices such as "Operation coup de main," where neighbors voluntarily assist one another (Bellanger, J.-P., 2023). This form of community-driven support ensures that recovery is not an individual task but a shared responsibility. This is especially vital in regions where informal economies thrive, such as coastal areas, as these economies depend heavily on interpersonal connections (Claeys et al., 2017). These bonds provide practical support and a deep sense of identity, reinforcing the idea that the community can recover regardless of the disaster’s severity. This resilience drawn on long-standing traditions and knowledge passed down through generations. Mimi Sheller (2020) emphasizes the resilience of communities living through disasters, characterized by altruism, resourcefulness, generosity, and collective mutual aid. For many, these values, in addition to strong community ties and cultural belonging, outweigh the push factors of environmental risk (Mallick et al., 2023; Ahsan et al., 2022). Instead of focusing on individual survival, people turn toward their communities. A strong sense of community in Guadeloupe could explain why the community has integrated resilience and faces disasters through immobilities.

2.3.3 SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

Spiritual beliefs can profoundly shape how people understand and respond to disasters, influencing their perception of such events as part of a greater cosmic or divine plan (Paviol, 2023). These beliefs may foster resilience by providing individuals with a sense of purpose or meaning, interpreting disasters as tests of faith or acts of a higher power (Claeys et al., 2017). Instead of viewing disasters solely as destructive forces, those with strong

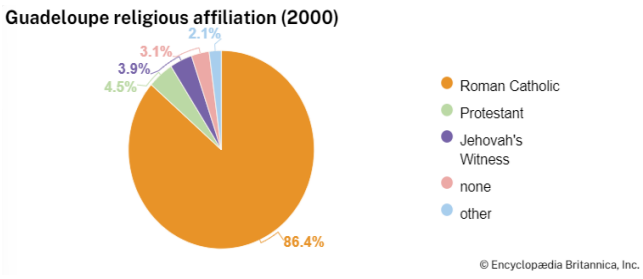

Figure 1: Guadeloupe religious affiliation 2000- Cornevin, 2024

spiritual convictions may see them as inevitable, something to endure rather than flee from (Bellanger, 2023). This perspective can lead to both strength and fatalism: while it reinforces the belief that survival results from divine protection, it can also make people feel that relocation is unnecessary or futile and disasters cannot be outrun. Many communities feel a strong connection to the land and believe that their future is linked to the will of higher powers, whether natural or divine. The focus on prayer and faith creates a cultural framework where dealing with risks becomes a spiritual practice (Bellanger, 2023). In Guadeloupe, where most of the population holds strong religious beliefs (see Figure 2), disasters can also be perceived as acts of God or natural phenomena that must be accepted, which makes them more likely to stay despite the potential dangers

2.3.4 PLACE ATTACHMENT

The attachment to the land and home can significantly influence the decision to stay in disaster-prone areas. This connection goes beyond simple physical value of a house or property; it is deeply embedded in emotions, identity, and cultural history. As noted by Adams (2015), place can be defined as a meaningful location, and place attachment is the bond between people and places. Homes often represent symbols of personal and familial heritage—places where generations have lived, struggled, and thrived (Claeys et al., 2017). The land holds cultural significance (Ahsan, 2022), ancestral memories, and embodies the sacrifices and achievements of those who came before, creating a profound sense of belonging that is difficult to part from, even in the face of natural hazards (Blondin, 2021). This emotional bond can lead individuals to prioritize staying over relocating, valuing their connection to the land above risks. Home is a site of comfort, pride, and endurance through time and adversity. Social and cultural connections tied to place further deepen this attachment. Neighborhoods become spaces of solidarity, a social and cultural milieu of a community (Mallick, 2020). To relocate is not only to lose one's home but to disrupt vital relationships and community structures. Relocating can feel like severing these vital connections, making leaving nearly unthinkable (Claeys et al., 2017). In Guadeloupe, this kind of place attachment may play a central role in understanding voluntary immobility. Residents may choose to stay not because they lack the capacity to move but because their sense of self, security, and community is rooted in place.

2.3.5 COLONIAL LEGACIES

Paviol's article suggests that Guadeloupeans perceive disasters, such as hurricanes, as originating from the ancestral lands of the African population. These events are viewed as forces with symbolic significance, including the idea that they could represent acts of vengeance or reminders of past injustices. Furthermore, they are seen as having a regenerative, even liberating character, as they can destroy everything that should not have been built (2023). For enslaved Africans and their descendants, these natural forces were even seen as answering their calls to liberate and destroy the oppressive structures of colonial power and the claim of Western men to dominate everything. A testimony from

that time stated: “It is as if he came to crush everything, hope as well as oppression, the oppressor and the oppressed united without distinction" (Paviol, 2023, p.28). Disasters were perceived as something larger than themselves, with a sense of inevitability and justice that pushed toward acceptance. Due to Guadeloupe's strong colonial past, which continues to influence society today, it is of interest to study how colonial legacies might still impact the perception of disasters among Guadeloupeans and shape their response in any way.

These various factors are well encompassed within the heritage framework by connecting with aspects such as histories of colonialism, community support, intergenerational inheritance, cultural memories, or even spirituality. They reflect how heritage is still being shaped, as we remember the past while facing the present and building the future.

2.4 SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This list provides a solid foundation for understanding how immobilities can be chosen and shaped by cultural aspects rather than being singularly endured, and to answer the main research question: How does heritage shape the immobilities of the population of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, despite the repeated disasters they experience?

A question that I address by answering the following sub-questions, based on the concepts primarily selected deductively:

Chapter 5: How Do Inherited and Conveyed Bonds Shape Disaster Response in Guadeloupe?

- How does the culture of risk, passed down through families and communities, shape Guadeloupeans’ perspective and response to disasters?
- What role does community support play in shaping the decisions of Guadeloupeans to stay despite the risks?

Chapter 6: How Do Faith and Fate Influence the Perceptions of Disaster?

- In what ways do spiritual beliefs shape the residents’ understanding and response to disasters in Guadeloupe?

Chapter 7: How Do Historical Legacies Anchor Residents in Disaster-Prone Areas?

- How does place attachment through emotional and familial ties shape the residents’ decisions to remain in a disaster-prone area?
- How does the colonial legacy shape Guadeloupe residents' perception of and response to disasters?

Chapter 8: Are Perspectives on Im/Mobilities and Disaster Response Shifting for the Future?

- How are Mobilities and Immobilities envisioned for the future in Guadeloupe?

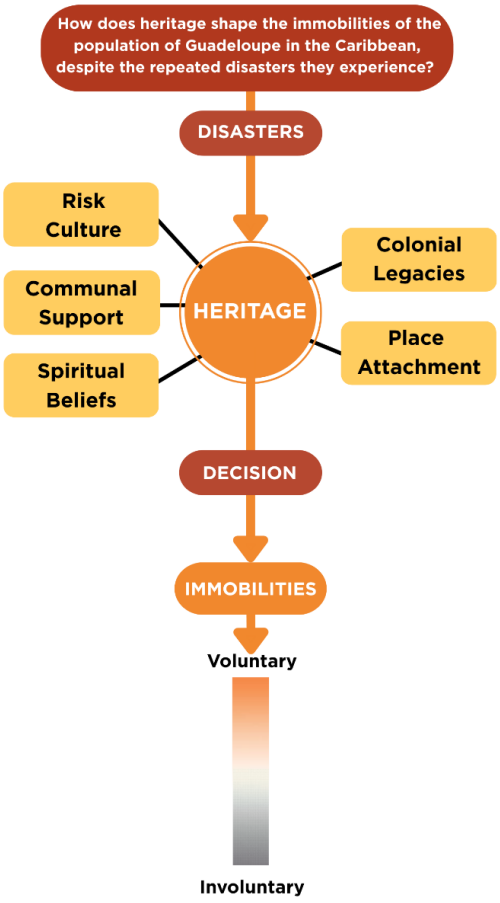

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of heritage as shaping voluntary immobilities in Guadeloupe, Valentine Lestringuez, 2025.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used for this research. I will begin by presenting the chosen case study and then describe the methods employed for data selection. I will explain the reasoning behind these choices and highlight the advantages of these methods.

3 METHODOLOGY

To conduct my research, I used a case-study approach, which offers flexibility in design due to its lack of binding guidelines, making it particularly effective for exploring new and complex processes (Meyer, 2001). By focusing on real-life settings of individual cases (Harwati, 2019), I conducted an in-depth examination of immobilities induced by heritage in the context of disasters. Case-study research can be described as an investigation that focuses on single or multiple cases, incorporating various qualitative methods (Nerida, 2014). For my thesis, I examined the case of Guadeloupe using qualitative data analysis, including interviews and observations, to enhance the validity of my findings.

3.1 CASE STUDY

To pursue this research, I chose to proceed with a case study. A case study cannot solely be defined by one single definition. It can be represented through an in-depth analysis of a person, a group of people, or a community, allowing the researcher to focus on a sometimes broad and complex phenomenon or topic in a natural setting to understand it better and generalize these results over several units (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Generalization must be approached with caution; a case study provides deeper insight into a specific context and offers preliminary ideas or data that should be further validated in other cases. In this context, by focusing on the case of Guadeloupe, I provide in-depth research on the immobilities response to disasters. For this specific study, this approach helps to comprehend both the processes and their context (Cassell & Symon, 2004, p. 324) by decrypting the process —the immobilities — and providing the context: the influence of heritage.

This method allows for flexibility as "it can adapt to and probe areas of planned but also emergent theory" (Cassell & Symon, 2004, p.324). Indeed, I adapted my research according to the areas and the residents' participation and responses, broadening my sample by gradually meeting Guadeloupeans. This allowed me to gain firsthand testimonies of the phenomenon and nuance, confirm, contradict, or expand the sub-research questions. In addition, researchers using this approach have a better opportunity to choose the methods they will employ, sometimes combining several techniques first to comprehend the phenomenon better or adapt to the context and situation they face. In this case, I combined literature reviews, interviews, and observations to integrate all available elements. A necessary process, as there is insufficient research on this specific case, and currently, a concerning lack of data.

3.1.1 LOCATION

The study was conducted in Guadeloupe, which, as mentioned earlier, consists of Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre connected by a bridge, along with several dependencies, such as Marie-Galante, La Désirade, and Les Saintes, as well as other inhabited islands like Petite-Terre. For this research, due to time, financial, and transportation constraints, I focused on the main islands of Guadeloupe: Basse-terre and Grande-terre. Indeed, I was unable to conduct interviews, observations, or visit the dependencies,

which were only accessible by boat. I am confident that if I had been able to study these locations, which are, for some, more isolated, I would have obtained broader and perhaps different results and insights.

Due to the cyclones' unpredictable nature, which can suddenly shift their trajectories, disasters have impacted Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre. Therefore, conducting interviews is relevant across the entire territory. All inhabitants have been affected by disasters in various ways and to various extents. They have various conceptions and understandings of what disasters are and have a story to tell, even when they do not think so.

3.1.2 TIMEFRAME

I arrived in Guadeloupe on October 30th and conducted research until December 19th, and resided in Sainte-Anne. I first struggled to start my research as I needed time to acclimate to the environment and culture. Finding participants was more challenging than expected; I was told that the timing of my research might not be ideal since people are more apt to stay inside during this period before the carnival season. When I arrived, they were approaching the end of the cyclonic season. During this time, Guadeloupeans face the constant threat of cyclones impacting their daily lives. In hindsight, the carnival season could have helped connect with more participants, but at the time, concerns about cyclones were still present.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE DATA

To conduct this research, I opted for qualitative methods, which aim "to answer questions concerned with what something is like, what people think or feel about something that has happened, and it may address why something has happened as it has" (Seers, 2011, p.1). This approach has the drawback of not generating statistical data for comparing the number of immobile individuals to those who are mobile, or any other quantified results whatsoever. However, qualitative data is crucial for this study as it offers flexibility, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of the population involved. Specifically, I aimed to identify the factors influencing immobilities, particularly related to heritage, since quantitative data cannot fully capture individuals' personal experiences and opinions. Qualitative analyses provide a clearer understanding of research results through methods such as interviews, photographs, and direct observations made by the researcher, who acts as the primary instrument for data analysis (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005). Therefore, this study, which examines how heritage influences immobilities in disaster contexts, incorporates elements derived from my findings, including perspectives and observed situations. Qualitative data analysis involves transforming raw data by identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns, trends, and themes to reveal their underlying meanings (Mezmir, 2020)—meanings the researcher assigns to the data.

3.2.2 LITERATURE STUDY

To begin the research process, I conducted literature research to compile findings that might be relevant to this paper. This was a crucial step in gaining a better understanding of the context of Guadeloupe. It is essential for conducting fieldwork research and explaining the significant impact of historical, political, social, and economic factors on the current state of Guadeloupe and the findings that emerge from this research, as they are intertwined. The review provided a deeper understanding of the complexities of mobility and immobility, along with their various representations and meanings. Additionally, it presented multiple definitions of heritage and identified different factors that could be explored for this specific thesis topic. While this literature review is not exhaustive, it includes all the essential elements to understand the research.

3.2.3 OBSERVATIONS AND FIELD NOTES

Participant observation allowed me to engage directly with the community, observing real-time behaviors, social interactions, and rituals (Ciesielska et al. 2018). This method complemented the interviews conducted, providing context and validating data by offering insights into participants' daily lives and routines (Meyer, 2001). The field notes helped me capture the full context of the study, documenting settings, social pressures, and other factors shaping residents' lives (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). Through these observations, I explored how the population discusses and perceives disasters in informal settings, providing deeper insights into my research.

3.2.4 INTERVIEWS

Ethnographic methodology is deeply rooted in understanding cultural contexts and the social relationships that shape them. This approach emphasizes close, immersive interactions between researchers and participants to explore the deeper meanings behind social dynamics while being aware of and sensitive to the limits of researching another context (Boas et al., 2020). It seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals within their cultural and societal environments. By engaging in the participants' daily lives, ethnographers can collect rich data that reveals how people perceive and navigate their social worlds. Methods such as participant observation and interviews are central to this process, enabling a comprehensive exploration of social phenomena that might otherwise be difficult to observe (Harwati, 2019; Khanal, 2016). However, engaging in "moving with" participants requires reflection, as it introduces challenges related to bias, power dynamics, and ethical concerns. Researchers must continuously reflect on how their presence and mobility methodologies may influence the communities they study, potentially oversimplifying experiences of immobility or misrepresenting perceptions of social transformations (Boas et al. 2020). By acknowledging these complexities, ethnographers can better capture the nuanced and unequal distribution of mobility as a resource.

For my ethnographic research, I employed semi-structured interviews and participant observations. I conducted semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data, enabling an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and opinions regarding disasters. Unlike unstructured interviews, which require long-term fieldwork to allow participants to express themselves freely (Jamshed, 2014), or structured interviews that follow a rigid questionnaire, semi-structured interviews strike a balance by offering flexibility while maintaining a clear direction (Mashuri et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews are a flexible method that allows for questioning while ensuring key topics are addressed (Karatsareas, 2022). I prepared a guide (see Annex I) with open-ended questions, aiming to interview approximately 20 participants, each lasting between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on the depth of their responses. The questions for this research were grouped into five themes: the origins of disasters, experiences of disasters, the influence of heritage and inheritance on disasters, mobilities and immobilities in response to disasters, and the future of disasters in Guadeloupe. Within these themes, I incorporated concepts that I had previously identified through a deductive approach. Ultimately, these interviews enabled me to explore participants' perspectives in depth, allowing new ideas to emerge during the discussions (Omolola, 2021). By integrating deductively generated concepts and allowing flexibility during the interview process, the research presents both traditional and contemporary ideas.

3.2.5 SAMPLING

When selecting my case study in the Caribbean for my research, several factors came into play: the scale of vulnerability and exposure to disasters, the low migration rate, the level of security, and the cost of living. Another equally essential factor was having contact from there. With acquaintances from Guadeloupe, I first spoke with them and others in the Caribbean. In the Caribbean and Guadeloupe, communicating with the locals is very easy; simply ask for an interview, and they will be happy to respond. I chose Guadeloupe because, although I didn't know anyone present there at the time, I had been assured that my research would be manageable. I spent seven weeks on the island, using the first three to acclimate to the environment and reach out to previously listed associations.

The thesis I aimed to produce required detailed field research to understand the role of heritage in Guadeloupeans' responses to immobility in the face of disasters. However, due to time constraints within the university's research framework, I was unable to conduct the extensive number of interviews I initially envisioned. The goal was to carry out 20 interviews focusing on achieving gender parity and including participants from diverse backgrounds, such as varying ages, ethnicities, religions, locals, and residents from the metropole. No strict order was imposed based on the respondents' profiles, although priority was given to those who had experienced disasters but chose to stay. Both individuals who have lived through disasters and those who have not were relevant to understanding the population's heritage in relation to disasters. Insights from different perspectives helped determine how Guadeloupeans view

disasters, what they were taught, and what influences them to remain in disaster-prone areas. These varied narratives provided valuable insights for concluding the study.

To select participants, I used snowball sampling. This method begins with a random sample; through these initial connections, the sample expands as participants refer other potential respondents, continuing through multiple waves until the interview goals are met. This process facilitated comprehensive data collection while capturing essential social networks (Snijders, 1992). The organizations I contacted were chosen based on two criteria: relevance to environmental protection and involvement in safeguarding and promoting Guadeloupe's or the Caribbean's patrimony. The rationale behind this selection was the belief that individuals engaged in such institutions share common values and align with my topic, making them more likely to participate in the interview. Furthermore, the aim was to initiate a snowball selection process with the first participants, who would then introduce me to others, continuing until all the necessary respondents were identified - meaning until data saturation which is when the researcher starts hearing the same information repeatedly, and no new themes, codes, or insights emerge from the data (Hennink et al., 2022). Although this technique may appear simple on paper, it proves more complex in practice. The selection of organizations was challenging; many were listed yet inactive for several years, and others lacked effective communication methods. I focused on those still active and with at least one email address for contact, representing around thirty associations and organizations. However, only four responded positively to me: the associations Nature Kulture, Clean My Island, Terra Festival, and APAGwa. These diverse interactions helped initiate the snowball sampling process, where initial respondents led to the recruitment of additional participants (Simkus, 2023). Furthermore, I continued this process by interviewing individuals I met outside of association contexts. Although the setting was more complex than expected, I was able to gather insights from 18 participants with diverse profiles.

The interviews were conducted and recorded, with the participants' consent, which was obtained both orally and in writing through the signing of a consent form. Only I, as the researcher, have access to these recordings, which will be deleted after the thesis is complete. In this research, the identities of the participants are protected and anonymized, referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on. General characteristics such as gender, age, profession, religion, and ethnicity are disclosed in Annex II when participants choose to share.

I conducted interviews across Guadeloupe’s territory: in Port-Louis, Sainte-Rose, Baie-Mahault, Pointe-Noire, Saint-François, Pointe des Châteaux, Vieux-Habitants, Pointe-à-Pitre, and Sainte-Rose. The map portrayed (Figure 3) represents the areas where the participants currently reside. Through interviews encompassing these several locations, I aimed to depict the perceptions of a broader sample of populations and diverse experiences. I tried to represent residents from Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre

equally. As mentioned, the two islands have different topographies and climate vulnerabilities, which are interesting to study.

3.4 DATA ANLYSIS

I first relied on the data from my literature review to conceptualize the notions that needed research. I adopted a deductive method, testing assumptions derived from theory, which is often regarded as the traditional approach (Grimes et al., 2023; Prince & Felder, 2006). Through this process, I encountered several vital concepts from previous scholars, such as place attachment and risk culture, that I believed would be significant for my study. This approach gave me a solid base to build upon once I started my field work. Additionally, several new concepts emerged during my fieldwork in Guadeloupe that align with inductive reasoning, which focuses on generating theories from empirical data. As noted by Prince and Felder, this process begins with real-world problems or observations (2023). Ultimately, employing this multi-method approach that combines both deductive and inductive concepts allows the research to provide deeper theoretical contributions and enhances both internal and external validity (Grimes et al., 2023).

To conduct the analysis of these concepts I first proceeded with the transcription of all interviews. When aiming at producing qualitative research that aligns best with the population's perspectives and claiming it is crucial to share their words as faithfully as possible. Transcriptions fulfill this goal and allow to replicate the voice of participants, as they provide transparency, accuracy, rigor and reliability and a commitment to ethical qualitative research (McMullin, 2023). Afterward, I selected and divided their statements into several concepts and chose quotes that I believe best reflected and best explained these factors shaping immobilities. Quotes enable the researcher to effectively convey participants' emotions and experiences, they add depth and authenticity to the findings and offer direct insights and evidence of their perspectives, they illustrate their points and deepen the reader's understanding grounding the researcher's interpretations in the words of respondents and sharing their voice (Eldh et al., 2020; Corden et al., 2006).

By selecting this study case and employing these diverse methods and approaches, this research contributes to the growing field of the immobilities paradigm by providing direct empirical insights of a population deeply impacted by climate change and disasters. In the next chapter I will provide the study background of my case, Guadeloupe.

4 STUDY BACKGROUND

Before presenting the results of my findings, I would like to present a background of my case study, starting with an explanation of the implications arising from the Caribbean's geographic disposition. Secondly, I will provide context for the chosen study location, Guadeloupe. To understand the immobilities' response, various factors must be considered to comprehend their current stance. The population's historical, political, colonial, environmental, and social pasts play a profound role in shaping their current dynamics.

4.1 THE CARIBBEAN: A REGION PRONE TO HAZARDS

The Caribbean region in the Atlantic Basin is prone to numerous types of disasters, particularly hurricanes, tropical storms, and other extreme weather events that occur during the cyclonic period from June to November (López-Marrero., n.d.; Benitez et al., 2020). The islands are subject to hazards such as intense rainfall, strong winds, and storm surges. In addition to floods and mass movements, landslides and mudslides are common, too. Furthermore, the area is tectonically active, rendering it vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions (López-Marrero, T., n.d). Finally, the region is susceptible to droughts and is on the front line of experiencing the El Niño/La Niña phenomenon (OCHA, 2020).

The frequency of these storms has been rising over the past decades (see Figure 1). However, there are no established patterns; in 2022 alone, there were only 14 named storms, eight of which became hurricanes and two major hurricanes. This broke a streak of 6 consecutive seasons above the climatological norm since 2015 (Thibord, 2023). Floods are the region's most frequent and costly disaster, with an average of 17 hurricanes per year and 23 category-five hurricanes recorded between 2000 and 2019 (OCHA., 2020). These storms have impacted nearly 41 million people in LAC, causing severe human and material damage. In addition to these risks, the Caribbean is also vulnerable to drought, which affects the agricultural sector, small-scale farmers, and freshwater availability (López-Marrero, n.d).

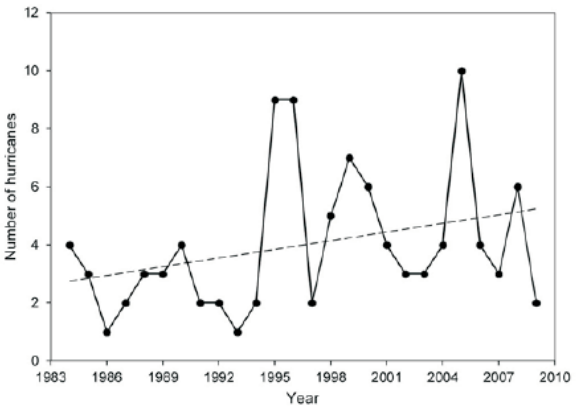

Figure 4: Occurrence of hurricanes in the Insular Caribbean region, 1984 through 2010- López-Marrero., n.d

The island's vulnerability is further exacerbated by a projected sea level rise of 1 meter by the end of the 21st century, threatening the islands' economies, infrastructure, and livelihoods (Hofman et al., 2021). In 2019, more than 70% of the population resided in low-lying coastal zones, making them particularly vulnerable to the effects of both tsunamis and rising sea levels (OCHA, 2020). The degradation of coastal areas and the increasing strength of hurricanes pose immediate risks, including the submergence and

erosion of archaeological sites, which are significant for cultural heritage (Hofman et al., 2021). Human activities, including deforestation, sand mining, and tourism overreliance, exacerbate the Lesser Antilles' environmental challenges. These activities have led to ecological damage and significant social changes within the region, including the destruction of natural protective barriers such as mangroves and coral reefs. Moreover, the historical exploitation of the Caribbean islands, from colonial times to the modern tourism industry, has left several islands economically and ecologically vulnerable (Hofman et al., 2021).

The Caribbean region is disproportionately affected by climate change despite being a relatively minor contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, due to the island's small size, relative isolation, and limited access to natural resources, they can be even more vulnerable (Hofman et al., 2021). The anticipated increase in the frequency and severity of storms due to climate change and rising sea levels will pressure local communities to continually adapt through their lifestyles and sociocultural and political structures to face the situation. However, the Caribbean region should not be viewed exclusively from the perspective of its vulnerability to disasters, as this overlooks its potential to serve as an example of sustainability and resilience. This is especially true when it is known that their communities have historically managed to face disasters and remain resilient. The indigenous population of the Lesser Antilles developed their strategies to cope, but their ancestral knowledge was disrupted by European colonization in the 15th century (Hofman et al., 2021).

In recent years, the Caribbean has been repeatedly impacted by severe hurricanes, which have devastatingly affected agriculture and infrastructure. The amount of water dumped by a single hurricane on coastal areas can equal the annual discharge of a large river, resulting in widespread flooding, damage to crops, and disruption of ecosystems (Koussoula-Bonneton, 1994). These extreme events also cause significant economic losses, particularly in sectors such as tourism and agriculture, which are crucial to their economies. In addition to these challenges, smaller-scale disasters, such as localized floods and landslides, can significantly impact the situation, particularly at the local level. “Weak storms can be equally destructive as the more powerful ones” (OCHA, 2020). However, these phenomena are less addressed and studied for disaster risk reduction measures (López-Marrero, n.d.).

Therefore, the Caribbean is highly vulnerable to various disasters and environmental impacts, which are further amplified by climate change. I will now focus on presenting the research study case, starting with a comprehensive contextualization, followed by a description of the island's climate and environmental conditions, and concluding with an analysis of disaster management on the island. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the key implications that have shaped and continue to shape Guadeloupe’s territory.

4.2 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF GUADELOUPE

4.2.1 OVERALL BACKGROUND

Located in the Lesser Antilles chain in the eastern Caribbean Sea, Guadeloupe is an overseas department and region of France, approximately 6,000 km from the French mainland (Guadeloupe Voyage, n.d.). The archipelago is composed of two main islands, Basse-Terre to the west and Grande-Terre to the east (Géographie de Guadeloupe, 2022), along with smaller dependencies like Marie-Galante, La Désirade, and Les Saintes. The governmental seat is on Basse-Terre, while the largest urban center, Pointe-à-Pitre, is on Grande-Terre (Cornevin, 2024).

Originally known as Karukera, Guadeloupe was invaded in 1493 by Christopher Columbus and inhabited by the Caribs. In the early 16th century, the Spanish colonization attempts were met with resistance from the Caribs, leading to Frenchman Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc establishing a trading company after driving the Spanish away. The colony heavily relied on slavery for sugar and coffee plantation expansion. Additionally, the British briefly occupied Guadeloupe in 1759, 1794, and 1810, but returned it to France each time. In between these events, Napoleon reestablished slavery in 1802, causing several revolts, and slavery was officially abolished in 1848, though some debate this date.

It is essential to approach stories about Guadeloupe's slavery experience with caution, including what I have just shared, as distinguishing truth from false narratives online can be complex. After the suspension of universal suffrage during Napoleon III's reign, colonial representation in the French Parliament was reinstated in 1870. Guadeloupe aligned with the Free French forces in World War II, pledging allegiance to the Vichy government in 1940. After the war, it officially became a French département in 1946 and a region in 1974 (Cornevin, 2024; Leone et al., 2020).

Despite its status as a French territory, the population's feelings of freedom and satisfaction were limited, giving rise to independence movements (Cornevin, 2024). Charles de Gaulle attempted to unify local inhabitants in the 1950s and 1960s, but separatist violence emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, including bombings both on the island and in Paris. The French government maintained its presence despite economic challenges and introduced reforms in 2000 to transfer power to local assemblies (Cornevin, 2024). Guadeloupe is divided into cantons and communes, managed by elected councils, with 32 municipalities currently on the island (Scolobig et al., 2014). A prefect and two subprefects represent the national government in Guadeloupe.

Guadeloupe's economy relies heavily on government services and has developed a strong tourism industry as its primary source of foreign exchange. The island also engages in intensive agriculture, producing bananas, sugarcane, coffee, and cacao, alongside a thriving fisheries sector. Manufacturing and services play significant roles in generating income, with public administration serving as the largest employer. However, Guadeloupe faces an annual deficit due to imports surpassing exports, particularly

of food and agricultural products, leading to high dependency and rising prices (Cornevin, 2024). In 2020, 34.5% of the population lived below the national poverty line, and unemployment among the youth reached 35%, compared to a national average of 20% (Le Point, 2021).

French is the official language of Guadeloupe, with local Creole as a second language. The population mainly consists of Creoles and island natives of African and European descent (Robert Cornevin, 2024). As of 2024, Guadeloupe had a population of 378,561 and exhibited lower birth and death rates compared to other Caribbean islands, with 4,678 births and 3,742 deaths in 2020.

4.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND

In addition to its complex history and socio-economic challenges, Guadeloupe faces significant environmental vulnerabilities, such as cyclones and sea-level rise, worsened by climate change. Covering a total area of 1,702 km² (Ministère de la Culture, n.d.), Guadeloupe features diverse landscapes. Basse-Terre, mountainous and volcanic, is dominated by La Soufrière, an active volcano peaking at 1,467 meters. In contrast, Grande-Terre is a low-lying, calcareous island with little elevation.

The island has a tropical climate with two main seasons: the dry season, from December to April, known locally as “Creole Lent” or “Carême,” and the rainy season, called “Saison des Alizés” or “Saison de l’Hivernage,” from July to September or October. Rainfall varies significantly, with Grande-Terre receiving about 990 mm annually and Basse-Terre over 2,540 mm. These variations, combined with volcanic soils, support rich and heterogeneous vegetation. However, colonial-era hunting and environmental degradation have left lasting impacts on biodiversity (Cornevin, 2024).

Colonialism shaped the territory's economic, political, and social status for centuries and hindered the local population's ability to develop the island as they wished, leading to a loss of biodiversity and heightened vulnerabilities. Guadeloupe is highly vulnerable to hazards, particularly destructive cyclones (Leone et al., 2020; OCHA, 2020). Located on the hurricane path over warm Atlantic waters, the island faces risks from multiple hazards, making it a valuable case study for understanding disaster impacts and cascading effects (Krien et al., 2015; Scolobig et al., 2014).

Between 1635 and 2018, Guadeloupe faced 132 significant hydro-climatic events. On average, these events occur 3.5 times per decade, peaking in September, August, and October. Since 1950, climate-related events have led to approximately one death every seven months on the island. The deadliest was the 1928 unnamed hurricane, which caused over 1,200 deaths, with the number still uncertain (Paviol, 2023) and devastated the island’s economy by nearly destroying coffee plantations and shifting to banana farming (Desarthe, 2023).

Guadeloupe's vulnerability is intensified by its topography. The Basse-Terre region is prone to landslides and heavy rainfall, while the southern parts of Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre, exposed to strong winds, suffer the highest death tolls during extreme weather events (Leone et al., 2020). The Pointe des Châteaux Peninsula has experienced cycles of drought and flooding, leading to internal relocations. Additionally, ongoing sea-level rise and coastal erosion have forced inhabitants to relocate over time and are expected to accelerate more rapidly than the global average (Hofman et al., 2021). It poses a significant threat to Guadeloupe's low-lying areas, particularly Petit Cul-de-Sac Marin, located at the junction of both twin islands and near Pointe-à-Pitre and Baie-Mahault. This area plays a crucial role in the island's economy, and its low elevation makes it severely vulnerable to marine flooding caused by cyclones (Le Cozannet et al., 2021). Similarly, the Morel coastline of Grande-Terre has retreated by 60 meters between 1948 and 2020 (see Figure 2). This coastal retreat has damaged the landscape and biodiversity, resulting in the loss of a significant portion of the archaeological sites (Hofman et al., 2021).

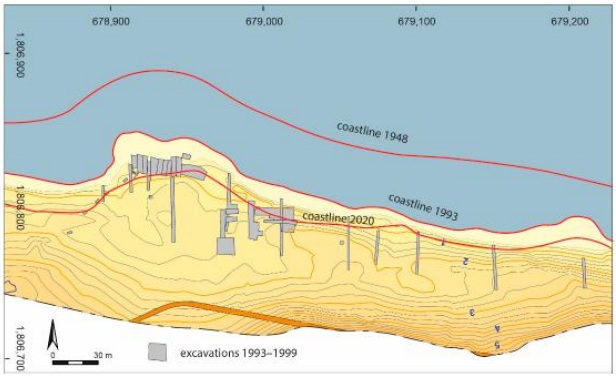

Figure 5: Retreat of the coastline recorded through topographical survey data from aerial and satellite images made in 1948 and 2020- Hofman, et al., 2021

Despite these threats, cyclones remain the most immediate hazard in Guadeloupe. Over the past century, major cyclones have impacted the island in 1928, Inez in 1966, David in 1979, Allen in 1980, Hugo in 1989, Marilyn in 1995, Georges in 1998, Lenny in 1999, Omar in 2008, Irma and Maria in 2017, Fiona in 2022, Philippe and Tammy in 2023, etc, causing significant destruction (Meteo France, 2023). Hugo, a category four hurricane, killed 11 people, destroyed 30.000 homes, and drastically damaged the island's agricultural sector, particularly the banana and sugar industries. The damage was so extensive that 40% of the sugarcane crops were destroyed, resulting in the closure of factories and prolonged unemployment. The island's economy suffered, deeply affecting industries, public services, and education. Schools were destroyed, and children had to continue their education under precarious conditions, which impacted their psychological and educational well-being. Moreover, the loss of potable water, electricity, and telecommunications services exacerbated health risks, leading to outbreaks of diseases such as dengue and leptospirosis (Koussoula-Bonneton, 1994).

Similarly, Hurricane Maria in 2017 resulted in the deaths of two people and the disappearance of two others. The category five hurricane severely damaged the areas of Point-à-Pitre in the south of Grande-Terre and the southern littoral of Basse-Terre. Forty percent of the population lost access to electricity, and the drinking water network was disrupted. Many roads were blocked, and the main hospital was damaged (Le Monde, 2017; 20 Minutes, 2017). Hurricane Fiona in 2022 caused immense damage, particularly in the southern third of the island of Basse-Terre. Torrential rains led to landslides, destroyed bridges, and flooded entire neighborhoods. Hundreds of homes were lost, and one person died after their

house was swept away by floodwaters (Bellanger, 2023). Guadeloupe regularly faces water shortages and must ration supplies due to recurring droughts, further deepening its vulnerability (Guadeloupe Voyage, n.d.).

Historically, disasters have profoundly shaped Guadeloupe's society and economy. Following the 1928 hurricane, it took years for the island to recover (Paviol, 2023). The devastating effects of these disasters, such as the closure of sugar factories, were long-lasting and significantly impacted the island's development. As a multi-hazard and multi-risk location, Guadeloupe frequently faces disasters and their cascading effects, making it one of the most challenging regions to manage from a disaster preparedness perspective (Scolobig et al., 2014).

4.2.3 DISASTER MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

Guadeloupe's complex environmental vulnerabilities demand effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management strategies. For example, stormwater drainage remains a significant challenge, exacerbated by impermeable soils from intensive commercial and industrial development, leading to frequent urban and coastal flooding (Le Cozannet et al., 2021). Urbanization reached 98.6% in 2024 (Cornevin, 2024), putting additional pressure on already-strained coastal areas, piling up on rising economic pressures (Krien et al., 2015). Guadeloupe's geographic isolation further complicates rapid disaster response and aid coordination during emergencies (Benitez et al., 2020). Although efforts to improve emergency management date back to the 1928 cyclone, including substantial but insufficient recovery funding (Desarthe, 2023), longstanding inequalities persist, with marginalized communities often excluded from community organizations, and volunteers taking over support when political responses are slow. In Guadeloupe, tensions between regional and national governments hinder disaster response, as local authorities often lack resources. Despite attempts to empower local governments through decentralization, financial aid remains inadequate, and multi-stakeholder participation remains weak, complicating efforts (Bellanger, 2023; Scolobig et al., 2014).

A significant lack of vulnerability assessments in Guadeloupe hampers targeted DRR measures, yet they need to be studied due to their intertwining with social and economic factors (Bellanger, 2023). Effective DRR requires collaboration among stakeholders; however, ongoing institutional confusion leads to temporary measures becoming permanent, hindering necessary actions (Scolobig et al., 2014; Claeys et al., 2017). Consequently, Guadeloupeans often have to respond to disasters independently.

Guadeloupe's geographical isolation - being 6,000 Km away from the mainland -, its colonial legacies, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and heightened environmental threats make it a complex location for DRR. These settings render the island as a high-risk, multi-hazard territory. Yet, despite these challenges, Guadeloupeans demonstrate resilience, resistance, and endurance. Understanding how Guadeloupeans navigate and respond to disasters requires moving beyond structural vulnerabilities to consider how heritage, embodied under various forms, fundamentally shapes decisions to stay.

5 INHERITED AND CONVEYED BONDS

A population that has experienced repeated disasters accumulates years of experience preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and facing these events. The bonds shared through various means, such as oral, written, or other forms of communication, within families, communities, and among friends, can play a crucial role in influencing an individual's daily life. Sharing knowledge, techniques, and experiences, as well as offering support, can sometimes be lifesaving. Living in a society characterized by communal behaviors can instill a sense of security, where one another addresses collective answers and needs, challenging the notion that migration is necessary to fulfill them. In this chapter, I illustrate, based on the results of my interviews and the concepts of risk culture and communal support, how shared knowledge, experiences, and ensured assistance contribute to developing resilience, enabling the population of Guadeloupe to effectively face disasters.

5.1 RISK CULTURE

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, a rooted risk culture enables communities to possess agency and crucial knowledge on how to face and respond to disasters. Throughout the interviews, I noticed that risk culture can be considered in two primary ways: first, as a culture shaped by experience, and second, as a culture conveyed and explained by the individuals around you. In both contexts, this understanding of disaster risks develops gradually over time.

In the first scenario, risk culture is not shared but rather experienced personally by individuals. Participant 2 argues that everything they learn in Guadeloupe comes from growing up there, and that the transmission of knowledge does not actually exist. He believes that learning through experience-by doing and by witnessing-is the best method. Growing up in Guadeloupe, individuals have no choice but to face disasters. During the cyclonic season, it becomes second nature for the population to stock up on supplies, secure their properties, and isolate themselves. As participant 1 shared with me in an informal setting, “dealing with these challenges is part of life on the island as we are quite literally exposed to such events from an early age”. Over time, and with experience, the reality and comprehension of these risks become clearer.

For the second scenario, risk culture is conveyed by individuals, takes many forms, and involves various voices, as in the case of Guadeloupe. Family members may offer warnings, neighbors may advise, and teachers might conduct evacuation drills. Communities accustomed to recurring hazards understand the risks and the importance of sharing information. Participant 1 succinctly expressed, “Now people are used to it; they know what to do and how to react, and we explain it to others.” Storytelling is a key component, whether through direct accounts from family members about their experiences and how they confronted challenges or by discussing and pointing out how places have changed over time. All the more so since visible reminders of Guadeloupe’s fragility mark its landscape: abandoned colonial-

era wooden houses, eroding coastlines, and damaged infrastructure, providing direct proof of the consequences of disasters to all.

Figure 6: Fragile and Damaged Wooden structures and houses in Sainte Anne - 2024

Figure 7: Eroding coastlines in Sainte Anne - 2024

For instance, Participant 1's father spoke of a friend whose roof was blown off during a cyclone, leaving a long-lasting souvenir in her daughter's memory, leading her to ask questions seeking to understand the different alert levels and various scales of disasters. Participant 14 articulated this deeply rooted resilience, stating, "In Guadeloupe, resilience is a vital part of our culture, shaped by our experiences with climate-related disasters [...] We always recover." Through intergenerational narratives from her Antillais in-laws about their cyclone experiences, the population internalizes both trauma and resilience. She now views herself as an elder, guiding the next generation by warning them about cyclones: "When you see one, you tell yourself you never want to see one again." These stories highlight the role of oral tradition in shaping risk perception across generations.

Participant 15 mentioned that parents discuss these events annually and claimed that as children, they may not understand their seriousness, but as they grow and learn from various sources (family, school, media, etc), they begin to grasp their significance. On the island, understanding disasters is as crucial as other life skills like tying shoelaces or learning to drive. Participant 12 shared that as a child, she enjoyed playing in the wind before a cyclone until her grandmother told her a chilling story about someone losing their head due to flying metal. Participants recalled their grandparents, who experienced major events like the hurricanes of 1928 and 1960, and how they reinforced their homes by attaching ribs to the posts for roof support.

Even individuals from the mainland without family ties on the island find guidance, as all participants in this case mentioned that elders or neighbors mentor them. In Guadeloupe, sharing knowledge is a fundamental trait among citizens. In this context, they readily answer questions from newcomers, helping them understand the island's workings. Participant 8 was taught by a centenarian her vast knowledge of the land, while Participant 11 received practical advice like pruning coconut trees and securing potential projectiles.

Schools also play a vital role in reinforcing awareness. Participants 1, 3, and 16 mentioned earthquake evacuation sessions and various disasters prevention tests. Participant 2 noted that school-based awareness began post-Cyclone Hugo. Despite facing recurrent disasters for centuries, awareness in educational settings is still relatively recent. Schools not only educate new generations about the dangers on the island, how they unfold, and how to react, but they also serve as refuge centers in emergencies for at-risk individuals. Public authorities play a crucial role in disseminating preventive measures to the population. As Participant 3 noted, warning signs and messages to raise awareness about disasters are increasingly becoming prevalent. Meanwhile, TV, radio, newspapers, and social media help spread this information to all citizens. Locals volunteer, like Le Point Mattéo, by sharing updates through social media and offering clear, accessible meteorological information.

The two portrayals of risk culture can be combined, with participants indicating that both scenarios enhance their understanding of such phenomena. Participant 9 highlighted the significance of learning through both storytelling and personal experience. For those who have lived on the island their entire lives, encountering these catastrophes is part of their daily reality. Their experiences foster resilience, while family narratives provide context and articulate their lived experiences. Hearing about a Category 5 cyclone is nothing compared to experiencing one. On several occasions, participants have mentioned that while they learned about the necessary actions to take and behaviors to adopt during events like earthquakes, the reality of the situation is very different. Survival instincts can take over. Participant 1 noted that despite all the theoretical training, emotions often override memories during a disaster and make you forget everything you've learned. Participant 10 echoed this, stating that one cannot truly understand a cyclone until they've lived through one.

Despite the population's habits of hazards, even in Guadeloupe, some residents still underestimate the risks, even after surviving previous disasters. For example, some residents refuse to evacuate, citing past survival as justification; if their house held steady last time, it will again. This mindset is reinforced by people's deep familiarity with the terrain and confidence in navigating it, as noted by several respondents who relied on their local environmental knowledge to make decisions.

Resilience is not only taught; it is actively lived. The island's disasters have become a significant part of Guadeloupeans' heritage, persisting for centuries and leaving a lasting impact on the minds and stories of its inhabitants. In Guadeloupe, "culture du risque" is integrated into daily life from an early age. The population has a strong awareness of disaster risks and readiness to respond, shaped by intergenerational transmission and personal experiences. This acceptance leads to the belief that disaster risk is an inherent part of island life and something to be accepted and lived with, rather than fleeing through mobility. Why would anyone leave a situation they know how to overcome?

5.2 COMMUNAL SUPPORT

The collective response to disaster significantly contributes to Guadeloupeans' immobility. Strong community ties, mutual aid, and solidarity define the island's identity by drawing on long-standing traditions and knowledge passed down through generations.

Participant 2 explained, “Guadeloupeans in general […] are communitarians. Guadeloupeans are mutually supportive.” Even strangers receive support, making it unimaginable for people to be left hungry or alone after disasters. As participant 18 summarized, “Caribbean culture is marked by strong solidarity.” This cultural heritage, passed down through generations, teaches the importance of caring for others. The spirit of mutual aid is integral to Guadeloupean identity and should be preserved, especially in an age of rising individualism. Being surrounded by a known, supportive community creates a sense of protection and emotional security when disaster strikes, and you won’t be alone in facing, as participant 1 claimed, “ people will never leave you alone”.

Many Guadeloupeans feel an instinctive need to offer shelter and reassurance. Participant 14 described hating leaving Guadeloupe, experiencing it as an anxiety-provoking moment. During Cyclone Georges, as she was gone, she expressed an urge to be physically present, help, and shelter others if needed. “I would have liked to stay. I didn't feel good leaving Guadeloupe with a cyclone coming towards us. It's as if I were being unfaithful to my country by leaving”. Participant 2 declared that those with little money stayed with their neighbors, mothers, and grandmothers; no one would sleep outside while participant 9 highlighted how the emotional bonds of community support manifest through comforting those who’ve lost their homes, visiting, talking, and reassuring them. These actions reinforce communal strength during crisis: “people unite in times of crisis”.

Guadeloupeans don’t just offer shelter, they share what they have, ensuring to meet everybody’s needs. Participant 2 observed, "you won’t hear that people died of hunger or thirst, it’s impossible. The solidarity is incredible.” This communal response is so ingrained that during the flood in Basse-Terre, they provided so much aid that it became excessive, and they were asked to stop. The farmer whose bananas would have fallen on the ground during a disaster and cannot sell them anymore will go around and hand them out freely. He added that this unity applies to all, even people you don’t know. Participant 11 recalled people giving away tomatoes from their harvest or giving access to electricity during outrage. Participant 5 recounted neighbors coming together to protect each other's homes, sharing meals as they were losing food due to the power outages, or going to wash together in the river. These acts of sharing provided more than providing support, strengthened social bonds, and created lasting connections among community members, “ thanks to the disaster”.

Some participants described solidarity not just as a tradition but as an inherent human behavior. Participant 6 believes it’s instinctive: solidarity emerges naturally and spontaneously, especially when

institutional relief is overwhelmed. He stated that even though he never needed help, he would offer it because of his close relationship with their neighbors, inspired by an elder neighbor who often checked on him. Participant 7 supported this; according to her, even neighbors who do not typically interact come together. It's almost an unspoken rule, a social rhythm activated during crises. A rule that Participant 12 further amplified by adding, "We end up helping those whom we do not like[…] like at funerals, we've never really gotten along with the neighbor. but we have to go to his funeral because in the end we all find ourselves around the coffin." Participant 12 used a metaphor to describe this unstoppable will to help: "the dung beetle that doesn't lose hope of bringing its dung back up the hill, even if the dung has come down ten thousand times." This metaphor underscores the determination of Guadeloupeans who would rather help, build back up, then turn their back on their communities, even in the face of disasters.

In times of disaster, attention turns especially to the vulnerable. Participants 8 and 13 emphasized the importance of checking on vulnerable community members, such as isolated elderly individuals, and providing assistance and shelter when needed, yet 13 specified, "There is no worry about all that; they know they will be helped." They reminded that many residents have to rely on others out of necessity. Participant 1 described how a friend's mother began homeschooling children after a hurricane. Exemplifying a form of reconstruction not through material support but through communal and collective effort, clearing roads, checking on others, even strangers, and welcoming them.

Guadeloupeans' resilience is deeply rooted in historical memory and collective experience. Participant 4 recalls Cyclone Hugo: "As soon as there's great pain, that's where all love is born." Seeing pain as fostering a sense of brotherhood. Indeed, shared suffering overcomes past grievances and transcends past conflicts, as participant 10 claimed, "Even if you've been angry at your neighbor for 20–30 years, you'll reach out." While the tradition of mutual aid persists, according to participants 11 and 16, it is under pressure from societal changes and urbanization and is gradually being lost among younger generations.

Recovery is a communal process in Guadeloupe. Instead of focusing on individual survival, this perspective emphasizes the strength of community traditions and bonds, fostering unity and making relocation seem unnecessary or unthinkable. Communities rely on shared resources, labor, and emotional support to rebuild. This form of community-driven support ensures that recovery is not a burden individuals bear but rather a shared responsibility. Participant accounts emphasize that rebuilding is rarely left to institutions alone—everyone pitches in to repair roads, distribute resources, or provide schooling.

These testimonies highlight the significant role of community solidarity, mutual aid, and resilience in Guadeloupeans' disaster responses. They emphasize the emotional and cultural bonds that drive collective action and support, illustrating how deep-rooted traditions of helping one another persist during crises. Despite the pressures of modernization and rising individualism, the enduring spirit of

communal support remains a cornerstone, a life lesson integrated in the Guadeloupeans' identity as a defining trait of their island.

As Participant 18 noted, Caribbean culture, especially in Guadeloupe, is marked by strong solidarity. This is a social value and a cultural heritage: a legacy of care, protection, and communal strength passed down across generations. It teaches that looking after one another is not optional but essential. This heritage is visible not only in disaster responses but also in the everyday gestures of support that define life on the island.

Being surrounded by a community that instinctively steps in without being asked offers a powerful sense of reassurance and ensures that individuals are sufficiently prepared to face disasters. In moments of uncertainty, Guadeloupeans know they will not be alone, will be protected, and will be able to recover and reconstruct. This ingrained support system fosters resilience that is deeply tied to place and people, and that cannot easily be replicated or replaced through mobility. In Guadeloupe, to remain in place is not merely to stay but to uphold a way of life built on inherited values of solidarity and shared responsibility.

Summary box: Inherited and Conveyed Bonds

By incorporating knowledge and preparedness strategies early on, whether shared or originated from experience, Guadeloupeans develop a sense of readiness, resilience, and acceptance of potential disasters. Individuals turn toward their communities, guide and support each other. They possess an agency, and crucial knowledge in how to face and respond to disasters, demonstrating a collective awareness of disasters. Ultimately, the Guadeloupean approach highlights disaster resilience shaped by a culture of risk and communal support that is rooted in intergenerational knowledge and daily practices shared between generations, discouraging relocation despite the encountered risks.

6 FAITH AND FATE

Faith, whether inherited or shared, can profoundly shape how people understand and respond to disasters. In Guadeloupe, I found claims and demonstrations that ideologies and beliefs, with some unique to the island, influence many of the citizens, often resulting in behaviors such as immobilities. While scholars have already outlined how spiritual beliefs can shape the understanding of and responses to disasters, which I will revisit in the first part for the specific case of Guadeloupe, I will expand on this framework by discussing how the relationship with death also needs to be considered. In the third section, based on my findings, I will examine the perception of nature on the island and its impact on daily behaviors.

6.1 SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

The strong presence of religion and spiritual beliefs on the island is evident to all, as seen in the absence of aisle 13 on planes due to superstition, public baptisms, carnival, religious singing on the beach, and the daily comments from locals mentioning God and his impact on the weather. The notion that God willed or permitted disasters was a recurring theme in the interviews. Participant 1 explained, “People turn to God during natural disasters,” and for them, “what happens depends on God.” Some, as Participant 2 stated, “say that it is the African God who sends the cyclone” from across the ocean. This reflects a perspective where hurricanes are viewed as divine messages or tests of faith rather than mere natural occurrences. Although Guadeloupeans often acknowledged climate change and its link to human behavior, many ultimately adopted a theological lens: “They know there is climate change, but they are very religious […] God wants to send us a message” (Participant 1). For many, prayer serves as a coping strategy and a means of emotional adaptation. As Participant 1 shared, families “will cling to God to get through it and have less pain over material losses… I had material losses, but God protected me. I am still alive. God protected my family.” Participant 5 recalled a neighbor passing by their house who stated that God had blessed them since they didn't suffer much damage. It could have been worse, but God protected them.

These expressions of faith extend to specific practices, such as praying before a hurricane and interpreting survival as divine protection. Participant 5, who lives near a chapel, described how people go there before storms to pray and ask for protection, returning afterward to pray again. She recalls that the chapel was spared during Hurricane Hugo while surrounding homes were destroyed - for many, this was evidence of divine intervention. Participant 10 also stated that people take refuge in the church, especially the elders who are believers, as they are sure God will protect them. Additionally, participant 13 shared: "When you’re given a warning, and you pray it is the only thing you can do, as there’s no way to stop the cyclone." She added that most of Guadeloupe is inherently Christian, and the fact that people pray leads them to being spared, reinforcing the belief that God actively intervenes in the lives of believers, offering them protection.

However, this same belief system can also foster fatalism. Several interviewees noted that people often adopt a mentality of "if it happens, it happens," seeing disasters as unavoidable outcomes of God's will and decisions rather than events that can be mitigated through preparation (Participant 15). As Participant 14 noted, her Catholic grandmother accepts things as they come, recognizing that they have no control over them. Several participants described how older generations might refuse to leave their homes despite warnings, relying instead on prayer. Participant 13, for example, said she never had to leave their home because she is Christian; she prays, is protected, and doesn't feel in danger or obliged to go to a shelter. She added that they would sense whether to leave when it happens. This feeling is shared by Participant 4, who declared that she won't leave the island as she knows she is protected. This belief in divine protection can reduce the perceived necessity of evacuation.

Beyond Christian beliefs, many respondents referred to mystical traditions and ancestral knowledge systems that coexist, voodoo, witchcraft, black/blue/white magic, etc. Guadeloupe's spiritual landscape is complex, blending religion and Afro-Caribbean traditions. As Participant 4 puts it, "You can't imagine witchcraft… It's incredible. It's everywhere. Everyone uses it here […] this ancestral knowledge can either heal you or drive you crazy". Yet, witchcraft is not always seen as negative. Some described it as ancestral knowledge, capable of healing or protecting; this participant said to have learned it all through a Caribbean priestess and now knows how to transcend it and stated: "They know nature, the plants that can kill or heal you, and their energy. […] All beliefs and everything you believe in become your reality. There are exceptional telluric forces and mystical experiences. Guadeloupe is a mystical and beneficial place". On the Island, not everything can be explained by science; there are phenomena we cannot comprehend that are greater than us.

These spiritual beliefs influence how disasters are interpreted and how people act. Some mentioned avoiding certain places or objects, such as intersections marked by ritual items like chicken feet or bundles, out of fear of curses or bad luck (Participants 11, 12). Participant 12 also talked about her grandmother as "a witch" who removed evil, placing brooms upside down at doors to block evil spirits. Participant 7 observed, "Phenomena that existed long before, […] even volcanic eruptions are the wrath of the gods. We are always looking for an explanation". Spiritual symbolism has historically provided and continues to offer meaning for aspects of life that people cannot fully comprehend.

Many also described a culture of acceptance, where negative experiences are viewed as spiritual consequences that must be endured. Participant 12 recalled how their grandmother used to say, "It was always the will of God, never the will of men." Even when suffering from human actions, such as climate change, many still interpreted it as divine punishment for collective wrongdoing. Participant 13 mentioned that their grandmother believed these disasters were God's work and that he had warned us about this change. She said that disasters will become increasingly deadly if humanity continues to destroy the world. Participant 13 added, "We've changed things […] little by little, we're being sent

signs [...]that we're screwing up […] We need to rebalance, otherwise it will be worse […] man needs to be whipped to say, okay, fine, I get it"; they need to feel the danger to finally grasp the reality. A sentiment shared by participant 14, who declared that men have been so far "it would almost take a cyclone to get people back in tune to stand, to behave properly." Participant 5 also stated that many people think disasters could be a punishment: "we are punished for causing damage to the planet. God can punish with natural disasters." A retribution sometimes seemed too harsh, as Participant 2 declared, "We asked him what we did to him. We didn't understand what we did wrong to deserve this nonsense." This intertwining of moral judgment and natural events mirrors the Biblical flood narrative invoked by another participant, who compared hurricanes to Noah's flood, arguing that God uses such events to reset human behavior (Participant 10). Some people insist that all bad and evil things are from the devil; it is Satan and should not be confused with God (participants 9, 10, 11). Participant 11 notes the difference with the Metropole: "We don't hear that in France. If there's a flood in France on TV, you won't hear them say that God chose it."

This sense of being spiritually "conditioned" also extends to everyday language and thought. Phrases like "See you tomorrow, God willing," "if God wills it," or "tomorrow is not yours" are used in everyday conversations in Guadeloupe, reflecting a standard view in which the divine has ultimate control over all outcomes; it is God who decides everything. Participant 14 critiques this perspective, noting that it can discourage agency: "It's limiting… they say we must pray, but they don't act. They suffer their condition rather than change it", although you can make enormous change even with a bit of energy. They add that this tends to victimize people rather than display the power they have to improve things. Others rely on different beliefs, such as spirits and witchcraft, in everyday life to explain negativity; as Participant 4 explains, they use it to "hinder the normal process of a human," such as seeing a medium to get their fiancé back. "Everything wrong is because of witchcraft […] if I think of you every day while thinking bad things, the vibration inevitably reaches you. Because everything is vibrational." By pointing out evil whenever something doesn't sit right, Participant 4 deplores how people can avoid responsibility. Spiritual beliefs can promote community resilience but may hinder proactive disaster preparedness and personal empowerment.

Nonetheless, the belief in divine or mystical protection remains deeply rooted and offers psychological strength. "It gives me the strength to face it," interviewee 13 noted, adding, "I tell myself it's going to be okay[…] I won't be physically impacted". Such faith creates a framework of meaning that integrates material, emotional, and metaphysical experiences.

In Guadeloupe, religious and mystical beliefs significantly shape daily life and responses to risk like disasters, creating a sense of spiritual resilience. Understanding the island's reaction to disasters requires recognizing the intertwining of divine justice, ancestral heritage, and mystical practices. For many Guadeloupeans, their spiritual beliefs remain fundamental aspects of their existence, serving as

guardians of their heritage. These convictions affect their mobilities and immobilities, with some seeking temporary refuge in nearby churches while others choose to stay in their homes, confident in God's protection.

6.2 RELATION TO DEATH

In Guadeloupe, I noticed that the perception of death differs significantly from that found in the French Metropole, and this divergence has profound implications for understanding how individuals respond to disaster risk. A greater acceptance of death, or the perspective of viewing death as a transition into a second life rather than an end, may explain why some people refuse to evacuate when disasters are predicted. Indeed, a distinctive cultural and spiritual belief toward death, often marked by religious symbolism, fatalistic acceptance, and communal celebration, can shape how people interpret and react to life-threatening events. This chapter proposes a novel theoretical lens on immobilities and mobilities in the context of disasters, grounded in the ways death is processed.

The few testimonies gathered expressed a view of death as a continuation, not an end, but rather a transition to another stage of existence, where death is not feared but welcomed as part of a spiritual journey. Indeed, Participant 14 reflected: "We are very much in the acceptance of what is happening. We are less afraid of what is going to happen so the cyclone, it's the same. It's that it has to pass, and that's all you know death will be accepted. Here…we have a vision of death that is a little gentler, we have less of this anxiety-provoking side, of wanting to leave, to flee, of taking shelter at all costs. It's a kind of letting go."

Such statements echo a broader sentiment prevalent in Guadeloupean culture: that death is neither taboo nor tragic in the same way it often is in Western metropoles. Funerals are community events, celebrations rather than solemn affairs. Participant 1 noted: "What would the deceased have wanted? For us to have a drink in his health, to laugh in his health, in his memory, and not to be dressed in black, all sad." Participant 14 also specified "we organize wakes for the dead, so it's still a kind of celebration, casually, where people drink, eat, we're there, we joke, as we say anecdotes, concerning the deceased". This emotional and spiritual connection to death may help explain behaviors that may appear irrational or non-compliant from a conventional disaster management perspective, such as refusing to evacuate. However, these choices can be understood as rational within a worldview that sees death as a divine destiny or a path to spiritual elevation.

Other observations reinforce this cultural frame. According to someone I met in Guadeloupe, they broadcast daily radio announcements of deaths of 3 minutes per person. The local added that death in Guadeloupe isn't as negative; we can die at any moment, but in Guadeloupe, particularly, everyone knows everyone. There's this connection between living and the dead through this communal consciousness: "When you live in a community system, living together, you feel concerned about what

happens to others". Beyond that, they stated that unlike us in the metropole who cry, they put on music, they celebrate, during the celebration of the dead, they come to decorate, dance, and eat with them. The different approach to death is also recognizable simply by observing the cemeteries, where they build colorful stones with photos and lights. All demonstrations toward the dead may reduce anxiety and heighten emotional resilience and acceptance, where death is seen as a natural part of life rather than something to be feared or avoided.

Furthermore, many Guadeloupeans interpret disasters and death as matters of fate, as participant 14 said: "It was written, it's destiny." This reflects a fatalistic perspective often linked to strong religious beliefs, which can reduce the perception of control over life-threatening situations. While such beliefs can enhance psychological resilience in daily life, they may also lead to a diminished response to official evacuation orders or other measures. As discussed in the previous chapter, many residents of Guadeloupe still believe that God decides everything. This belief can prevent them from relocating, as they feel they are under divine protection.

This chapter does not claim to offer a comprehensive or final explanation but instead lays the foundation for a promising theoretical direction, as these attitudes towards death may result in culturally rooted risk tolerance. Individuals who almost or do not fear death or who accept it more easily may not recognize the need to flee or prepare for disasters. However, those with a higher fear of death, a trait more prevalent in individualistic cultures found in the French metropole, for instance, may be more prone to react to risk due to fear and present behaviors of mobilities.

6.3 THE INFLUENCE OF NATURE

From my field research in Guadeloupe, I observed that for many individuals, nature is seen as a living, responsive force that observes, teaches, punishes, and ultimately restores its balance when disrupted. Disasters, for many, are not anomalies; they are part of a cyclical natural order that reflects deeper imbalances in the relationship between humans and the environment. This belief shapes how individuals experience, interpret, and prepare for disasters. As a result, disaster is not only a material disruption but also a moral and spiritual reckoning. It serves as a reminder that humanity must respect and adapt to the laws of nature rather than attempt to dominate them.

This perspective encourages an awareness of nature's signals, described as ecological literacy, developed through knowledge passed down through generations. Nature often warns us that, if we listen carefully, the environment indicates upcoming events. Many participants shared their experiences, noting that silence can be a significant signal. Participant 1 noted, "The calmer it is before, the more scared you are, the sea is very calm, there is no wind, no clouds, that's when you know it will hit hard. The calmer, the more it's gonna be violent." Others observed that birds and insects become quiet in the hours leading up to a cyclone. Participant 12 recalled how her grandmother taught her to notice the behavior of ants; when

ants took unfamiliar paths, it signaled that their nest was likely to be flooded and they needed to leave. Participant 2 echoed this observation, remembering how suddenly the birds and insects disappeared, and it was time to seek shelter. This calm before the storm can linger even afterward, as Participant 1 noted; it takes a few days for birds to start singing again. Participant 13 mentioned how “wildlife comes back, signaling it's over. They tell me I can go out, but only if I don’t see any animals or birds.” By protecting themselves, they also protect the citizens.

Indeed, animals, too, are seen as intuitive messengers. Many participants noted that domestic pets like cats and dogs often hide before disasters. Participant 11 emphasized how oxen could sense an oncoming storm and make warning noises, or how pelicans and frigate birds' distinctive behavior can announce incoming threats. Behaviors seen as instinctive responses to environmental changes show that people need to be more observant. Participant 10 explained that even fish can indicate upcoming storms. Certain fish species appear only during specific cycles, indicating changes in water temperature and flow, which provide essential signals for those who can identify them.

This knowledge is grounded in ancestral wisdom passed down through generations. Participant 4 mentioned that they were instructed and taught “peasant knowledge” lessons during their youth, a heritage passed down from elders who were deeply connected to the land. According to this participant, it was their job to observe the Earth. More than just a skill, nature conveys its legacy and secrets to those willing to pay attention. The moon's shape and color, the cloud cover at night, and the presence or absence of stars serve as valuable meteorological tools. The “water-toothed moon,” taught by elders to Participant 8 and Participant 13, suggests rainfall; a ring around the moon indicates moisture in the air. Additionally, Participant 13 notes that an abundance of lychee on fruit trees is seen as a sign of an impending disaster.

The sea functions like a living organism that we must learn to adapt to. In the documentary "Bad Times for the Planet: Guadeloupe's Fragile Beauty," one interviewee claims they can predict rain or storms simply by listening to the sounds of the sea. For those who live or work near the ocean—such as fishermen, sailors, and surfers—the rhythms of the sea speak a language of their own. Participant 7 explained that after a storm, they determine it is over by observing the sea; the movement is different. If the water remains brown or foamy, danger persists. Similarly, Participant 12 shared that their grandmother could read the wind, interpreting its strength, shape, sound, and scent. They expressed a fear of the wind, noting, “It’s not the strength; it’s in the writing of the wind—the way it touches our skin and the information it conveys”. They emphasized that we determine the wind's nature, whether it feels dangerous, melancholic, or evokes fear from past memories. These perceptions create a unique, sensory language that technology cannot replicate. She added: "We become one with nature; we are nature. Our bodies unconsciously warn us. Nature has its language, and when you understand it and

speak it yourself, you know how to respond and prepare for what it presents". As participant 2 stated, nature is the wisest being on Earth. If we respect and align with it, we have nothing to fear.

This relationship with nature is both practical and spiritual. Several participants described offering thanks to nature after surviving a storm, as Participant 2 expressed: "Thank you, universe, thank you, trees. We're spared." For Participant 14, the Earth is viewed as an entity with moods and memories: "This earth that shelters us has moments and itself in all its states, it's its own story…", almost as an alive entity, almost like an individual. Participant 13 cautioned that nature has become more violent due to human interference: "Man has been so eager to interfere with the functioning of nature that he's allowed nature to strengthen itself, to defend itself. And that's why all disaster-related phenomena have become more intense, dangerous, and deadly."

Participants expressed increasing concerns that traditional knowledge is fading. Urbanization and modernization have overshadowed these conventional ways of understanding the world. Participant 4 highlighted that the Antillais community once taught vital lessons about nature, but such knowledge is lost in urban areas. The value once placed on independence and self-sufficiency has diminished. Participant 13 expressed concern that "even scientists are overwhelmed but don't admit it." They pretend to have everything under control, yet they discreetly approach others for advice on best practices and then act as if the discoveries were their own. Additionally, they mentioned that they would handle things differently if it were up to them. Still, they have to follow directives from the government, which does not understand the island's needs**.** She adds, "With all the technology, we don't pay attention or care. People in urban areas rely on weather broadcasts," – although even in these areas, it is still possible to find signs, but people don't look. The Participant also lamented that we have lost the ability to interpret our dreams or bodily sensations. They argue that our bodies attempt to communicate and share the secrets of life and nature, yet we often rely on machines and have lost the ability to interpret natural signs. Nevertheless, community members continue to make efforts to share these important lessons with children.

Several participants framed disasters as physical events and a form of moral reckoning, suggesting that nature responds to human actions in meaningful ways. For Participant 9, disaster is "nature teaching us a lesson," while Participant 10 describes a cyclone as "nature speaking." Similarly, Participant 17 attributes agency to "Mother Nature," emphasizing her power to act independently, and Participant 18 asserts that "nature is stronger than men. It's up to us to adapt to nature, not the other way around."

Participant 12 reflected more philosophically, acknowledging how we often perceive nature as illogical, especially when destabilized by human lifestyles. "Nature is logical," they said, "but when it's thrown off balance by the way we live, anything can come from anywhere. Nature does what it wants, and even the best infrastructures can be destroyed in the snap of its fingers." For them, disaster reveals human fragility: "After a disaster, you realize you're nothing—just a small thing—and that nature always

reclaims its rights." As Participant 14 succinctly said, "The earth lives, it expresses itself." Participant 13 added, "It's up to humans to serve nature, not the other way around. This doesn't mean nature never serves us, but we must respect it. No matter what we do, the cyclone comes, the water cannot be stopped. Nature has its way of functioning. We shouldn't try to control it. If you reconcile with it, things will be fine."

This sense of connection is not only moral or metaphysical but also physical. Several participants described the human body as a mirror of the planet. Participant 4 explained: "Our body is a planet. If we observe our body, we understand our errors—these are reflected in the earth. When there's imbalance, it manifests. The Earth takes care of itself. When there's a war, there's an earthquake on the other side. When we disrespect nature's balance, it rebalances itself. She reclaims her rights. [...] When you don't know yourself, you don't know the Earth." She emphasized the gradual nature of this understanding: humanity must come to terms with the coexistence of shadow and light, abundance and scarcity. These forces clash to restore balance. "Cyclones are the echo of human movements. When there's imbalance, nature reminds us—a flap of her wings can sweep away what people hold most dear." This deeper awareness shifts one's relationship with the natural world. As Participant 7 observed, living through disasters doesn't necessarily make you afraid, but it makes you understand what nature is capable of.

In this worldview, disasters are not random accidents but responses and corrections to imbalance. When humans become disconnected from the environment, the Earth responds. My field observations support these testimonies. In Sainte-Anne, I helped a woman close her shop. Noticing the rising grass, she quickly recognized the changing weather, showing that Guadeloupeans still know how to read nature's signs in their daily lives. Despite the increasing modernization, some still strive to adopt traditional practices. For instance, in Sainte-Rose, I observed women preparing fish by hand, and in Bois Jolan, a man cleaning the beach using oxen. Many Guadeloupeans want to reject modern practices and return to local, organic, and pesticide-free production instead of relying on imports. In the face of globalization, they have come to understand the value of the heritage passed down from previous generations, which emphasizes interpreting, communicating, and living in harmony with nature.

What emerges from these narratives is a philosophy that views disaster not as something to conquer, but as a reality to anticipate, interpret, and respect. Nature plays a central role in how disasters are perceived and responded to. A population that sees disasters as a natural part of life is likely to believe these events are common occurrences that must be accepted and endured, which may lead to the conclusion that efforts to respond to disasters are futile. Additionally, people who live in harmony with nature learn to recognize the signs of danger and impending disasters. Thanks to ancestral knowledge passed down through generations, they are often better equipped to prepare for and confront these challenges. Ultimately, the majority of Guadeloupeans I interviewed believe that humanity must face the

consequences of damaging the world and degrading nature, that it is people's duty to restore balance to this equilibrium, and that we cannot simply walk away from this responsibility.

Summary box: Faith and Fate

Personal and collective beliefs shaped by spiritual traditions and cultural heritage are crucial for understanding how individuals perceive and respond to risk. The concepts of immobilities and mobilities, particularly in disaster response, must be reconsidered through a cultural lens, where decisions are driven by how communities fundamentally understand life, fate, and death. These belief systems are not merely abstract concepts; they encompass experiences that influence behaviors such as immobilities and risk acceptance. This chapter demonstrates that faith and fate, whether expressed through religious or spiritual beliefs, attitudes toward nature and death, or as interconnected forces that one must engage with to appreciate the island's valuable aspects, ancestral connections, and spiritual depths, play a significant role in shaping everyday decision-making and interpretations of disasters. This culturally embedded approach to risk reveals that Guadeloupeans do not merely endure disaster; they navigate it through the lens of heritage, identity, and belief.

7 ROOTS IN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

This chapter examines how the past influences the present, connecting individuals and communities to places imbued with memory, significance, and resilience even when those places are exposed to risk. Understanding why people remain in disaster-prone areas requires an examination of the deep-rooted emotional, cultural, and historical ties to their place. First, I will introduce the concept of geographical legacies, which reflects the acceptance of certain hostile phenomena. Then, based on previous studies I discuss how the decision to stay is often influenced by a deep connection to the land or shaped by colonial legacies. Adding to this literature, I contribute by highlighting how identity, shaped by historical colonial legacies, fosters a strong sense of belonging that Guadeloupeans cannot find elsewhere. This connection to their island reinforces the desire to remain in a place that respects and values their culture and identity.

7.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LEGACIES

As one approaches the Caribbean region from above, the distinct cultural and biodiversity differences from mainland France become immediately apparent. From the fine white sands, volcanoes, turquoise waters, and waterfalls, anyone can witness the uniqueness of this archipelago, which is envied by the world. Guadeloupe itself welcomed more than 1.2 million tourists in 2023 (Marie-Claire, 2024). Guadeloupe seems like a paradise, but a more complex reality exists beneath. In daily life, Guadeloupeans face regular water and electricity outages, higher food costs, etc. And every day, they face the threat of disasters, yet living there means accepting those risks; they are deeply intertwined with the island, they are its legacy, a constant, its identity.

While on the island, I noticed that the wind here feels different and carries distinct intentions compared to what I'm used to. During my first week, I experienced strong gusts and storms, with a uniquely darkening sky and swaying trees, creating a heavy atmosphere that felt ancient and deserving of respect or fear. Here, disasters are not exceptions; they are part of the rhythm of life. Participant 16 summarized this normalization perfectly: “It’s become the norm. Like a Breton who lives by water, there are storms all the time. Actually, it’s part of it. For example, in Canada, 30 cm of snow or an ice storm won’t scare us, whereas in France, 1 cm of snow and people panic.” They add that every place has its own thing happening; it is what it is. In Guadeloupe, facing climatic hazards is an integrated phenomenon, even integrated into the cultural identity of the island.

What might seem unbearable for others is accepted here because it must be, almost as an underlying fate, as a regular and significant aspect of their lives and cultural identity. Participant 9 offered a broader philosophical take: “We are in a risky territory. There is no safe zone. But it’s the planet, it’s life, it’s the risk, it’s the environment... The Earth is not made for us. It has its beauties, but that too is from elsewhere; it existed before us. And it will most certainly exist after us.” There is a deep awareness that danger is

inherent to life, especially in Guadeloupe. As they insisted, “We're on a beautiful island with a fantastic connection to nature. In 5 minutes, we're in the forest, we're at the sea. There's always the downside: it's an area with its dangers; life is dangerous.” Yet no one I spoke to viewed this as a reason to leave—quite the opposite. Participant 14 said clearly: “I’m always aware we’re on a land with a high risk potential. But that’s not what will make us leave.” And again: “Paradise has a price, which is accepting that it’s a land that can also be dangerous, even for us, at a given moment.” That danger is part of what makes the land sacred. Its unpredictability is part of its value, and people recover, rebuild, and persist.

For many, this coexistence with the natural world and its extremes is not just tolerated, it’s cherished. Participant 1 painted this duality as “pink and black.”: “It’s painful to say to yourself, ‘My island is beautiful, and it’s being damaged by these cyclones.’ But for the beauty of the island... when there’s nothing, it’s incredible. People don’t settle down, don’t live in the moment, but here we do, we like being able to stop. To be in the moment.” And that moment, as ephemeral as it may be, is worth everything and cyclones are a reminder to appreciate the pink parts more than the black parts, focus on the positive, and beautiful aspects of life that we have been given, that have been built for centuries by previous generations and how some even fought for it.

Living in Guadeloupe means living with a constant, ambient vulnerability. But people do not live in fear. They live in awareness. Participant 8 compared the disaster season to winter in France, which is unpleasant, expected, but temporary. “It's seasonal. You know that after that, it's over, and that's it, life goes on. I don't think it impacts us that much.” Even if you lose your house and belongings, as the respondent said, it is annoying yet not shocking, as if it were part of the deal for anyone living on the island. Participant 5 framed it more bluntly: “ When I always talk about Guadeloupe to family or friends, I say, It’s not paradise. Paradise is undermined, you have to know that.” They referred to the cemetery being destroyed. Even the sacred isn’t safe. And yet, even with this fragility, the connection to the land is unshakable. There is no illusion here; it is a choice, a decision to remain. Participant 17 shared their mindset: they feel ready to face whatever nature brings because disasters are part of life on the island.

In Guadeloupe, remaining in high-risk areas is often a deliberate, culturally grounded expression of identity, belonging, and heritage. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic activity are not viewed as exceptional disruptions, but as events that have always been present, part of what it means to inhabit this land, woven into the landscape, memory, seasonal cycles and geographical legacies. This acceptance is not passive resignation, but a resilient stance rooted in a deep connection to Guadeloupe’s heritage, whether its lands, ancestors, or community. Risk becomes the price of living in a place marked by profound beauty and cultural significance. Adopting a fatalistic point of view- what must happen on the island will happen, just like it always has. It reflects a belief that nature in Guadeloupe both gives and takes, and that living here means accepting its gifts and dangers. Guadeloupeans navigate their vulnerability not despite, but through their heritage.

7.2 PLACE ATTACHMENT

In Guadeloupe, place attachment may be crucial in understanding residents' immobilities, as they often choose to stay in disaster-prone areas despite the risks. Attachment extends beyond the physical value of a house or land, and, by extension, can also include an attachment to the sea; it is deeply rooted in emotions, identity, and history. On this island, homes are often seen as symbols of personal and familial heritage, where generations have lived, struggled, and thrived. For many of those interviewed, staying is about survival and maintaining a sense of pride in their ability to endure and rebuild.

The home and land become a refuge, a place of comfort, even when natural hazards threaten their safety. Participant 3 emphasized feeling attached to Guadeloupe because they recognize themselves in the island and feel rooted. This is echoed by Participant 1: "There's family, attachment […] the comfort of life […] the land, they already have land, the family can build the house." Similarly, Participant 14 highlighted the historical and familial continuity: "People are very attached to their neighborhood, to their section, to everything it represents: history, family, people who have been around each other forever. […] Being an island means that people all hang out, we all know each other more or less. As it's a village life, we're a little bit attached to the area where we are. So it's true that people don't necessarily want to move, "

This emotional bond to home and place can lead people to prioritize their connection to their land over safety concerns. Many residents' homes are not just physical structures but symbols of identity, pride, familial heritage, and ancestral history. Participant 2 added: "They're attached to all of this. And it's all part of this whole. We can't leave the family home […] They take the risk of staying. No cyclone will make me leave Guadeloupe. I'll leave when I decide to leave." This emotional intensity is often linked to histories of dispossession, with the refusal to leave acting as resistance to spatial control and loss of dignity. Participant 1 also emphasized inheritance: "There's also the inheritance aspect. They inherited the house."

Despite the risks, residents often take pride in their ability to rebuild after each disaster, viewing their survival and resilience as integral to their identity. Rebuilding becomes a cultural practice, reinforcing place attachment. Participant 17 stated: "If I judge that my home is unsafe because of an unusual phenomenon, I will seek shelter elsewhere. However, I will never leave my island; I will help rebuild it." A sentiment echoed by participant 4, as she stated she won't leave her island and would rather stay and help. She mentioned a feeling of owing to a place that gave her everything, and being out of love with the people and the island. She would rather rebuild the island; losing a house is a challenging experience, yet it doesn't mean you've lost everything. However, if you choose to leave, you will. For her, as for others, rebuilding is more than infrastructure; it's about maintaining identity and social cohesion on their land rather than anywhere else. Participant 4 said she wouldn't leave the island because

she feels a deep love and sense of duty: “I feel really close. I love these people. I wouldn't feel like that in France. In France, we're lost.”

The trauma of potential relocation is also deeply spiritual. Participant 12 poignantly expressed: “The house is the soul of the family, it's the entrance, it's the place where we allow people to enter and not enter, it's the place where we take refuge, where there are memories […] once there is a catastrophe we have lost everything.” Even reconstruction doesn’t fully restore this loss: “Inevitably the trauma is there since we know that we will not be able to go back in time, there is no history […] We build the house, but the house is soulless, empty. There is nothing because everything that was before has disappeared.” For many, the loss of the home equates to the erasure of identity and history.

Immobility is often a deliberate decision, shaped by the irreplaceability of local cultural life. In this context, participant 3 emphasizes the importance of maintaining the network they have established through work, friendships, and other connections. They highlight that knowing the locals and feeling accepted and recognized on the island significantly influences their willingness to stay, as rebuilding this network elsewhere would require considerable time. Participant 1 highlights the significant role of attachment in decision-making. Many struggle to leave because they have invested so much in their jobs and experiences in Guadeloupe. This attachment also comes from a sense of connection to belongings. When present during disasters, individuals are more likely to care for their equipment. Additionally, familiar surroundings tend to be less anxiety-provoking for people. Sociodemographic factors such as age, education, family structure, and asset ownership also play a role. Older adults often prefer to stay due to deeper emotional or historical ties to a place.

For some, staying is an act of agency and defiance. In the documentary Bad Times for the Planet: Guadeloupe, Fragile Beauty, a woman facing relocation said: “No, I've always lived here. You have to put yourself in my shoes. [...] My family has been here forever. I've never been afraid to stay here. It's the state that's afraid of me staying here. I'm not afraid. Things happen as they should, and that's it.” Even with financial compensation and the offer of a new home, where she could be the official owner, she resisted leaving, citing generational ties, claiming that her grandfather built the house and that her late mother’s house, along with her brother’s, is located on this land. People resist leaving, insisting that they have been there for generations, and that their lifestyle habits go back over a few decades.

Some participants acknowledged the dangers but framed departure as a temporary or last-resort measure. Participant 14 described the emotional aftermath of disaster: “For me, it always gives me a little anxiety because when you've experienced it once, frankly, you never want to experience it again. Even if we rebuild, it will never be the same country, neighborhood, or village. The trees you knew before are no longer there. You have to mourn what your island was like just 24 hours before. 24 hours later, there's nothing left. Be happy to see all that there, standing there, because you know that at some point, it could be completely razed. And you'll have to start from scratch and rebuild.” This sense of mourning

underscores the intensity of her connection to her island, yet even when everything is gone, the desire to stay and rebuild remains.

Interestingly, for some, Guadeloupe is not just a home but a place of personal transformation. Participant 8, born in mainland France, described their experience in Guadeloupe as life-changing: “This is my life here. Because what I do here makes sense to me. And over there, I never found my place. There was no meaning at all to my life, you see. I was doing stupid things. With Guadeloupe, now, I have meaning and manage to help people […] I have three children who live here too, so... I'm attached. I speak Creole fluently. I live with Guadeloupeans.” For them, Guadeloupe represents a reinvention of self, anchored in cultural integration and meaningful contribution.

Yet not all participants share the same unwavering attachment. Participant 2 reflected critically on the intensity of these ties, “They don't want to leave their homes. They're attached to their homes. They're attached to their families. They're attached to their communities. They're attached to their land. It's impressive how attached many are to that.” Expressing disbelief at how deeply some are connected to what they perceive as a land of dispossession: “I say that because I'm connected to everything and attached to nothing. It leaves me speechless: how attached they can be to the place where they were deported.” Although he would not leave the island, he questions the logic of such strong emotional ties to a land with a painful colonial history. This tension illustrates how views on place attachment and mobility can diverge sharply even within a shared community.

Ultimately, the choice to remain in Guadeloupe’s vulnerable zones is not merely a matter of denial or imprudence. It reflects a deep entanglement of identity, history, culture, and emotional belonging. Residents weigh the physical risks of staying against the psychological and cultural costs of leaving, and for many, the latter far outweighs the former. Home is not just a shelter but a vessel of memory and meaning for them, inherited by most. With the pressure of disasters and relocation, understanding the depth and complexity of place attachment in Guadeloupe is essential. Proposing physical safety is insufficient without recognizing the social, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of home. In Guadeloupe, staying put represents more than a choice; it is a declaration of identity, continuity, resistance, and connection with ancestral history.

7.3 COLONIAL LEGACIES

Based on both literature and interview results, Guadeloupe’s colonial past continues to influence residents' perspectives on and responses to disasters, contributing to their sense of immobility to varying extents.

The symbolic and metaphysical reading of hurricanes as a symbol of vengeance still persists in local memory and oral traditions. Some participants emphasized these legends, noting that they were transcended for a time but are losing their legitimacy. Participant 2 explains, "The Senegalese

grandfather, the wise Senegalese, says when there's a cyclone in the Caribbean, it's the ancestor taking revenge on the slave trader." He continues: "Cyclones, the gentle winds that start in Cape Verde, in Senegal, sometimes become dangerous here in Guadeloupe. It's a parable to say that from our ancestors to today, we've always understood that there was a wolf somewhere. And that between our ancestors and today, we continue to denounce it, even if we continue to be beaten up. The Rastas repeated the story of cyclones as revenge for the settlers. They always think like that; they don't change and go around in circles. The ancestor speaks to us of revenge, of deportation, of being enslaved. But otherwise, in Guadeloupe itself, ancestrality is recent." The participant specified that although they continually share these stories, they know they are parables. This highlights the persistence of cultural memory as a political and spiritual framework for interpreting the recurring environmental trauma. Even when residents recognize these metaphorical ideas, they still hold significant meaning and power.

In addition to shaping the significance of disasters, Guadeloupe's colonial past also affects how residents conceptualize their immobilities. Participant 7 captures this resistance to relocation: "I don't think I'd leave the island after a hurricane, firstly because of family history. Since childhood, my grandmother has said we must keep the land to build on. My mother and I are the only ones in Guadeloupe." The land itself becomes an inherited obligation and a site of historical resilience, transcending the family's values. For many families, such land was acquired through ancestral fight and must be kept in their respect: "To preserve my grandmother's heritage, they fought to have it; not everyone had it. They fought, the Antillais state, their family, and they didn't have any land. It was family land; my mother had land." This renders the thought of abandoning it unacceptable and disrespectful to what their ancestors have endured and lost in their lives to be able to have something on their own. This land bears the marks of colonial resistance, deepening their attachment to their land. Additionally, Participant 7 remembers how, back then, the land used to be a cotton plantation and that their ancestor hid in the burlap sacks filled with cotton during a cyclone, emphasizing their resilience.

Despite hurricanes and coastal erosion, many prefer to stay. This attitude is especially significant in communities built within the "50 pas géométriques," a colonial zone of state-owned land along the coast that continues to host thousands of informal housing units. The vulnerability of Guadeloupe's coastal population is the result of deeply embedded historical dynamics. Participant 7 describes this issue firsthand: "They don't have permission to be there. They've been there for years, even generations. They can't regularize their situation because they have to pay." The legal obstacles include high administrative costs, land purchase fees, and compliance with urban regulations, all of which disproportionately burden poor families. Moreover, these procedures often require fluency in formal French, a barrier for many residents in predominantly Creole-speaking areas. These historical legacies shape spatial inequality and psychological ties to the land. Participant 13 embodies this attachment: "I was born in Guadeloupe. My background, experiences, ties, family, and philosophy of life. It is the land of my ancestors, from the Amerindians to the arrival of the slaves. We, in Guadeloupe, have all that in our veins." She emphasized

a distinct Guadeloupean identity rooted in a complex, mixed heritage: “We are not African, we are Guadeloupeans, from several ethnic groups. Amerindian, African, Asian, European, that's it. Where do you want us to go?” For such individuals, migration is an erasure of their past, identity, and legacy.

Participant 14 questions immobilities in a distinctive way, when talking about the energy and fun Guadeloupeans put into carnival, a tradition stemming from slavery’s commemoration, but not in other matters: “I'm questioning myself. What is pushing them to such immobility, even if it's culturally, perhaps the legacy of slavery.” Herself, born in the metropole, she adds: “I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't enjoy life; having fun is wonderful too, but All that energy just to have fun... when you have a country to build to keep alive, and to do for your children, for your descendants, for yourself, that concerns me.” Participant 14 suggested that the cultural and historical legacy of slavery may explain a hesitance to invest entirely in collective development “people of African descent aren't going to want to work because they have the after-effects of slavery. If you love your country, if you want things to evolve, you can't just stay stuck on that”. Contrasting Afro-descendant communities with Indo-Guadeloupeans, “There are other people who came to Guadeloupe and who did things differently, The Indians, the Hindu descendants, also arrived in rather special circumstances, since they came to ‘recover’ the work of the slaves, since the slaves had been freed, but for modest sums. And yet, these people were extremely resilient and remained in Guadeloupe. They’re invested. And today, it's the biggest fortunes, after the bequests (the descendants of slaves).” This highlights internal debates within Guadeloupean society over how historical trauma translates into present-day action or inaction, introducing another form of immobility.

In short, the perception and experience of disasters in Guadeloupe are inseparable from its colonial heritage. As I was told during my housing search: “The Antillais and Guadeloupeans are deeply rooted in their history, their colonial past.” Although my findings did not validate the theory that people view disasters as forces of colonial justice, as only one participant mentioned it and emphasized its metaphorical meaning, colonial legacies are still relevant, as land remains an anchor of identity, ancestry, resistance, and hope.

7.4 GUADELOUPEAN IDENTITY

When asked about their origins, a Guadeloupean born and raised on the island will not say they are French; instead, they will say they are Guadeloupean. Individuals from mainland France are more likely to identify as French. In my interviews, all six respondents born in mainland France described their origins as French, European, or mentioned their department in the metropole. And 11 out of 12 people born in Guadeloupe or the Caribbean declared their origins as Guadeloupean, Antillais, or Caribbean. Only the participant whose parents were both from mainland France stood out by declaring herself French without mentioning Guadeloupe. Children with one Guadeloupean parent and one parent from mainland France mentioned both.

Since the period of slavery and continuing to the present day, Guadeloupeans have remained heavily under the control of mainland France. Participant 14 points out that everything in Guadeloupe is imported, forcing prioritization of French and European products over those from America, despite lower transport costs. Additionally, Guadeloupe lacks factories and businesses, except for bananas, rum, vanilla, etc. In Guadeloupe, water and electricity outages are common, prices in supermarkets are higher than on the mainland, and public transport systems are also inefficient. As Participant 2 puts it people from the metropole think that they receive plenty of help "I'll tell them one thing: come live with us for 15 days, not come to Club Med for tourism, but come live with us for 15 days and we can discuss the water outages, the power outages". Guadeloupeans strongly feel like their governments neglect them. The repeated absence or failure of state services across centuries has generated a culture of self-reliance on the island. As many interviewees noted, Guadeloupeans cannot depend on the authorities. They must rely on themselves and their communities, managing crises with whatever tools they have. This creates a strong sense of independence born of necessity; a resilience forged in the void left by failed governance.

In many discussions, participants emphasized their distrust in authorities for conveying information or alerting in case of disasters, as institutions had flaws in communicating and managing these situations in the past. The feeling of isolation of the population is reinforced by the fact that external help, when it does come, is often delayed, insufficient, or misaligned with local needs. During Hurricane Marilyn, for example, the alert was issued too late, allegedly because, according to participant 9, the prefect's wife was flying in, and the school remained open even during an orange alert, putting children at serious risk. As participant 7 claimed: "The prefecture said not to pick them up; they were safe at school, but the school was flooded; they weren't safe." These behaviors often lead to a lack of trust in authorities and their warning systems. For example, participant 14 mentioned that they sometimes are alerted of imminent strong threats, only to find out later that it was insignificant. Conversely, there are instances when they are informed about something trivial, which then unexpectedly escalates, causing confusion and a potential loss of credibility. The irony was that for some, cyclone real support often came not from France, but from "the Americans" and neighboring islands, who restored electricity long before the French state intervened, according to participant 5. By failing to relay information about imminent dangers, they can create a high level of temporary vulnerability during the few decisive hours preceding disasters. The difficulties encountered in crisis management have been linked to certain imperfections in weather forecasts. The extent of the floods, with a return period of more than one hundred years, caused in Basse-Terre by the rains of Hurricane Marilyn was underestimated, because the cumulative effect of its rainfall and that of Luis, which occurred a few days earlier, had not been taken into account (Pagney Benito Espinal, 2020).

One common feeling for all participants is that the needs of the overseas territories are poorly represented and that they cannot be comprehended by people in mainland France; only someone born

and raised in the Antilles should be the spokesperson for these populations**.** However, even now, they continue to elect people who lack the necessary qualifications and expertise for this role. The disconnection between administrative officials and local realities exacerbates this feeling of alienation. Participant 9 describes prefects arriving from mainland France and staying for 3-4 years before leaving again, as arrogant, uninformed, and dismissive of local expertise. “They aren't from Guadeloupe, they don't listen to what people tell them here, they're always sure of their facts, and naturally, they make bad decisions.” He adds that they are people coming from the mainland, often unfamiliar with such disasters and unprepared for the specific challenges of island life. These officials are supposed to trigger alerts, but usually do so either too early or too late, causing confusion and mistrust. Geographical remoteness may have once justified these lapses, but such excuses no longer hold in the age of technological advancement. Aid is deployed rapidly elsewhere, so why not here? They prioritize economic concerns, maintaining stores open. Participant 4, reflecting on incompetence, claims that they often bring students, or individuals who know nothing about Guadeloupe, and make unreasonable requests, and advocate the need to include more local people in these processes.

Participant 6, born in the metropole, claims he is unsure about staying, as he does not feel very attached to the land. However, he clarifies that he will not leave because of disasters. In general, expats, or 'métros', come with idealized visions of the island but are frequently disillusioned by the hardships and leave, unable to adapt to the Guadeloupean way of life. As Participant 1 puts it: “It’s often the expats who, when they’re here, finally understand the reality of life on an island. Every year, you must be strong and confront this reality. However, many expats struggle to face it fully.” Or, I personally, heard women from the metropole talking about how they “expected it to be more heavenly.” Their departure further reveals the depth of the identity crisis: they don't have this Guadeloupean identity, and they often fail to gain the trust of the locals. Participant 10 addresses this topic explicitly: “If you leave, you don’t know who you are, you can’t trust yourself, and you don’t have to be afraid to stay at home and experience it.”

This attachment depth is rooted in centuries of historical ties. One cannot simply erase, nor should one, hundreds of years of racism, colonialism, and systemic exclusion. Slavery is not merely a historical fact; it shapes the past, and still influences and dictates the present and future situations and experiences of Guadeloupeans. What seems a distant fact to the metropole remains painfully close in the Antilles. What is the legacy of the Guadeloupeans, whether positive or negative, doesn’t reflect, not even remotely, that of the mainland French. As participant 9 claims: “The people who left Guadeloupe aren't Guadeloupeans. They're people who came for a visit. No one left Guadeloupe because it's in your DNA,” adding that all Guadeloupeans know that there are cyclones, that you can count on your neighbors, Guadeloupeans stay and rebuild. They rebuild because that’s what Guadeloupeans have always done; they overcome challenges, in a way, slavery was the biggest disaster of them all.

Participant 12 came back to Guadeloupe after living for some time in the mainland: “I felt a strong inner calling to return home, I embraced my culture, this calling was powerful, often bringing up feelings of melancholy and sadness,” claiming that she felt torn in the metropole and being caught in cultures that she didn’t belong to. This "pain of identity," as Participant 4 described it, is persistent. Guadeloupeans often seek a sense of belonging by turning to their African roots, ancestral religions, and spiritual practices, efforts that are both profoundly spiritual and overtly political. Reclaiming identity becomes synonymous with reclaiming autonomy. Meanwhile, those who live or have lived in mainland France often face a deep internal conflict. Participant 13 shared how she felt constant tension and isolation: “They are French, but they realize that they are not.” In the metropole, they are often reminded they are not white, not quite French, and treated as foreigners. And when they return to Guadeloupe, they are sometimes treated like forgotten strangers.

Ultimately, Guadeloupeans possess a distinct pride, a legacy inherited from ancestors who fought tirelessly not to be seen as objects or commodities, but as human beings with dignity, agency, and traditions. As many participants expressed, to abandon this identity would be to relinquish something earned with great difficulty. Why should they leave Guadeloupe to return to a place that never truly accepted them? Why must they tear away part of themselves to adopt another identity that never fits? So, when you're from Guadeloupe or the Caribbean, you hold your culture dear, as do your roots. A Guadeloupean has achieved and acquired it not without difficulty. With their ancestors, they fought against discriminatory ideologies, acts of hatred, and deeply rooted inequalities. They don’t simply wait for storms; they take proactive steps to prepare. They stock up on water, gasoline, and candles and build concrete houses to withstand severe weather. This approach isn’t just a coping mechanism; it reflects their refusal to rely on failing systems. It's not merely about survival; it’s about asserting their sovereignty. Participant 4, born in the metropole, claims that Guadeloupeans are superiorly intelligent and have superiority over mainland French, and their resilience and legacy could be an example for the entire world.

Summary box: Roots in the Past and the Present

Guadeloupeans have long struggled for recognition and rights, shaped by a geographic and colonialist legacy, and a distant, often indifferent government. Systemic racism and a deep sense of abandonment continue to echo through generations, underscoring the pressing need for greater autonomy and self-governance. Self-reliance is a survival strategy and a defining element of Guadeloupean identity and cultural heritage. The lack of reliable state support, coupled with the perception of being treated as outsiders in the Metropole, reinforces feelings of alienation. Guadeloupeans fully reconnect with their identity and aspirations when power resides in their own hands and when they find themselves on their land. The enduring resilience and relocation resistance of Guadeloupeans stand as a powerful testament to reclamation and the pursuit of self-determination.

8 SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES – THE FUTURE OF IM/MOBILITIES

In this final section of my results, I examine how could im/mobilities evolve in the future in Guadeloupe. Diverse claims revealed throughout my research in Guadeloupe tend to suggest that people stay because there is no viable alternative elsewhere, further reinforcing the desire to remain in a familiar context. I will conclude my results by exploring the generational differences revealed across the testimonies, challenging the notion that the current immobilities associated with heritage will be perpetuated in the long term. Ultimately, these two parts will be further detailed in a broader discussion in the following chapter.

8.1 NOWHERE SAFE

The concept of mobility and immobility in the context of disasters revolves around the idea of an "elsewhere." When faced with the dangers of climate disasters, conflicts, and other risks, a mobile person seeks to escape these threats and relocate to a safer area, aiming to reduce their risk of becoming a victim, with the hope of renewal and safety.

In the past, migration has often been a fluid process influenced by a variety of factors beyond climate. Historically, people have moved for numerous reasons, seeking stability and opportunities in new territories. However, it is increasingly recognized that climate change has added a layer of complexity to this mobility, with migration not being a linear process but involving various stages of mobility, immobility, and reorientation (Schapendonk, 2020). Recently, the assurance of finding stability through migration has become less certain. For example, leaving a flood-prone area may now result in encountering other climate-related threats, such as cyclones, heatwaves, or additional accumulating risks in the new location.

For instance, Guadeloupeans are aware that nature is unpredictable, and a hurricane can rapidly intensify, increasing from category 4 to 5. Everyone was able to explain to me the dangers they face; everyone knows the science behind the role of nature in translating these phenomena, as well as how they are expressed and how to prepare for them. The danger persists and can intensify, but it remains known. Due to the repetition of hazards, and with clear and precise knowledge of their geographic and climatic vulnerability each year, Guadeloupeans prepare, improve, and innovate; it's part of life. During an interview, a respondent compared disasters to snow in Canada. The phenomenon is so normalized that we know how to recognize it, prepare for it, and recover from it. As a result, danger seems to be in control in this territory, whereas it is not in others; it appears completely insane to take the risk of losing one's bearings. It is better to face a recognized danger rather than an unknown threat. One seems in one's hands; the other seems elusive.

This conviction is echoed across the testimonies gathered in Guadeloupe. Participant 9 declared, "I'm not going to leave home... disasters are increasing all over the planet. Where am I going to leave? Cyclones are arriving in Europe now. There is no solution anywhere. It's a lie to believe that I'm going to leave the waterway and go to another place where it will be completely safe. No, it's not true." Similarly, Participant 14 shared, "I don't have the impression that any places in the world are completely safe either... We really see more disasters in Europe. Maybe, twenty years ago, we would have said to ourselves that we would be safer in France. […] they're not better off than us. Almost worse even." Participant 12 compared these phenomena to a sickness, stating that the rest of the world, including places like India, is sick. For many, like Participant 18, "changing location does not mean escaping natural risks, but simply facing other types of threats." Participant 7 observed, "They're experiencing what we used to experience here... The currents and phenomena are moving, it's much calmer here than in Europe."

Others, like Participants 1 and 2, observed increasing shifts in climate dynamics: hurricane seasons stretching into December, stronger and more frequent cyclones, rising concerns about seismic and tsunami risks, and increased fear of infrastructural inadequacy. Participant 13 noted that "they often head towards us and deviate," expressing a sense of both vulnerability and perceived protection. Participant 11 drew attention to seaweed proliferation as the most significant growing concern. At the same time, Participant 6 discussed coral bleaching and rising sea temperatures above 30 °c.

These reflections encompassed a shared perception: Guadeloupe, though increasingly exposed, is familiar. It is home. As Participant 12 emphasized, "We, compared to the rest of the world, I think it's okay." The sentiment is not denial but realism grounded in preparedness and observation. While Participant 2 claims that they are lucky in Guadeloupe, Participant 13 even considers Guadeloupe blessed, claiming that every country has its share of disasters, but they are less intense in Guadeloupe. As a result, danger seems to be controlled in Guadeloupe and doesn’t seem to be the case in other territories. It is better to face a recognized danger rather than an unknown threat. One seems in one’s hands, the other seems uncontrollable.

Residents accept that climate change is altering the rhythm of life: more rain (P13), heavier Lent (P3), hotter temperatures (as remarked by a woman in a restaurant). But Guadeloupeans trust their capacity to adapt, because they always have. As Participant 4 said succinctly, "Disasters are an integral part of everything on the planet, no more so on this island than elsewhere." It would, therefore, also make no sense to abandon one's culture, loved ones, and ties for a semblance of security elsewhere. “Nowhere safe” also reflects the importance of maintaining one's roots and the folly of abandoning one's identity. With danger everywhere, it's better to stay where life still has meaning for you. Some have mentioned that they wouldn't leave their ancestral land for anything, as they want to honor and maintain their

heritage because it's part of who they are. Facing disasters and remaining immobile is worth the cost if they can keep these commitments.

Ultimately, the concept of "nowhere safe" reflects a certain logic: if risk is omnipresent, it is better to confront it where one feels a sense of belonging. In such environments, coping mechanisms are woven into the social and cultural fabric, and the community's collective knowledge has transformed danger into a form of routine resilience. Thus, the climatic hazards that once prompted people to migrate can be controlled, leading to immobilities. They may also seem less significant now in the face of the increased frequency and intensity faced by the rest of the world. Why should I move towards more uncertainty? Why should I abandon everything and migrate? Isn't it preferable to deal with constant, familiar phenomena that Guadeloupeans know how to measure, rather than migrating and confronting unknown hazards that they are unaccustomed to? Wouldn't that situation be more dangerous and present more vulnerabilities? Even if I live in a vulnerable place, it is up to me, my island, and my department to adapt, to rebuild if necessary, and to evolve. If the price I must pay to preserve my identity, heritage, and culture is to face these disasters, I am ready to take the risk. In the face of growing uncertainty, immobilities may provide deeper preparedness.

8.2 GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

During my fieldwork in Guadeloupe, I interviewed individuals from various age groups, including among younger generations. Their perspectives were vital for understanding how heritage is transmitted within families and communities over time. A key objective was to study whether younger Guadeloupeans' views resonate with their elders, as this alignment could play a crucial role in preserving their legacy, especially concerning previously studied factors and their visions for the future.

The choices made by younger individuals regarding their island, whether to confront the risks it presents or to seek opportunities elsewhere, are crucial. Their reasons for potentially leaving and overall attitudes are essential for comprehending how values and traditions are maintained or altered across generations. In a society where culture, heritage, and adaptation to natural hazards have traditionally been shared, the insights of the younger population are significant. Ultimately, their views will influence the ongoing dynamics of im/mobilities, identity, and resilience in Guadeloupe.

A recurring theme in these interviews is the generational gap in how individuals perceive, prepare for, and react to environmental risks. Older respondents often demonstrate resilience when facing cyclones and other hazards. This cultural legacy, built on repeated exposure and communal adaptation, pushes them to remain on their island. However, younger participants don’t seem to perpetuate this wish to stay. For instance, participant 1 noted that they left for their studies: “But if it weren't for studies, I would have left anyway because I admit that it still affects me. All these changes affect me. It pisses me off to put my whole life into a loan, into something, to have a house and have it destroyed. You can too easily

lose everything you've built. And that's too heartbreaking. That's too hard." This statement captures a shift across generations. While elders often speak of adapting to danger as a necessary trade-off for staying in one's home, the younger generation increasingly views the drawbacks more critically when comparing prices and benefits. Their aspirations are tied to the possibility of safety, stability, and personal achievement, often imagined outside the island.

Another major factor is the generational reliance on technology, with traditional knowledge systems gradually turning obsolete. One older participant (P2) regretted how younger generations are digitally dependent and seem unequipped to navigate life without these tools: "The new generation, without a phone, without internet for a month, without electricity ... they're stuck... I think that those people will leave Guadeloupe." He mentioned that they depend entirely on these technologies and couldn't face the reality of being without electricity for weeks. According to him, they fail to understand that a phone is useless compared to flashlights and batteries. Although parents continue to teach their children the proper actions to take when a disaster is announced, these lessons are gradually forgotten.

This reflects a deeper issue - that younger Guadeloupeans may lack practical survival skills, like recognizing natural signals or coping with the aftermath of disasters. As participant 8 claimed: "Yeah, there's a certain kind of fatalism, let's say, about that, especially among the older generation. The younger generation, they don't give a damn... It's not my kids who go up on the roof and yell; I have one who's 28, and there's another who's 24. If there's a cyclone, it's me who risks my life up there. I think there's going to have a gap between the generations, it's quite huge. They're so in their comfort zones because they're not going to have Internet, oh my, how are we going to do it, I know we really have a job to do to pass it on for future generations." These could also be the results of not having experienced a category five hurricane in a long time, along with the constant warnings from the media about a heavy cyclonic season that isn't very strong after all.

As evoked, in the chapter regarding risk culture, both experience and education on these phenomena are crucial; could it be that they are both fading? And therefore, could those who didn't receive this knowledge feel unprepared to face disasters and decide to leave? Furthermore, as mentioned by participant 10, younger generations are less inclined to believe in traditional religions, witchcraft, and the colonial legacy. These beliefs are gradually being replaced and forgotten, disrupting the legacy of older generations that once encouraged Guadeloupeans to remain on the island. Younger generations are more inclined to be educated on disaster through a more scientific lens, erasing cultural links and historical perspectives to adopt a more pragmatic approach and solutions. This gap underscores the idea that im/mobility in Guadeloupe is not merely a reaction to danger, but a culturally grounded choice influenced by identity, memory, and education. Age also is crucial factor in migration decisions, younger people are more likely to leave for better opportunities, often viewing mobilities as empowerment rather than rupture.

Indeed, several testimonies illustrate how mobility is normalized and valorized among youth. Many leave to study in mainland France or abroad, and few return. As participant 14 stated: " And if they can enter the civil service in France, or elsewhere, then it's like they're 'saved. All our kids leave and don't come back... we encouraged them to be mobile since we offered them, well, accommodation there, a job, access to something else, to a more promising life in terms of social and financial success." Participant 8 also stated, "young people leave to study in the metropole".

While older generations may value this inherited resilience and communal protection, younger ones increasingly prioritize individual success and comfort values that challenge traditional understandings of legacies and identities. Participant 15 declared: " I'm leaving. I don't want to die stupidly, I'm out of here, far away, I'm not staying in a country that's going to burn... I want to be a legend, but my life is my life. I'm out of here, far away, I'm not staying in a country that's going to burn." Even putting the fault on the individuals who prioritize attachment above survival " And volcanic eruption, I don't give a damn about that. You didn't have to live there. All the people from Basse-Terre, they're going to arrive, it's going to be a pain. We'll have no more housing. There are some, they don't have the sense of survival." This reaction encapsulates a broader logic of detachment.

Even those who still hesitate to leave admit that a long-term or irreversible disaster, not a cyclone but a rising temperature, might push them to migrate, as participant 3 mentioned: "If I have to move because there is a disaster, I think I will leave Guadeloupe." This conditional loyalty contrasts with previous generations' almost obstinate staying, no matter the risks. While many young people still express love for their island, it is a love that doesn't stand against vulnerabilities and academic and work opportunities. Among all the participants interviewed, the younger ones in their early twenties all expressed a strong desire to leave Guadeloupe, with many having already done so or considering it. This starkly contrasts with the testimonies of older generations, who all stated they would never leave their island. They committed to staying and helping rebuild, insisting that no cyclone would drive them away. Even when discussing the possibility of a catastrophic event like Hurricane Hugo again, they maintained that they would remain and face the challenge. They noted that it would become unbearable if such storms were to happen regularly.

Summary box: Shifting Perspectives – The Future of Immobilities

The concepts of mobilities and immobilities are continually evolving and increase disasters worldwide complicates these notions, as risk can no longer be avoided. Choosing immobility can be the best-case scenario, as it allows people to remain in familiar areas with cultural, historical, and identity ties. Guadeloupeans know how to face the dangers and peculiar phenomena present on their island but might not elsewhere. The crucial question is how long their resilience can be sustained over time and generations, with younger ones presenting a rising contrast of ideologies and legacies. One thing is certain: these factors can profoundly reshape the im/mobilities realities in Guadeloupe and worldwide.

9 DISCUSSION

In this discussion chapter, I will expand the more salient findings of my research and relate these results to the broader literature and data from other scholars while providing personal reflections. This section enhances the knowledge obtained from this case study of Guadeloupe by broadening its context and reinforcing its arguments. I will then offer reflections regarding the limitations of this study. By highlighting the limitations of the research, I intend to propose suggestions for improvement.

9.1 A NOVEL APPROACH TO IMMOBILITIES

This study has revealed key factors linked to heritage shaping immobilities in Guadeloupe, enriching the im/mobilities paradigm by introducing unexplored or underexplored key dynamics such as geographical legacies, colonial histories, relations to death and nature. While other crucial themes like risk culture, community support, and place attachment remain significant, these findings highlight the broad dimensions that lead to voluntary immobilities.

Inherited and conveyed bonds

The risk culture in Guadeloupe, shared across generations and institutions, plays a vital role in shaping the population's response to disaster. From early childhood, they are exposed to a culture of awareness, preparedness, and resilience, which aligns with the intergenerational knowledge sharing frameworks promoted by the UNDRR (2016) and UNESCO (2024). Guadeloupeans do not view disasters as exceptional events; rather, they are considered part of everyday life on the island. This cultural normalization of disasters mirrors Wiegel et al.'s (2021) findings and provides a perception of safety grounded in social and cultural familiarity. Yet, some individuals, particularly those who have experienced Hugo, still underestimate the risks of hazards. Just as Benitez et al. (2020) mention, previous disaster experience can create a sense of overconfidence, or, as Wiegel et al. (2021) claim, they think they have experienced the worst; therefore, there's no need to move away. Similarly, Carol Farbotko's (2023) insights on place-based knowledge systems support this notion of prior survival leading to the desire to stay.

Beyond shared knowledge, the Guadeloupean communal care enhances their disaster responses. This mantra, seen in everyday life, is even more salient in times of crisis, translated into acts of mutual aid. As Bellanger (2023) points out, through "operation coup de main," people voluntarily assist one another and provide support. This isn't unique to Guadeloupe; it is rather emblematic of the Caribbean, as noted by Sheller (2020), who highlights their communal resilience, altruism, generosity, and collective aid. Previous research have linked communal support with voluntary immobilites, as can be found in Mallick et al. (2023) and Ahsan et al. (2022) studies. Having a community to rely on, whether one's definition of it, outweighs the push factors of environmental risk; these values and cultural belonging push people to stay.

Faith and Fate

As witnessed, spiritual beliefs significantly shape risk perception and responses to disasters in Guadeloupe. This aligns with Paviol (2013) and Claeys et al. (2017), who found that these events can be perceived as a greater cosmic divine plan or acts of higher power. For many, disasters represent punishment for collective wrongdoing on the environment, which Wiegel et al's (2021, p.4) expands on by stating "spiritual being plays an important role in determining whether people believe human action can influence the climate, how this should be done, and who is to be held responsible." Such an approach helps explain why individuals can choose to remain in place despite risk. Spiritual fatalism, as Bellanger (2023) illustrates, cultivates a sense of inevitability, of something to endure rather than flee. Believers feel divine protection, leading to immobilities or engaging in micro-mobilities in churches, where in both places, prayers will defend them, according to Bellanger, dealing with risks becomes a spiritual practice. Wiegel et al (2021) caution that framing these beliefs as irrational would overlook the culturally coherent systems guiding people's behaviors in risk areas.

A novel contribution of this research is its focus on the role of nature and death in influencing immobilities. While I haven't found any literature highlighting these factors, they must be considered. In Guadeloupe, death is frequently viewed as a transition rather than an end, echoing Wong et al.'s (1994) classification of "Approach Acceptance" or seen as a natural part of life, through a "Neutral acceptance". This perspective fosters greater tolerance for risk and reduces the perceived urgency of leaving, while someone fearing death would be more inclined to flee risk situations. Nature itself is seen as a living entity that teaches and punishes. This sentiment echoes Smith et al.'s (1999) statement, which posits that a disaster is considered a symptom of a society's condition. In Guadeloupe, many have learned to live in harmony with nature, a concept that mirrors Consiglio's (2024) emphasis on the importance of environmental knowledge for thriving on the land, extending beyond mere survival. Nature is vital in perceiving and responding to disasters; this science has been shared for generations among families and communities and must be preserved and passed down through time. As Motsumi et al (2025) show, the ability to read nature and predict disasters can guide preparedness and response strategies. So far, the literature has associated environmental literacy solely with migration, as noted by Van Praag et al. (2022) and Justo (2025). However, as my findings suggest, it can also lead to the decision to remain.

Roots in the past and the present

Beyond being a natural phenomenon, disasters are geographically linked to Guadeloupe, as Pagney Benito Espinal (2020) claims; their frequency suggests that they are as highly recurrent. It is woven into the island's identity, resonating with Boas et al.'s (2022) findings in Chilean Patagonia, where residents accepted risk as a significant aspect of their lives and cultural identity. In Guadeloupe, as shown in both my fieldwork and the work of Claeys et al. (2017), homes are often seen as symbols of personal and familial heritage, where generations have lived, struggled, and thrived. Relocating can feel like

severing these vital connections, making leaving nearly unthinkable. Land embodies ancestral memories, the sacrifices and achievements of those who came before, creating a profound sense of belonging that is difficult to abandon, even in the face of disasters. The testimonies reflect what Claeys et al. (2017) described in Guadeloupe: residents only accept relocation if it is to a private home in the same neighborhood, rather than an unfamiliar setting. Findings that align with Mallick et al. (2023), Wiegel et al. (2021), and Ahsan (2022), who argue that non-migration is often a deliberate, value-driven choice shaped by the irreplaceability of local cultural life, emotional ties, and social norms. The case of Guadeloupe supports this research yet highlights other aspects like identity, cultural history, and resistance.

Guadeloupe's colonial past still strongly shapes the population's behaviors and vulnerabilities. In 1674, King Louis XIV declared coastal zones, the "50 Steps of the King," state property to preserve military, fishing, and trade access (Claeys et al., 2017). Over time, newly freed slaves and poorer populations impacted by the agricultural crises and the sugar industry decline settled illegally in these areas. Nowadays, many residents of the "50 steps zone" still reside in their homes illegally; only 5,800 applications for regularization were submitted, and only half were approved due to the high costs and legal constraints associated with these applications (Claeys et al., 2017). Mimi Sheller (2020) frames this as a "colonial condition" of vulnerability, where environmental risks are linked to historical dispossession. Post-slavery populations inhabit exposed zones, which is a direct legacy of colonial land policies and labor regimes. Sheller argues that many disasters, including colonialism have marked the Caribbean. Local governments often face a tension between enforcing state policies and meeting the needs of communities. Resistance to state-led relocation is, as Claeys et al. (2017) argue, an act of revolt against the ongoing colonial spatial control. In Guadeloupe, the colonial heritage still shapes the island; it isn't just a reaction, it's an active resistance —a duty to perpetuate the fight of the ancestors against injustices.

This duty is especially needed when decisions by the French government often overlook the reality of Guadeloupe. One can question how residents feel French on the other side of the world. This sensation isn't just geographic; it stems from centuries of resource extraction, colonialism, and governance failures that have fostered a strong sense of self-reliance among Guadeloupeans. Many feel abandoned and neglected by a government that does not represent their rights and needs. How can they feel French when 60 to 70% of the population lack access to drinking water (Remusat, 2024; Coalition Eau, 2025), while the mainland spends 1.4 billion to make the Seine "safe" for the Olympic Games (Guérin, 2024)? Previous disasters have further reinforced the population's distrust of authorities, reflecting a broader sense of being forgotten. As Larrier (2010, p.3) insightfully asks: "How can we hold singularity and republic together, difference and unity, distance and kinship?" Recent events, such as a television show where only votes from mainland France were counted, and the protests that occurred in late 2024 over the high cost of living in the overseas department, highlight the marginalization and neglect of their

voices. Access to essential services, such as water, food, and electricity, remains severely limited. All these neglects rooted in a history of exploitation led Guadeloupeans to cultivate a strong sense of resilience regarding their land, culture, and identity. There is a colonial reality often overlooked. How can one feel French on land taken from its inhabitants, where people were forcibly enslaved? Understanding one's identity is complex in a space where natives, colonists, and captives intersect. Even while there, I heard discussions highlighting how the descendants of colonizers still own significant land and businesses, enriching themselves at the expense of Guadeloupean nature and culture. As noted by Larrier (2020, p.4), "The Antillais emigrant in France leads the life of an emigrant but has the status of a citizen. He feels French but is subject to latent or overt forms of racism". Guadeloupeans take pride in their heritage, shaped by ancestors who fought for dignity and recognition. For many, Guadeloupe represents their identity and belonging.

Shifting perspectives – The future of immobilities

The im/mobilities paradigm is linked to the concept of an "elsewhere", where mobility is an adaptation strategy to seek better living conditions (Vinke et al., 2020), to seek safety and renewal (Raleigh, 2011) but can also result in uncertainty and increased vulnerabilities (Vinke et al., 2020). Traditional migration theories have expanded to include and highlight the interconnectedness of mobility, immobility, and micro-mobilities, whether voluntary or involuntary (Zickgraf, 2021)**.** Those who choose to remain weigh the benefits and costs of staying versus leaving. Climate change discourses traditionally suggested that disasters primarily affect poorer countries, with disasters appearing distant. While it is the case, richer nations are increasingly affected, as noted by the IPCC (2021). This growing unpredictability fosters a sense of eco-anxiety, of constant threat and paralyzing uncertainty, reinforced by media coverage as highlighted by Adam England (2024). This feeling leads many Guadeloupeans, to believe that nowhere is safe.

The notion that disasters are increasing and spreading globally is a recent academic focus. Not everyone experiences disasters, yet varying weather conditions affect all, diminishing the reliability of migration as a solution and instead representing more uncertainty. Recent literature by authors such as Mallick (2023), Ahsan (2022), and Adams (2015) highlights that many avoid mobility because they think conditions elsewhere might be the same or worse. Wallace Wells (2019) argues that climate change undermines the concept of safe havens and the elsewhere is weakened, leading to a global sense of precarity. Many disasters still remain unpredictable; while technology evolves, nature often defies it, necessitating constant reinvention IPCC, 2021). Even with accurate predictions, there's no guarantee that populations and infrastructure can resist all eventualities. Mobility exposes people to new environments, economies, cultures, and climates, which can be frightening and contribute to climate anxiety, as noted by Wallace-Wells (2019). With disasters affecting all regions, many remain unprepared

and prefer to stay in familiar, manageable dangers. Guadeloupeans have long experience in mitigation and adaptive strategies on their land, making these known dangers safer than unknown ones.

In this chapter, I provided personal statements and connected my findings from the Guadeloupe case study to the literature. Figure 8 illustrates and summarizes the research results.

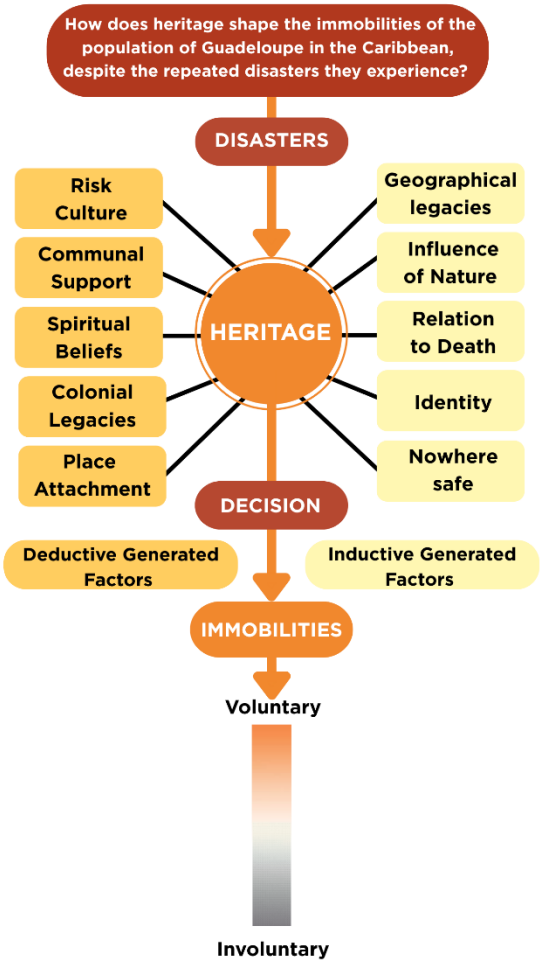

Figure 8: Factors in relation to Heritage shaping voluntary Immobilities in Guadeloupe, Valentine Lestringuez, 2025.

Yet, all of these findings may shift at any point, with younger generations presenting new patterns. More connected to technologies, less anchored in traditions and their heritage, they do not show the same ambitions to stay. As Ahsan (2022) notes, factors like age and education play a pivotal role in shaping migration decisions, with youth seeking better opportunities and viewing mobilities as empowerment. It echoes Larrier's question (2010), "Why have they entangled their destinies in the idea of exile?"; lamenting the fading of belonging. For some, Guadeloupe is still seen, as older migrants once claimed, as a place of "misère, malédiction, and sorcellerie," not worth the risk of remaining. Whether their desire to leave is temporary or lasting, their patterns could challenge existing findings and reshape the concept of im/mobilities. This leads into the next section, which discusses the limitations of this research.

9.2 LIMITATIONS

Lack of Data

There is a significant lack of information regarding mobilities and immobilities, both quantitative and qualitative, in Guadeloupe. Indeed, I was unable to find concrete figures or even estimates related to displacements, whether internal, national, or cross-border, for this case study. As mentioned, even the IOM displacement tracking matrix does not include Guadeloupe. Additionally, the literature and research on disasters in Guadeloupe are limited, with most studies focusing on storytelling about previous disasters and warnings of shifting environmental conditions. Due to the limited availability of information, this research first lacked concrete data to support and validate my topic on (im)mobilities. The belief that Guadeloupeans respond to disasters with immobilities was based on interpretations of (im)mobilities literature and of Guadeloupe.

My research aimed to address this issue by providing direct insights into the behaviors and responses of Guadeloupeans when facing disasters, and who predominantly lean towards immobility. Yet, this study still does not fill the gap in quantitative, informed data. Providing the number of people who have used mobilities or immobilities, to any extent – including micro-mobilities – would convey more faithfully the reality of these phenomena on the island. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis are crucial for better assessing the needs of populations, as well as for envisioning and creating policies that encompass everybody, respecting their wishes and choices.

Although the timing of my arrival was convenient for my research, the time limit remains short. To conduct an in-depth study, it is crucial to dedicate a longer period to research, including more participants, and ensuring greater diversity. While I am generally speaking about Guadeloupe, I cannot currently represent the experiences and opinions of people from the dependencies. However, their voices are essential to understanding the full scope of im/mobilities. They have experienced different disasters, faced various consequences, are even more geographically isolated, and may exhibit distinct patterns of im/mobilities. The absence of effective public transport in Guadeloupe made it challenging to move around the island; it is necessary to rent a car, which represents a considerable budget. To produce research that conveys data from both the mainland of Guadeloupe and its dependencies, larger financial means must be allocated, adding to the cost of travel to the archipelago.

Finding Participants and Gendered Fieldwork Issues

Interviewing strangers can be intimidating, especially when the researcher is expected to manage every aspect—finding participants, choosing the setting, preparing questions, and ensuring informed consent yet fieldwork is inherently unpredictable. Women need to take extra precautions and assess their surroundings. As a young white woman from mainland France, I quickly realized that my gender, age,

and positionality (as both a researcher and tourist) shaped my encounters. Based on friends' testimonies, I believed finding participants in Guadeloupe would be easy, yet it wasn't.

Although I aimed to interview about 20 participants, finding them was more complicated than I expected. As previously mentioned, Guadeloupeans do not necessarily see the value in researching this topic and were reluctant to participate. The theme of disaster isn't exactly one of cheer. The phenomenon is so deeply ingrained on the island that many, although they acknowledged that many things could be said, did not see the point of conducting research on the matter. Being new to Guadeloupe and still learning about its culture, I didn't feel ready to approach the population directly, fearing to impose myself or risk coming across as disrespectful. Although I understood that researchers must step out of their comfort zones, I wanted to ensure I approached the situation thoughtfully. I've faced both agreements and refusals, and while rejection can be discouraging, it's essential to move past it. Equally important, researchers must limit external and self-imposed pressure, as decisions should be based on personal experience, ambitions, and feelings.

During my first interview, the participant insisted on being picked up in a remote forest instead of a public place. On the way back, he asked me to stop for groceries. Although nothing happened, I realized I was alone with a man twice my age, whom I barely knew, and I was isolated. I questioned how I had lost control over the situation and how I could have avoided it. It reflects Zurné's (2024) critique that ethnographic training often romanticizes fieldwork as a transformative rite of passage, while ignoring the gendered risks that many researchers, particularly women, encounter. While immersion is encouraged, the vulnerability of close proximity to participants can create dangerous power dynamics.

This manifested in subtle coercions, such as being isolated with unknown men, paying for their drinks, or tolerating numerous unsolicited calls and messages after the interview, like "I miss you." These dynamics raise ethical questions: What is the researcher expected to give in return? How far does reciprocity go before it becomes manipulation? A person may have good intentions in an academic setting, but others may perceive them differently. There is a power imbalance: the questioner, needing information, may feel dominated by the respondent, who holds the actual power in the exchange. Zurné's work highlights how safety protocols, like risk assessments, tend to individualize responsibility, burdening researchers with anticipating and managing threats alone. This reinforces structural inequalities in academia, where women are often expected to modify their behavior, downplaying discomfort, dressing conservatively, or avoiding specific topics or participants to stay "safe."

After reflecting and confiding in peers, I prioritized my well-being over data collection. I established personal conditions, including not compromising safety for participant numbers, not pursuing gender parity for this study, and demanding to meet male participants only directly in public places.

Choosing not to follow up with a participant who displayed more interest in me than the study was a difficult but necessary boundary. While undermining my research, these decisions were essential. Few studies openly address the realities of fieldwork for women. While some research highlights issues like inequality and harassment, personal testimonies are rare due to fear of reprisals or being perceived as disrespectful. My goal is to raise awareness of these risks and advocate for removing the stigma around women's experiences in research. Trusting our feelings and instincts is essential, even if we sometimes justify problematic behaviors as cultural differences we didn't grasp, or claim that it could have been worse. In academic discussions, I discovered that their experiences echoed mine, indicating that more testimonies likely exist.

Sharing experiences is vital for enhancing safety advice in research. Before my fieldwork, I filled out a form detailing potential dangers I could encounter and how I would face them, but it still felt insufficient as it placed full responsibility on the researcher. While responsible for our actions, we cannot control others' behavior. Training courses can identify issues, present diverse scenarios from researchers' experiences, and help provide solutions or anticipate challenges. Group discussions foster insight-sharing and collaboration among researchers. Involving future field researchers is crucial for building solidarity and improving outcomes. As noted by Zurné (2024), women often change their field sites or abandon ethnography due to negative experiences, which can lead to fewer participants and hinder gender parity. This ultimately results in data gaps and less effective gender comparisons, particularly in female-led studies, as their insights may reveal perspectives that male researchers might overlook. Ultimately, future training must reflect the complexity of gendered fieldwork. Creating space for vulnerability will pave the way for safer, more inclusive, and honest ethnographic practices.

Shifting results in the long term

Based on the section about generational differences, it is essential to recognize that the new generation will likely produce different outcomes. A long-term analysis across various generations would be beneficial, particularly regarding whether they will continue to uphold this heritage. I believe that observing different generations over time would enhance our understanding of the heritage factors influencing immobilities, as it allows for an exchange of knowledge, skills, and resources.

Additionally, some individuals mentioned that they might leave due to long-term issues, such as extreme heat. It is of great interest to study how slow-onset disasters will impact Guadeloupe and influence (im)mobilities, as for now, this research many evoked rapid-onset events.

Ultimately, what is true now may change in both the short and long term. Studying im/mobilities over a longer time would more effectively capture the phenomenon in Guadeloupe. As a voluntary immobile person, at any point, can become an involuntary immobile person or a voluntarily or involuntarily mobile person.

10 CONCLUDING

10.1 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis aimed to explore the paradigm of immobilities in response to climate change and disasters, adopting an approach that incorporates heritage and its underlying factors, with a case study of Guadeloupe. I set out to research this theme by answering the central question: How does heritage shape the immobilities of the population of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, despite the repeated disasters they experience? To do so, I opted for an in-depth qualitative study grounded in the perspectives and opinions of the concerned population. The fieldwork I conducted, and my research ultimately demonstrate that heritage plays a vital, multifaceted role in shaping voluntary decisions to remain in disaster-prone areas.

Heritage in Guadeloupe manifests through both tangible and intangible cultural expressions or historical legacies, through all shapes as listed along the research – risk culture, communal support, spiritual beliefs, colonial legacies, etc. These various elements, closely intertwined, create a deeply ingrained sense of belonging and identity among the populations that shape preparedness, mitigation, and response strategies to climate change and disasters. Guadeloupeans do not remain simply because they lack the agency and capability to leave; rather, they make an active decision to stay. Remaining close to their heritage, their ancestors, their identity, their land, and their way of life, which is worth all the risk and would be fractured through mobility.

Immobilities, which were previously mainly linked to failure to adapt or vulnerability, are a culturally and emotionally grounded act of resilience, resistance, and agency, triggering the questioning of the right to stay of populations in areas of risk. The right to choose where to live, where to resist, the right to adapt by their own means, raising their voices and knowledge as a tool to defend their land, history and identity.

Yet, acknowledging these phenomena also forces us, and me, to confront some harsh truths. The very act of conducting this research, traveling by plane to Guadeloupe, and contributing to carbon emissions is a key contribution. Our mobilities are part of the very causes that intensify climate change, placing communities, including Guadeloupe, in more precarious situations and leading others to face involuntary mobilities or immobilities. These movements by threatening lands also pose a risk of erasing the culture and heritage of populations, destroying both material and immaterial legacies.

The Caribbean region has long gone under external extraction and exploitation, and in many ways, climate change and its consequences are another chapter of the long history of colonialism. Immobilities in Guadeloupe are directly influenced by their heritage but are also a product of its preservation.

10.2 IMPLICATIONS

My findings advance climate change, disaster, and migration studies, contributing to the growing field of the mobilities/immobilities paradigm by providing empirical insights into the cultural and historical logics shaping disaster response. This case study raises broader questions about resilience and resistance to climate change and environmental crises, resonating with the Caribbean and other disaster-prone communities globally, and offers a foundation for rethinking our approach to managing immobilities in the context of disasters.

This approach has two significant implications. First, it challenges dominant policy narratives that equate mobilities with safety and immobilities with vulnerability. Second, it underscores the need for disaster risk reduction strategies that are culturally sensitive and historically informed. Policies that fail to recognize these underlying factors risk reinforcing vulnerabilities rather than mitigating them by misaligning with local values, experiences, and wishes. Instead, understanding how heritage shapes people's decisions offers a more specific socio-cultural and ethically grounded approach to disaster planning and community engagement.

This research redefines the understanding of immobilities in disaster contexts by exploring diverse representations of Heritage, offering a deeper reality of the lived experiences, resilience, and decisions of individuals threatened daily in disaster-prone areas. It encourages a rethinking of disaster preparedness and advocates for community inclusion, with participatory bottom-up design, emphasizing the legacy, the knowledge, and connection they hold with their land, whether in Guadeloupe or other locations worldwide.

Ultimately, disaster response policies must go beyond material solutions and engage with the complex social, historical, and cultural dimensions of im/mobilities. Policies that fail to recognize these underlying factors risk reinforcing vulnerabilities rather than mitigating them. While external interventions often promote relocation to reduce risk, my findings suggest that such strategies must be carefully adapted to the specific socio-cultural realities of communities, and in this case, of Guadeloupeans. Indigenous knowledge, science, and approaches are crucial in DRR and more globally towards reaching a more sustainable Earth. By presenting immobilities not solely as a constraint but as an active choice, my research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of disaster resilience and adaptation in hazard-prone regions, providing a deeper comprehension of cultural factors. By focusing on heritage in disaster research, this study enhances our understanding of immobilities's emotional, and cultural dimensions, highlighting that staying in place is an act of resilience and identity for many.

To conclude this thesis, I would like to present an extract from the conclusion of Mimi Sheller's book Island Futures: Caribbean Survival in the Anthropocene (2020), which, in my opinion, perfectly depicts the stake of the Caribean region and the role it can have in leading us towards a more just and sustainable future.

"Out of the global experience of modernity/coloniality, which in many ways began here in these island archipelagos, the Caribbean has bequeathed to us powerful reconstruction strategies that can guide us all as we face an uncertain future. Caribbean people have had to survive neoliberal economies of exploitation that have destroyed self-sufficient agriculture, broken local markets, undermined sovereignty and forced people into low-waged work or migration abroad […] The people of the Caribbean have been surviving genocide, colonial violence, labor exploitation, cultural suppression, natural resource extraction and environmental destruction for more than five hundred years. Out of colonization, indigenous survivors and their descendants created modes of resistance. Out of enslavement, African survivors and their descendants created the living praxis of freedom. Out of violent cultural repression and suppression, black and indigenous people of the Caribbean, joined by other peoples who moved there from around the world, created dynamic culture building practices – spiritual, linguistic, musical, culinary, artistic, literary and philosophical. Out of imperialism Caribbean nations created anticolonial revolutions, postcolonial social movements, new forms of democratic socialism and decolonial thinking […]Although the Caribbean may be at the forefront of the climate emergency, the only conclusion must be that it also at the forefront of solutions to ending the coloniality of climate, demanding reparations, reinstating care for the world and one another, and thereby giving the world back its future."

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12 ANNEXES

12.1 ANNEX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

To begin the interview, I briefly introduced myself and the research's purpose when participants wished for a reminder. After that, I asked the interviewee to present themselves by including their name, age, and function. If they felt comfortable sharing with me, I asked about their ethnicity and religion, if they had one. As seen, ethnicity and religion are a direct link to heritage and can play a role in shaping the immobility of the residents, which, therefore, represents crucial criteria. I then proceeded with the questions regarding my research topic. The process lasted thirty to ninety minutes, depending on how much the interviewee was ready to share. The interview guide I wrote aimed to list the topics I discussed with the participants. The list is non-exhaustive as it evolved, because as the interviews unfolded, the interviewees' responses pushed me to modify, adapt, or add new questions. The questions are divided by different themes following a previously established logic.

Part 1: The Origins of Disasters: I first asked how the respondents view disasters and what they think is causing these repeated disasters. As we have seen, various scenarios appear regarding the comprehension of the origins of catastrophe, whether through colonial influences, spiritual beliefs encompassing religion, or nature as the sender.

- What do you think are the causes of disasters?
- Where do you think they come from?
- Do you think they occur often in Guadeloupe?

Part 2: Their experience of disasters: I wished to see if the respondents had any disaster experience. Which ones come to their mind, and why? I wanted to understand their behavior and response to a disaster. This also allowed me to determine which part of the population is most affected, if there is any as well as other factors like risk perception and response.

- Have you ever experienced a disaster? If so, can you tell me which one you experienced and when?
- Can you tell me about how this disaster unfolded?
- Did you learn in advance that it was going to happen?
- What did you do to prepare? Did you think you were ready?
- How did you experience it when it happened? Physically, emotionally, and psychologically.
- Do you think you took the appropriate measures?
- How did you know it was over?

Part 3: The influence of ancestral heritage and inheritance on disasters: I aimed to examine the legacy that the residents might have received or inherited from their relatives or acquaintances.

Understanding the Guadeloupeans' culture allows first to gather information on the various approaches to disasters and to explain their response according to familial, cultural, and communal factors.

- Is a well-known saying or story important in your culture? What role does it play in your life, and is it related to disasters?
- Did someone close to you (family, friend, community, etc.) first talk to you about disasters? Whether it was to explain what they are, warn you about dangers, or provide advice or instructions on how to cope?

➔ Did they mention your ancestors?

➔ Did they mention God?

➔ Did they mention Nature?

- When disasters strike, does your community contribute to the experience and recovery from them? Do you help each other?

Part 4: The im/mobilities in response to Disasters: Through this process, I tried to determine whether the residents of Guadeloupe had to move away or stay in the face of disasters, and if there were mobilities taken, how far. The goal here was to understand the im/mobilities patterns – a crucial part, as there is, to date, barely any research done on this specific island.

- Have you ever had to leave your home or neighborhood before, during, or after a disaster?

➔ If so, how long and how far did you have to leave?

➔ If not, why do you think you never had to?

- Have you ever considered leaving because of these risks?
- Do you know anyone who has had to leave their home because of a disaster? If so, can you tell me more about their situation at the time, and why? And does this happen frequently?
- Do you know people still living in high-risk areas today? Why do you think they are at risk? To your knowledge, are they trying to address them? If not, why?

Part 5: The future of disasters in Guadeloupe: By analyzing how the residents consider the island's future, we can study their confidence level and envision the future im/mobilities patterns. By presenting diverse scenarios, we can understand the population's limits and gather the various factors that can push a population to either move or stay in disaster contexts.

- In your opinion, will disasters worsen on the island in the future?
- Do you feel prepared to deal with them?
- Do you think disasters are an integral part of life on the island?
- Would you be willing and able to leave your home/neighborhood in the future if these disasters worsen? How far are you willing to go? If not, can you explain your reasons for staying?

12.2 ANNEX II: INTERVIEWEES

The following table represents the participants I interviewed during my research in Guadeloupe.

Code	Origins	Profession	Age	Beliefs	Location	Interviewing Method	Date
Participant 1	Guadeloupe (Lives Abroad)	Student	23	No Religion	Online	Recorded	14/11/2024
Participant 2	Guadeloupe	Ancestral Teller	48	Spiritual	On-site	Recorded	25/11/2024
Participant 3	Guadeloupe	Agronomy & Student	29	No Religion	On-site	Recorded	26/11/2024
Participant 4	Metropole	Retired artist	81	Spiritual	On-site	Recorded	26/11/2024
Participant 5	Metropole	Retired teacher	76	No Religion	On-site	Recorded	27/11/2024
Participant 6	Metropole	Teacher	61	No Religion	On-site	Recorded	27/11/2024
Participant 7	Guadeloupe	Painter	41	No Religion	On-site	Recorded	29/11/2024
Participant 8	Metropole	Animator	56	Spiritual	On-site	Recorded	02/12/2024
Participant 9	Guadeloupe	Farmer	55	No religion	On-site	Recorded	02/12/2024
Participant 10	Guadeloupe	Fisherman	51	Spiritual	On-site	Recorded	03/12/2024
Participant 11	Metropole	Artist	58	Catholic	On-site	Recorded	03/12/2024
Participant 12	Guadeloupe	Painter/Photographer	62	Catholic	On-site	Recorded	05/12/2024
Participant 13	Guadeloupe	Farm Manager	58	Catholic	On-site	Recorded	09/12/2024
Participant 14	Metropole	Community work	52	Spiritual	On-site	Recorded	11/12/2024
Participant 15	Guadeloupe	Mechanic	22	No religion	On-site	Recorded	18/12/2024
Participant 16	Guadeloupe Lives Abroad)	Marketing specialist	23	No religion	Online	Recorded	22/01/2025
Participant 17	Guadeloupe	Sales	36	Catholic	Remote	Writing	01/02/2025
Participant 18	Guadeloupe	Content Creator	/	/	Remote	Writing	10/02/2025

AI tools were used in this research: Grammarly was employed to check grammar mistakes and Chatgpt was used to help find literature for this research.