

Institution: University of Essex		
Unit of Assessment: 27		
Title of case study: Reconceptualizing troubled border relations: promoting cross-border collaboration, cooperation and solidarity between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the wake of the denationalization crisis in Hispaniola		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Maria Cristina Fumagalli	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor in Literature	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1999-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>In 2013 the Dominican Constitutional Court passed a ruling aimed at denationalising hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian ancestry. To address the ensuing socio-political fallout and to counter this denationalisation, local human rights groups, NGOs, and civil society organisations have used Fumagalli's research to highlight disavowed cultural continuities, and focus upon collaboration and solidarity between Haitians and Dominicans. This has led to NGOs co-organising and developing artistic/literary projects that foreground social/cultural unity; cultural promoters supporting interactions between Haitian and Dominican artists; the creation of constructive dialogues with human rights organizations to support their advocacy and to reaching neglected demographics.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The underpinning research for this project is the monograph <i>On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic</i> (LUP 2015; 2018), the first literary and cultural history of the region [R1] and related articles/book chapters published before or after [R2 – R6]. Historically, cross-border exchanges on Hispaniola have often been characterized by conflict and violence, dating back to the first clashes between Spanish and French in the 17th century. The French colony of Saint Domingue was officially established in 1777 alongside Spanish Santo Domingo but, during the Haitian Revolution, the border was contested, shifted or disappeared altogether. The Haitian occupation of the Spanish side (1822-1844) and the 1937 massacre of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans in the Dominican borderland contributed to cast the borderland as a site of violent confrontation. Most scholarship on the region casts Haitians and Dominicans as incompatible polar opposites and Haitian-Dominican relations as inevitably bellicose.</p> <p>Approaching literary history by shifting the traditional focus on nation states to geographical regions which are not national territories, <i>On the Edge</i> is the fruit of years of archival and field work. Its 430 pages bring to the fore a multilingual body of work spanning from the encounter between indigenous populations and the Spanish colonizers in the 16th century, the causes, unfolding, and immediate aftermath of the 1791 slave revolt and the 1937 massacre, to the 2010 earthquake and the new 'borderlands' in the Dominican Republic created by Haitian migration. The monograph [R1] and other underpinning publications [R2 – R6] highlight long-standing but strategically disavowed cultural continuities and collaborative linkages between Haitians and Dominicans.</p> <p>Underlining these continuities and linkages has become particularly urgent since 23rd September 2013, when the Dominican Constitutional Court ordered all birth registries from 1929 to be audited for people who had been (allegedly) wrongly registered as Dominican citizens, <i>de facto</i> denationalizing over 133,000 Dominicans, mainly of Haitian descent. The 2013 ruling is supported by well-established Dominican anti-Haitian racist ultra-nationalistic discourses which encourage a national identification where Haiti is the negative foil, offer a simplified artificial picture of the island which posits its two peoples as incompatible, denies cultural permeability, and demonize and disenfranchise Dominicans of Haitian descent.</p> <p>This approach has detrimental consequences for those targeted by the 2013 ruling who live in new 'borderlands within' established throughout the Dominican Republic by historical and recent Haitian</p>		

immigration. *On the Edge* tells, instead, an occluded story of long-standing cross-border collaboration, solidarity, and transnational interculturality, providing a much-needed, rich and compelling counter-history for local civil society organizations. Since 2013, these organisations have been demonstrating against nationality stripping and deportations, using legal means to restore rights to the denationalised. In the 2013 ruling's aftermath, however, it became evident that for human rights activities to gain traction it was vital to challenge ultra-nationalistic propaganda from a cultural as well as legal point of view.

3. References to the research (can be supplied by HEI on request)

Monograph:

R1. M.C. Fumagalli (hardback 2015; paperback 2018) *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic* (Liverpool U.P.). ISBN-10 1781381607

Chapters in Books:

R2. M.C. Fumagalli 'When dialogue is no longer possible, what still exists is the mystery of hope': migration and citizenship in the Dominican Republic in film, literature and performance,' in *Border Transgression and Reconfiguration of Caribbean Spaces*, eds Moïse, M. and Réno, F., Palgrave/MacMillan (2020), pp.139 – 161. ISBN 978-3-030-45938-3

Publications in French and Spanish:

R3. M.C. Fumagalli (2017), 'Karmadavis: inlassable performeur d'espoir,' *Trois-Cent-Soixante*, 2, pp. 95-98. *This article in French in a non-academic publication circulating in Haiti and the Francophone world can reach a relevant audience who cannot read English.* (Can be supplied by HEI on request)

R4. M. C. Fumagalli (2018), 'La massacre de 1937: adueñarse de un recuerdo tal y como relumbra en el instante de un peligro'. In: *Masacre de 1937 - 80 años después: Reconstruyendo la memoria*. Editors: M. Bosch Caruro, E. Acosta Matos, A. Pérez Vargas, (Santo Domingo: Fundación Juan Bosch), pp. 273 -295. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvnp0k4x.14> *The 1937 massacre is rarely discussed in the Dominican Republic so this chapter in Spanish can reach a relevant audience inside and outside Hispaniola who cannot read English. Contains copy of Declaration [S6].*

Introduction to novel:

R5. M. C. Fumagalli (2019), Introduction, Freddy Prestol Castillo *El Masacre se pasa a pie/You can cross the Massacre on foot*, Duke University Press (v-xvii) ISBN - 9781478004448 1478004444 (https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-0383-0_601.pdf). (Can be supplied by HEI on request) *The first English translation of this neglected text from an eyewitness to the 1937 massacre of Haitians and Haitian Dominicans in the Dominican borderlands: after the publication of On the Edge that foregrounded the significance of this event, Fumagalli was approached by the editor at Duke University to write in support of its translation/publication and later to provide an introduction.*

Guest Editor:

R6. *Special Issue on Hispaniola After the Earthquake for BLAR (Bulletin of Latin American Research):* 32.4 (2013). Follow up to the exhibition *Karmadavis: Art Justice, Transition*, co-curated for Firstsite, Colchester. <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12069>

Grants

Co-investigator

G1. American Tropics: Towards a Literary Geography, *AHRC Research Grants Scheme*, October 2006 - September 2011: £347,260

Sole investigator

G2. *On the Edge: The Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Leverhulme Research Fellowship*, December 2012 - November 2013: £23,408

G3. Reconceptualising troubled border relations, *ESRC, University of Essex Impact Acceleration Account: Impact Fund*, 2016-2018: £5578; £9424; £9833

4. Details of the impact

The activities undertaken by Fumagalli and her regional partners, underpinned by her research, have influenced civil society's efforts to raise awareness, reach neglected beneficiaries, develop artistic/literary projects to enhance social/cultural unity on the island, and informed NGOs in their attempts at reforming regressive governmental policies [S1 – S8]. Overall, impact resulted from a

cumulative process of challenging damaging ideological perspectives and enabling a more diverse civil society to make its voice heard, for example by raising awareness of Haitian socio-cultural perspectives in the Dominican Republic and Cuba [S3, S4, S7]. The Caribbean Migrants Observatory (OBMICA), a *think-tank* and *do-tank*, based in Santo Domingo and focused on migration, human rights and social development, was the main partner for impact activities. Fumagalli met the Director of OBMICA in 2009; in 2013 invited her to a conference on border relations, a symposium/exhibition of the work of Dominican artist Karmadavis organised at *Firstsite*, Colchester, and published her work in *BLAR* [R6].

Fumagalli's research has triggered a "cultural turn" for OBMICA and led the organisation to revise their campaigning strategy which was previously solely based on a legal approach [S1]. As a means to embed the significance of transnational interculturality in the region, concerts, murals, performances, film-screenings, round tables, book launches, photographic exhibitions, festivals, public talks/workshops and a video were organised in the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Haiti, and Cuba between 2013 and 2018 [S3, S4]. Putting the enabling message of her book [R1] and other publications [R2 – R6] in dialogue with human rights concerns, cross-border dialogue has been promoted, highlighting cultural continuities on Hispaniola - including its neglected borderland communities - and maximising visibility for those affected by the 2013 ruling [S3, S4, S6, S7].

Two interconnected/interdependent areas of impact are evident in activities arising from this work:

- 1) **On OBMICA**
- 2) **On other non-governmental organisations and cultural promoters.**

1) **On OBMICA:**

In her support letter [S1], the Director of OBMICA elaborates on the impact of Fumagalli's work on OBMICA's "cultural turn" and on the substantial changes in the way in which advocacy is conducted on Hispaniola: "*for OBMICA a cultural turn means taking a cultural perspective on migration, especially Haitian immigration on island. Fumagalli has catalyzed this novel approach by OBMICA and other stake holders as demonstrated in [our] special bulletin*" [S1, S3]. She then explains that this has enabled OBMICA to bypass what Wooding calls "*the limitations of the fetishist approach to the legal framework*" and reach new and more diverse audiences via the range of artistic endeavours, promoting a vital and much-needed cultural change [S2, S3, S4, S5, S7].

Using this approach meant that OBMICA could "*reach sectors of the population who live in areas generally characterised by neglect*", "*bringing to them cultural activities aimed at foregrounding an often occluded history*", "*celebrating and 'legitimizing' the dialogue between Haitians and Dominicans*", "*developing solidarity between the borderland population and Dominicans of Haitian descent who live in the rest of the country and are affected by the 2013 ruling*" [S1], namely, the denationalisation crisis, and deportations. This has allowed OBMICA to "*expand the range of institutions (state and non-state) with which [they] have contact, especially new ones in the French Antilles and Cuba*" [S1]. This "cultural turn" has helped OBMICA to "*make [their] work known in different contexts, raise awareness on the plight of Dominicans of Haitian descent whose situation is not very well publicised in the region (not even in Haiti) and reach people of Haitian descent in different islands, learn about their experience and build on them in [their] advocacy as examples of how different interactions are possible*" [S1].

Moving beyond the traditional legal focus has helped to "*keep the pressure up and the spotlight on the issues of migration and denationalization*" [S1] on Hispaniola and the Caribbean at large via "*the always substantial press coverage of [OBMICA and Fumagalli's] activities*" [S1, S4, S5]. This has reinforced "*existing contacts in Haiti which also benefited from [Fumagalli's] research*" [S1], helped OBMICA to "*enjoy a much more visible alignment*" [S1] with Haitian organizations, and to "*forge mutual commitments to foster cultural activities on border relations, migration, and citizenship*" [S1]. For example, the trilingual bulletin on Fumagalli's research published by OBMICA [S3] meant that these seminal ideas were now available to French speaking Haitians, Spanish speakers in the Dominican Republic, and French, Spanish and English speakers elsewhere in the region. This cultural turn, spearheaded in the region since 2013 by OBMICA and Fumagalli, has created a path

for other local organisations to follow [S2]. This then informed new projects/reports to policymakers on border relations, deportations and xenophobia, such as the 2016 preliminary report on deportations [S1, S8].

The Director of OBMICA concludes her letter by saying: “*Evidently, had it not been for the research [Fumagalli] undertook at the University of Essex, the benefits outlined here could not have been achieved*” [S1].

2) On other non-governmental organisations and cultural promoters

Cultural interventions [S1 – S4; S6; S7] co-organised with OBMICA were aimed at NGOs, human rights organisations, diplomatic corps, journalists, local civil society, political activists, cultural promoters, general public on Hispaniola and in the Caribbean. Cultural promoters and human rights organisations have been quick to grasp the opportunity offered by *On the Edge* to counter obsolete ideological frameworks by collaborating and by initiating ground-breaking interactions between Haitian and Dominican artists. 28 representatives of local human rights organisations /civil society/cultural promoters signed testimonials [S2] to confirm that Fumagalli’s research provided a new perspective/*modus operandi* on Haitian-Dominican relations and advocacy work.

Exemplifying the significance she placed on the role of culture in civic society and modelling the cultural turn in democratic advocacy, in 2016 Fumagalli launched *On the Edge* in Port-au-Prince, Haiti with *FOKAL-Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète/Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty*, an independent organisation which promotes democracy. This helped to raise the profile of a key artistic presence in the region. Inspired by this book launch, the Artistic Director of the *Festival Quatre Chemins* in Port-au-Prince devoted the 13th edition to border relations and invited Karmadavis, then unknown in Haiti, as artist in residence [S1, S2, S3]. Despite being the prominent voice in the migration debate in the Dominican Republic [R1, R2, R3, R6], Karmadavis had never been to Haiti nor been invited by a Haitian institution. A Dominican special guest in Haiti has huge symbolic value for Hispaniola’s art scene in terms of establishing transnational and intercultural dialogues. Fumagalli, OBMICA and Karmadavis, foregrounded the predicament of Dominicans of Haitian descent which receives little attention from Haitian media [S1, S3]. As part of the new cultural dimension to OBMICA’s policy engagement, Fumagalli hosted a book launch in 2015 in the Dominican Republic with OBMICA and the British Ambassador to Dominican Republic and Haiti.

In 2017, on the 80th anniversary of the 1937 massacre of Haitians and Haitian Dominicans in the Dominican borderland, a historical fact rarely discussed in the Dominican Republic, the *Fundación Bosch* (independent organisation promoting anti-racist pacific cohabitation on Hispaniola) organised a public commemoration in Santo Domingo. Fumagalli was the only speaker who presented on literary/cultural relations [R4]. It has been judged by OBMICA that this was instrumental in the inclusion of cultural and academic aspects of two key points (6 and 7) in a declaration prepared for dissemination to relevant stakeholders and policy makers [S6, S1]:

From point 6: We advocate that the borderland ceases to be a territory of abandonment, exploitation, repression and conflict and becomes instead a territory in which both the Dominican people and the Haitian people live with dignity and in which social, cultural, political and economic relations are fostered, protected, promoted in an enriching way.

From point 7: We will work to promote greater mutual knowledge and the deployment of more academic and cultural contacts [S6].

In 2017 with OBMICA and local NGOs, again to exemplify and extend the significance of shared cultural practices and relations in the region, Fumagalli co-organised a range of cultural activities on the border crossing of Comendador/Belladère in Dominican borderland, to turn the 80th anniversary of the 1937 massacre into an occasion to rethink/reframe past, present (current denationalization crisis), and future [S3, S4]. The border crossing of Comendador/Belladère is the site of bi-weekly, bi-national markets where Haitians regularly interact with Dominicans, an area/population neglected by the government and disparaged for its proximity to Haiti. Dominican and Haitian school children, officials, and local population attended bilingual talks, our photographic exhibition, the *Azuei* concert in the market square with Haitian and Dominican musicians where a Dominican and a Haitian artist

painted a mural as a permanent reminder of solidarity and cooperation [S3, S4].

These activities succeeded in informing and instilling pride in a sector of the population often denigrated for its connections with Haiti and Haitians. The 1937 massacre is rarely discussed with lucidity in the Dominican Republic: the public in Comendador was poorly informed and had never heard about the massacre-related texts showcased, despite the fact that some were set in their home towns. Presenting texts which highlighted a history of collaboration and solidarity, underlined the bravery of those that in 1937 risked their lives to protect those hunted by the government, and the importance of binational markets then and now for the economy and cultural interaction on the island [R1-R6]. *“It is difficult here to distinguish between Haitian and Dominicans”* says the local cultural promoter Segundino Feliz in a video Fumagalli co-produced with OBMICA. This documents how the local population enjoyed these talks in Spanish and French and the photographic exhibition, engaged with artists/musicians, and appreciated the decision to commemorate a tragic historical moment with artistic performances [S4, S3, S1].

In 2017 Fumagalli was invited by *Casa de las Americas*, Cuba, to present on the 1937 massacre of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans in the Dominican borderland, the denationalization crisis, and the wave of deportations. Her intervention impacted on the debate surrounding the 2013 ruling in the Dominican Republic, and was perceived as a threat by the Dominican Ambassador in Cuba. This was covered in the Dominican press, where he sought *“to reaffirm the right of the Dominican Republic to define the parameters for nationality and citizenship and its sovereignty on its borders”* [S5] in opposition to the growing challenges in civil society to the ruling. This same intervention, however, inspired the Cultural Ambassador of Barbados and well-established calypsonian Mighty Gabby to express his commitment to the cultural connections between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and to the island of Hispaniola. He composed the song ‘In Transit’ dedicated to the denationalised/deported (mis)defined by the Dominican government as people “in transit” with no right to citizenship: *“one word touched me and it was ‘In transit’ and I wrote this song”* [S7, S1, S3]. (*“In Transit”*- selected lyrics: *“‘In transit’ – even if a was born here / ‘In transit’-they call me a Haitian so I cannot be a Dominican / I have to go, they say I have to go / Go to Haiti, a country that I don’t know / I have to go and leave everything behind / because if I stay I’ll die for what is mine / ‘In transit’ [...] Give me one country, give me one land / Don’t call me Dominican, don’t you call me Haitian / Forever and ever call me Hispaniola”* [S7]).

The OBMICA programme of cultural activism promoting civic unity continued in 2018, when Fumagalli returned to Cuba with the Director of OBMICA for public talks at *Casa de las Americas* and *Ignatio de Loyola Centre* (Havana), *Casa de la Diversidad Cultural* (Camaguey), *Casa del Caribe* (Santiago) [S1, S2, S3]. Her research findings around anti-Haitian rhetoric have informed the work of other NGOs in the region, through reports from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and OBMICA dealing with these issues to counter [S8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. Letter of Support from Director of OBMICA (Santo Domingo).
- S2. Package of 28 testimonials from cultural and NG organisations in Haiti, Guadelupe, Dominican Republic, Cuba,
- S3. A trilingual (English, French, and Spanish) bulletin devoted to *On the Edge* by OBMICA
- S4. YouTube Video on activities in Comendador/Belladere, October 2017 (>3900 viewers)
- S5. Response of Dominican Ambassador in Cuba on Dominican press; media coverage; interviews
- S6. Declaration-2017 Santo Domingo (+ English translation)
- S7. Mighty Gabby’s Gran Finale Concert in Casa de las Americas, Cuba (2017) recording + photo
- S8. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report “Cross-Border Trade and Corruption along the Haiti-Dominican Republic Border” (2019) and OBMICA’s 2016 report on deportations from Dominican Republic to Haiti, with political recommendations by OBMICA and OBMEC (incorporating an article by Fumagalli on literary/artistic representations of forced migration in appendix)