

‘Frenchification’ phenomena in the
French Creoles of the Lesser Antilles as
shown by the ALPA (*Atlas Linguistique
des Petites Antilles*)



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Paris

Outline

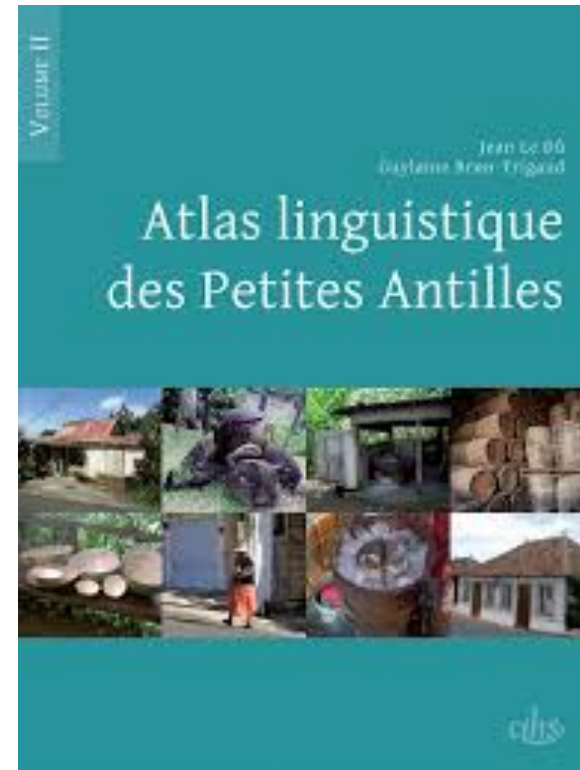
- Introduction
- Historical and geographical landmarks
 - Guadeloupe and Martinique
 - Dominica and St. Lucia
 - Acadie and Québec
 - (Louisiana and Haiti will not be included in this talk)
- Analysis of the geolinguistic material
 - Lexicon ('socks', 'pants', 'pair of shorts', 'clothes')
 - Pronunciation features (final consonants, <oi> and nasalization of [l] > [n])
- Summary and conclusion

Introduction

- French, an exported language
 - French creoles (West Indies, etc.)
 - Expatriate varieties of French (Canada, etc.)
- European French, a center of expansion
- Chronology of political and cultural contacts: innovations and archaisms
- Creole ‘Frenchification’ (but it might be more accurate here to say ‘lexical modernization’) in Martinique and Guadeloupe: can it be objectively demonstrated?

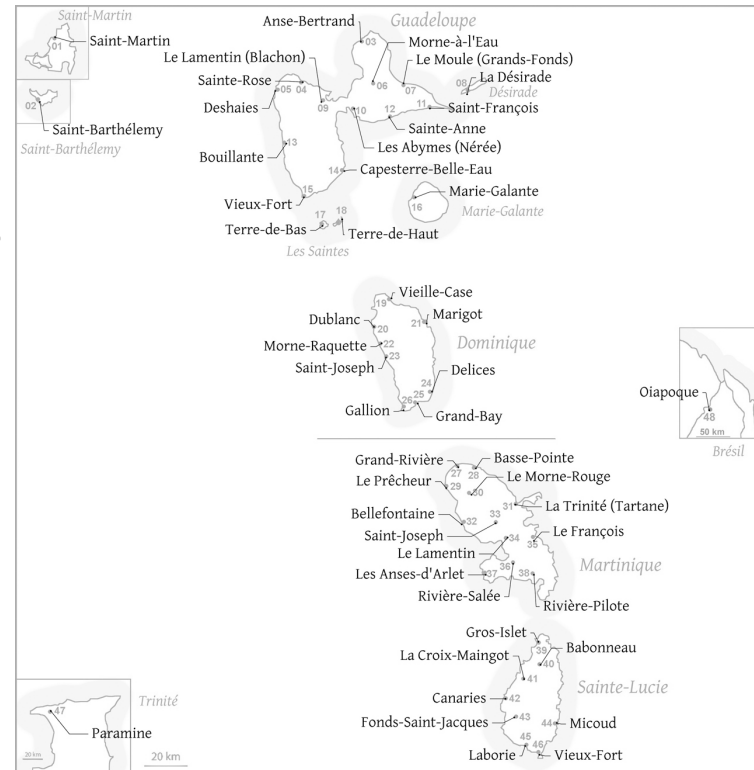
French Creoles: atlases

- Two atlases represent the dialectal variety of French Creoles in the Caribbean: Fattier (2000, 6 vols.) for Haiti and Le Dû / Trigaud (2011-2013, 2 vols.) for the Lesser Antilles.



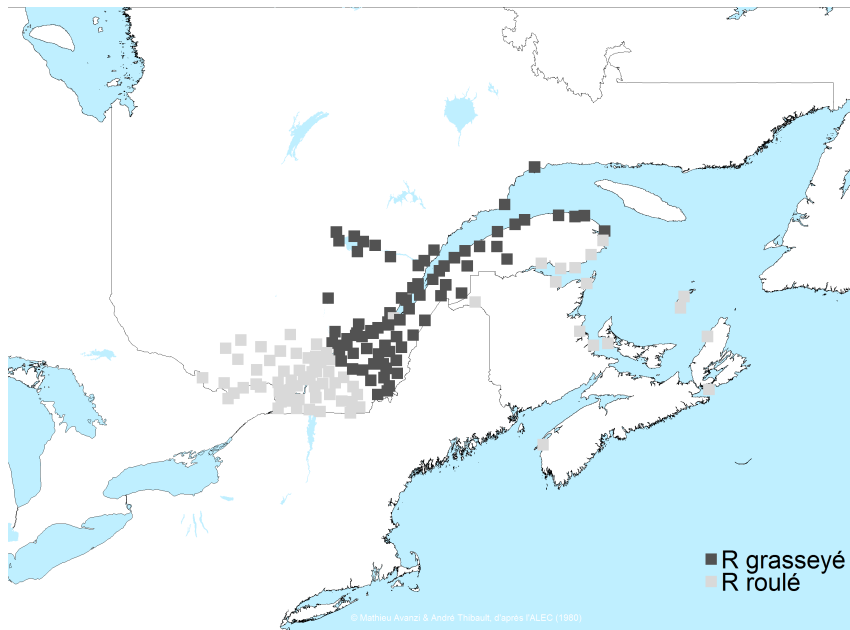
French Creoles: atlases

- The contact between French creole varieties and metropolitan French can be quite **significant** or virtually **nonexistent**, depending on the local situation (Guadeloupe and Martinique vs. Dominique and St. Lucia) and the historical period.



Expatriate varieties

Apical vs. uvular /r/



ALEC (Dulong / Bergeron) 1980

Le Parler populaire du Québec
et de ses régions voisines

Gaston Dulong, Gaston Bergeron

Volume 1
Présentation et
Guide de l'utilisateur

*Atlas linguistique
de l'Est du Canada*

History and geography

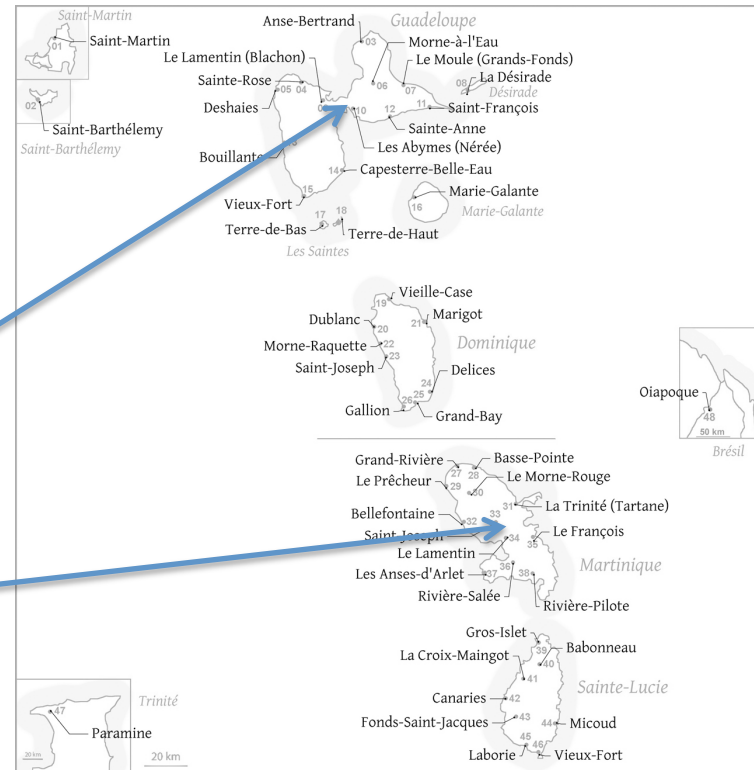
- French in France is in constant evolution, but...
 - The period of contact between the motherland and its colonies varies.
 - The nature of the political or cultural relationship also varies.
 - And it all influences the exportation of innovations overseas.

History and geography

- French Overseas Departments
 - Guadeloupe and Martinique
- Ex-British Islands
 - Dominica and St. Lucia
- Canada
 - Acadie and Québec

Guadeloupe and Martinique

- The French gradually settled down in the Antilles in the **mid-seventeenth century**.
- Guadeloupe and Martinique still belong to France.



Dominica and St. Lucia

- Dominica became British in **1763** and St. Lucia in **1814**.
- They became independant in, resp., 1978 and 1979.



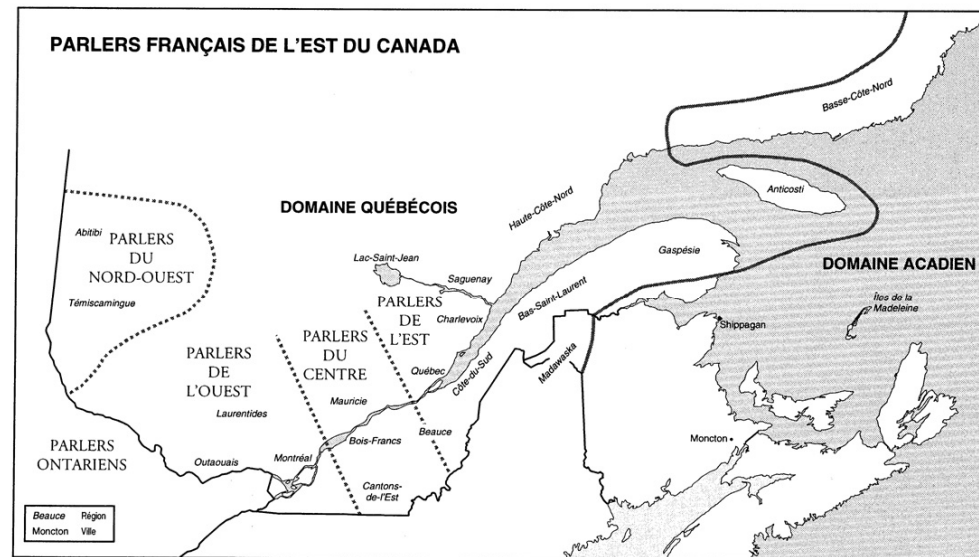
Acadie

- Acadie was founded by the French in **1604** and separated from the homeland in **1713** (Treaty of Utrecht).



Québec

- The rest of Nouvelle-France (Québec City was founded in **1608**) fell into British hands in **1763** (Treaty of Paris).



Carte 4

Chronological overview

Timeline		17th c.	18th c.	19th c.	20th c.	21st c.	
Territories	Acadie	1604...	...1713		...	...2019	
	Canada	Québec	1608...	...1763		...	...2019
		Dominica	ca 1650...	...1763			
	ex-British islands	St. Lucia	ca 1650...	...	...1814		
		Guadeloupe	ca 1650...	...	...	...	...2019
	French overseas depts.	Martinique	ca 1650...	...	...	...	...2019

Analysis of the material

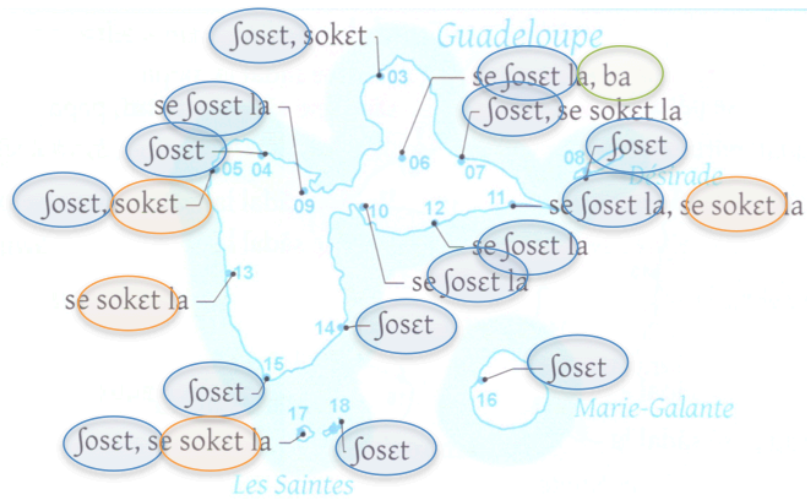
- We are going to have a look at a series of maps dedicated to features that will show how **political separation** can affect the distribution of variants across the French-speaking world (at large).
- The creole of the **French** Departments will be systematically compared with the one spoken in the **ex-British** islands.
- Where data is available, **parallels** between **Canada** and the **ex-British** islands will be highlighted.

Analysis of the material

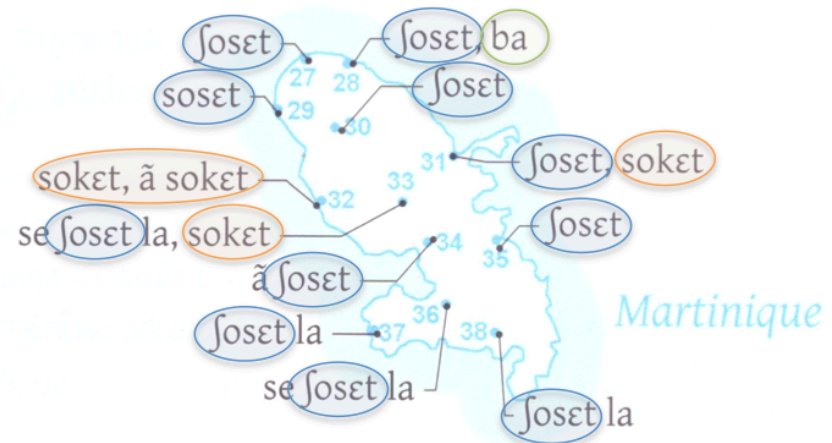
- lexicon: concepts related to clothing
 - “socks”
 - “pants”
 - “pair of shorts”
 - “clothes”
- (lexicon-related) pronunciation features
 - final consonants
 - final consonant restitution in standard French (*avriL, sourciL, aoûT*)
 - absence of final consonant restitution in standard French (*juilleT, minuiT*)
 - pronunciation of the <oi> spelling: [we] in the old norm, [wa] in the new one
 - nasalization of [l] > [n] in *caleçons* > *caneçons* (lower-class French)

Concept 'socks'

Guadeloupe



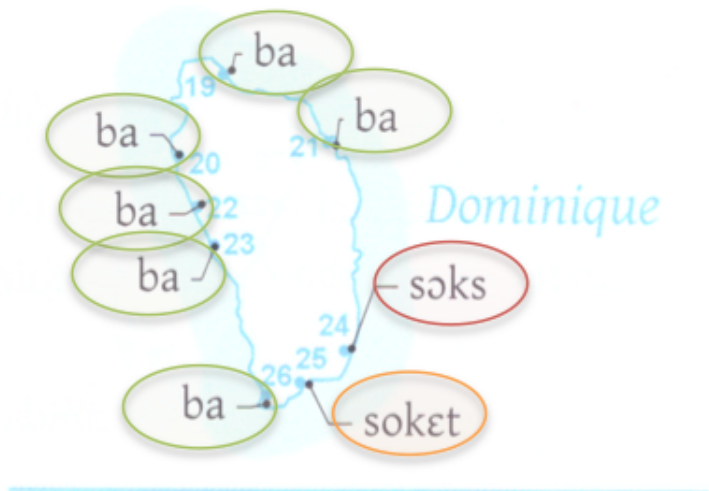
Martinique



dominant type: *chaussettes*

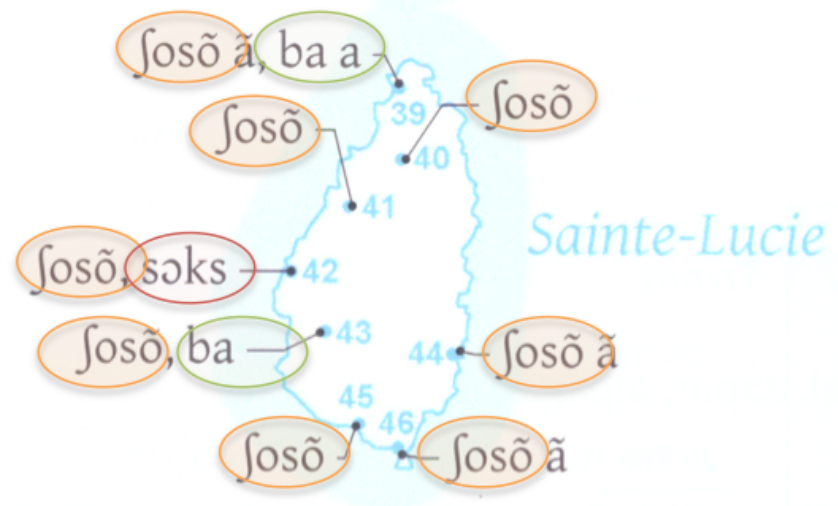
Concept 'socks'

Dominica



dominant type: *bas*

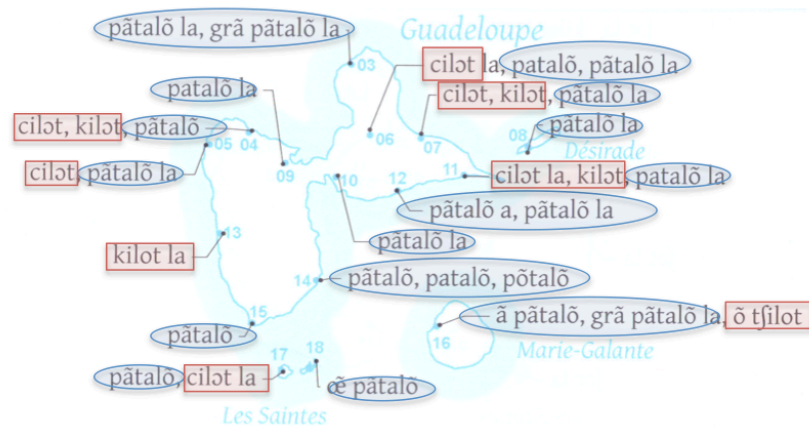
St. Lucia



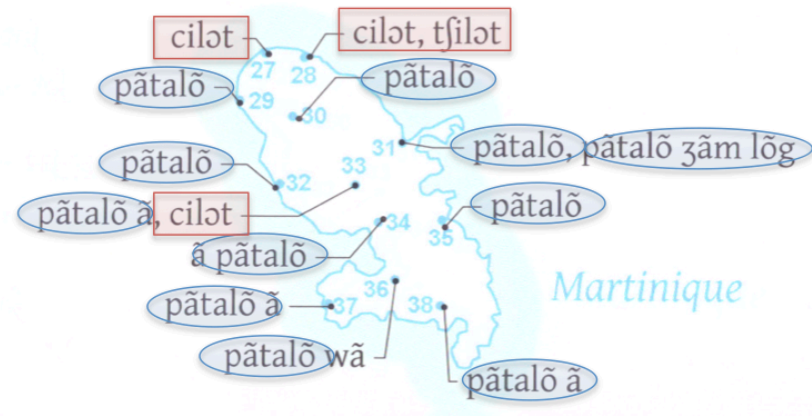
dominant type: *chaussons*

Concept 'pants'

Guadeloupe



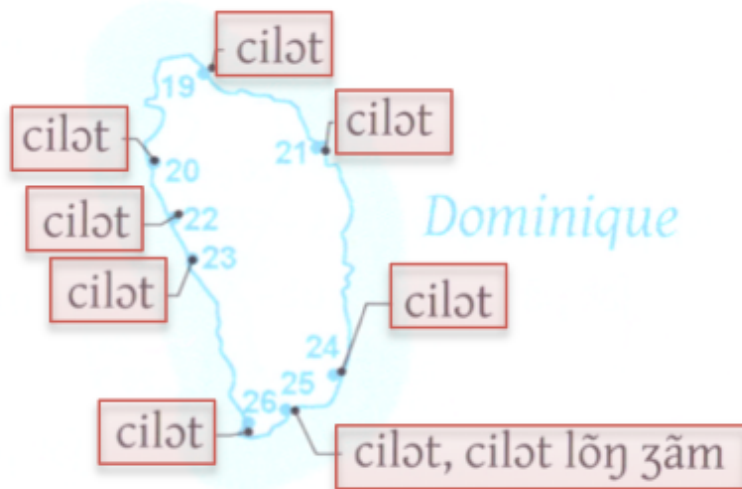
Martinique



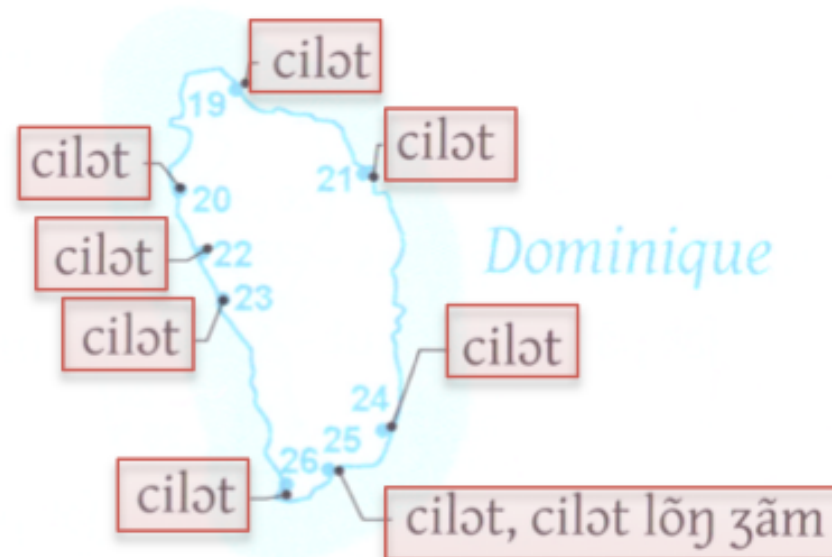
dominant type: *pantalón*

Concept 'pants'

Dominica



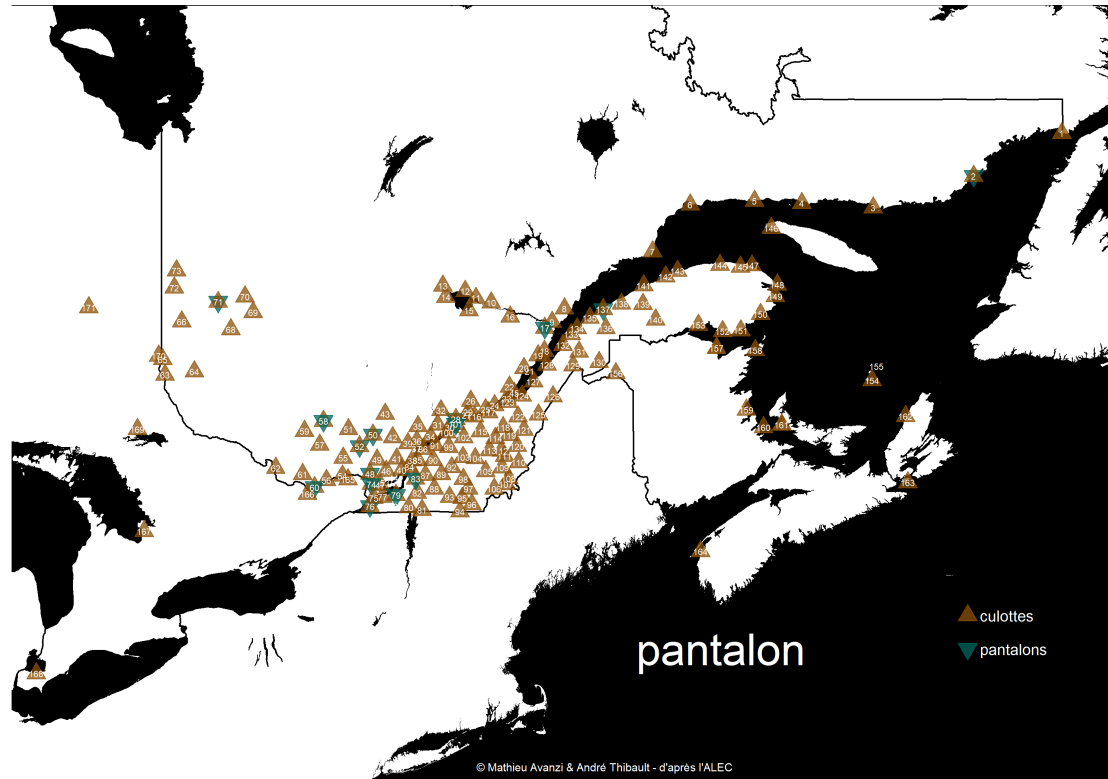
St. Lucia



dominant type: *culottes*

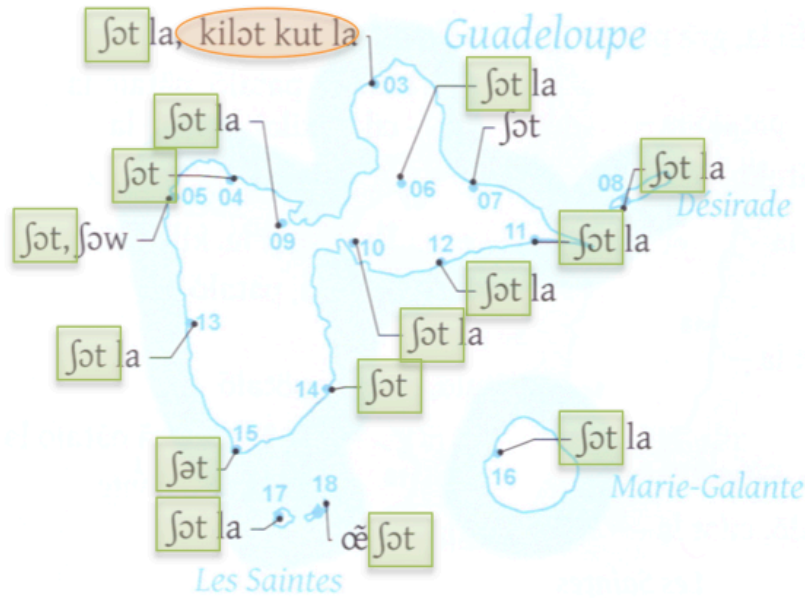
Concept 'pants'

- The standard French word for “pants” is *pantalon*, an Italianism that appeared in 1790.
- It is no surprise that overseas varieties have kept a much older word, *culottes*.
- Traditional Canadian French behaves like the ex-British islands:

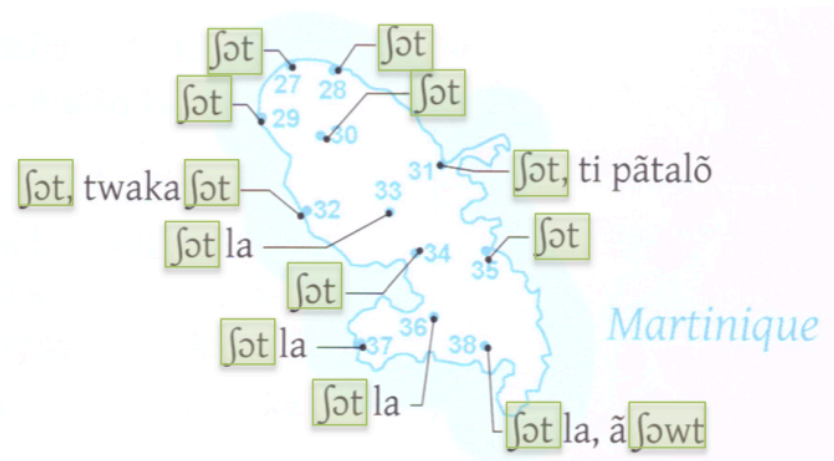


Concept 'pair of shorts'

Guadeloupe



Martinique

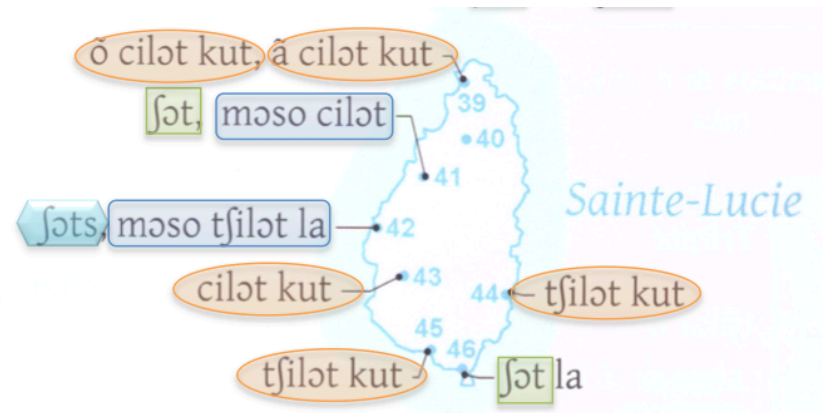
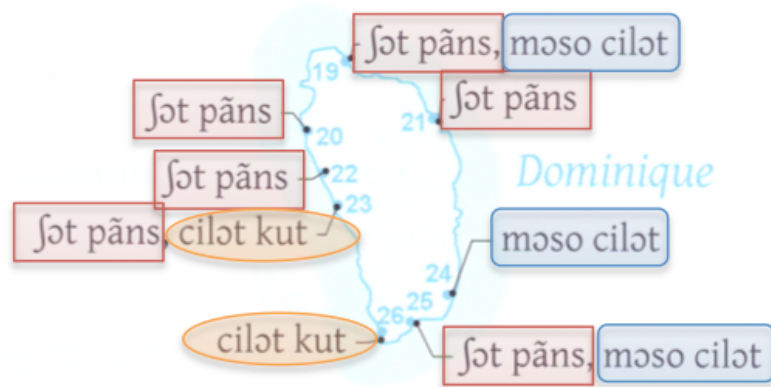


dominant type: *shorts* (recent European French Anglicism)

Concept 'pair of shorts'

Dominica

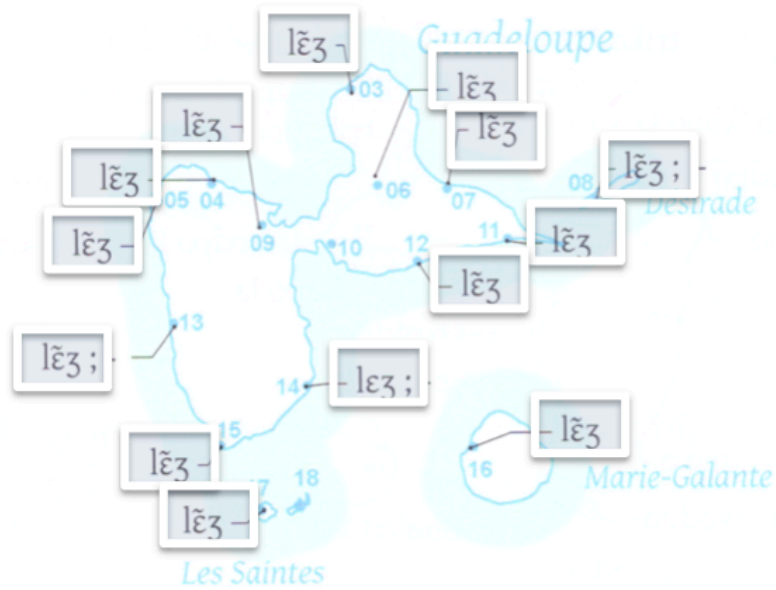
St. Lucia



wide variety of types

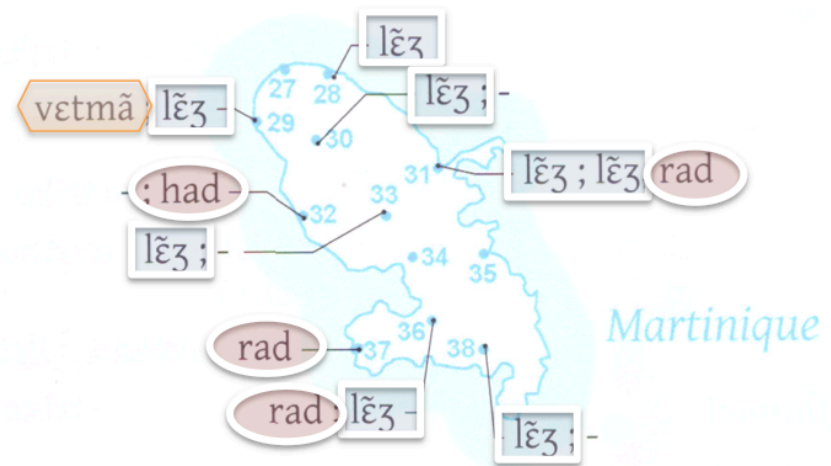
Concept 'clothes'

Guadeloupe



dominant type: *linge*

Martinique



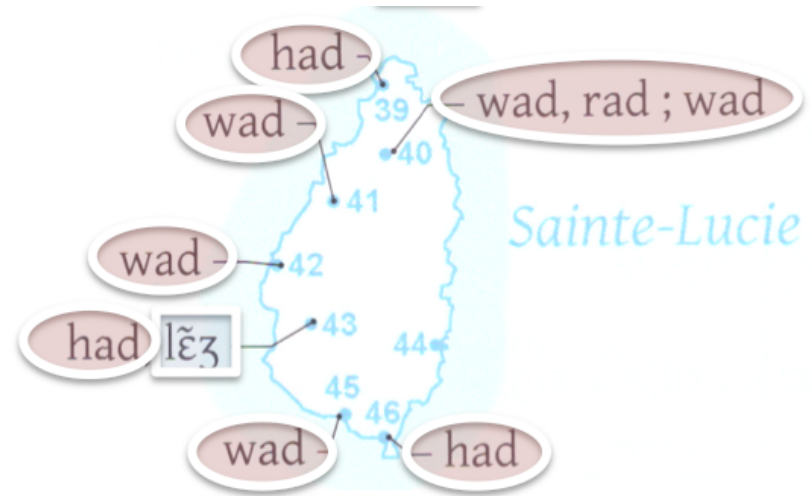
attested types: *hardes, linge, vêtements*

Concept 'clothes'

Dominica



St. Lucia



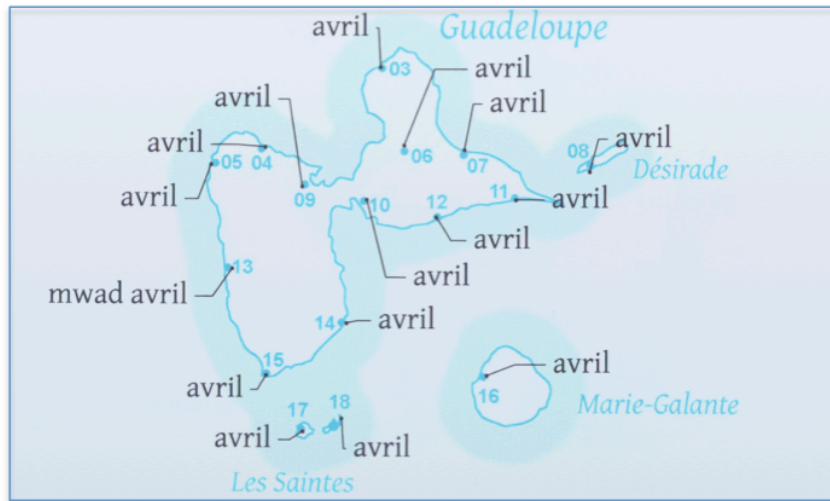
dominant type: *hardes*

Pronunciation features

- Final consonants – general tendencies
 - final consonants were all pronounced in Old French, stopped being pronounced in Middle French, and have been (only partially) restituted in Modern French
 - final consonant restitution in standard French (*avriL, sourciL, août*)
 - absence of final consonant restitution in standard French (*juilleT, minuiT*)

avri[l] 'April'

Guadeloupe



Martinique

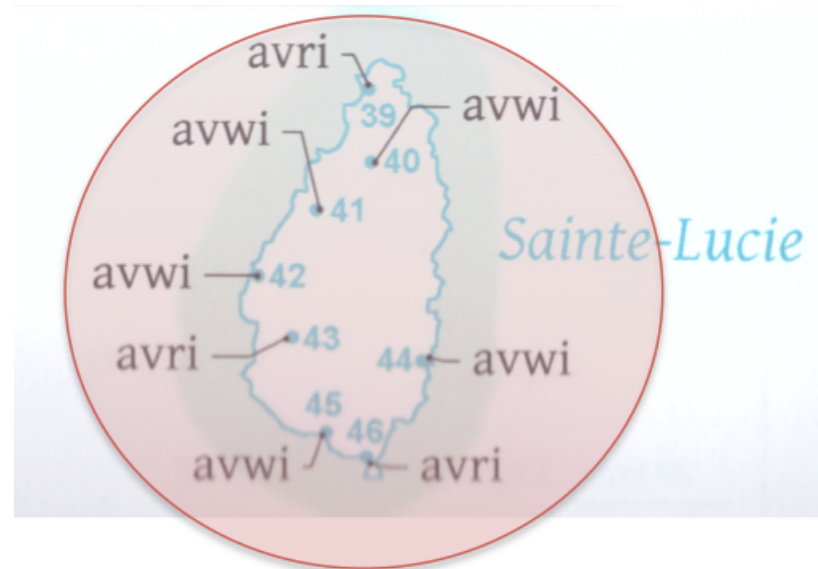


avri[l] 'April'

Dominica

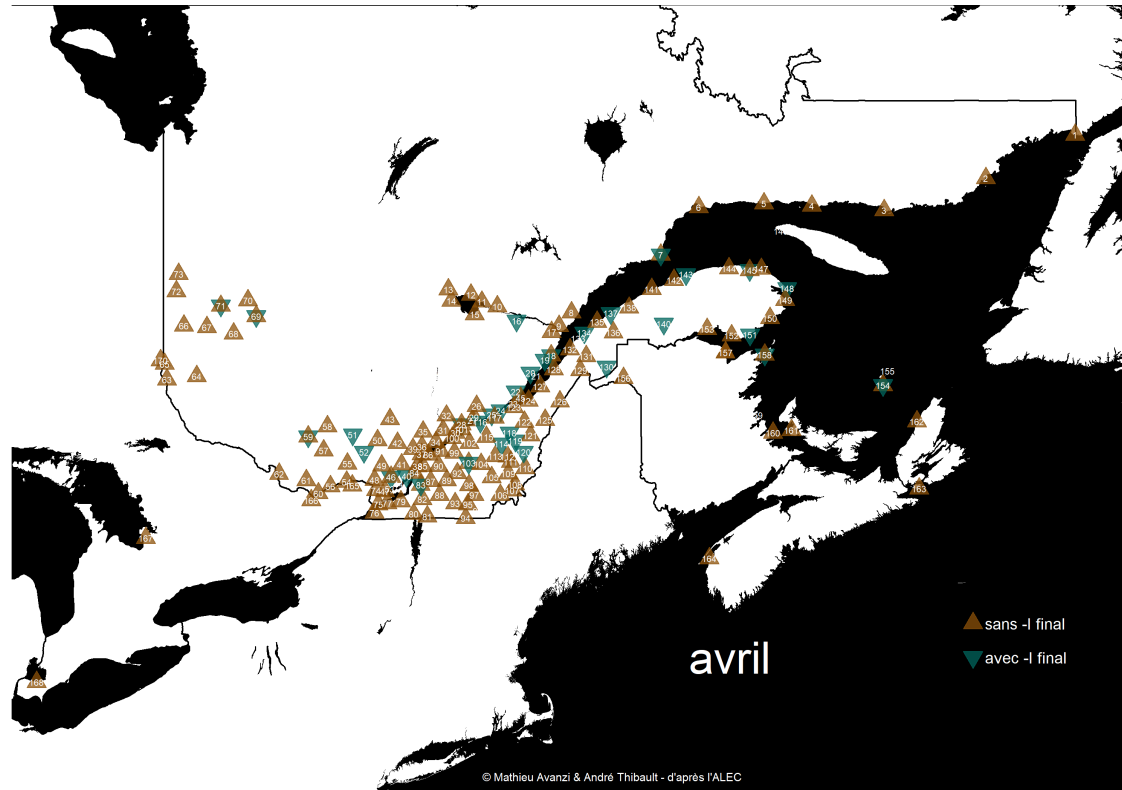


St. Lucia



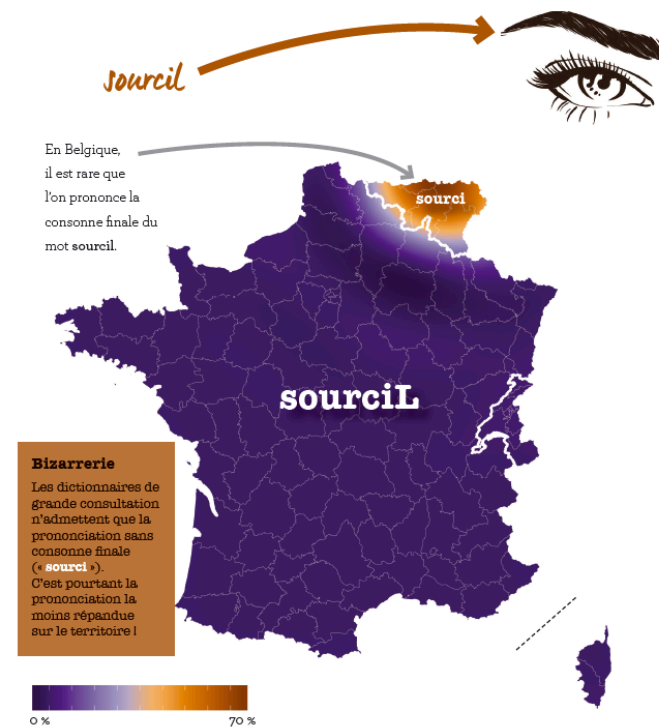
avri[l] 'April'

- The old pronunciation of *avril* without its final *-l* was still common among old rural speakers around 1970-1980 in Canada (according to ALEC, question 1697, brown triangles).
- The newer pronunciation, a recent importation from France, was attested in a few points only (green triangles).



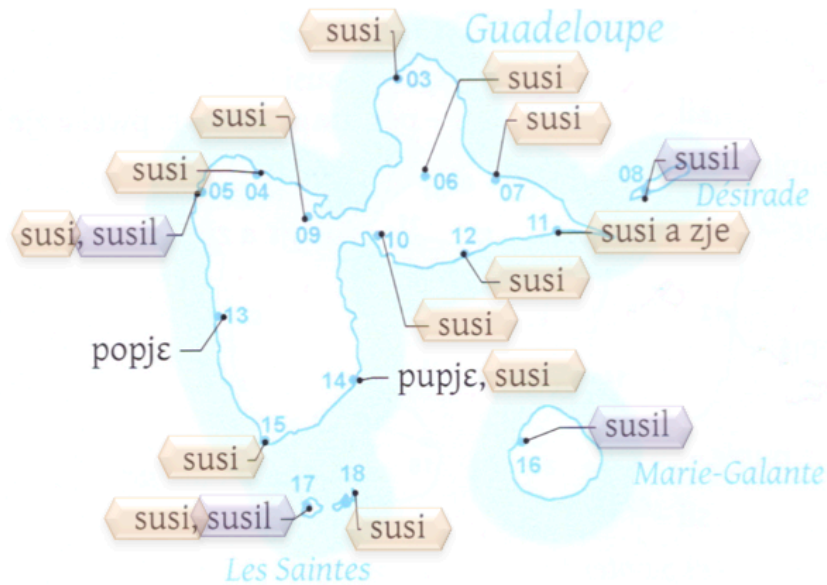
sourci[l] ‘eyebrows’

- The restitution of final *-l* in the pronunciation of *sourcil* (“eyebrows”) is extremely recent in France—so recent, that it still hasn’t reached most dictionaries.
- But cf. Avanzi 2017:

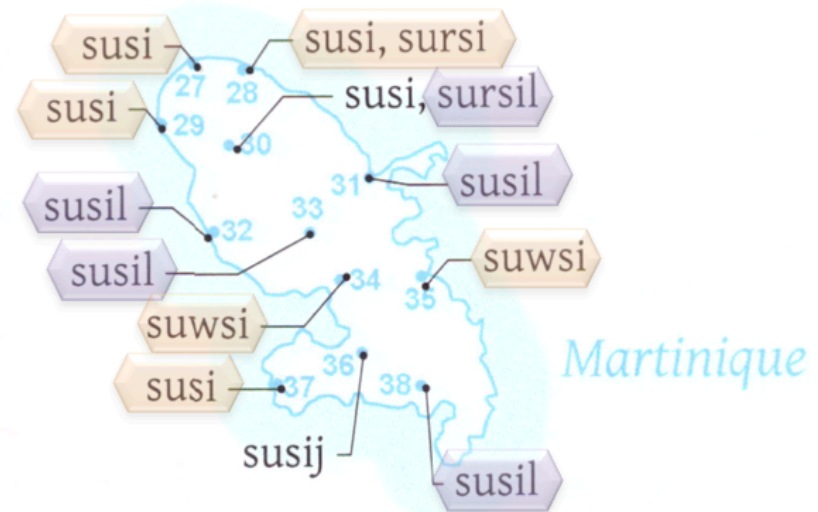


sourci[l] 'eyebrows'

Guadeloupe



Martinique



sourci[l] 'eyebrows'

Dominica

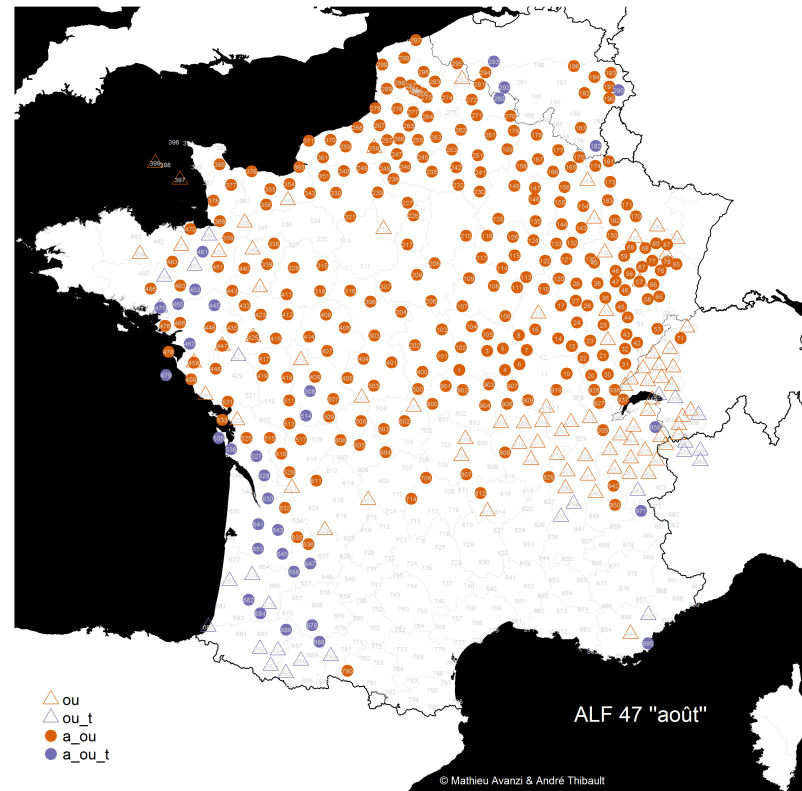


St. Lucia



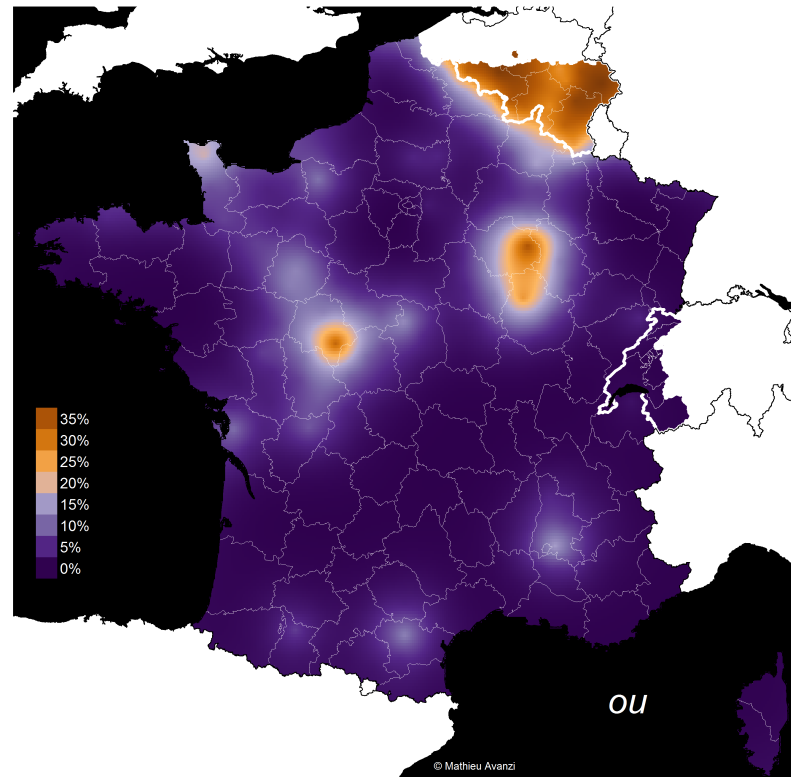
[a]oû[T] 'August'

- Roughly speaking, the pronunciation of this word in the last two centuries went from [au] to [u] to [ut].
- The domination of [au] at the beginning of the 20th c., in the primary Gallo-Romance dialects, can clearly be seen on this map based on ALF data, where the orange circles correspond to this pronunciation.



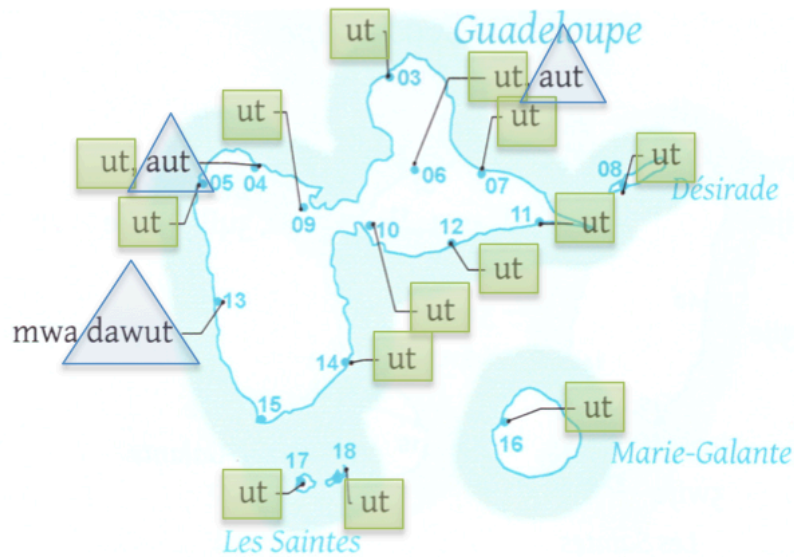
[a]oû[T] 'August'

- In current European French, [au] has practically disappeared and [ut] has become the most widespread variant (here in violet);
- but the intermediate form [u] (here in orange) still survives in Belgium, as well as in several isolated areas.



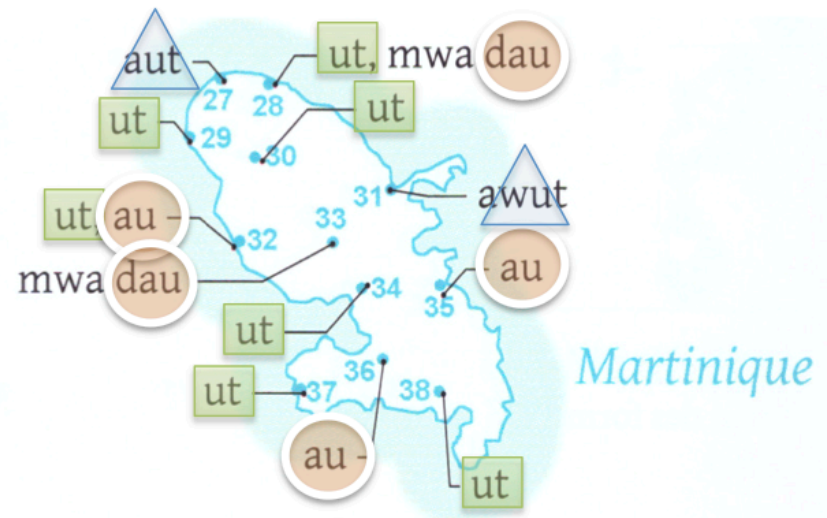
[a]oû[T] 'August'

Guadeloupe



dominant type: [ut]

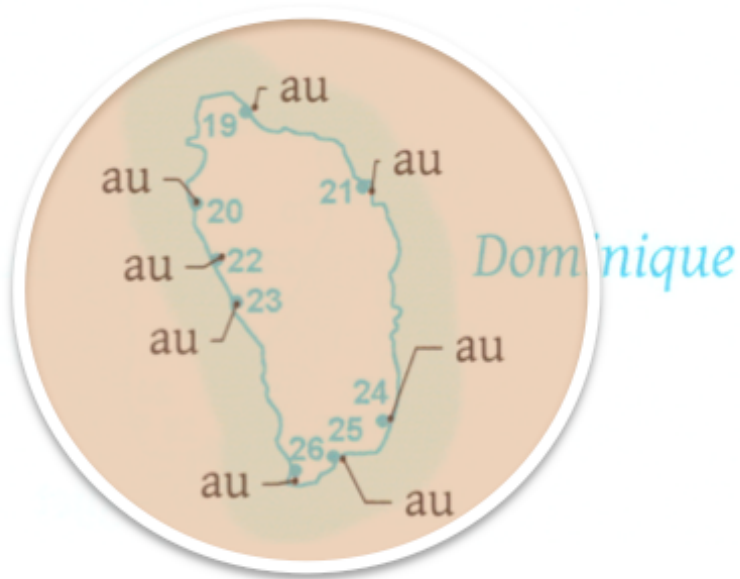
Martinique



attested types: [au], [ut]

[a]oû[T] 'August'

Dominique

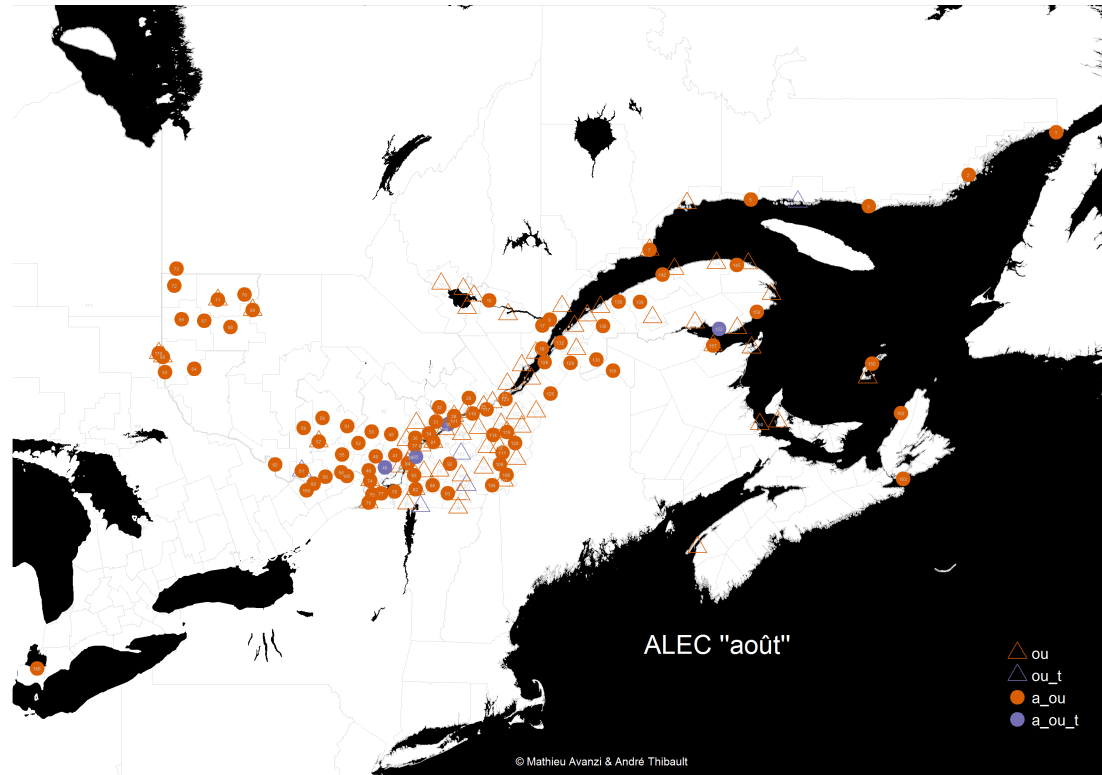


St. Lucia



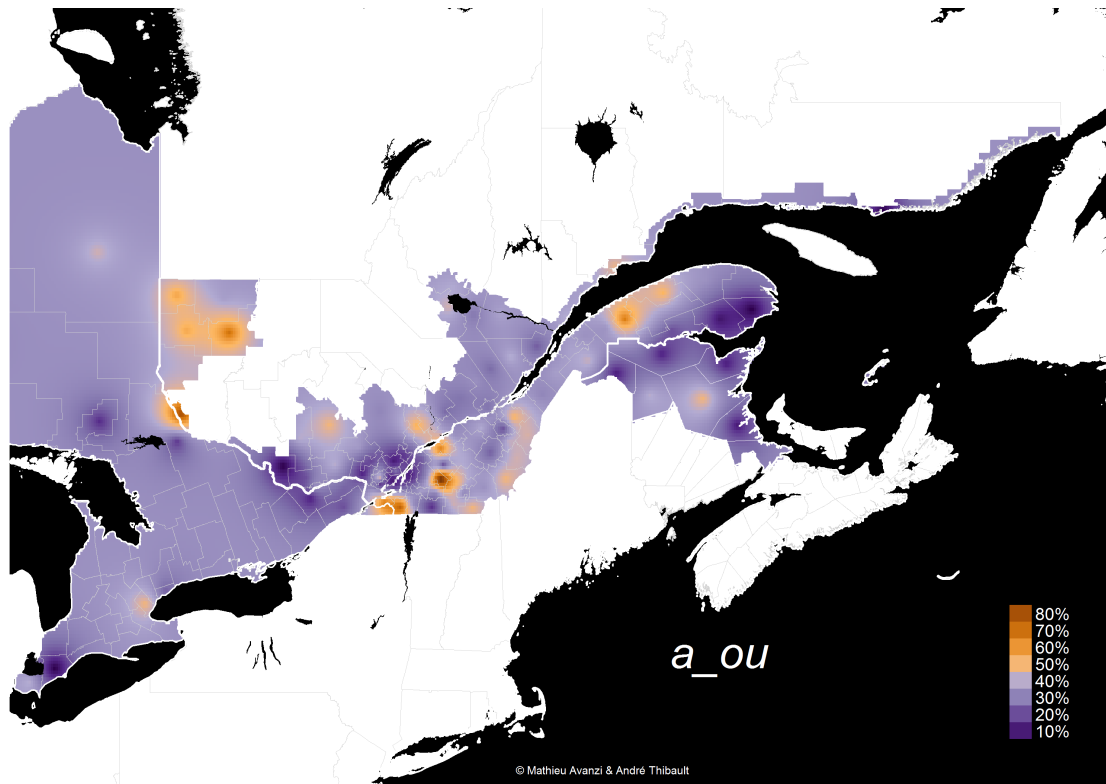
$[a]o\hat{u}[T]$ 'August'

- If we look at Canada, the old rural speakers of the ALEC (1980) survey still used the most archaic form, [au] (orange circles), in a majority of points.
- Nevertheless, the intermediate form [u] (orange triangles) was already well attested.



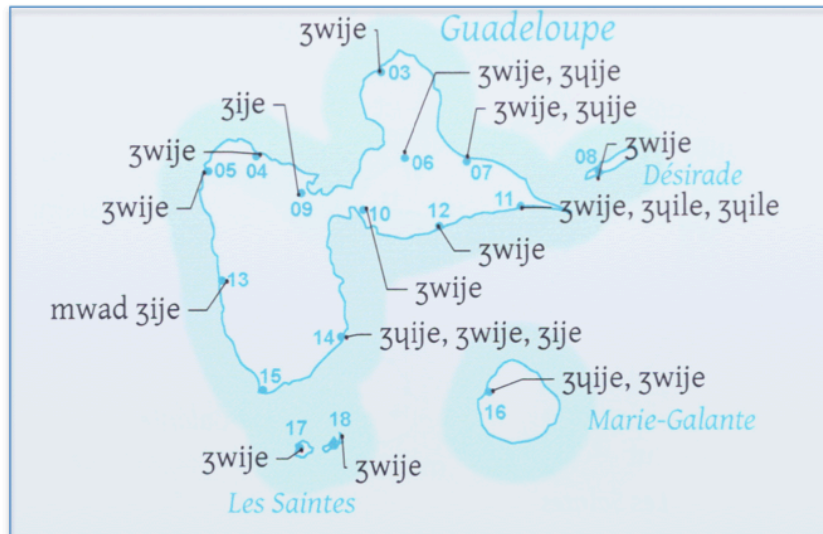
[a]oû[T] 'August'

- A much more recent survey shows that the situation has shifted:
 - nowadays, [u] has become the norm (in violet), and [au] (in orange) only survives in remote communities.
- As far as [ut] is concerned, it is (still) virtually nonexistent in Canadian French.

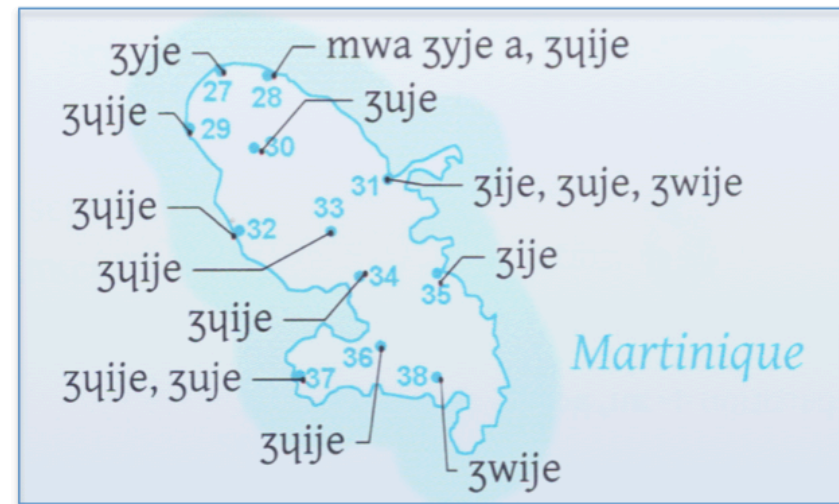


juille[t] 'July'

Guadeloupe

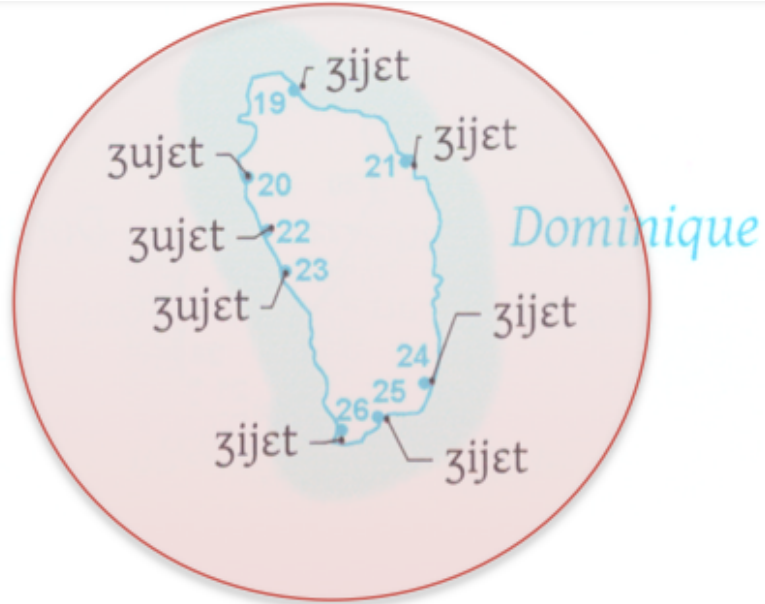


Martinique

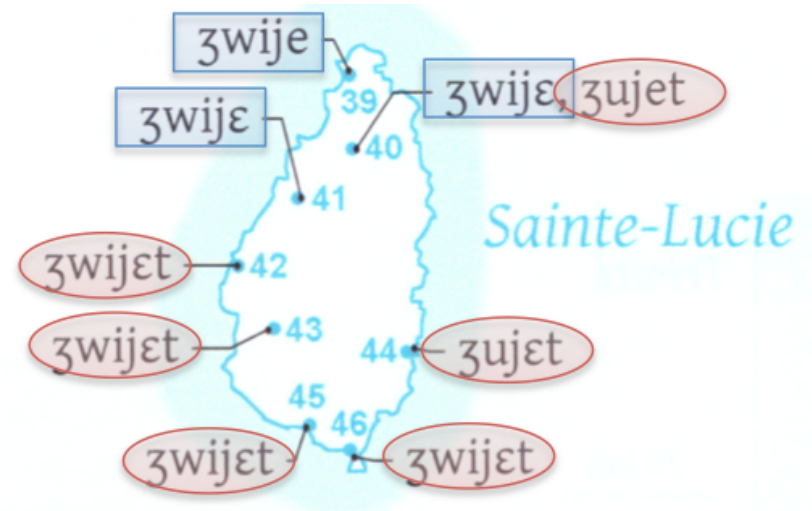


juille[t] 'July'

Dominica

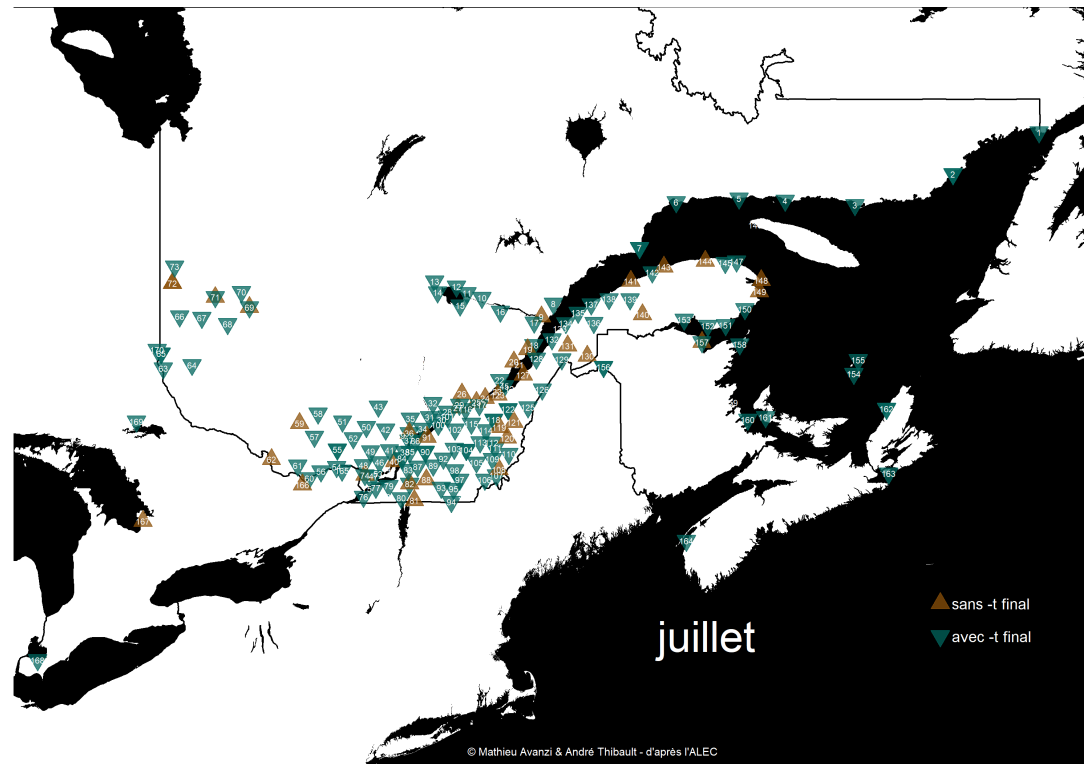


St. Lucia



juille[t] 'July'

- The pronunciation of the final consonant in this word is attested in a few dictionaries, but never became mainstream in French lexicography.
- It must have been very frequent in colonial times though, because it is the best represented variant in traditional Canadian French, as documented in the ALEC (green triangles):

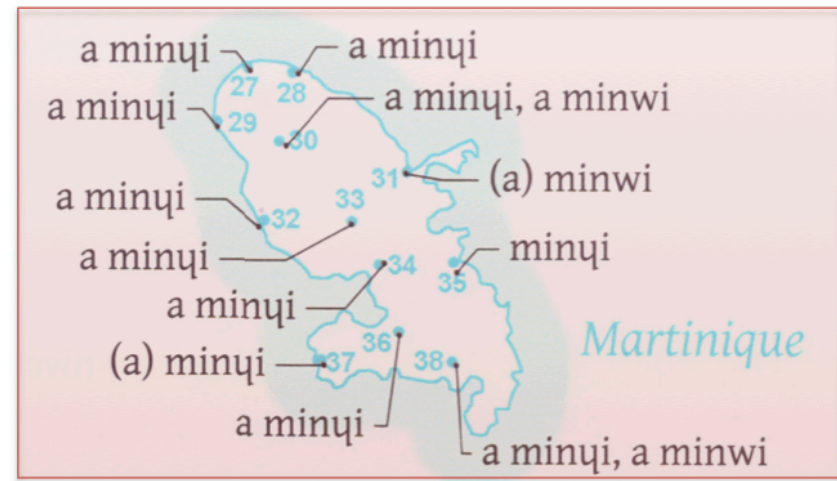


minui[t] ‘Midnight’

Guadeloupe



Martinique

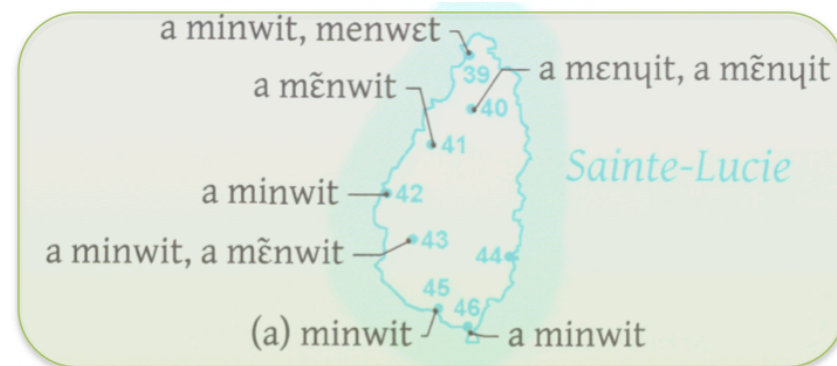


minui[t] ‘Midnight’

Dominica

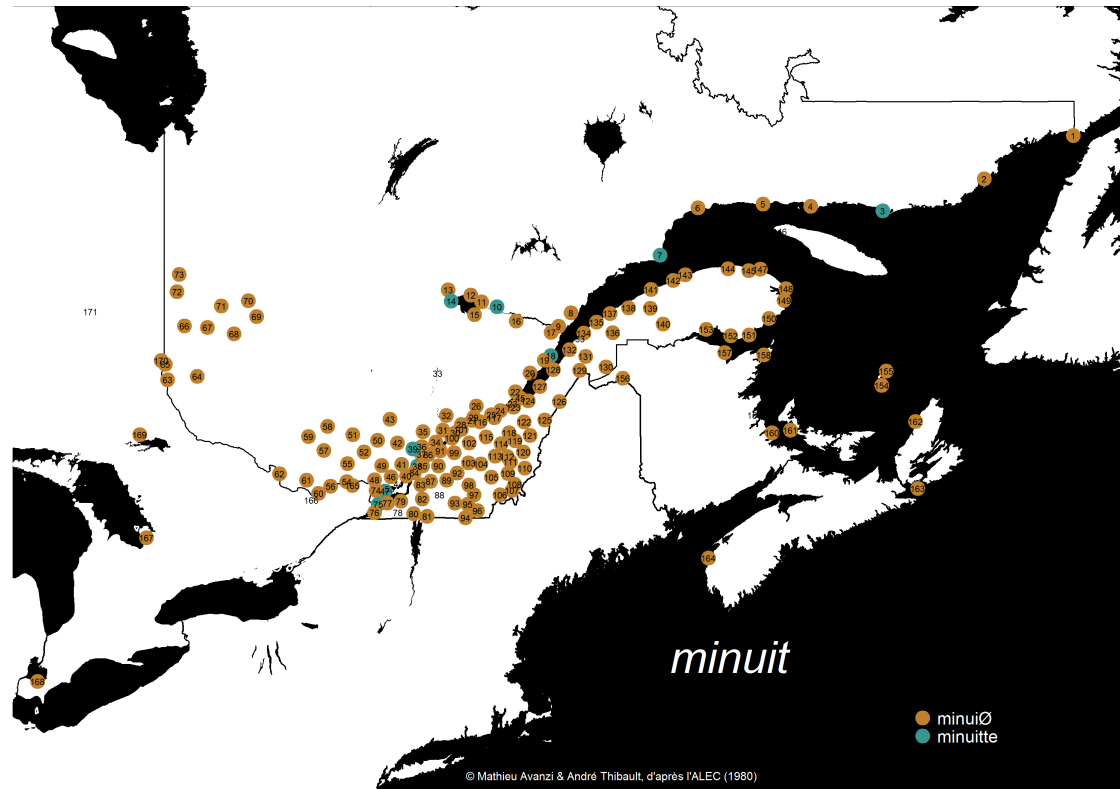


St. Lucia



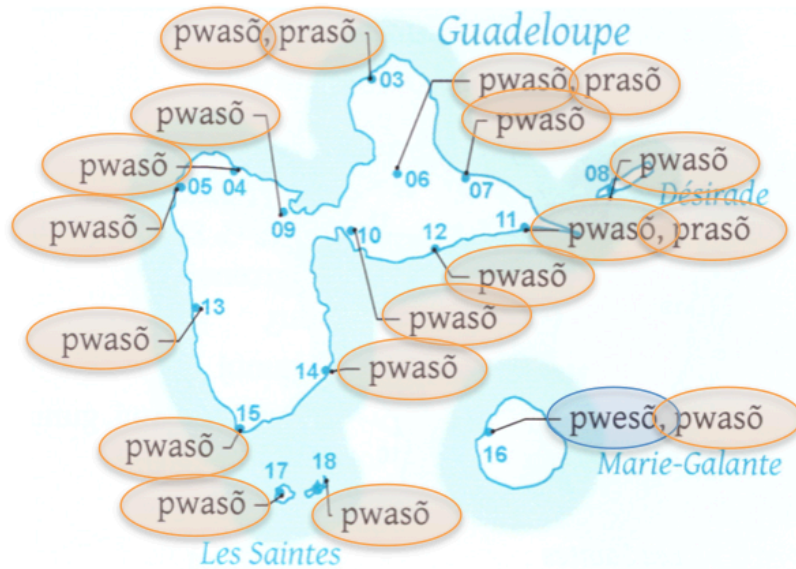
minui[t] ‘Midnight’

- In traditional Canadian French, the pronunciation of the final consonant is attested, although with a minority status (green circles);
- the modern standard variant, the one without final [-t] (brown circles), was already the norm, even for elderly rural speakers back in 1980.
- Nowadays, its hegemony would most probably be even stronger.

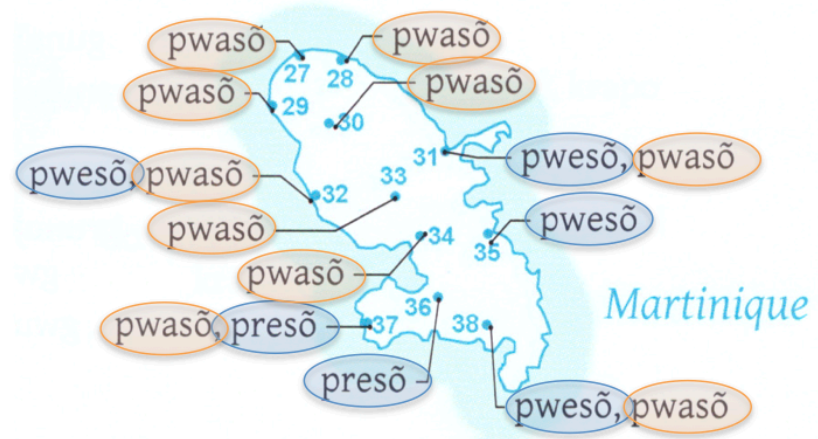


Pronunciation of <oi> ([we, wa])

Guadeloupe



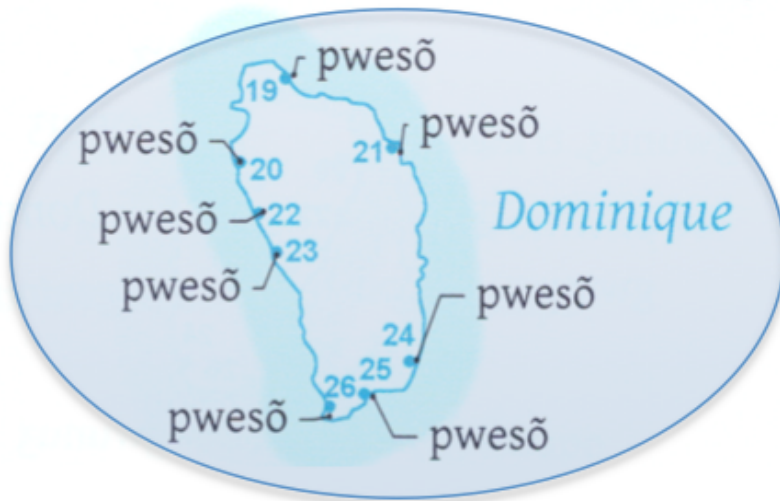
Martinique



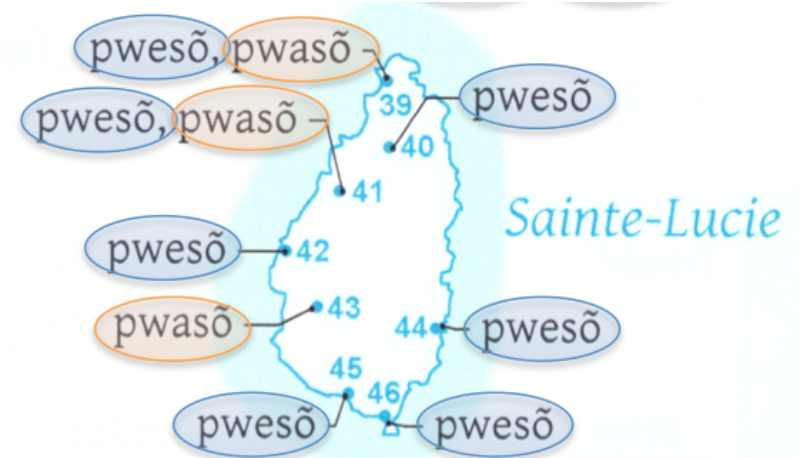
dominant type: [wa]

Pronunciation of <oi> ([we, wa])

Dominica



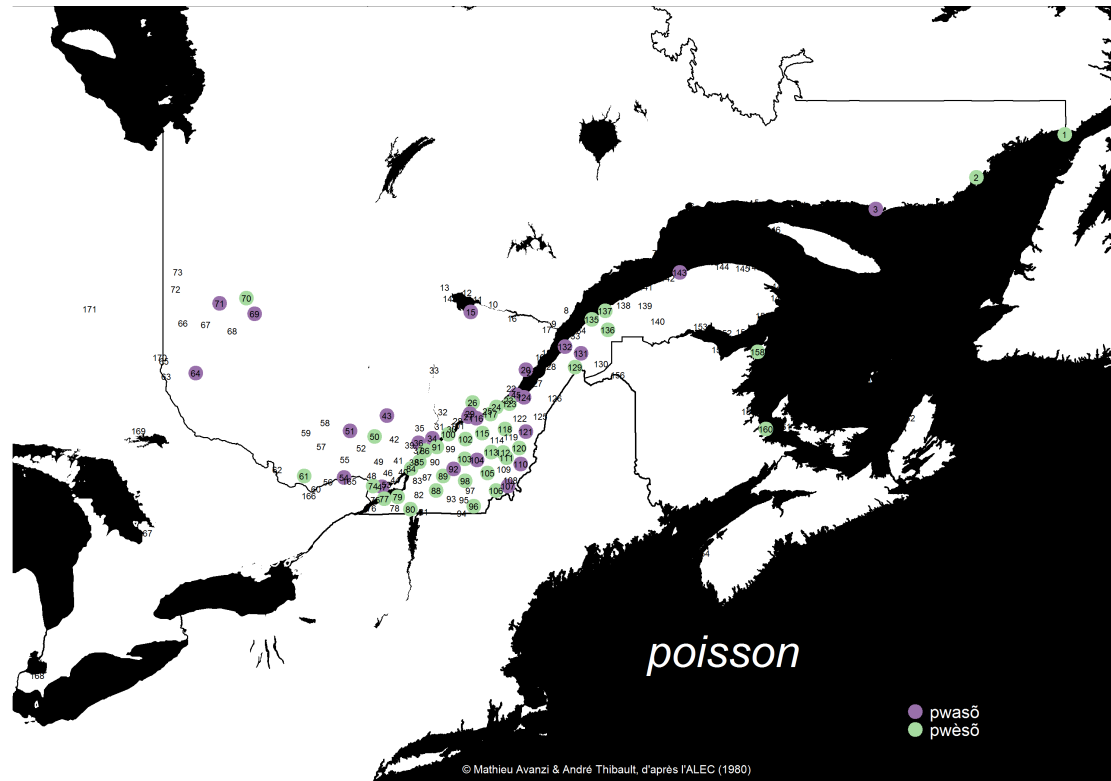
St. Lucia



dominant type: [we]

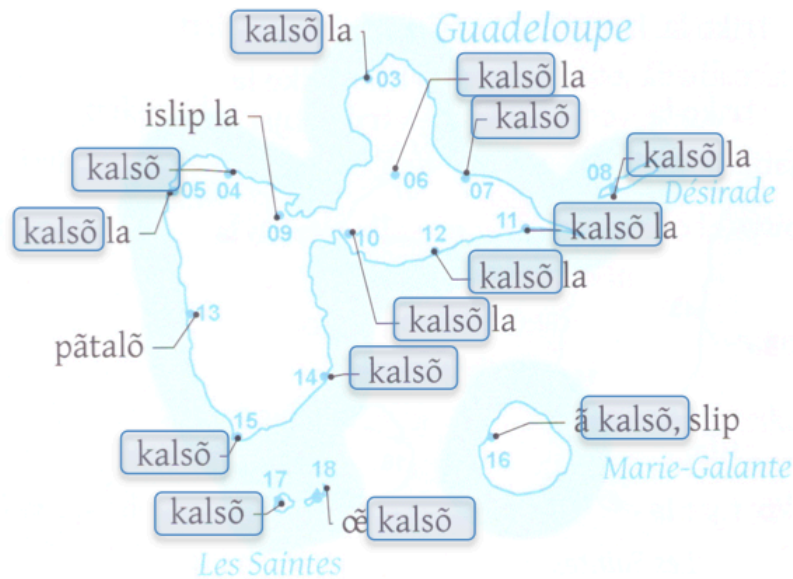
Pronunciation of <oi> ([we, wa])

- It is a well-known fact that <oi> in pre-Revolutionary French corresponded to [we] in the pronunciation of the higher classes, and then switched to [wa] when the bourgeois classes took over.
- This map shows the survival of archaic [we] (green circles) in the word *poisson* “fish” in elderly rural speakers born around 1900.

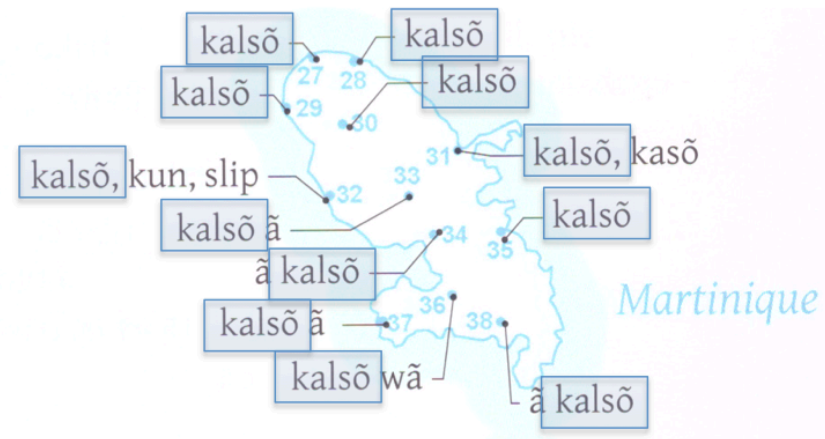


Nasalization of [l] > [n] in *caleçon* > *caneçon*

Guadeloupe



Martinique



we have [-al-] everywhere

Nasalization of [l] > [n] in *caleçon* > *caneçon*

Dominica



dominant type: [-an-]

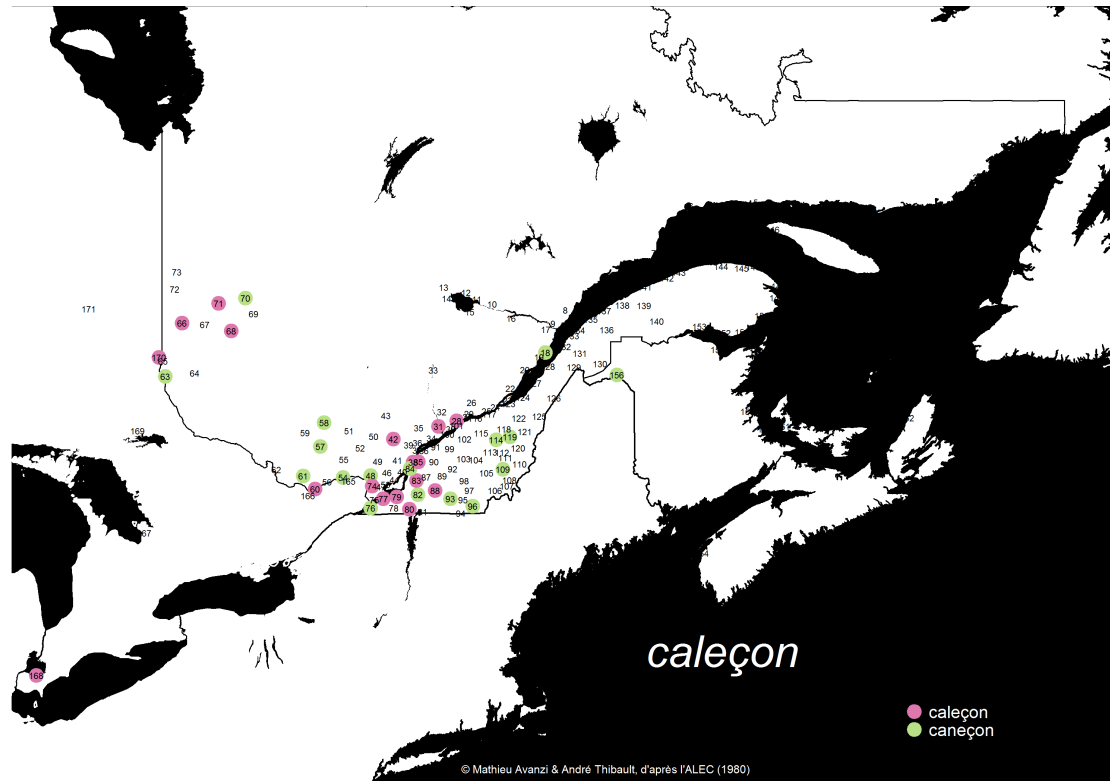
St. Lucia



dominant type: [-al-]

Nasalization of [l] > [n] in *caleçon* > *caneçon*

- The standard French word for “underwear, boxer shorts” is *caleçon*. The phonetic variant *caneçon* has existed for centuries, yet always limited to the speech of lower social classes.
- It is a typical case of “diastatism”.
- In traditional Canadian French, both variants coexisted (see map).



Summary and conclusion

- Innovations can theoretically appear anywhere, in any speech community, but in order to achieve a **wider** diffusion and conquer **new** territories they must radiate out from a major demographic (as well as cultural and political) **center**;
- in this case study, we saw that innovations from **France** often ended up conquering other parts of the French-speaking world, while the reverse situation seems less likely.

Summary and conclusion

- Nevertheless, a **clean break** of political ties can slow down or even stop this process, a situation that is particularly striking in the ex-British islands Dominica and St. Lucia, whose French creole is virtually untouched by recent European French innovations.

Summary and conclusion

- However, political independence does not necessarily imply that a strong demographic center cannot disseminate its innovations **beyond** its political boundaries: **cultural prestige** can be just as significant as **political ties**.

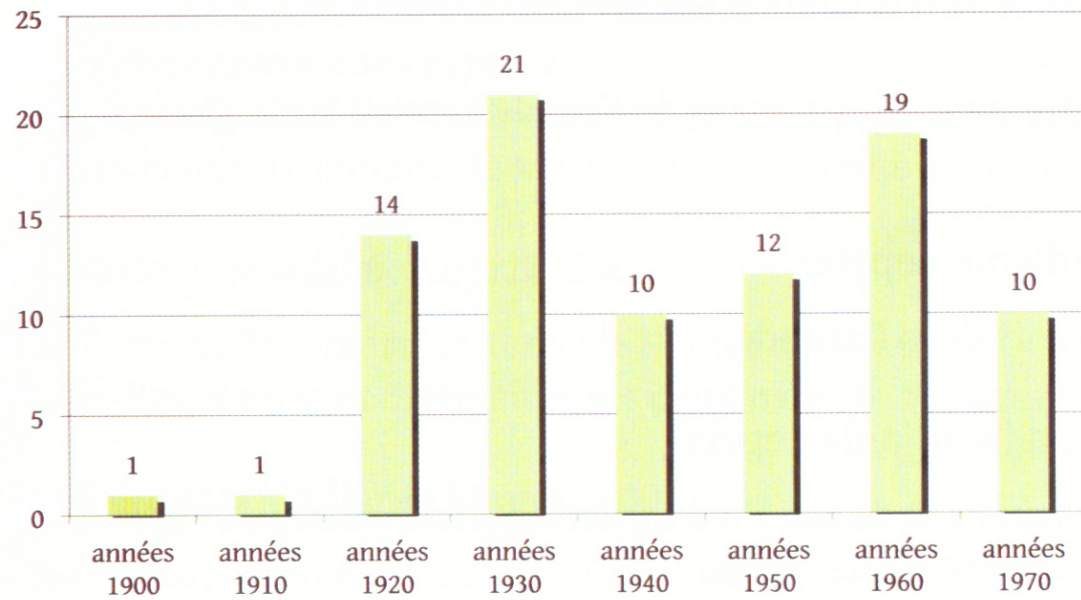
Summary and conclusion

- French-speaking Canada **gradually reconnected** with European French in the last century, seeing it as **more prestigious**, and we saw in this study that the variants that are respectively attested in the French islands on the one hand and in the ex-British islands on the other often coexist in Canada but **across generations**;
 - in other words, a *diatopic* differentiation in the West Indies can correspond to a *generational* one in Canada.

Summary and conclusion

- The creole of the French islands is often viewed as more and more '**Frenchified**' ('francisé'); for some, it might even find itself on the slippery slope of '**decreolization**'.
- This impressionistic view might be a bit exaggerated or alarmist, but at least we now know that the use of linguistic atlases can help us to evaluate this process on the base of empirical facts, by systematically **comparing** Guadeloupe and Martinique with Dominica and St. Lucia.
- Nevertheless, generational studies would have to be conducted in order to get a better view of the situation.

Age of the informants, ALPA



Summary and conclusion

- Moreover, decreolization cannot be measured without taking into consideration more **systemic** features, both **phonological** (such as rounded front vowels and glides) and **morphosyntactic** (such as subordinate conjunctions);
- borrowed lexical items and lexicon-related pronunciation features alone are not enough.
- Nevertheless, they do show that the influence of Metropolitan French is very strong in the 'DOMs.'
- The important thing is to distinguish between 'Frenchification' (which could only affect the lexicon, by updating it) and 'decreolization' (which supposedly affects the whole system).

Thanks for your attention!



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