National identity among the Colombian returnees from Venezuela

Motives for Migration, Transnationalism, and Integration

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Figure 1 front page: Getty Images (2018)

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Introduction

In 2014, the dire life conditions in Venezuela started a mass migration flux from Venezuela to the surrounding countries. The flux is of such unprecedented dimensions that it has often been called one of the worst migration crises Latin America has seen (CIDH 2018). The exact figures are unclear, but by the end of 2018, at least 3 million Venezuelans have exited their homeland (CIDH 2018). Conditions in Venezuela are precarious: food and medicine are difficult to obtain, and hyperinflation renders any savings obsolete (CIDH 2018). Hunger and crime make life a challenge for most of the population (CIDH 2018). To see this veritable exodus of migrants coming from Venezuela as a homogenous group would be a mistake (CIDH 2018), for it consists of various social classes and nationalities. This research project focuses on one of these groups: the returning Colombians from Venezuela that migrated back to Colombia in 2018[1]. This particular group of migrants once reconstructed their lives in Venezuela after their first migration, or were raised by Colombian parents in Venezuela. None of these new members of the Venezuelan society foresaw a return to the country of origin (CODHES 2017). In the current circumstances, they are forced to return to their native country. Upon their return, they attempt to reclaim their rights as Colombian citizens. But this process is complex, firstly because they are invisible in the enormous wave of migrants, and often perceived as Venezuelan migrants. And secondly, because they often lack the necessary documents to achieve status as Colombians.

The migratory flux from Colombia to Venezuela was always present and intensified in the second half of the twentieth century (Mejía Ochoa 2012). The main reason for this was the military conflict that grasped Colombia and caused mass internal and external displacement. This meant the development of major structural problems such as extreme poverty and inequity among the population. The conflict and its consequences drove numerous Colombian citizens over the border, many of whom to Venezuela. From the 1970s, the Venezuelan economy was strong and allowed the Colombian immigrants to effectively participate in society. Even when the socio-economic and political conditions in Venezuela deteriorated, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Colombian emigrants still saw enough reason to choose Venezuela as their migratory destination (Mejía Ochoa 2012). Venezuela remained a popular country for migrants until recently, when the economy and life quality started to take a deep dive. This dive has now converted into a free fall, which entails the harsh life conditions, and is what is pushing the citizens out of the country (CIDH 2018).

Characteristic to this phase of the exodus, between 2017 and 2018, is the modest background and few financial resources of the migrants. The choice of migration for this group of Colombian returnees was spontaneous (CIDH 2018). They had to wait for a chance to migrate, which would either be the ideal occasion, or when their own socio-economic situation was endangered. Once they arrived in Colombia, they still had to face various challenges; reclaiming their rights as Colombian citizens, and reconstructing their lives in the country of origin. The reintegration has not taken place yet, and is a question for the future. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: *What is the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees from Venezuela?* In this paradigm, the Venezuelan and Colombian identity feature as two ends of a scale, and the migrant is somewhere in

[1] By this is meant the Colombians that moved to Venezuela at some point in their lives, and those that were born to Colombian parents in Venezuela. Another notable characteristic is the fact that they returned to Colombia in 2018.

the middle. National identity is viewed along the lines of Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities', as proposed by Madsen and Van Naerssen (2003). This has led to the following hypothesis: *The sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees is linked to the economic, professional, familial and social stability found in Venezuela. They are more likely to feel Venezuelan than Colombian.*

In order to properly asses the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees, the research question is divided into three sections: engagement in transnational activities and maintenance of the culture of origin; integration into Venezuelan society; and circumstances of migration and rupture with life ambitions. These correspond to three sub-questions: the first section refers to transnationalism and maintenance of the original culture. The question is: *How did the transnational activities of the Colombian migrants in Venezuela affect the return to Colombia?* Transnationalism is often considered an important element in the life of an immigrant, because it can lead to the maintenance of strong ties with the country of origin (Schiller et al. 1992; Gilmartin 2008). Transnationalism can also be associated to the concept of 'home' (Kinefuchi 2010; Levitt 2004; Silvey and Lawson 1999), and the importance of the location of the family/household (Skrbiš 2008; Silvey and Lawson 1999). This, in its turn, affects the sense of belonging, and, thus, the national identity. This led to the following hypothesis: *Transnationalism may have had a certain role in the decision to return, but it seems not to have been a decisive factor. The majority of the Colombian citizens abroad (in countries other than Venezuela), that engage in similar transnational activities, do not foresee a return.*

The next section of the main research question zooms in on the integration into Venezuelan society by the migrants, and poses the following question: *To what extent did the Colombian migrants integrate in the Venezuelan society and how did this affect their sense of national identity?* Whether integration is successful, depends on the manner of integration of the immigrant. An immigrant might, for example, choose not to adopt any habits and traditions from the receiving country in favour of the original customs (Algan et al. 2012). But it also depends on the receiving society. Immigrants might not have access to all layers of society, and might not enjoy the benefits the native citizens do (Algan et al. 2012). Presumably, in the case of the Colombian immigrants in Venezuela, the assimilation process was relatively complete. They had access to the job market, and their cultures are fairly similar. On a social level, the integration should not have posed a great difficulty. The manner of integration into the new society matters because it facilitates, or complicates, the adoption of a new national identity. The following hypothesis was formulated: *Because the cultural and linguistic differences are small between the two countries, it was possible for the Colombians to integrate with a certain ease; not only on a social and professional level, but also on a political level. Even if the Colombians occupied jobs of low status, and were discriminated against in certain ways (as often occurs with migrants), it is likely that their experience should be of (near-) complete integration.*

Lastly, the research focuses on the circumstances of migration with the research question: *How did the migratory motives of the Colombian returnees affect their sense of national identity?* In this section, the main distinction is made between forced migration and any other sort of migration. It takes forced migration as a rupture of life plans, and implies unfinished business in the country of origin. This has implications on the post-migration life of the migrant. The desire for return is greater, and the prospect of return is more complex (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Other types of migration, professional and economic migration, are preceded by some sort of planning to move abroad. In the

case of the Colombian migrants, the migration to Venezuela was usually economically motivated. A return was out of question until the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela started. The forced migrants are likely to identify more with the Colombian nationality because they left "unfinished business" in Colombia (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). The other migrants were freer to adapt their identity, without any attachment to the country of origin. This led to the following hypothesis: *Migratory circumstances of the Colombians moving to Venezuela affect their sense of national identity and they determine the cause of leaving and returning. If this was voluntary and with a perspective on a better future, the migrants were more likely to perceive themselves as Venezuelan than as Colombian.*

For this qualitative research project, fieldwork took place during a six-week period in November and December 2018. This data collection consists of sixteen semi-open interviews, between 40 and 60 minutes of duration, and took place in Bogotá, and in Riohacha and Maicao in Guajira[2]. Most of the interviews for this paper were realised in Guajira, a temporary stop for most migrants. The province Guajira is the second biggest entry along the Colombian border according to the RAMV 2018 report (RAMV 2018). The province experiences difficulties coping with the large number of migrants entering the province due to the harsh climate and the complex structure. Most of the help is provided by NGO's. Ten of the interviewees were Colombian returnees, and of this number, only one fled Colombia because of the military conflict. The remaining seven interviews took place with 'experts', which entails professionals that are in close contact with the migrants, such as professors and NGO workers. The interviews with the migrants had a standard format, in order to obtain the same type of information from each returnee. The questions asked in the interviews with the 'experts' differed depending on their field of expertise. Because the situation is still in development, it causes insecurity among the migrants and some of the 'experts.' Therefore, numerous interviewees preferred to maintain their anonymity. Migrants that preferred to remain anonymous would explain their reasoning by stating that they still received some sort of benefit from the Venezuelan government, or that they envisioned a return one day and wanted to avoid any confusion upon their return to Venezuela. Those migrants would allow me to refer to them with their first name, like so 'returnee [first name]'. In the case of the experts, two interviewees preferred to remain anonymous due to the delicate situation and humanitarian crisis caused by the incoming migratory flux, and shall be named Regional Leader and Official.

The first chapter starts by situating the research in the current academic debate on migration and national identity. It zooms in on the concepts of national identity, and identity formation. Then it continues by describing transnationalism in connection with the concept of home and family. Next, it moves on to the topic of integration regarded as assimilation, its possible degrees of assimilation, and its implications on identification with the host society. Lastly, the motives for migration are described, which makes the distinction between forced migration and other types of migration, and it is linked to transnationalism and integration. The second chapter moves on to placing the target group in the context of the current migration crisis. It focuses on migration between Colombia and Venezuela in the second half of the twentieth century, and defines the reasons that drove these migrants to exit Colombia in the first place. Then it describes the current situation in Venezuela and the motivation for the exodus. Next, it zooms in on the target group, the Colombian returnees, and observes the particularities of this group and their challenges before and after returning to Colombia. The second

[2] A list of interviewees and a model of the interview questions can be found in annex 1 and 2.

chapter concludes with a brief description of the location of the data collection, Guajira. The third chapter aims to discuss the data collected during the fieldwork along the lines of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 1. It situates the Colombian returnees in the academic debate. In doing so, it aims to debate the research questions, and is followed by a discussion on the hypotheses. This final chapter traces the hypotheses back to the influence the phenomenon has on the national identity of the migrant.

Chapter 1: Sense of national identity: transnationalism, integration, and motive for migration

This research attempts to shed light on the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees from Venezuela. These individuals form part of the current migration crisis from Venezuela and experienced two migrations in disparate contexts and motives. The first migration occurred from Colombia to Venezuela as labour or economic, or as forced migration. The second migration, the involuntary return to Colombia, was caused by the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. This makes the sense of national identity of this group an interesting topic to research. In their initial migration, the intention was to leave Colombia behind and fully integrate in the Venezuelan society. But, under the dire life conditions, they were forced to return. This chapter aims to form a theoretical framework through which to understand the national identity of the Colombian returnees. In order to achieve this, the following concepts are examined in this chapter. These concepts correspond to the sub-questions. First of all, identity and national identity (from both sending and receiving country) are discussed. This is followed by a detailed description of transnationalism in connection to the concept of 'home', sense of belonging and family, and how this reflects on national identity. The chapter then moves on to the effects of integration into the host society on national identity, and the possible degrees of assimilation. The chapter ends on an observation on the importance of the motives for migration, because these have a strong repercussion on the post-migration lives of the migrants, their engagement in transnational activities and their integration in the country of destination.

1.1 National identity: transnationalism and integration

First of all, as stated by Akerlof and Kranton (2000), identity is considered to be a person's self-image, which is based on their pertinent social categories, and on behaviours and ideas appropriate to these categories. These are fulfilled by following a set of prescriptions associated to the categories. The range of those categories consist of gender, education, age, social stratus, social circles, to name a few; there are numerous factors that shape identity. People can influence identity formation by manifesting certain behaviours or realising certain acts that relegate them to the respective categories and, thus, they come to participate in certain social groups. Individual incentives can affect the process of identity formation, although, some categories cannot be chosen, such as age or ethnicity. By this logic, the categories might include nationality, and even migrant status, and could also have a repercussion on integration. A migrant could adapt their behaviour and actions in order to accommodate themselves in, or to actively exclude themselves from, the new society.

A migrant is confronted with their national identity on a regular basis; habits and philosophies from the country of origin can remain, whereas they might not have a place in the receiving country's society. The two countries feature like poles on opposing ends of a scale with the migrant floating somewhere in the middle. Nationality might be seen as a category that constitutes identity, and it is interesting to approach them from a national perspective. Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities' offer an enlightening insight on the matter. This concept was originally devised to explain nation and nationalism, though, as Madsen and Van Naerssen (2003) suggest, results fitting to shed some light on national identity. In a way, the 'imagined community' can be seen as one of the categories of identity formation. The 'imagined community' is a social construct, an idea, that citizens collectively have of their nation; "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson 1983: p. 6) The nationals trust in this conational community: "he has

complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity." (Anderson 1983: p. 26). The 'imagined communities' are constructed from people with a shared history, culture, and language, in a certain demarked territory. Within their countries, citizens form part of smaller social structures such as families, local communities, institutions of religions, etc., which ultimately consist of friends, family members and colleagues, and are essential to the formation of identity. They also give way to "deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983: p. 7) within the bounds of the nation, which creates an innate sense of belonging to this country of origin. It is, therefore, a category that englobes the social structures in which the people participate. Anderson's idea also addresses the importance of borders, he states that the 'imagined community's' territory is limited. Boundaries effectively exclude any other territories, and the citizens of those other territories, "because even the largest of them […] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (Anderson 1983: p. 7). This matter complicates when barriers become physical, are politicised by the state and give way to effective practice of exclusion, or in the words of Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002), 'othering' of us/them. In this sense, the country of origin obtains an important role in the construction of identity. The sense of belonging that the 'imagined community' creates, and the exclusion of citizens in/from) other countries, generate a bond with the native land and with the nationality. When an individual migrates, he leaves the 'imagined community' of his native country behind, and, in some cases, attempts to participate in the 'imagined community' of the new society. Even so, this does not necessarily mean that this migrant would automatically substitute his original for the new nationality by immediately incorporating the new 'imagined community'. Additionally, the new social structures that the migrant takes part in, can only partially replace the old: new friend circles can be formed, new colleagues are met, as well as new neighbours, though family cannot be replaced. This leads to the next vertebrae of this chapter; contact and interaction with the home country in shape of transnational activities.

1.1.1 The reflection of transnationalism on national identity

Transnationalism is of the utmost importance for the creation of migrant identity. "We have defined transnationalism as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (Schiller et al. 1992). The migrants maintain ties in their country of origin as well as in the receiving country, and bring a part of themselves and their culture into the new society. They create mutable identities by having multiple connections to various locations and extensive global networks (Gilmartin 2008). This, however, is separated from the level of integration into the receiving society: these transnational citizens are as much residents of their new community as the locals. Transnational interactions can be categorised in three main types: first, economic activities, such as monetary remittances to the home country. This is especially common when a spouse (usually the husband) migrates to earn a better wage and sends part of the salary back to his family (Schiller et al. 1992). This happens now in Venezuela, as part of the family migrates to neighbouring countries to send capital back to Venezuela to support the family there. Second, there are transnational political activities, voting in the country of origin, for example, or even spreading political ideas (through social media) are common. Lastly, social activities constitute a broad scale of interactions, as visits and correspondence of all kinds, and perhaps even maintaining habits and traditions from the country of origin (Levitt 2004; Skrbiš 2008).

The degree and frequency of these interactions are reflected in the migrant's identity (Schiller et al. 1992). Especially activities as remittances are a strong indicator that the migrant does not consider the receiving country to be their home country, (partially) because their family is still in the native country. Engagement in political activities in the sending country and recurring visits are also indicators (Levitt 2004). In the past, these socio-cultural activities would be limited to very rare visits,

perhaps a few letters and mainly being in touch with the homeland through traditions. Whereas nowadays, in this interconnected world, modern technologies have intensified contact with the country of origin, and has facilitated an increase in participation and engagement in the native communities on all fronts (Levitt et al. 2003). As Levitt (2004) proposes, the concept of 'home' in migration is strongly related to transnationalism. The idea of home construction in both sending and receiving country might be one of the main drives of transnationalism. Whether a migrant merely wants to maintain contact and build social fields that link both societies, or actively wants to work on home construction in both countries, are crucial factors in migrant identity formation (Levitt 2004). This determines the intensity of the sense of belonging and where this belonging lies. Kinefuchi (2010) also states that home is an important determinant for migrant identity, moreover, that they are inseparable. The experience of 'home' depends on numerous factors, such as the political, economic, cultural and personal circumstances of immigration and post-migration lives. Another important factor in the creation of home is family (Skrbiš 2008; Silvey and Lawson 1999). Whether the migrant already has a family, and this family comes to the new country or stays in the old, are paramount to the location of home. If the migrant were to construct a family with a local and create a home in the receiving society, the ties with this new society are stronger, and the perception of home is more likely to be there as well (Charsley et al. 2016). This can currently be seen in the situation in Venezuela; migrants leave the country to earn money to remit to their families back home. There is a significant difference in the experience of home between a forced migrant and a voluntary migrant. The former leaves everything behind as a last resort for survival, whereas the latter strives towards the prospect of migration. This motive has repercussions on the post-migration lives, which is discussed in Chapter 1, section 2.2.

1.1.2. Effects of integration on national identity

Integration is a useful parameter to measure to what extent a migrant has been able to construct a home and build a life in the country of destination. If the migrant manages to adapt to, and actively participates in the new society, this can be seen in their sense of national identity. The migrant integrates completely and sheds his own identity. This is questionable, as there are various theories that state that the immigrant maintains parts of the original identity (Fong et al. 2016). But integration is a complicated issue with varying opinions and determinants. There are various theories that could apply, as outlined by Algan et al. (2012) and shed light on different aspects of integration. This section addresses and contrasts solely the theories applicable to the situation of the Colombian returnees, in their first, or their second migration: assimilation theory, structuralism and segmented assimilation synthesis.

Assimilation theory explains integration through three different phases. First, the different ethnic groups will come to share a common culture as they, by living in the same society, have the same access to socio-economic opportunities as natives of the host country. Second, the original cultural and behavioural patterns come to disappear in favour of the receiving country's norms. Third, the process moves inevitably and irreversibly towards complete assimilation. Even though this process seems simple, there can be problems such as the acceptance of the dominant group in the host country, which, when not obtained, can lead to isolation and oppositional groups and identities (Algan et al. 2012: p. 4-5). Assimilation theory is quite general, albeit not always applicable because this theory argues that the original culture and behaviours will come to disappear completely, which is not always the case. This theory seems appropriate for the target group in this research. Especially since the relatively small cultural differences and the shared language between Venezuela and Colombia, which stem from a shared colonial past, simplify the assimilation process significantly. This type of

assimilation states that over time, the immigrants completely assume the national identity of the receiving country.

Structuralism contradicts assimilation by addressing another fault in assimilation theory. It states that different groups, and migrants, do not necessarily have the same socio-economic opportunities in the receiving society. It takes into account that societies camp with structural problems and need to factor in immigrants, which is complicated (Algan et al. 2012: p. 5-6). Moreover, structuralism pertinently argues that immigrants have unequal access to benefits such as wealth, jobs, housing, education, power, and privilege, which affects the ability of immigrants to socially integrate. This causes difficulties or even impossibility for migrants to assimilate fully, which can lead to continued inequity in income, education, and occupational achievement of immigrants (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Portes and Borocz, 1989, cited by Algan et al. 2012). Therefore, the immigrants only obtain the benefits of the societal class in which they integrate. Structuralism questions even the possibility of cultural and socio-economic integration of immigrants.

Segmented assimilation synthesis finds a middle between assimilation theory and structuralism. Segmented assimilation aims to shed light on a more complete picture of different patterns of integration. It states that assimilation is possible, though occurs in different ways depending on the social stratus that absorbs the immigrant (Algan et al. 2012: p. 6-7). This entails that integration consists of three possible patterns: first, assimilation and economic integration into the normative structures of the majority group; second, a pattern in opposite direction, associated to assimilation and parallel integration into the underclass; third, economic integration but slow assimilation and/or deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and identity (Portes and Zhou 1994, cited by Algan et al. 2012). Therefore, assimilation is segmented in the different social stratus into which the immigrant integrates: normative, lower class, or preference and maintenance of own identity. It also takes into account that socio-economic factors and their interaction with circumstance determine integration. The first two patterns play into the criticism structuralism makes on assimilation theory, although segmented assimilation theory states that assimilation is possible. These first two patterns would also have an effect on the identity of the migrant, as through these patterns the migrant fully accepts the receiving society's identity, whereas the third category merely accepts the economic benefits of the new society, without adopting the new society's national identity. This situation might come to apply to the Venezuelans in Colombia, although it is too early to properly release this theory on the situation now. However, when the Colombians migrated to Venezuela, this pattern was visible. Venezuela used to have a strong upper- and middleclass, thus the migrants absorbed by these social strata would be more integrated in society, whereas the individuals integrated in the lower strata might feel less identified with the new society. Also, there might be a group that only plans on integrating on an economic level, without assimilating culturally.

1.2 National identity formation and motives for migration

The decision to migrate and the motives for migration play a crucial part in the formation of identity. Because it affects the post-migration lives of the migrants, the role and importance of transnationalism, 'home' and integration change. Not merely the rupture with the country of origin, and the 'imagined community', but also the manner of migration, influence the sense of belonging of a person. Various motives for migration occur among the target group, which are important to the post-migration lives in Venezuela and the decision to migrate back to Colombia. The drives for migration were first determined by Ernest Ravenstein in his *Laws of Migration* (1889). He developed the 'push-pull' theory which states that certain circumstances or conditions can 'push' people away,

and that certain circumstances or conditions 'pull' them towards a different country. Ravensteins most relevant conclusions were that economic opportunities are the most important motive for migration; long-journey migration is the exception, not the rule; migration occurs in stages, wandering from place to place usually towards a relatively rich core (city), or a place that offers economic stability; when there is emigration, there tends to be a counter-current of immigration; woman is a greater migrant than man; and migration differentials (e.g., gender, social class, age) influence a person's mobility. Everett Lee (1966) then further refined the push-pull theory, especially the factors that push or pull the person from the country. He states that variables such as distance, physical and political barriers canimpede or even prevent migration. Lee also elaborates on the migration differentials by stating that these characteristics determine the individual's response to push-pull factors, as well as their personal conditions, such as family connections and education amongst others.

Before going into the topic of migration motives, there is another choice at hand for a migrant; the choice for the country of destination. Fielding (1993) suggests that there are a number of possible 'linkages between countries' which can motivate this choice. These linkages can be of cultural and material nature. Cultural linkages between countries can be created by sharing a common colonial past, because of this historical reason, a very similar culture and tradition has been spread throughout the territory. Even though the territory might have divided itself, it would still facilitate the decision for migration. Due to this shared history and culture, there would be less psychological and material costs for the migrant to assimilate (Fielding 1993). Another linkage that bonds two countries would be a common language, as this would significantly reduce difficulty for the migrant to integrate in the new society. Distance is an important example of a material linkage, as well as possible costs for moving from one country to another. Between Colombia and Venezuela, both cultural and material linkages are important, as they do have a common colonial past and share the same language, and are neighbouring countries.

1.2.1 The role of economic and labour migration motives on post-migration lives

Economic and labour migration is a common cause for migration, as was already stated by Ravenstein (1985), whether due to better salaries or professional opportunities. The majority of the target group experienced labour or economic migration, or migration due to family ties in the receiving country, which usually stemmed from economic or labour migration. To their situation and migratory experiences, several theories could apply, and show different facets of this choice of migration, as explained in Jennissen (2007). As the people interviewed went through two separate accounts of migration, the theories could be appropriate in different settings and scenarios. The most important views on economic and labour migration are: neoclassical economic theory, dual labour market theory, new economics of labour migration, and relative deprivation theory.

The neoclassical economic theory states that the difference in wage stimulates labour migration. This wage difference can be due to geographic differences in labour demand and labour supply. However, labour productivity and the degree of organisation of workers could be other determinants. This essentially entails that people from low-wage countries migrate to high-wage countries (Borjas 1989; Massey et al. 1993, 1998; Bauer and Zimmermann 1995, cited by Jennissen 2007). Such situation was seen during the Venezuelan *bonanza petrolera* (economic prosperity due to petrol trade), when Colombians started to migrate to their neighbouring country looking for work. Dual labour market theory or segmented labour-market theory is often, but not necessarily, intertwined with neoclassical economic theory. It offers an explanation for the internal market affairs by suggesting that developed economies, which attract migrants, are dualistic: they have a primary market of secure, well-

remunerated work, with good work conditions, and a secondary market of low-wage work (Piore 1979, cited by Jennissen 2007). Immigrants would fulfil these low-wage jobs, which are necessary for the economy, but the local population avoid them because of their bad image and the generally poor working conditions. This theory seems to form a parallel with the segmented assimilation theory, and even the structuralist assimilation perspective. Both views state that certain groups of immigrants do not have equal access to all aspects and benefits of the receiving society, and end up integrating in the lower classes, with low-wage jobs. Hence the duality of the market – the primary market corresponding to the normative classes and the secondary market to the lower social strata – would be the structural disparity of the society as described in structuralism, and segmented assimilation. Furthermore, this theory seems to offer an explanation for the situation of numerous Colombians working in Venezuela. These Colombian immigrants would automatically fall into the secondary market, and occupy low-wage jobs that the Venezuelans themselves avoided, such as factory worker. In the new economics of labour migration, Stark and Bloom (1985) argue that the decision to become a labour migrant cannot be explained only at the level of labour and individual workers; they focus their attention on the social surroundings of those worker migrants, the household, specifically. The household, in this scenario, would have an income deficit. In this migratory pattern, the household itself would stay in the country of origin, in order not to risk insufficient income, and send one or various members abroad to compensate the existent deficit (Jennissen 2007). The family/household members abroad would then send remittances back home. This perspective of labour migration has overlap with transnationalism, since remittance is a common transnational activity. As the household would still be located in the country of origin, the sense of 'home' would very likely be located in the native land, too. Additionally, this migrant would probably only integrate on an economic level, and maintain their own culture, since permanence in the receiving country is not in the life plans, as seen in segmented assimilation synthesis patterns. This type of migration is common between Venezuela and Colombia; especially now with the current crisis in Venezuela many decide to work abroad and send back money and other goods, such as medicine. Relative deprivation theory also addresses a migratory pattern centred around the household and social circles. It argues that awareness of other members (or households) in the sending society about income differences is an important factor with regard to migration. Therefore, the incentive to emigrate will be higher in societies that experience much economic inequality (Stark and Taylor 1989). This pattern establishes because of transnational networks, wherein migrants move abroad to join their family and acquaintances in the destination country.

Depending on the motives of the migrants, this has implications for their sense of identity. The patterns discussed assume the possibility of a return. It is especially this intention of returning with the accumulated wealth that is an important factor for the sense of identity. Moreover, it has certain overlap with previously discussed transnationalism and integration, because the pending return indicates that the migrant considers the native country their home (or their most important home). In the group of migrants that either has family in the country of origin, or is planning a return, transnational activities, such as remittances, are common and frequent (Levitt 2004). As well as they might integrate according to the segmented assimilation synthesis states; only on an economic front, whilst maintaining cultural habits and behaviours from the country of origin.

1.2.2 Forced migration as a cause for different experiences

Considering that the motives of migration influence the identity, sense of 'home', and the degree of transnationalism and integration of the migrant, forced migration should be mentioned. Forced migration lacks an official agreement on characteristics, though it is clear that the migration occurs as

last option for survival. This can come forth from extreme violence, threats, coaction, manipulation, and is common in Colombia due to the guerrillas and armed groups (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Because of these circumstances, this type of migration isn't preceded by any kind of planning to move abroad, nor by a dream of economic welfare or professional ambition. It is abrupt and motivated by fear, sometimes for the family as well; it is the rupture of life plans and ambitions (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Jiménez Zuluaga (2011) keenly points out that women that flee abusive relationships could also be considered forced migration, as they often face violence, rape, threats and manipulation. The decision for migration in these cases are without return, and are of spontaneous nature, taken in fear for their lives, and for the lives of their children. In Colombia, domestic violence is relatively common. According to a National Demographic and Health Survey from 2000: "41% of the women have been submitted to physical abuse by their partners; 11% responded that they were raped by their partner" (Profamilia 2002, cited by Jiménez Zuluaga 2011).

An important note is that forced migrants tend to experience permanent impoverishment and marginalisation (Cernea and McDowell, 2000; World Commission on Dams, 2000, cited by Castles 2003). Typically, the victims of the Colombian internal conflict are from rural parts of the country (Castles 2003). Forced migration has a different impact on the person's sense of identity and belonging. The desire for the old country is stronger, because of 'unfinished business and ambitions' there. The life they desired to live in their homeland that, due to circumstances, became impossible (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Therefore, transnational activities are more common, and more complex. Remittances may occur, as well as visits from family members and correspondence, though transnational political activity is more delicate; this was often the reason for migration. It is difficult to say what integration theory best applies to these migrants, though it is clear that they hang on more to their roots and original national identity. This also entails that the return is a different concept for economic and forced migrants. When economic and labour migrants move, in some cases, they have the intention to return with the accumulated wealth (Murillo 2009). In the case of forced migrants, returning to the homeland is not a viable possibility unless the initial threat ceases. However, there are cases in which forced migrants returned, even though the threat had not disappeared. This may be due to the feeling of responsibility towards the family that still resides in the country of origin, or because of being homesick (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011).

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This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the question of (migrant) national identity and how it is manifested in migrants. Andersons 'imagined communities' were applied to the idea of national identity, and nationality. Then the sense of belonging was further examined when looking into the importance of home in a migrant's life. Both factors are crucial for the formation of identity. Because participating in an 'imagined community', shapes the individual's sense of nationality and can therefore be categorised as element for identity formation, in the format suggested by Akerlof and Kranton (2000). The importance of home, as per Kinefuchi (2010), is also prominent, due to the sense of belonging it embodies. The concept of home is closely tied to the family, and is of transnational significance. Afterwards, the chapter moves on to transnationalism and integration, both of which are crucial to determine the position of the migrant between the two national identities, of the sending and receiving society. Even though these concepts are unrelated, because a migrant can be fully integrated and participate in transnational activities, their existence, or inexistence, in the migrant's life, is paramount to their self-image. In continuation, migration and its motives are discussed in order to explain their relevance in the formation of identity. The choice for migration is regarded distinctly by migrants that envision a return, and by those that are forced to leave their homeland, as opposed

to those that move for economic and labour related reasons. The first type of migrant maintains motives to participate intensively in transnational activities and do not necessarily need to integrate fully, as their stay is only of a temporal nature. The second, the forced migrant, regards migration differently, as this individual did not move voluntarily, and therefore breaks with any ambition and future plans in the country of origin. Because of this, the migrant views the homeland with more nostalgy than the other types of migrants. Lastly, the economic and labour migrants that move with the purpose of staying in the new country, can break entirely with their native country, and completely assimilate into the receiving community. These concepts and patterns will be further discussed and applied to the target group, the Colombian returnees from Venezuela, in Chapter 3. In continuation, a contextualisation of the current situation is given.

Chapter 2: Venezuelan exodus: the Colombian returnees

Migration between Colombia and Venezuela is an ongoing process that has been in place ever since their Independence in 1819. The two countries have a relatively strong bond because they were governed under the same colonial Viceroyalty, and after their independence there was an attempt to join the countries. This indicated a stronger bond between the two from early on, and migration between the two was not a rare phenomenon. However, the flow between them became more frequent from the second half of the twentieth century (Mejía Ochoa 2012: 190). Colombia got caught up in a devastating internal conflict that affected most of its citizens and brought about mass internal, and external, displacement. This conflict impeded economic growth and social development in such a way that (extreme) poverty and huge class differences became commonplace (Mejía Ochoa 2012). Venezuela had a distinct trajectory; the petrol production was boosted and gave way to a solid economy and relatively stable government. Until the "lost decade" of the eighties, when the crisis was mismanaged and gave way to a corrupt government (Rodríguez Rojas 2010). The discontent of the nineties, the following election of Hugo Chávez and his complete remodelling of the Venezuelan economy, ultimately led to the current humanitarian crisis (Bermúdez et al. 2018). These distinct socio-economic and political situations of each of these countries are represented in the migration flows as push-pull factors. This chapter discusses these migration flows and push-pull factors between Venezuela and Colombia in the second half of the 20th century. Then, it moves on to the socio-economic and political advances in Venezuela that made way for the current events, in other words, how the climate deteriorated to such a point that the population decides to exit the country. This leads the chapter to a close observation of the target group, the Colombian returnees. The chapter ends on a brief description of the place where the data was collected in the field, Guajira.

2.1 Colombo-Venezuelan migration in the second half of the 20th century

In the migration flows between Colombia and Venezuela, Colombia has predominantly been an emitter rather than a receiver of migrants (Echeverry Hernández 2011: 12). The internal military conflict and displacement impeded the Colombian government to create a development structure for the nation, and obstructed the growth of the economy. Decades of fighting between different groups made Colombia an unattractive destination for migrants (Echeverry Hernández 2011). The conflict caused political unrest, social insecurity, a lacking economy and poverty, which pushed Colombian citizens to emigrate. Venezuela, on the other hand, was ideal for migration prospects. The strong oil economy flourished in the seventies and the Venezuelan society reaped the benefits for several decades (Mejía Ochoa 2012). This entailed a sizeable Colombian emigration to neighbouring Venezuela. It was a common destination because of the geographical closeness, the similar culture and the same language and religion, and most of all, the strong economy that was able to absorb the Colombian immigrants. The Venezuelan national censuses show that from 1941 to 2011, the citizens born to Colombian parents in Venezuela increased by 178% (Mejía Ochoa 2012: 190). The rise in this number mainly occurred between 1971 and 1981, due to the labour deficit in Venezuela, which attracted Colombian workers. Supposedly, this number mainly consists of Colombian farmers that crossed the border clandestinely in search of a better future (Mejía Ochoa 2012: 190).

This mass migration from Colombia to Venezuela was brought about by various push and pull factors. In the 1970s, the migratory pattern from Colombia to Venezuela was triggered by the booming oil economy (Mejía Ochoa 2012). These Colombian migrants usually came from the border region, because they only had limited means to travel long distances. Most of them would come from the regions of Norte de Santander, Cesar and Guajira (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010: 28). In the 1980s, the migratory flux became even stronger because of the relative stability of the Venezuelan economy and Colombia's structural problems which had led to another escalation in the conflict (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010). And from the start of the second half of the 1990s, another migratory wave of unprecedented dimensions took place due to Colombia's economic crisis and its accompanying intensity of the conflict (Cárdenas and Mejía 2006, cited by Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010). Usually the group of migrants consisted of lower- and working-class citizens who sought to improve their chances in life. During the economic prosperity in Venezuela, the Colombian immigrants took up the professions that the Venezuelans looked down upon, due to low social status or low wages. This resulted in the fact that these immigrants assimilated in the lower classes and did not often display plans of return (Mejía Ochoa 2012; Álvarez de Flores 2004; Rodríguez 2018[3]). During the 1990s, the Colombian situation worsened and the emigration to Venezuela increased. By this time, migration to Venezuela was an easier choice to make. The previous migratory waves and the establishment of Colombian citizens created transnational networks that facilitated immigration (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010).

Colombia, on the other hand, has developed into a migratory destination over the last few years. Historically, it never received big waves of migrants from Europe or other continents. But, from the 1990s, Colombia opened its markets and took measures to increase foreign investment, which effectively attracted immigrants (Ramírez Molinares 2010). Even when the outgoing migratory flux from Colombia was significant, the migrants, usually from neighbouring countries as Venezuela and Ecuador, saw Colombia as a viable destination for their migratory projects (Echeverry Hernández 2011). This in spite of the fact that in most cases, those migrants were forced to abandon their homes (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010). In 1985, the most common countries of origin were Venezuela, followed by the USA, Ecuador and Panamá, and the migrants from these countries constituted slightly more than half of the number of immigrants in Colombia (Cárdenas and Mejía 2006, cited by Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010).

The seventies marked the peak of welfare in Venezuela. The global economic crisis too hit Venezuela in the 1980s, and remained unremedied by the regime. This, in its turn, caused unrest and protests. The extreme oppositional activity continued well into the 1990s. Combined with the lack of success to stabilise the economy, this contributed to Chávez' victory in the 1998 elections (*BBC News Brasil* 2019). In spite of the destabilising politic-economic situation in Venezuela, the number of incoming migrants from Colombia did not decrease. During the nineties, the Colombian immigration spiked due to the Colombian economic crisis and the worsening of the internal conflict (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010). In comparison to the socio-economic situation in Colombia, the circumstances in Venezuela were still relatively stable and attractive to the emigrants. The immigrants and Venezuelan natives could ignore the deteriorating climate in Venezuela until recently. The economy's heyday in the seventies provided a strong financial structure that was able to withstand Chávez' mismanagement

[3] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018.

for about a decade. Around 2014, the Venezuelan economy and life conditions started to plummet in such manner that millions of Venezuelans decided to flee.

2.2 The current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela

The current situation of mass migration from Venezuela was caused by Chávez' gross financial mismanagement. When he got to power in 1999, he radically changed the system in order to achieve a new type of socialism, "socialism of the 21st century". This entailed that Venezuela started to pass through a period in which economic, social and political modifications occurred on a large scale, and influenced the future of the country and of its citizens. In 2004, Chávez formulated a project of cooperation based on the ideas of the "socialism of the 21st century". That was the basis of his government, which caused the necessity of finding different politics and measures to unlink the country from integration in the globalised world. To this end, he reformulated the Constitution, expropriated companies, nationalised the petrol and food industry, rationalised electricity and ceased proper terrain. Everything came under the government of the state (*The Economist* 2017). So, the government adopted anti-neoliberalist practices for a better social inclusion by giving the state a bigger role. Although, his politics did not regulate the economy nor structure the market in an attempt to fight poverty. The migration from Venezuela was caused by these structural changes, which reshaped the economic model in society (Echeverry Hernández 2011). The first few years of his presidency were unstable and his politics caused huge protests and strikes, and after a coup in 2002, he was imprisoned. Days after however, he was reinstated and the protests were reversed (*The Economist* 2002). Internationally he broke ties with the former allies, such as the USA, and established ties with Venezuela's former enemies, Russia, China, Iran and Cuba.

In 2005, Chávez discharged 18,000 PVDSA (National Petrol Company) employees and replaced professional knowledgeable staff by political friends. This event caused the first migratory wave. These people subsequently moved to Colombia (*The Economist* 2014). They belonged to a wealthy elite, had the capital to invest in Colombia and inserted themselves nicely in the social circles in the country, which guaranteed a better quality of life. Additionally, they had a range of labour opportunities in Colombia (Echeverry Hernández 2011). This event was also reflected in the Colombian statistics; in 2005, the Venezuelans were on top of Colombia's list of foreign residents living on Colombian soil, with a number of 50.033 (Ramírez, Zuluaga and Perilla 2010). Furthermore, Chávez donated much of the national treasure to buy gifts for party members, and to suit his socialism of the twenty-first century, he spent it on education, healthcare and safety. In the first years of his presidency, his enormous public spending on his socialist program did not seem to have an impact on the economy because PDVSA managed to produce enough and the oil prices were high (*The Economist* 2013; Prieto 2018[4]). Because Chávez, without any knowledge how to run PDVSA successfully, took as much money out of PDVSA as possible for personal political gain and did not invest in PDVSA's future production and new resources, PDVSA and so the Venezuelan economy reeled and never recovered (*The Economist* 2014). The second wave of emigration started in 2010 and intensified in 2011. It consisted of businessmen and people from wealthy backgrounds that aimed to save their own properties and protect themselves from possibly losing their capital. In addition, the Venezuelan economy was

[4] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018.

experiencing steep inflation which was a reason the more to exit the country (Robayo 2018[5]; Prieto 2018[6]). These changes that occurred over the last two decades have strongly increased the Venezuelan immigration in Colombia (Echeverry Hernández 2011).

After Chávez died in 2013, the left-wing dictator Maduro came to power. He won the formal elections by little over 1 %, and this resulted in massive protests (*The Guardian* 2013; Prieto 2018[7]). The financial mismanagement continued when Maduro held office. The reason why Maduro is not as successful as his predecessor, is that the Venezuelan people felt sympathy for Chávez, who seen as a hero, whereas Maduro is considered an unsympathetic and uncharismatic leader (*The Guardian* 2013; *The Economist* 2016; Prieto 2018[8]). From 2014 onwards, the living conditions in Venezuela sharply decline. In first instance the hyperinflation, ever since Maduro's election, has made daily life next to impossible. As of November 2018, the inflation rate was 1,300,000% and stayed on the rise, with prices doubling approximately every 19 days by the end of 2018 (*BBC* 2019). The GDP is falling for various reasons: because of plummeting oil prices in 2016, the falling oil production, and the US economic sanctions, because before 41% of the oil export went to the US. Then, there is not enough food for the population. As early as 2017, 64.3% of the people stated to have lost weight, 11.4 kg on average, because of insufficient intake. And due to the economic circumstances, nine out of 10 cannot afford daily food; 8.2 million had two meals or fewer a day (*BBC* 2018). Furthermore, there is not enough medicine and major illnesses, such as malaria, diphtheria and measles, are breaking out and causing deaths (*BBC* 2018).

Even though this migratory crisis is usually categorised as an economic migration, the dire life conditions have shown to be a strong forced component to the choice of migration (Bermúdez et al. 2018). This can be seen in the desperate methods to flee Venezuela – on foot through dangerous, gang-controlled border areas (Robayo 2018[9]) – and it also becomes clear when studying the socio-economic situation in Venezuela, which has been worsening since 2014. The economy has been plummeting, the petrol production and export have collapsed, and the IMF speculated that inflation would reach 1 million percent by the beginning of 2019, from the 13,864% in 2018 (IMF 2018, cited by Bermúdez et al. 2018). The GDP has fallen 15% in 2018 and it is expected to decline another 6% in 2019, which entails that Venezuela's economy will have experienced a contraction of almost 50% in 6 years (IMF 2018, cited by Bermúdez et al. 2018). In spite of the lack of official data, Bloomberg stated that at the end of 2017, Venezuela would be classified for the fourth year in a row as the most miserable economy in the world, in perspective of inflation and unemployment (Bloomberg 2018, cited by Bermúdez et al. 2018) The devastated economy has unchained a humanitarian crisis. The Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida shows that poverty in Venezuela passed from 48,4% in 2014 to 87% in 2017, with 61,2% in extreme poverty in 2017 (ENCOVI 2017, cited by Bermúdez et al. 2018). The unemployment rate has risen from 7,5% to 9%, and the insufficient salaries are in stark contrast with the hyperinflated prices. The steep rise in unemployment is partially caused by the closure of at least 500.000 companies over the last 10 years (Consejo Nacional del Comercio y los Servicios de Venezuela 2018, cited by Bermúdez et al. 2018): only 250.000 companies of the 830.000 companies

[5] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[6] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018.
[7] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018.
[8] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018.
[9] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018

that functioned in 2002 are still in business now, 2019 (Bermúdez et al. 2018). Not only economic factors, but also the dictatorial governance in a dismantled democracy, jeopardise Venezuela's society. The government mismanages the state-owned oil industry, spends money recklessly and fails to invest otherwise in a healthier economy. The state fails to meet the people's basic needs and the dictatorial power base does not lead to a legitimate stable government (Bermúdez et al. 2018). The popular anger because of the many hardships that the people have to endure, polarises the politic climate. In the polemic re-election of 2018, Maduro repressed the opposition. Corruption destabilises the economic and social stability even further (Bermúdez et al. 2018; Prieto 2018[10]).

These macro factors push Venezuelan citizens out of the country, because they interfere with a citizen's basic human rights, such as: the right of life, of freedom, of security, of food, to live in health, dignity and to live in peace (Bermúdez et al. 2018). Now that a job, and a (regular) salary prove to be insufficient to fulfil the basic needs and live a dignified life in Venezuela, people feel forced to leave (Prieto 2018[11]). This may be seen in the interviews, in which, in some cases, the decision to emigrate is voluntary, but, in others, there is a forced, involuntary element because of the political, economic and social conditions of Venezuela. 83,6% of the migrants interviewed at the border stated to be in search of safer environments, whereas 31,2% stated that they were forced in some way. It seems likely that emigration is a necessity for the majority of Venezuelans, and based on UN interviews it may be concluded that there are no notable differences in motive between men and women (Bermúdez et al. 2018).

The third migratory wave started around 2014, simultaneous with Maduro's rise to power, and was composed by the middle- and lower-middle-class (Robayo 2013). It largely consisted of youth migrating to earn money to remit to their families in Venezuela or to study to improve their chances in life (Robayo 2013). With this third wave, the profile of the Venezuelan migrant changed. These migrants belong to all educational and socio-economic levels of society and their economic activity is in different sectors. They have different motives for migration and their expectations, experiences and perspectives vary (Ramírez Carreño and García 2015). The economic and social crisis in Venezuela has caused thousands of citizens to leave to find new opportunities. Because of its closeness and similarities, Colombia has converted itself in one of the main destinations by the Venezuelans to construct a new life. Lastly, the migratory networks constructed over time have been an important factor in the Venezuelan immigration in Colombia. It is not only about Venezuelans migrating to Colombia, but also Colombian offspring has been registered to return. This is mirrored in the numbers found by Cámara Colombo-Venezolana, which reports that from 2011 to 2014 there has been a 630% growth in Venezuelans acquiring a passport to travel to Colombia (Echeverry Hernández 2011). Robayo (2018[12]) pointed out that the current situation seems to be the exact contrary to the situation in the seventies: "Remarkably, something similar is happening today. When before it was the Colombians migrating to Venezuela for work and stability, the situation has now reversed. […] Venezuelans are migrating to Colombia for work, and the stereotype of the poor immigrant Colombian, has now created itself for the Venezuelan migrant."

[10] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[11] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[12] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018

2.3 The Colombian returnees in the Venezuelan exodus

"We do not know exactly how big this group is, and this is very complex to find out, because it is not clear how many Colombians are on Venezuelan soil" professor Rodríguez (2018[13]) stated. The migratory tradition from Colombia to Venezuela has been in place for about half a century. Due to this early migration, numerous Colombians have a double nationality, and these Colombians have Venezuelan children. By the end of the nineties, about 31% of the Colombians abroad lived in Venezuela (Ramírez and Cárdenas 1999, cited by CIDH 2018). Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (UNGRD) estimates there could be 230.000 returnees, but these numbers remain imprecise (CIDH 2018). The current situation for the Colombian returnees developed following a political-relational problem between Venezuela and Colombia. There had been some turmoil at the border in 2015, a clash between armed groups and Venezuelan soldiers. After this incident, in August 2015, Maduro closed a part of the border between Venezuela and Colombia. The closure of the border converted into a diplomatic crisis (CIDH 2018; CNMH 2018). Following this event, thousands of Colombians were expulsed from Venezuela, especially those living in the nearby state of Táchira (CNMH 2018). The reason given by the Maduro administration was that they were illegal residents. According to the sources interviewed for this thesis, Colombians from all over Venezuela were deported, especially the Colombians that migrated after 2000, since they "would not dispose of the correct papers" (CNMH 2018; Robayo 2018[14]). Ever since this event, the first wave of returning Colombians from Venezuela, the flux of Colombian returnees has persisted, and the exact magnitude is unknown. This wave of returnees mostly consisted of victims of the Colombian conflict, and most of these returnees came back using their own resources (CNMH 2018; Robayo 2018[15]; Official 2018[16]). At this moment, the Colombian government has calculated little over 1400 deported Colombians and little over 10.700 returnees, whereas the UN has reported more than 24.000 people (CIDH 2018). There has been emergency attention for the migrants: aid organisations have provided shelter and food; the public have helped with illegal passages by trucks. The Colombian authorities (Cancillería) have stated that, from the moment of deportation in August 2015 until June 2017, 2415 returnees are recorded in the designated register, Registro Único de Retornados. This number is likely to be much higher since a lot of returnees have not registered and it is estimated that about 30-35% of the people arriving from Venezuela could be returnees (CIDH 2018).

Simultaneously, the exit of Venezuelans started. Chávez' death and Maduro's subsequent rise to power generated big protests in 2014, which were swiftly and violently suppressed. Around 2015-16, during the first part of the ongoing exodus, the Venezuelan migrants tended to stem from higher social strata, and disposed of means to reconstruct their lives and contribute to the receiving society (Robayo 2018[17]). This first wave of migrants soon flowed into the second wave in 2016-17, when the financial situation in Venezuela became precarious. At this point, it was not only the highly educated and upper classes that made the decision to emigrate, also the middle classes and lower classes started to uproot their lives and cross the border (CIDH 2018; Robayo 2018[18]). This group, due to its dimension and

[13] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[14] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[15] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[16] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018.
[17] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[18] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018

variety, was more difficult to incorporate into the receiving society. Moreover, in this period, the situation started to convert itself into a humanitarian crisis, especially because the Colombian and other surrounding countries had difficulties to cope with the amount of migrant arrivals (*The Economist* 2018). Because the political and economic situation in Venezuela was worsening, inevitably there was a third migrant wave, from 2017 onwards, which ultimately constituted the current situation. This wave is essentially a mix of classes and origins, though prevalently of a poor social stratus. The migrants do not, or hardly, dispose of any means or measures to sustain themselves nor to provide for their migration (CIDH 2018). The target group of Colombian returnees which this paper focuses on, belongs to this phase of migration. The third wave of the Venezuelan exodus, which wave has lasted from the end of 2017 until the present, consists of citizens with few financial resources, who tend to be of lower social strata. These migrants have little capital at their disposal, so, they have had to postpone their emigration until a possibility arose. This entails that their crossing the border often is a spontaneous decision (Prieto 2018[19]). Another characteristic of this phase of the exodus are the horrible conditions: the emigrants are often forced to cross the border via illegal crossings and some of them have to do this on foot (CNMH 2018; Robayo 2018[20]).

In this third wave of the exodus, the migrants can essentially be divided into two groups: those that were victims of the Colombian conflict and took refuge in Venezuela, and those that emigrated voluntarily. The group of the emigrated victims of the Colombian conflict can be subdivided again, into two groups: those that upon arrival in Venezuela, underwent a legal procedure to obtain the status of refugee, and those that did not (CNMH 2018; Robayo 2018[21]). The emigrated victims are a complex group of citizens due to the administrative and judicial measures associated with the status of refugee or victim. UNHCR estimates that in 2017 there were about 171.920 refugees (either registered or unregistered) in Venezuela. Upon their return to Colombia, the Unidad para la Atención de las Víctimas (UARIV), tries to respond to the victim's needs and with an intricate administrative system, it tries to support refugees and provide protection, shelter, food and medical care, but also tries to secure their human rights and inclusion in the Colombian society (CIDH 2018). Apart from this organisation, the Colombian state, and many international aid organisations and citizens try to accommodate these people in any other way (IOM 2018; Rodríguez 2018[22]). The group of victims is complex for other reasons as well, because many of them opt not to register themselves upon arrival in Colombia. Most victims shy away from governmental and legal assistance, and try to remain below the radar. This behaviour has multiple explanations: the complex bureaucracy of the acquisition of status of victim, the remaining threat of armed groups, and the social stigma and discrimination. The latter is notable: most victims come from rural areas, that did not have access to proper education, healthcare and financial sources, and have thus obtained the stereotype of being very simple (peasant) farmers (Castles 2003; Naizzir 2018[23]). The prejudice towards this stereotype causes this group of uneducated people to face more difficulties in obtaining a job or any form of support which is necessary to reconstruct their lives. In conclusion, this group prefers to remain anonymous and not to name their

[19] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[20] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[21] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[22] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[23] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

"condition" (Naizzir 2018[24]). This also explains why, for this thesis, only one interview was conducted with a returned victim of the conflict, which shall be discussed later.

This is not the only challenge faced by this group. Once back in Colombia, the returnees aim to reclaim their rights as Colombian citizens: "These migrants of Colombian origin realise that they can reclaim their Colombian citizenship, something they have never thought to do before" Rodríguez stated (2018[25]). To this end, there is one law in place: Law of Return (Ley de Retorno) (CIDH 2018; Official 2018[26]). According to this law, the returnees often fall into the category of "voluntary return", although they could be characterised as "humanitarian return" (CIDH 2018; Robayo 2018[27]; Official 2018[28]). This law is destined for the Colombian emigrants, not necessarily victims of the conflict, that planned a return after a long absence. In order to comply with the regulations, they should present their Colombian documentation. This process is nearly impossible for a part of the returnees, especially for the returnees of the third wave that have very few resources and often were not documented in Colombia. This causes a necessity for them to fall back on their parent's documents, or even creates the need to re-establish ties with long lost family members, which contributes to the stress of returning. As Rodríguez (2018[29]) states: "They [the Colombian returnees] enter Colombia as Venezuelans and start the legal process to claim their rights as Colombian citizens. But the system never had enough infrastructure for this." This law does not account for the number of returnees, as before the exodus, the option to return was more remote (Official 2018[30]). This is also reflected in Colombian emigrants elsewhere, a group that largely has no intention of returning to the home country (CODHES 2017).

2.4 Guajira in the migratory flux

As this research was mostly conducted in the province of Guajira, this part will zoom in on the particular conditions of this part of the country. The Guajira is the official territory of the Wayuu tribe, whose lands extend well into Venezuela. Because of their ethnicity, they have the right to move themselves freely throughout their entire land. They created many unregistered crossings from Colombia into Venezuela, called *trochas*. The border in this province is therefore extremely porous (*BBC* 2019). The Wayuu tribe has long been a belligerent tribe that largely maintains their norms and traditions (Regional leader 2018[31]; *BBC* 2019). Partially because they are traditional, partially because Guajira is mainly a desert, and partially because their territory is geographically isolated – the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to the South, and for the rest surrounded by the ocean – the Colombian state has lesser presence in the province, in favour of Wayuu law (*BBC* 2019). As this region was cut off from main Colombia, the preference for trade was not the main land, but the Caribbean islands (namely Aruba and Curação) and Venezuela. Informal trade systems have been established in an unorthodox

[24] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[25] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[26] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[27] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[28] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[29] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[30] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[31] Interview. Riohacha, 11/12/2018

way, and the corruption rates have been high up until now (Regional leader 2018[32]; *BBC* 2019). So, this province is cut off from the country in several forms.

Because Guajira is a desert, it has serious drought-related problems (*BBC* 2019). Therefore, the guerrilla troops are mostly present in the South of the province, that borders on the mountains, where the soil is fertile and most farmers are concentrated (Regional leader 2019[33]). In the North of the province, there are hardly any settlements that are of interest to the armed groups. There is some in-province displacement from the South to the North, and also to Venezuela. Additionally, there is a lot of informal labour in Guajira, and it is a relatively poor province, which is another reason for migration to Venezuela, or other regions of the country. The armed groups, paramilitaries, that are present, generally have the objective to control the harbour in the North of the province and are focused in that area. The harbour would enable them to trade with the Caribbean islands Regional leader 2019[34]). For the two neighbouring provinces Atlántico and Santa Marta, the route through Guajira is the quickest to get to and come from Venezuela. There are numerous migrants originally from the Northeast of the country that return by entering Guajira, both through the legal and illegal crossings (Regional leader 2018[35]). It is mostly an area of transition, because the majority of the migrants only stop there temporarily. It is a problematic region of the country, underdeveloped in comparison to the rest of the country, and complex to govern (*BBC* 2019). This situation causes issues for the incoming migrants. The climate is harsh and transport difficult. There is no stable structure that could provide shelter or daily meals, so these are provided by NGO's. Guajira is the second biggest entry on the Colombo-Venezuelan frontier (RAMV 2018).

Figure 2: Radio Santa Fe 2015

[32] Interview. Riohacha, 11/12/2018
[33] Interview. Riohacha, 11/12/2018
[34] Interview. Riohacha, 11/12/2018
[35] Interview. Riohacha, 11/12/2018

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The current situation was a product of the socio-political and economic events since the mid-1900s. Venezuela and Colombia experienced tumultuous circumstances, at some moments pushing out, and at others pulling in migrants. Whereas Colombia was always an emitter of migrants, because of the extended and complex civil war and bad economic environment, Venezuela was on the receiving end. The prosperous economy and relative political stability generated a safe place for migrants to reconstruct their lives. When these fructiferous circumstances changed, the situation reversed, and citizens started to flee the country to Colombia. The lack of food and medicine, the hyperinflation and the spread of political unrest made life in Venezuela next to impossible for a large part of its population. Until 2014, the group of emigrants consisted mostly of wealthy and well-educated citizens that were searching for a place to resettle to avoid losing their capital. From 2014 onwards, the exodus started and in three waves composed of different classes exited the country *en masse*. In 2015, the deportation of Colombians commenced with a border crisis. This wave mainly consisted of victims of the conflict and better-off citizens of Colombian origin. Then, along with the trends of the Venezuelan emigration, the Colombians accompanied the next two waves.

Chapter 3: The Colombian returnees: national identity, motive for migration, transnationalism and integration

The Colombian returnees are a group of migrants that moved to Venezuela since the 1970s. Until the life conditions in Venezuela became too precarious, a return to Colombia was out of the question. So, this group was forced to flee Venezuela, and decided to return to Colombia. In this process they faced several challenges. This research aims to discover what the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees is. First of all, it is important to study their first migratory cycle: the reasons to abandon Colombia, integration in the Venezuelan society, and whether they maintained contact with the home country. The chapter also assesses the second cycle of migration: the forced return to Colombia. This chapter attempts to debate the research questions. The data collected are examined and contrasted using the theory outlined in Chapter 1. Then the hypotheses are discussed. The data comes from sixteen semi-open interviews collected during six weeks of fieldwork in Colombia, during November and December 2018. These interviews are used in two different ways: the data collected from the experts are used to confirm, disconfirm or nuance the theoretical framework; whereas the interviews with the Colombian returnees are seen as the reflection of reality, which tests the theoretical framework. The chapter starts by addressing the sub-questions, before advancing to the main research question. Firstly, the chapter zooms on the motives for Colombians to migrate to Venezuela and back. It continues with transnationalism and the feelings of attachment of the Colombian emigrants to their native country. The next research question concerns integration in the Venezuelan society and the degree to which they feel like they belong there. And, finally, the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees is studied.

3.1 Motives for migration and the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees

The intent of migration has certain repercussions on the sense of national identity of a migrant, because it affects post-migration life: the willingness of the migrant to integrate in the receiving society, and the attachment to the country of origin (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Economic migration is preceded by some sort of planning and an estimation of future prospects. It is considered to be part of the life project of an individual. This individual consciously leaves behind the country of origin in exchange for the destination (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). In this process, there are still various aspects to be taken into consideration: the degree to which the migrant is willing to integrate in the new society, and the measure in which they miss the home country and maintain bonds with the native culture. In the case of forced migration, these dynamics change, since it lacks various necessary components of economic migration such as previous planning, envisioning of better future prospects and the volition to migrate. It is a forced move, and therefore spontaneous because it is usually the last resort to survive (Castles 2003; Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). On the other hand, there is the possible prospect of return. In the case of the economic migrants, the return is seen as a viable possibility. But often it is already planned when leaving the home country, and the migration is fulfilled with an eye on a return with the accumulated wealth (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). In the case of the forced migrant, the return is complex. A proper return can only take place when the initial threat ceased. However, there are documented cases in which the return occurs sooner, due to homesickness, obligations in the home country or duty towards family or the occupation (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). The way the migrant regards the initial migration and the return determines how the migrant sees himself. These motives

are determining factors in the post-migration lives of these citizens, and, as a consequence, in their sense of belonging and identity. This led to the following research question: *how did the migratory motives of the Colombian returnees affect their sense of national identity?*

To be able to answer the question, the migratory flux of the Colombian returnees between Colombia and Venezuela is discussed through the perspective of various theories of economic and labour migration, and forced migration. In the economic and labour migrants, several motives for migration can be distinguished. Especially from the 1970s until roughly the 1990s, the motives proposed by the neoclassical economic theory were accurate: people from low-wage countries tend to migrate to high-wage countries (Borjas 1989; Massey et al. 1993; Bauer and Zimmerman 1995, cited by Jennissen 2007). Especially during the petrol bonanza in Venezuela, the push and pull factors were abundantly clear. Rich Venezuela pulled in countless migrants from poor conflict-riddled Colombia. Even though the Venezuelan economy in the 1990s and 2000s was not nearly as prosperous as in the 1970s, Venezuela was still structured enough and able to accommodate the Colombian immigrants (Mejía Ochoa 2012). The incoming migratory flux from Colombia did not cease until the 2000s, which entails that the economic and professional opportunities in Venezuela were regarded as an improvement compared to the opportunities in Colombia (Mejía Ochoa 2012). This perspective often ties together with monetary remittances and the desire to return to the home country with the accumulated wealth, in due course. The view proposed by the neoclassical economic theory, the prospect of wealth, often coincides with professional opportunities in the destination country.

Dual market theory describes a pattern of professional opportunities for migrants. It states that in the receiving society there is a primary market of secure, well-remunerated work, with good work conditions, and a secondary market of low-wage work (Piore 1979, cited by Jennissen 2007). In Venezuela in the 1970s, these jobs were created by the rapidly developing petrol industry. It created a labour deficit which attracted migrants. Immigrants will fulfil these low-wage jobs, which are necessary for the economy, but the local population avoid them because of their bad image and the generally poor working conditions (Piore 1979, cited by Jennissen 2007). This is true for most poor unskilled or low educated Colombian migrants. Generally, Colombians by the time knew of the labour opportunity in Venezuela (Rodríguez 2018[36]). This is reflected in the professions among the target group, which were often construction (Returnee Ricardo 2018[37]) and factory worker (Returnee Leonor 2018[38]). However, there are Colombians that obtained good jobs in Venezuela and integrated in higher social strata. Among the target group, there is one example of a doctor that received his medical training in Venezuela and got a prestigious job as general practitioner (Returnee Miguel 2018[39]).

Additionally, there is a group of Colombian migrants that moved to Venezuela for other motives: they migrated with their family or to join their families in Venezuela. Essentially these migrations stem from economic and professional causes as well, because a transnational network is established through extensive the migratory relations between Colombia and Venezuela (Mejía Ochoa 2012). This entails that migrants follow relatives and acquaintances to the new country and the already established immigrants help the new immigrants to rebuild their lives. This phenomenon is called the relative

[36] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[37] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[38] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[39] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018

deprivation theory (Stark and Taylor 1989). The theory also states that migrants tend to come from economically unequal countries, which may be seen in the case of Colombia, and in present day Venezuela. In the target group of interviewees, the immigrants who used the transnational network of Colombians in Venezuela tend to have migrated to Venezuela more recently; at the end of the nineties or in the zeroes (Returnee Yeimer 2018[40]). This makes sense because a transnational network needs to take shape before migrants can make use of it.

The migrants that were forced to migrate can be divided into two groups: those that fled the Colombian military conflict and those that fled domestic abuse (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Jiménez Zuluaga (2011) states that this type of migration isn't preceded by any kind of planning to emigrate, it is an abrupt choice motivated by fear. This forced character of migration causes the migrant to develop a greater attachment to their roots and original national identity. Transnational activities are more common among forced migrants, and are more complex. Remittances may occur, as well as visits from family members and correspondence, though transnational political activity is more delicate, in the cases that this has been the reason for migration (see Chapter 1) (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). Although, domestic abuse is stated as a possible cause for forced migration, in the interviews the women that fled for this reason showed a great similarity to the labour and economic migrants. "So, I took the kids and went to where he wouldn't follow me." Returnee Leonor[41] (2018) stated. Even though their motive was of a forced nature, their complete integration in Venezuelan society and scarce, or absent, transnational activities are in line with the economic and labour migrants (Returnee Leonor 2018[42]; Returnee Angélica 2018[43]).

The extreme life conditions in Venezuela forced the return to Colombia. This second cycle of migration has quite a lot of the characteristics of forced migration: it is an abrupt migration motivated by fear for the survival of the family, is barely preceded by any planning, and their daily lives were threatened by the dire life conditions and the high criminality (Castles 2003; Jiménez Zuluaga 2011; Robayo 2018[44]). Even though the Venezuelan exodus is characterised as socio-economic migration, it has a strong "forced" component; the Venezuelan society cannot provide a peaceful life and the basic needs. "We had to go somewhere; our lives were at stake" (Returnee Ricardo 2018[45]). Basic needs are not met and there is no prospect of improvement. In the current circumstances of hyperinflation, no work or too low wages, besides a food shortage and a lack of healthcare, many people are incapable of providing for their families (*BBC* 2018; Prieto 2018[46]). The forced character of the return also triggered the pattern of unfinished business, and nostalgia for better times at home, in Venezuela (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011; Returnee Ricardo 2018[47]). These extreme circumstances caused another pattern of economic migration, the new economics of labour migration (Jennissen 2007). Many Colombian returnees, and Venezuelan migrants, left part of their family in Venezuela to work in

[40] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[41] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[42] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[43] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[44] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[45] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[46] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[47] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018

Colombia in order to provide for them (Returnee Freddy 2018[48]; Returnee Ricardo 2018[49]; Returnee Antonio 2018[50]). This pattern was rare in the target group during the migration from Colombia to Venezuela. In the second migration, returning to Colombia, there were various cases of monetary remittances among the interviewed returnees, although it was not the rule. It is arguably more common among Venezuelan migrants (Bermúdez et al. 2018). For the time being, this is the only occasion the new economics of labour migration theory can be applied to the current situation. Not enough time has passed to assess further evolution of the situation.

The hypothesis for this question is: *Migratory circumstances of the Colombians moving to Venezuela affect their sense of national identity and they determine the cause of leaving and returning. If this was voluntary and with a perspective on a better future, the migrants were more likely to perceive themselves as Venezuelan than as Colombian.* All the economic and labour migrants purposefully left Colombia behind to rebuild their lives in Venezuela. Venezuela was meant as the permanent destination of the Colombian emigrants (CODHES 2017; Robayo 2018[51]). Both dual market theory, and especially neoclassical economic theory, strongly emphasise the prospects of return, which in the case of the Colombian returnees was not an option. This strongly affects post-migration lives, the impossibility of return, because it entails the necessity for the migrants to fully integrate in the receiving society. The hypothesis also implies that those forced to migrate identify more with the home country (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011). According to the findings, this is true but only for those fleeing the conflict (Returnee Jorge 2018[52]). The women fleeing domestic abuse, had believed that their lives would improve by moving to Venezuela. They were fully integrated in society there and did not partake in transnational activities (Returnee Leonor 2018[53]; Returnee Angélica 2018[54]). Therefore, the Colombian citizens had emigrated in order to find a good job and to achieve a better quality of life. According to plan, these interviewees they found work and managed to properly construct their lives in the receiving society. Their recent return to Colombia was an interruption in this plan. It is mainly this 'forced' element that makes the migrants nostalgic for times when Venezuelan society was still functioning, and they still believe that Venezuela is where they belong.

3.2 Transnational activities of the Colombian returnees in respect to national identity

Contact and interaction with the country of origin are determining factors in the sense of belonging of a migrant (Kinefuchi 2010). Transnational activities express the connection the migrant has and maintains with the country of origin. Other factors are the sense of belonging of the migrants, where their home and family is, and whether they feel nostalgic towards a certain place (Skrbiš 2008; Kinefuchi 2010; Levitt 2004). In the case of the Colombian returnees, this nostalgia could be felt towards Venezuela, Colombia or both. In order to properly study the transnationalism of the Colombian returnees, a few elements need consideration: what transnational activities they participated in whilst living in Venezuela, what transnational activities they engage in now that they

[48] Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018
[49] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[50] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[51] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[52] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[53] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[54] Interview. Maicao. 5/12/2018

have returned to Colombia, where they consider their home and where their family is. Furthermore, another important determinant is in what measure they maintained the habits and traditions of their country of origin, Colombia. This led to the following research question: *How did the transnational activities of the Colombian migrants in Venezuela affect the national identity of the Colombian returnees?*

The transnational activities of the Colombian returnees were multifaceted, and they occurred after their first migration to Venezuela, as well as after their return. The most common transnational interactions named by the interviewees are monetary remittances, visits from family and friends, and correspondence, such as phone calls and contact through social media (Levitt 2004). Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that the Colombian returnees initially moved to Venezuela to stay there. This means that most did not engage in monetary remittances, and radically broke with the home country (see Returnee Yeimer 2018). The main point of transnationalism for the Colombian returnees would the contact with their family in Colombia. For the rest, the ties with the homeland seemed to be fairly unimportant. For this assumption, the differences between the present and past should be taken into account (Levitt 2004). These migrants usually (though there are exceptions) preceded the fast, modern, interconnected world. They lacked access to technology that would permit regular contact with their families in Colombia (see Returnee Ana 2018[55]). Moreover, they also lacked the financial means to be able to travel to Colombia and visit. Some broke bonds with their family entirely, but the majority of the interviewees stated to have had very little contact with their family in Colombia, which was generally limited to "a few phone calls" (Returnee Ana 2018[56]; Returnee Antonio 2018[57]) and later to "some visits" (Returnee Ricardo 2018[58]). In some cases, the family would afterwards uproot and join them in Venezuela, or they would go after their family themselves (see Returnee Yeimer 2018[59]). More recently, most of them resumed contact to some extent with their families, when the financial and technological measures became available. "Only after 25 years did I reinitiate contact with Colombia, I found a sister of mine" (Returnee Antonio 2018[60]). After the return to Colombia, transnational activities to Venezuela were more common. Many returnees left a part of their family in Venezuela, and moved to Colombia to work and remit money. Some of them planned to establish themselves in Colombia before uprooting the family and bringing them to Colombia (see Skrbiš 2008; Returnee Antonio 2018[61], Returnee Freddy 2018[62]). For the victims of the military conflict, monetary remittances were more common. This, however, would be the main transnational activity in which they could participate. Visits to the country of origin would be impossible due to the persistence of the threat that caused them to flee the country, and transnational political activity would risk their lives even further (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011; Naizzir 2018[63]; Returnee Jorge 2018[64]).

[55] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[56] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[57] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[58] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[59] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[60] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[61] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[62] Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018
[63] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[64] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

Even though transnational activities were limited, a relation with Colombia was maintained through tradition and food (Schiller et al. 1992; see Returnee Ana[65]). The Colombian community in Venezuela is sizeable because of decades of immigration. This means that the community as a whole could uphold customs. One returnee stated that he lived in a "street of Colombians" (Returnee Freddy 2018[66]), and that they would celebrate Colombian holidays as well as Venezuelan. Another returnee also expressed her attachment to her country of origin: "I always maintained contact with my sister, and I would always cook Colombian style" (Returnee Ana 2018[67]). However, the migrants stated that they never missed Colombia, and that their lives improved since migrating to Venezuela. Some stated that they did miss their families in Colombia, although contact was scarce and visits were impossible because of the distance, obligations in Venezuela and lack of financial resources (see Returnee Ana 2018[68]). Notable is that the interviewed Colombian returnees have not set foot on Colombian soil since their emigration.

Figure 3: Freddy (returned Colombian), his wife, and myself. Interview in Bogotá, 27/11/2018

The Colombian migrants moved to Venezuela with the intention to stay there and never return. This means that they constructed a home in Venezuela instead of in Colombia. They established families in Venezuela, often with a Venezuelan partner, and their children carry the Venezuelan nationality (Rodríguez 2018[69]; see Returnees Freddy[70], Antonio[71]). Kinefuchi (2010) proposes that the concept of home is interwoven with the sense of belonging. Family also contributes to the sense of home and belonging, and intensifies this feeling (Skrbiš 2008; Charsley et al. 2016; Silvey and Lawson 1999). The feeling of belonging and home of the Colombian returnees was almost unequivocally in Venezuela, even among the group of returnees that maintained ties with Colombia. They established a family, married, and had children in Venezuela; they had a house, a job and a life there. Considering that they were from a low social class, they in particular benefitted from Chávez' socialist politics. These policies facilitated houses, healthcare and schooling for their children (*The Economist* 2013). This might have contributed to the sense of belonging to the Venezuelan society. Many migrants mentioned that their house embodied their home, because it was the place where their children were raised (see Returnees Leonor[72], Freddy[73], Daniel[74]). The location where the family resided and the location of their own house constituted important factors for the perception of their home and identity. In the case of the victim of the military conflict, the family remained in Colombia, and transnational activities such as

[65] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[66] Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018
[67] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[68] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[69] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[70] Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018
[71] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[72] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[73] Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018
[74] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018

family visits and remittances were common, more common than with the other returnees. This corroborates with the "unfinished business" in Colombia (Jiménez Zuluaga 2011); home is still in Colombia. Notably, most interviewees hoped that the political and socio-economic structure of Venezuela would be restored, and that they would be able to "go back home" (Returnee Daniel 2018[75]). They actively anticipated a return to Venezuela at some point in the future, in case the situation would improve. Especially when large parts of their families, in most cases their children, were still in Venezuela. Among these migrants, monetary remittances to their families in Venezuela were frequent. Nostalgia to a simpler time, in Venezuela, is also common (Skrbiš 2008; and see Returnee Daniel 2018[76]). Another common characteristic of this group was that they want to stay close to the Venezuelan border to enable a swift return to the remaining family, in case this would be necessary. In the meantime, they intended to reconstruct their lives as well as they could: "I want to make a home in Riohacha, and get my grandchildren's lives on track." (Returnee Leonor 2018[77]).

The first migration was not at all comparable to the second migration in terms of transnationalism. In the first migration from Colombia to Venezuela, transnational activities played a minor role. The goal of the first migration was to create a better life in Venezuela, and to leave Colombia behind. The remaining contact with the country of origin was almost exclusively with the family, and it was often sporadic. This is also visible in Colombian groups abroad in other countries, such as Ecuador, that have no intention of returning (CODHES 2017). This led to the following hypothesis: *Transnationalism may have had a certain role in the decision to return, but it seems not to have been a decisive factor. The majority of the Colombian citizens abroad (in countries other than Venezuela), that engage in similar transnational activities, do not foresee a return. There seems to be no reason that this is different in the case of the interviewees; it is not likely that it has been an important motivation to return to Colombia through identification with the Colombian national identity.* Transnational activities and contact with the native country, even though having a certain role, were not conclusive factors in their decision to return. The push factors to leave Venezuela were very strong in comparison to the relatively weaker pull factor of the benefit that they would receive when they would move back to Colombia. Even so, this benefit should not be disregarded, because once the decision of emigration was made, Colombia was their obvious country of choice. The transnational contact and ties with the country of origin, the remaining family and the knowledge of the region of origin were certainly pull factors that also made Colombia the most attractive option. Arguably, there are cases in which the contact with family was re-established once returned, as well as cases where the family in Colombia turned their back towards their returnee relatives. The transnational activities towards Venezuela indicate a strong bond with Venezuela that overlaps the choice of Colombia. This second migration gave way to transnational families among the group of Colombian returnees. Generally, the father is sent abroad to gain money to compensate the income deficit of the household which remains in Venezuela (see Returnee Antonio[78]). This points towards the fact that the Colombian returnees consider Venezuela their home, they feel like they belong there and identify more with the Venezuelan identity.

[75] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[76] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[77] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[78] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

3.3 National identity and integration of the Colombians in Venezuelan society

The degree of integration of the Colombian migrants in the Venezuelan society is relevant to determine to what extent they identify themselves with the Venezuelans. For the Colombian migrants, their intention to remain in Venezuela played a significant role in their integration in the Venezuelan society. Moreover, the cultural differences between Colombia, especially its Caribbean region, and Venezuela are small, which facilitates the assimilation. Furthermore, there was room for the Colombian emigrants on the Venezuelan job-market from the 1970s until the 2000s (Mejía Ochoa 2012; Álvarez de Flores 2004; Prieto 2018[79]). But the opportunities on a socio-economic level might not have been equal to those that the native Venezuelans enjoyed. These factors conducted toward the following research question: *To what extent did the Colombian migrants integrate in the Venezuelan society and how did this affect their sense of national identity?*

The process of integration into Venezuelan society seemed fairly simple. Venezuela and Colombia share numerous linkages (Fielding 1993). They have a joint colonial past, which causes them to have the same language – albeit with small phonological differences – culture and religion. "In the end, the Colombians and Venezuelans are not that different. We share certain identities. There are very evident regional similarities" Robayo (2018[80]) confirmed. Many migrants discovered in Venezuela how much the two countries had in common, an example of this is the folk songs, or *villancicos*, that the Colombians thought were typically Colombian (Rodríguez 2018[81]). Upon migration to Venezuela, they encountered the exact same songs. The migrants discerned almost no cultural differences between Colombia and Venezuela, apart from the Venezuelan welcoming attitude towards migrants, which Colombia lacks (Prieto 2018[82]). Even though this explains part of the reason why integration was relatively easy, the other neighbouring countries display the same elements. To Ecuador, Panama and a part of Peru the same reasoning could be applied. Therefore, the crucial reason that integration was as fluid in Venezuela, was due to the economy that was able to absorb the migrants and effectively give them a place in society.

The cultural similarity between the countries make integration according to the assimilation theory (Algan et al. 2012) more likely. Assimilation theory completes itself in three steps. The first would entail a slight adaption of the Colombian culture to the Venezuelan. Also, by sharing the same culture and living in the same society, they would enjoy equal opportunities as the local population: "The Venezuelan society treated me well. Everything was easy there. There was work, and the state and society helped those who had nothing. Everyone had a house, a home" (Returnee man 2018[83]). Because this barrier for initial assimilation was very low, as are result of the similar cultures and shared language, the further two steps of assimilation theory were almost automatic. The original cultural and behavioural patterns would disappear in favour of the receiving country's norms, after which the process would move inevitably and irreversibly towards complete assimilation (Algan et al. 2012). This is how the Colombian returnees interpreted their assimilation in Venezuela. They perceived themselves as workers who performed satisfactorily and as residents who were equal to any other in

[79] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[80] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[81] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[82] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[83] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018

the country (Fong et al. 2016). However, assimilation theory overlooks the fact that most of the Colombian migrants would occupy low-wage jobs in the petrol industry. This means that not all Colombian immigrants had the same opportunities in Venezuela. With the exception of a returned Colombian doctor, who had received his education in Venezuela (Returnee Miguel 2018[84]), the returnees all occupied jobs of low prestige that merely required basic education. This seems to concord with the critique that structuralism makes on assimilation theory. Immigrants have unequal access to benefits such as wealth, jobs, housing, education, power, and privilege, which affect the ability of immigrants to socially integrate (see Chapter 1) (Blau and Duncan 1967; Portes and Borocz 1989, cited by Algan et al. 2012). Though, when you look at the start of Chávez' presidency, access to housing, education and healthcare were equally divided due to his socialist policies. This may be seen in some accounts of returnees, who were supported by the Venezuelan state: "When I became ill, the Venezuelan State helped me a lot. But now they can't" (Returnee Yeimer 2018[85]). And that these migrants from low social strata and of few financial means owned their own house. "I had everything in Venezuela, a house, with air-conditioning even." (Returnee Jorge 2018[86])

The combination of assimilation and structuralist theory seems to direct at the segmented assimilation synthesis (Portes and Zhou 1994, cited by Algan et al. 2012). Segmented assimilation entails assimilation according to three possible patterns. These theoretical patterns are: first, assimilation and economic integration into the normative structures of the majority group; second, a pattern in opposite direction, associated to assimilation and parallel integration into the underclass; and third, economic integration but slow assimilation and/or deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and identity (see Chapter 1). The case of the Colombian economic and labour migrants in Venezuela show similarities with the first two possible patterns of this theory. The third pattern did not seem to occur in the majority of the Colombian returnees. It would be an unlikely pattern for migrants that voluntarily leave their home country to fully establish themselves in the new country, without any volition to return. Nevertheless, the third pattern could be applied to the victims of the military conflict (Fong et al. 2016). However, there seemed to be a mix of the first with the second possibility. Only one account, namely the doctor's (Returnee Miguel 2018[87]), matched the first pattern, though it may be assumed that this was not the only case. The third wave of migration is characterised by a low social stratus and few financial means, and therefore it is less likely to find a returnee fitting to the first pattern. For this reason, the second pattern is prevalent. The returnees themselves stated not to have experienced discrimination within the Venezuelan society. Still, there are several accounts of stereotype of the Colombian immigrant in Venezuela, as a lower-class citizen (Rodríguez 2018[88]). "Ever since the seventies, there was prejudice against the Colombian migrants [in Venezuela]" Robayo confirmed (2018[89]) "Especially because after the seventies, there was less work for the migrants in Venezuela, and some of them returned to Colombia. Those that stayed in Venezuela generated an image of marginalisation, which fuelled prejudice." Overall, the Colombian returnees stated that integration in Venezuelan society had been easy, and usually emphasised the ease with which they had found work and rebuilt their lives: "Moving to Venezuela was quite easy,

[84] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[85] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[86] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[87] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[88] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[89] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018

there was work" (Returnee Leonor 2018[90]). This points to the remarkability that these migrants were quickly absorbed into the Venezuelan system, and thus they perceived their integration as fast and almost effortless. This contributed to their sense of belonging in Venezuela: having a job, a house, being able to start a family and have their children grow up in a safe space with good education (Kinefuchi 2010). The integration of the victims of the Colombian military conflict seemed to be fairly complete, even though victims tend to miss the home country. Just like the economic migrants, the victim felt accomplished in Venezuela, more so than in Colombia. And the victim integrated relatively easy in the Venezuelan society (Returnee Jorge 2018[91]).

The cultural and linguistic similarities, and the open job market caused a fluid assimilation process for the Colombian migrants. Therefore, the hypothesis is as follows: *Because the cultural and linguistic differences are small between the two countries, it was possible for the Colombians to integrate with a certain ease; not only on a social and professional level, but also on a political level. Even if the Colombians occupied jobs of low status, and were discriminated against in certain ways (as often occurs with migrants), it is likely that their experience should be of (near-)complete integration.* The Colombian migrants perceived their integration in the Venezuelan society according to the assimilation theory. But it could be argued that they did not have the same opportunities as the native Venezuelans. As the dual market theory proposes, the Colombian immigrants participated in the secondary job-market created by the petrol industry. They were redirected towards the professions the Venezuelans looked down upon (Mejía Ochoa 2012). Even so, the Colombian migrants stated not to perceive discrimination in Venezuelan society. The integration of the Colombian migrants on a political level seemed fairly unimportant, because they do not identify themselves with influence and politics, as not uncommon in lower classes (Laurison 2016). Generally, they would express their discontent towards Venezuela's current leader, president Maduro ("*Este Señor*"). The most notable aspect of integration seemed to be the economy that provided a stable life. Initially the market, and later Chávez socialist policies, made a better and stable life with a job, a home and a family possible (*The Economist* 2014). All these factors contributed to the feeling of belonging and the identification with the Venezuelan nationality.

3.4 Sense of national identity among the Colombian returnees

The sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees' ranges on a scale from feeling Colombian to Venezuelan. The measurement on this scale is determined by numerous parameters, such as the motivation for migration both to and from Venezuela, the remaining ties with the country of origin and transnationalism, and feeling of belonging and integration in the receiving country. Anderson's (1983) ideas on 'imagined communities' as part of the national identity are interesting because they are adaptable to the situation of migrants, as suggested by Madsen and Van Naerssen (2003). The migrants abandon the sense of community in the first country, and try to make the new community their own. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the migrant necessarily ceases to identify with the original 'imagined community'. Another important element to the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees is the pending reintegration into the Colombian society. If the returnees identify more with the Venezuelan nationality, it is more likely they would aim to return to Venezuela, as soon

[90] Interview. Maicao, 5/12/2018
[91] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

as this is possible. Aside from these issues, there are also the challenges this group of migrants faces upon their return in Colombia. This has resulted in the following main research question: *What is the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees from Venezuela?*

The returnees mentioned that they were fully functional in Venezuelan society. Moreover, they felt that they had more opportunities to participate in the Venezuelan society than in Colombia. This is reflected in the scarce transnationalism, near-complete integration in Venezuelan society and absence of plans to return to Colombia of the Colombian returnees. Deteriorating conditions in Venezuelan society interrupted their lives and forced their return (CIDH 2018; Bermúdez et al. 2018). In the migratory process of the return, another factor of identification appears. The Colombian returnees migrate the same way as the Venezuelan migrants. They use the same resources and methods. They are part of the flux and cross the border among the Venezuelan migrants (CIDH 2018). Upon their arrival in Colombia, they face equal circumstances as the Venezuelan migrants. This creates a bond of identification. Some Colombian returnees need to sleep on the street, and recur to the NGO's provisions for food and shelter, just like the Venezuelan migrants (Returnee Leonor 2018[92]). This is upon immediate return. Then they still face various challenges: re-entering in contact with their personal networks in Colombia (usually the family), creating the proper conditions to reintegrate in society and undergoing the administrative process of reclaiming their rights as Colombian citizens (CIDH 2018).

The personal network, especially the family, the Colombian returnees left behind when they migrated to Venezuela, can play a role in the return. The family can have a welcoming attitude, or not at all. A helpful family means that it is easier for them to plan a future in Colombia, it gives them essential assistance and support. It also provides them the means to reintegrate into the Colombian society, though this does not seem to have happened yet. Some of the returnees could count on the help of Colombian family members. "I'm luckier than most [migrants], I have a place to stay with my sister" (Returnee Daniel 2018[93]) and "Our relatives have treated us very well; look, they even gave me a phone" (Returnee Freddy 2018[94]). In contrast, there are cases where the Colombian family distances themselves from their migrant relatives. "Coming back to Colombia is very hard. My family doesn't want to help me. If it's possible, I want to go back to Venezuela as soon as possible" (Returnee Yeimer 2018[95]). These returnees stated that they have to rely on the Colombian society and initiatives from the church and NGO's to provide them with their basic needs. The main difference between the victim of the conflict and the other returnees seems to be that the victim seemed to be less disturbed by the forced return from Venezuela. He was the only interviewed migrant that felt already reintegrated, and that had found himself a job (Returnee Jorge 2018[96]). Similar to other victims of the conflict, he mainly used support from his own network (Naizzir 2018[97]) and he seemed to have a practical attitude to the return (CNMH 2018).

[92] Interview. Riohacha, 4/5/2018
[93] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[94] Interview. Bogotá, 25/12/2018
[95] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[96] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[97] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

The practice of 'othering' happens throughout the migratory process of the returnees (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002), by the family and also by the Colombian society (Official 2018[98]). "They [the Colombian returnees] experience problems in talking to their Colombian relatives and the Colombians reject them" Rodríguez confirms (2018[99]). The returnees are essentially excluded from the "deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983: p. 7) that shapes the 'imagined community' of Colombia. However, only one of the interviewees stated to feel 'othered' by fellow Colombians. She stated that "they deny me my Colombian identity because I don't sound Colombian" (Returnee Leonor 2018[100]). Especially the Colombians that are in danger of being discriminated against, of being denied their Colombian identity, are more likely to feel the "deep, horizontal comradeship" towards Venezuelans. Notably, some of the interviewees seemed to feel so detached from Colombia that they do not plan to stay: "but I don't want to stay here in Colombia. I want to travel; I want to go to Cusco and work in Peru" (Returnee Daniel 2018[101]).

In order to successfully reclaim the rights of Colombian citizens, the returnees need to prove their descendance (CIDH 2018; Official 2018[102]). According to the Law of Return, this should be with their own Colombian document, or in worst case scenario, with the document of a parent (CIDH 2018; Official 2018[103]). This has proved to be complex and the returnees need to enter a lengthy administrative process, partially because this law was not intended to absorb the enormous quantity of returnees (Rodríguez 2018[104]; Official 2018[105]). Colombia did not have a strong culture of registration, mainly due to the massive internal displacement, and often only the parents of the migrants were registered and had an identification document (Prieto 2018[106]; Official 2018[107]). So, the migrants need to prove that their parents were Colombian, and that they were the children of these Colombian citizens. The retrieval of the documents of the parents can cause additional problems: there are cases where the returnees have to search for long-lost family members. This contributes to the stress of the return (Official 2018[108].

The Colombian returnees see themselves as more Venezuelan than Colombian, not excluding either. On the scale, they would be (almost) all the way on the side of Venezuela. "I'm more from there [Venezuela] than from here [Colombia]" (Returnee Leonor 2018[109]). A notable difference was that the migrants that anticipated an easy reintegration into Colombian society were inclined to feel more Colombian than Venezuelan. None of the interviewees negated their Colombian descendance nor did they deny that they do not, partially in the least, feel Colombian: "I feel almost Venezuelan, only I have a sister here [Colombia] and I was born in Colombia." (Returnee Daniel 2018[110]). Perhaps this attitude forms part of a mental preparation to reintegrate in Colombian society. The interviewed returnees

[98] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[99] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[100] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[101] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[102] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[103] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[104] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[105] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[106] Interview. Bogotá, 25/11/2018
[107] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[108] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018
[109] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018
[110] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018

have not set foot on Colombian soil for decades, some since their youth. Another determinant of the reluctance to acknowledge the Colombian national identity, is the bad reputation of Colombia internationally. Because of the violence, the conflict and the drug trafficking, many Colombians perceive their national identity as undesirable. This may have contributed to the adoption of the Venezuelan identity by the Colombian returnees (Official 2018[111]). Robayo (2018[112]) also commented: "Colombia is a divided country, geographically, by the [military] conflict, there is no unison and a lot of culturally ingrained distrust." The clearest distinction between the perception of Colombia and Venezuela, was visible in the following statement "I am in my country [Colombia], though not in my home" (Returnee Miguel 2018[113]). This is interesting, because these returnees considered Colombia to be their country, though not their home. They seem to feel as if they belong in Venezuela, and not in Colombia. This friction between the two 'imagined communities' seems to have an interesting reflection on their sense of identity. They recognise both in themselves, but identify more with the Venezuelan nationality.

This has led to the hypothesis: *The sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees is linked to the economic, professional, familial and social stability found in Venezuela. They are more likely to feel Venezuelan than Colombian.* The hypothesis mainly states that the identification of the Colombian returnees with the Venezuelan nationality is mostly linked to the life conditions and integration in the Venezuelan society. The welcoming attitude of Venezuela and the open market that provided a stable life for the migrants indeed proved to be important factors in the identification with the Venezuelan identity. The Colombian migrants chose to emigrate from Colombia in search of a better future, which they found in Venezuela. They made no plans to return to Colombia, established families and had Venezuelan children. The concept of home and family are also strongly related to their sense of belonging and national identity (Kinefuchi 2010; Levitt 2004). The interviewees stated to feel both Colombian and Venezuelan, though they tend towards the Venezuelan identity. There were no clear differences between men and women. The only clear disparity was the victim of the conflict who did feel more Colombian, and was not shaken by the forced return.

*

In concrete, there were several parameters of importance to the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees. The intent of migration to stay in Venezuela, the scarce transnationalism toward Colombia and the near-complete assimilation to the Venezuelan society were clear indicators of the identification with the Venezuelan society. Furthermore, the challenges this group faces upon return to Colombia do not contribute to their identification to Colombia. They mostly feel equal to the Venezuelan migrants. Some of them are supported by their families and receive help. Others are rejected by their families. The 'othering' of the Colombian returnees, and the denial of their Colombian citizenship by the Colombian society, also poses an issue. Finally, the objective to reclaim their rights in front of the Colombian state is possible, yet complex. It is constituted by a lengthy administrative process. Although the Colombian returnees consider themselves both Colombian and Venezuelan,

[111] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[112] Interview. Bogotá, 26/11/2018
[113] Interview. Maicao, 12/12/2018

they tend more towards the Venezuelan identity and nostalgically remember a stable and prosperous life in Venezuela.

Conclusion

This research was centred around the sense of national identity of the Colombian returnees that migrated back to Colombia in 2018. After residing in Venezuela for decades, these migrants faced the question whether they identified more with the Colombian or the Venezuelan identity. The thesis attempted to distinguish the national identity along three main topics. The first delved into the motives of migration and how they affected the national identity of these migrants. The second topic investigated the transnational activities and the bond with the country of origin. And the third studied the degree of assimilation of the Colombian migrants in the Venezuelan society, and its repercussions on their national identity.

The first chapter determined the theoretical framework for the question of national identity and how it was manifested in the case of Colombian returnees. It continued with a description of transnationalism, and it was linked to the importance of home and family. The combination of these concepts created a good indicator for the migrant's sense of belonging, and national identity. Next, integration was discussed and related to sense of belonging. These phenomena gave a clear perspective of the post-migration lives of the returnees. They interacted on several points, most notably, the consideration of home, and the location of the family. Lastly, migration and its motives were discussed because of their role in the post-migration lives and how these influenced the national identity formation. The main message drawn from the theoretical framework, was that the motive for migration had a significant impact on post-migration lives. Namely, it had repercussions on the manner and volition of integration. And it also influenced the frequency and intensity of transnational activity. In this question, the distinction was made between those that were forced to migrate, and those that migrated voluntarily. The forced migrants seemed less likely to integrate fully in the new society, because they did not want nor plan to ever leave their home country. Home was, therefore, still in the country of origin, and this entailed more transnational interaction. Transnationalism was an indicator for where the migrant considered their home. Additionally, the location of the family had strong implications to the sense of belonging. In the case that the migrant established a family in the country of destination, the integration would be faster and more complete. Whereas when the family remained in the home country, the integration would be slower, incomplete or only occur on an economic level. Although transnationalism and integration were good indicators for the sense of national identity, they were not mutually exclusive. A migrant could simultaneously be fully integrated in the new country, and participate in transnational activities.

The second chapter provided context on the migratory patterns between Colombia and Venezuela during the second half of the twentieth century. Afterwards, the current situation was described, and the position of the Colombian returnees herein was shown. The chapter concluded with a brief observation on the place of the data collection, Guajira. The chapter outlined that ever since 1950, Venezuela and Colombia experienced extreme circumstances, with frequent migration flows between them. Historically, Colombia was always an emitter of migrants and Venezuela a receiver. But this situation changed when Maduro came to power in Venezuela in 2014. Venezuelan citizens massively started to flee the country. The Venezuelan society was completely destabilised. The lack of food and medicine, the hyperinflation and the spread of political unrest made life in Venezuela next to impossible. This crisis broke a pattern in history that forced the countries to reverse their positions on

the migratory spectre: Colombia acted as the receiver, and Venezuela as the emitter. The Colombian migrants that once moved to Venezuela in search of a better life, returned to flee the dire life conditions. But the massive return was initiated by a political crisis in 2015. After a diplomatic incident, Maduro deported thousands of Colombians, which soon triggered other Colombian immigrants to leave the country. This migratory flux of return blended in with the Venezuelan exodus, rendering this group invisible. Once the returnees re-entered Colombia, they still faced several challenges, such as the reencounter with their family, the pending reintegration into Colombian society and the act of reclaiming their rights as Colombian citizens. This made the return stressful and difficult for the migrants. Many of them had not set foot in Colombia since their youth. Guajira was the second biggest entry along the Colombo-Venezuelan border, but it was mostly a temporary stop in the migration trajectory. Most Colombian returnees that passed Guajira were on their way home to neighbouring provinces on the Caribbean coast. Some of them intended to stay in Guajira in order to stay close to the border, in case they needed to return to their families in Venezuela. The province was difficult to govern due to the presence of armed groups, the geographical isolation and the desert climate. These challenges also caused problems for the incoming migrants. There was relatively little support that could be provided, and most of the help was given by NGO's.

The last chapter attempted to answer the research questions by using the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 1 as a lens. It addressed the following topics: the motives for migration, the frequency and intensity of transnationalism, the degree of integration, which built towards the sense of national identity among the Colombian returnees. The findings on the migratory motives of the returnees were that the majority of them seemed to have moved to Venezuela due to economic or labour reasons. Most notable was their initial intention to stay in Venezuela, which had a strong impact on their post-migration lives. It meant that they were prepared to completely integrate into Venezuelan society, and did so successfully. This seemed to have made their return more perturbing in their lives. It also offered an explanation for their scarce transnational interaction with Colombia. The only contact that existed for most migrants was with their families that resided in the country of origin, and even this contact was rare. Some stated to maintain Colombian cultural elements, such as culinary practices and traditions. The transnational network of Colombians in Venezuela that established over the years could also play a role in the maintenance of Colombian rituals. Transnational activities with Venezuela after the return to Colombia were very common. Monetary remittances occurred among the target group, where they had not when they migrated to Venezuela. This was because the returnees often left parts of their family in Venezuela, and still consider themselves as belonging to Venezuela. The returnees seemed to perceive their integration into Venezuelan society as (near-)complete. However, it should be argued that there was some discrimination in Venezuelan society towards the Colombian immigrant; they were characterised as lower-class workers. Generally, the Colombian immigrants would indeed have simpler jobs that Venezuelan natives looked down upon. Furthermore, once they returned to Colombia, this group still faced numerous challenges. Because they migrated in equal conditions as the Venezuelan migrants, they seemed to identify with this group. When they arrived in Colombia, they needed to re-establish contact with their personal network, usually the family, and this was not always successful. Some of them were supported by their families and received help, whereas others were rejected by their families. The reaction of the Colombian society was not always positive, as the Colombian returnees were sometimes seen as equal to the Venezuelan migrants. This "othering" of the Colombian returnees, and the denial of their Colombian citizenship by the Colombian society, also posed an issue.

Finally, they aimed to reclaim their rights as Colombian citizens, which tended to be a complex process as well. These challenges upon return did not contribute to their identification with Colombia. So, the Colombian returnees considered themselves both Colombian and Venezuelan, but they tended more towards the Venezuelan identity and nostalgically thought back to their stable life in Venezuela.

The period contained in this thesis reached until the 24th of December 2018. Since then, numerous radical political changes have occurred in Venezuela. The polemic re-election of Nicolás Maduro was widely protested and led to the rise of Juan Guaidó. This has led to more unrest in Venezuela, as the country divided into two camps. Violent clashes followed, as well as the further deterioration of already dire life conditions. Speculations are that this situation will lead to a full-blown civil war. In any case, the end is not in sight, and it looks like the life conditions of the Venezuelan people will not improve at any time soon. This also entails that the migration and humanitarian crisis are still in course. It is therefore necessary to keep observing the situation in and around Venezuela. An interesting topic for further research would be to find a way how to effectively reintegrate the Colombian returnees in the Colombian society, as well as to accommodate the Venezuelan migrants.

The Colombian returnees went through two migration cycles under very different circumstances. The first was to have a better future, a stable life and job. The second was forced by the precarious conditions and life-quality in Venezuela. There is still a long way to go for these migrants. They need to reintegrate in the Colombian society and reconstruct their lives. Their future is insecure and riddled with challenges, but as an elderly lady, Leonor, said "[The return] was something we were forced to do, but we have to move forward now. I need to get my grandchildren on track" (2018[114]).

[114] Interview. Riohacha, 4/12/2018

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Figure 3: Interview. Bogotá, 27/11/2018

List of interviewees				
Interviewee	**Job or role**	**Topics of conversation**	**Place and date**	**Duration**
Lublanc Prieto	FUNDAVENECOL	Situation in Venezuela, reception of Venezuelan and Colombian migrants in Colombia	Bogotá, 25/11/2018	75 min
Ronald Rodríguez	Professor of the Universidad el Rosario	Political relations between Venezuela and Colombia, repercussions of the mass migration	Bogotá, 26/11/2018	1 hour
María Clara Robayo	Professor of the Universidad el Rosario	Emotional and identity repercussions of migration	Bogotá, 26/11/2018	1 hour
Freddy	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Bogotá, 27/11/2018	50 minutes
Miguel	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Riohacha, 4/12/2018	45 minutes
Leonor	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Riohacha, 4/12/2018	45 minutes
Daniel	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Riohacha, 4/12/2018	45 minutes
Yeimer	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Riohacha, 4/12/2018	45 minutes
Angélica	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Maicao, 5/12/2018	40 minutes
Ana	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Maicao, 5/12/2018	40 minutes
Ricardo	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Maicao, 5/12/2018	40 minutes
Anonymous	Indigenous leader	Contextual information about Guajira, and the presence of armed groups in Guajira	Riohacha, 11/12/2018	1 hour

Jheimmy Naizzir	In charge of the Centro de Atención a los Migrantes in Maicao	The different migratory waves and their dissolution in the Colombian society. Challenges and problems of the mass migration and the returned victims of the conflict, migration dynamic in Guajira	Maicao, 12/12/2018	1 hour
Jorge	Victim returnee	Own experiences of forced migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Maicao, 12/12/2018	30 minutes
Antonio	Colombian returnee	Own experiences of migration to Venezuela and return to Colombia	Maicao, 12/12/2018	45 minutes
Anonymous	State	Migratory dynamics, the role of the state	12/12/2018	1 hour

Model interviews

All interviews were completed in Spanish.

Target group:

[Identification of the interviewee: name, date, gender, education, social class, age, place of birth]

1. Migrants born in Colombia

1. When did you leave Colombia?
2. Why did you decide to move to Venezuela?
3. How long were you living in Venezuela?
4. How did the Venezuelan society behave towards you?
5. How much effort did it cost you to adapt in the Venezuelan society?
6. You have experienced two migrations. How was the first (Colombia – Venezuela) different from the second (Venezuela – Colombia)?
7. Why did you not return to Colombian before?
8. Do you think Colombia owes you something because you are Colombian?
9. In comparison to the Venezuelan migrants, do you believe you are treated better?
10. How does the Colombian society react to your return?
11. How much has it cost you to adapt to Colombia again?
12. Do you truly feel Colombian?
13. Do you foresee plans to return to Venezuela if the circumstances improve?

2. Migrants born in Venezuela to Colombian parents

1. Why did your parents move to Venezuela?
2. How long were you living in Venezuela?
3. How did the Venezuelan society behave towards you?
4. Do you believe that your Colombian descendance was important to the Venezuelan society?
5. Why did you not return to Colombian before?
6. Do you think Colombia owes you something because you are Colombian?
7. In comparison to the Venezuelan migrants, do you believe you are treated better?
8. How does the Colombian society react to your return?
9. How much has it cost you to adapt to Colombia again?
10. Do you truly feel Colombian?
11. Do you foresee plans to return to Venezuela if the circumstances improve?

Experts:

[Identification of the interviewee: name, date, company/organisation/institution, function, specialisation]

1. What magnitude and implications has the migratory wave of Colombians returning from Venezuela?
2. What are the main problems and challenges the migratory return poses?
3. What phases can be observed in the return and how do they relate to the reception in Colombia?
4. What are the characteristics of the specific dynamics of Colombian migration and how did they affect the return?