



Escaping from the crisis

A qualitative assessment of integration amongst the Venezuelan migrant population
of Medellín, Colombia



Max Vlugt

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Trabajo en bruto pero con orgullo,
Aquí se comparte, lo mío es tuyo.
Este pueblo no se ahoga con marullos,
Y si se derrumba yo lo reconstruyo.

Calle 13- Latinoamérica

Abstract

Venezuela used to be one of Latin America's wealthiest countries. Former president Hugo Chávez used wealth derived from oil to initiate social programs, which especially benefitted the poor. After Chávez his death in 2013, Nicolás Maduro followed him up. He built further on Chávez' socialist policies, but falling oil prices led to a deterioration of the economic situation. These developments are considered as the basis of one of Latin America's worst crises so far. Inflation rates rose to sky-high levels, food became scarce, medicines lacked throughout the country and insecurity affected the Venezuelan population. The accumulation of problems in turn led to a substantial migration flow from Venezuela to other Latin American countries, with Colombia as most popular destination. A large share of Venezuelan migrants chose for Colombia's second largest city: Medellín. Migrants intend to stay for a longer period in the city and therefore seek to become active in different layers of the Colombian society. Access to work, housing, healthcare and education is required for integration. Not meeting legal requirements restricts the access to these services. This restriction implicates that healthcare can only be acceded in case of emergency, and that formal job opportunities are out of reach amongst others. Despite these legal restrictions, other factors like social capital and personal characteristics have the ability to bridge this gap.

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List of tables and figures

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Figure 2: *Population density Medellín*

Figure 3: *Metrocable Medellín*

Figure 4: *Interviewees' age categories*

Figure 5: *Background of interviewees*

Figure 6: *Number of interviewees*

Figure 7: *Date of arrival (census)*

Figure 8: *Documentation of interviewees in Medellín*

Figure 9: *Labor market position in Venezuela (number of interviewees)*

Figure 10: *Current labor market position in Medellín (number of interviewees)*

Figure 11: *Housing interviewees*

Table 1: *Operationalization*

Table of content

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | 3 |
| Acknowledgements | 4 |
| List of tables and figures | 5 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| 1 Theoretical Framework | 12 |
| 1.1 Migration..... | 12 |
| 1.2 Defining migrants and refugees..... | 13 |
| 1.3 Irregular migrants..... | 14 |
| 1.4 Informal sector..... | 15 |
| 1.5 Migrant integration..... | 16 |
| 1.5.1 Access to work..... | 17 |
| 1.5.2 Access to housing..... | 18 |
| 1.5.3 Access to healthcare..... | 18 |
| 1.5.4 Access to education..... | 19 |
| 1.5.5 Role of social capital..... | 20 |
| 1.5.6 Role of government..... | 21 |
| 2 Methodology | 23 |
| 2.1 Conceptual Framework..... | 24 |
| 2.2 Operationalization..... | 25 |
| 2.3 Selection of participants..... | 26 |
| 2.4 Practical challenges in the field..... | 27 |
| 2.5 Relations in the field..... | 29 |
| 2.6 Bias & limitations of research..... | 31 |
| 3 Thematic and Regional Context | 32 |
| 3.1 Colombia..... | 32 |
| 3.2 Medellín..... | 33 |

Data-analysis

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4 Introducing the research sample | 36 |
| 4.1 Research sample..... | 36 |
| 4.2 Migrants' background..... | 37 |
| 4.3 Preference for Medellín..... | 38 |
| 4.4 Moment of arrival..... | 39 |
| 4.5 Motivations to leave Venezuela..... | 41 |
| 4.6 Intention to stay in Colombia and or return to Venezuela..... | 42 |
| 4.7 Legal documentation..... | 42 |
| 4.7.1 PEP..... | 43 |
| 4.7.2 Venezuelan passport..... | 44 |
| 4.7.3 Irregular migrants..... | 44 |
| 4.7.4 Colombian citizenship..... | 44 |
| 4.7.5 Visa..... | 45 |
| 4.7.6 Foreigner ID..... | 45 |
| 5 Access to work | 46 |
| 5.1 Labor market position Venezuela..... | 46 |
| 5.2 Current labor market position Medellín..... | 47 |
| 5.3 Ways to access work..... | 49 |
| 5.4 Motivations..... | 51 |
| 5.5 Time spent searching work..... | 53 |
| 5.6 Impact on economic stability..... | 53 |
| 5.7 Mobility..... | 56 |
| 6 Access to housing | 58 |
| 7 Access to healthcare | 62 |
| 8 Access to education | 65 |
| 9 Role of Colombian government and social capital | 68 |
| 9.1 Actions taken by Colombian government..... | 69 |
| 9.2 Actions taken by NGO's and other institutions..... | 70 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 9.3 Social capital and acceptance..... | 71 |
| Discussion..... | 74 |
| Conclusion..... | 77 |
| Literature..... | 80 |
| Appendix 1..... | 87 |
| Appendix 2..... | 90 |
| Appendix 3..... | 91 |
| Appendix 4.1..... | 92 |
| Appendix 4.2..... | 93 |

Introduction

Migration receives increasingly more international attention. For the first time migration has been mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as a challenge for global development (Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017). The globalizing world facilitates people in migrating elsewhere in search of better opportunities. Migration has the ability to stimulate development in both home as receiving countries. Home countries can profit from international migration through the means of remittances; 415 billion American dollars have been sent in 2016. Migrants can also contribute to receiving countries by becoming active on the labor market, filling labor gaps and at the same time by making a contribution through the payment of taxes (UN, 2017). Despite these advantages, migration also holds some eventual risks for integration in receiving countries. Fear for migrants takes places on different places worldwide. On the one hand it involves fear for migrants' attraction of social benefits and jobs and on the other hand it involves fear of cultural clashes (Phillimore et al, 2018). Integration, a mainly European concept, is seen as the 'middle way' between adaptation of national norms and values on the one hand and the risk of dissociation on the other hand (Favell, 2014). South-North migration has received most international attention, while South-South migration has been relatively underexposed. Latin America has a large tradition of intraregional migration and this flow increased rapidly over the past years. This rise is due to stricter migration barriers and less job opportunities in the 'North', and shifts and improvements in multiple countries within Latin America itself (Cerruti & Parrado, 2015). Over the past years, Venezuela entered a deep crisis which resulted in a huge migration flow from Venezuela to other Latin American countries. Venezuela used to be one of Latin America's wealthiest countries, in terms of resources it still is. Large quantities of oil and other natural resources made the country an attractive place not only for Venezuelans, but also for many migrants from all over the world. Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's former president, used wealth derived from oil to initiate social programs (McKinney, 2015). When Nicolás Maduro was elected as president of Venezuela in 2013, he built further on Chávez's legacy. Maduro continued Chávez' socialist policies. But, falling oil prices and subsequent economic deterioration led to an accumulation of problems (Gutiérrez, 2017). These problems led to a serious crisis, which affected both the political, humanitarian, economic and social aspects of life in Venezuela. The country found itself leaping on the verge of bankruptcy,

with inflation rates reaching as high as 2400% in 2017 (Günther, 2018). Food is scarce, amounting to huge waiting lines in front of supermarkets. The average Venezuelan lost 11.4 kilograms in 2017 alone and 87% of all Venezuelans are living in poverty (Reuters, 2018). These problems created a substantial migration flow from Venezuela to other Latin American countries, with Colombia as the most popular destination. The opposite happened in the 1970s and 1980s, Colombians sought refuge in Venezuela due to the violence and political turbulence they experienced in Colombia (Günther, 2018). The Colombian government recently declared that the number of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia surpassed one million, whereof 442.662 are described as irregular migrants (Migración Colombia, 2018). Medellín, Colombia's second largest city, received a large quantity of Venezuelan migrants indeed. A census, executed by the Colombian government, has shown that 21.850 irregular migrants registered themselves in Antioquia, Medellín's province. This number does not take the amount of regular, return migrants and citizens with a double nationality into account (RAMV, 2018). This research focuses on the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín, as the city provides a representative overview of how migrants are coping with integration in Colombia.

Academic sources (Merke et al, 2018; Ellis, 2017; Dachevsky & Juan Kornblihtt, 2017) speak of the causes and eventual solutions for the current crisis in Venezuela, but few paid attention to the integration of these migrants in other Latin American countries. The Venezuelan migration flow is also overseen due to the massive influx in Europe of refugees fleeing conflict in the Middle East (Gedan, 2017). This research aims to fill this gap. There is a lack of knowledge on the access of Venezuelan migrants to work, housing, healthcare and education in Colombia. Venezuelans in Medellín are not officially recognized as refugees, which holds large implications for integration. Furthermore, there is a large quantity of irregular migrants in Medellín and in Colombia as a whole, which makes this case different and worthwhile researching. It is a unique case because the large majority of Venezuelan migrants are planning to stay in Colombia and to integrate. This process of migration and integration is still ongoing and some policy changes have been implemented recently.

This research is structured in the following manner: first, a theoretical and conceptual framework explain the main theories that guide this Master Thesis. This framework flows into a section explaining the methodology and operationalization used for this research,

followed by two analytical sections based on the fieldwork results. First section focuses on Venezuelan migrants' access to work, housing, healthcare and education in Medellín. The second section discusses the facilitating role of the Colombian government and social capital in the realization of integration. Furthermore, the following research and sub-questions have been raised to guide this research:

Which factors influence the integration process of crisis-escaping Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?

- What were the main reasons for Venezuelans to leave their country and migrate to Medellín?
- Which role do legal statuses play in the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?
- Which personal characteristics determine the access of Venezuelan migrants to work, housing, healthcare and education?
- Which role does social capital or the absence of it play in the integration process of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?
- How does the local government in Medellín support Venezuelan migrants in the provision of work, housing, education and healthcare?

1 Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overview of the main concepts and theories that guide this research. First, a couple of terminologies that deal with migration will be discussed. The second part puts emphasis on theories regarding integration of migrants. There are multiple factors that influence the process of migrant integration, an overview of the main influential factors are central to this section. The concepts and theories form the basis upon which the results are discussed. These are essential for understanding the integration process of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

1.1 Migration

Migration is a widely discussed topic in academic circles. The term enhances an extensive body of related theories, concepts and approaches. Castels (2008) argues that there is a lack of common theoretical understanding of migration, different authors use different concepts and terminologies to describe migration. Migration has become more complex due to globalization processes, characterized by advances in both the field of technology as in transportation. Migration also got stimulated by political shifts; from the 1980s onwards barriers on international trade and capital got abolished (Czaika & De Haas, 2015). This barrier removal not only facilitated the flow of trade and capital, but also of people. International migration therefore increasingly became more important. International migration does not exclusively consist of migrants moving from one country to another. Various types of migration exist, each with different backgrounds and characteristics. Return migration consists of migrants that return to their home countries after a certain period. Transit migration is another form, wherein migrants stay temporarily within a country and then move to another country in order to search for better opportunities. Migration is often described in binaries: *internal vs. international, temporary vs. permanent, and regular vs. irregular migration*. Another important, yet problematic, divide is that between *voluntary and forced migration, for instance 'economic' migrants vs. refugees* (King, 2012: p. 8).

Migrants have different motivations for migration. Labor migrants, both low and high-skilled, move to other places in search of job opportunities. Labor migrants migrate for better employment opportunities, after recommendation by social contacts (networks), employer recruitment or illegal recruitment (Arnold: 2017). Luo and Stone (2017) argue that migration

can stimulate the labor market in the country of destination, but that the influx of refugees as a result of conflict can put social and political pressure on the host society.

Migration theories can generally be divided into two main paradigms: functional and historical-structural theories. Functionalist theories perceive societies as organisms, under this paradigm migration is perceived as a positive development, as it would contribute to more equal societies. Historical-structural approaches on the other hand *emphasizes how social, economic, cultural and political structures constrain and direct the behavior of individuals in ways that generally do not lead to greater equilibrium, but rather reinforce such disequilibria* (Castles et al, 2014: p.27). This theoretical approach perceives migration as a negative development in the sense that it would only lead to exploitation of cheap foreign labor force, which just benefits wealthier migrant receiving countries and can lead to a brain drain in migrants' home countries. In these theories migrants are not perceived as active human beings. Theories from the 1980s onwards tend to pay more attention to the agency migrants have to make a changes in their own lives. These theories mainly focus on the reason of migration and on how migrants cope with migration. Social capital is an example of agency, as it can smoothen the migration process (idem, 2014).

In this thesis migrants are perceived as active beings that have the power to make changes in their own lives. The societal and political context might restrict the integration of migrants in some ways, but agency has the power to fill this gap. Notions described above have to be taken into consideration whilst speaking of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

1.2 Defining migrants and refugees

There is an ongoing debate on the terminology regarding migrants and refugees. Goodman et al. (2017) have shown through an media-analysis that terminology is of great importance for people's perceptions on how migrants/refugees should be treated. The current refugee crisis in Europe was initially described as a migrant crisis, the term 'migrant' was used in news messages to spread fear towards newcomers. The moment that the term 'migrants' got replaced by 'refugees', there was an increase visible in sympathy towards this group. The term implicates that refugees find themselves in a more critical situation and therefore require direct support (Goodman et al, 2017).

For the definitions on migrants and refugees terminology derived from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) will be used, as they are the leading authority in the field of migration and refugees. Migrants are defined as follows: *Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government* (UNHCR, 2016). A refugee on the other hand in general does not move voluntarily. Conflict or persecution are reasons to flee their home country. The most important difference between a migrant and a officially recognized refugee is that the latter is protected under international law. Thus, not only the receiving state is responsible for the well-being of refugees, but also other international organizations are responsible. Refugees receive this international protection because returning to their home countries can be a dangerous act, as articulated in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Additionally, they are also entitled to fair asylum procedures and basic human rights. Migrants on the other hand are dependent on the immigration laws of the specific country where they 'choose' to reside. The UNHCR states in addition that mixing up of these two terms can do injustice to refugees, as they are perceived as migrants and therefore do not receive the help they are officially entitled too (UNHCR, 2016). These definitions have to be taken into consideration, because applying one of these terms can hold large implications. The term *migrant* will be applied in this thesis as the Colombian government (Migración Colombia, 2018) speaks of migrants rather than refugees, this terminology is furthermore used by other international media. Venezuelans that migrated to Colombia could certainly be described as refugees, as migrating is in many cases not a free choice but simply a basic need. But, using the term migrants better suits the ongoing debate.

1.3 Irregular migrants

It is important to make a distinction between regular and irregular migrants. The International Organization (IOM, 2012) for Migration describes irregular migrants in the following way:

Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. There is no clear or universally accepted definition of irregular migration. From the perspective of destination countries it is entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary

authorization or documents required under immigration regulations. From the perspective of the sending country, the irregularity is for example seen in cases in which a person crosses an international boundary without a valid passport or travel document or does not fulfil the administrative requirements for leaving the country. (IOM, 2012)

Due to globalization, the protection of nation states through border control became more essential. Irregularity is a conflictual term, as it suggests that people are 'irregular', which is not the case. The term has to refer to the laws within the country wherein a migrants is residing (Ambrosini, 2013). Often the term implies that migrants don't meet the legal requirements to stay and work in the country of residence. It is important to mention that national policies concerning irregular migrants vary strongly. Spain for example periodically regularizes irregular migrants. Denmark on the other hand knows a stricter policy in the sense that irregular migrants cannot accede healthcare, just in case of emergencies. Whether irregular migrants can accede services like healthcare relies upon specific national contexts (Bloch & Chimienti, 2011). A state has three options regarding irregular migrants: accept their presence, legalize or remove them. If migrants are considered as irregular, this does not implicate that integration is out of reach. By building networks and by becoming active on the labor market, their agency can empower them to establish some sort of self-integration. Becoming 'invisible' is another technique for blending into a society without being recognized as foreign (Schweitzer, 2017).

The implications of irregularity for Venezuelans in Medellín will be discussed in the paragraph on **Legal Documentation**. Both informality as irregular migration are important concepts for this research, as a lot of Venezuelan migrants are informal. This legal status holds large implications for integration in Medellín.

1.4 Informal sector

The informal sector is a crucial concept in this research because migrants are often pushed towards informal economies. Especially because a lot of Venezuelan migrants work in the informal sector of Medellín, often this is due to their legal status.

Toksöz describes informality as phenomenon wherein jobs lack (legal) protection and are therefore excluded from certain benefits (Toksöz, 2018). More traditional theories make a distinction between formal and informal markets in developing countries. In these theories informal work is considered as a sector characterized by less opportunities and many

barriers. Informal workers are excluded from formal markets and often less socially and politically engaged. These dualist theories don't take into account that the formal and informal sector overlap each other to some extent. The probability of a worker switching from formal to informal work is relatively high (45% in Brazil). As well, and this mainly applies to Latin America, if someone in a household is already working formally, it is less necessary for other family members in the household to follow the same path. One family member can already assure services like healthcare to all family members, this is one of the reasons why you find a higher quantity of informal workers in Latin America (Bakers et al, 2018). The structure of the global economy is sometimes seen as a stimulator for the expansion of the informal economy. Various authors have referred to the informal sector as a co-existing system next to the capitalist system, it operates within market mechanisms and capital production. The informal sector can be seen as similar work to that of the formal sector, but then unregulated (Monroy-Ortiz & Valenzuela-Aguilera, 2014).

Ariza & Montes-Rojas (2017) paid attention to the characteristics of the informal sector in Colombian cities. They argue that the size of the informal economy increased due to the conflict that affected Colombia for decades, resulting in forced migration on a big scale. This migration put a lot of pressure on the formal economies of Colombian cities, as they were not able to absorb all newcomers. This resulted in a rise of informal workers throughout Colombia (Ariza & Montes-Rojas, 2017). Formal work on the other hand facilitates migrants to become active in different layers of the society. It provides a number of rights like access to healthcare and has the ability to protect workers. Informality mainly refers to labor, in the sense that it implicates a lack of protection. Implications of informality will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

1.5 Migrant Integration

Similar to the term migration, integration is a controversial term. Integration is a valuable term for this research, as most Venezuelan migrants intend to stay in Colombia, as will be described in the section **Introducing the research sample**. In this section different perspectives of migrant integration are given. An understanding of the term integration is important for the conceptual framework and the further operationalization of this research.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM: 2012) describes integration as: *the process of mutual adaptation between the host society and the migrants themselves, both as individuals and as*

groups. Migrant integration policy frameworks should take into consideration the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, including access to the labour market, health and social services, and education for children and adults. Integration implies a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and their host communities in a common purpose.

Definitions of integration differ strongly, in the sense that authors describe different factors to demonstrate the impact on integration. There is no delineated definition of integration.

Yet, in this thesis the following factors of migrant integration will be elaborated upon: documentation, access to work, housing, healthcare and education. Secondly, the role of social capital and the government are seen as crucial factors that influence the integration of migrants. Documentation should be seen as a condition that permits the accession to work, housing, healthcare and education. Social capital and an active government mainly facilitate the access to these services, which would finally lead to integration.

1.5.1 Access to work

If migrants can access work, they are more likely to become integrated in the new host society. Legal barriers can obstruct working formally and push migrants to the informal sector. If professional experience from the home country is not being recognized, this can negatively influence the integration of migrants (OECD, 2016). Zettel & Raudel (2011) observe that access to work not exclusively counts on legal conditions. Other factors might play a role, like: restrictions concerning entrepreneurship, limitations of creating capital and slow processes of legalizing statuses. Stereotypes and or discrimination may also obstruct the access to work. Positively, social capital, coming from a similar culture, speaking the same language and recognizing professional or educational experience has a positive effect on integration in the host society (Zetter & Ruadel, 2018). Access to work can also boost migrants' self-reliance. Migrants generally desire to become independent of humanitarian assistance. It is important to take into account that the successfulness of including migrants in a host society confided in the strength of the economy of the migrant-receiving country. An unstable economy, with high levels of unemployment, obviously faces more difficulties regarding the absorption of migrants in their labor market (Morrison-Métois & Ruadel, 2017). Irregular migrants face more problems regarding acceding work. In the Netherlands for example, work experience and involvement in social networks positively influences migrants' access to better paid jobs (Gheasi et al, 2014). Abrego (2011) argues that although

irregular Latino migrants are prohibited to stay and work in the United States, integration builds upon different aspects like gender, nationality and educational background.

1.5.2 Access to housing

The majority of Latin America's inhabitants reside in cities. It can offer great opportunities to its residents, but housing can also result in large social inequalities (Klaufus & Ouweneel, 2015). Whether cities can provide good housing to their citizens, is contingent on their size, the strength of the economy, government services and the geographical location. The Washington Consensus, starting from the 1980s onwards, implicated a shift towards neoliberalism, also in Latin American cities. The main result was that the governments' role concerning the provision housing decreased and that the free market, the private sector and civil society started playing a larger role (Gilbert, 2014). This resulted in more informal housing throughout various Latin American cities. Residing in informal houses can affect the integration of migrants. Informal housing often implicates not having ownership and a lack of rights and services. Up to Meth (2014) this could even trigger involvement in criminal activities. Ager & Strang (2008) mentioned the following factors of housing that are necessary for integration: *a range of measures of the physical size, quality and facilities of housing, along with the financial security of tenancies and, where appropriate, ownership* (Ager & Strang, 2008: p.171). Furthermore, legal status is not the most determining factor in acceding housing, factors like social networks and individual decisions are of greater importance. Despite legal restrictions, international migrants have a certain agency to assure certain services like housing (Landau, 2017).

1.5.3 Access to healthcare

Access to healthcare is an important aspect of migrant integration. Access to healthcare is considered a human right that also counts for international migrants. But often this is not the case for migrants and refugees. Different barriers can restrict migrants' access to healthcare. User charges can form a barrier to acceding healthcare, as migrants often do not have the means to pay for these charges. Legal restrictions can also affect migrants' access to healthcare. Undocumented migrants can often only access healthcare in case of emergency.

Separate from these formal barriers there are also some informal barriers: *questions of language, psychology, and socio-cultural factors* (Norredam & Krasnik, 2007: p.48).

Giannoni, Franzini, Masiero (2016) argue that health policies are required to combat health inequalities amongst migrants. The authors conducted a research on the relation between migrant integration and health inequalities in Europe. The main outcome is that problems with migrant integration can negatively influence the health status of migrants, therefore policies are needed.

Integration is a crucial for healthcare, as not including migrants could lead to diseases throughout the migrant population. This in turn could build up to marginalization. Health policies have the power to guarantee equal access to healthcare (Barsanti, 2018). The healthcare system can therefore contribute to equality between migrants and locals, and lead to protection of migrants. Access to healthcare is not exclusively a legal matter: cultural and language aspects, financial limitations and an absence of information can also negatively influence the access to healthcare (idem, 2018). Irregular migrants are generally more at risk, because often they cannot access healthcare services. They are more vulnerable to diseases, mental and physical health issues and often are not up-to-date in regard to their rights on healthcare (De Vito et al, 2016). The access of migrants to healthcare strongly reckons on the local context. Israel for example exclusively provides healthcare to citizens, irregular migrants can barely accede these services, depending on the criticalness of their situation. A number of countries in Europe (Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden) provide irregular migrants with access just in case of emergency. While in other countries like Austria, Hungary and Latvia, irregular migrants have to pay for the full costs of treatment. Migrants' access to healthcare relies upon: (...) *the complicated relationship among local notions of citizenship and "health-related deservingness" and competing logics of the labor market, public health, and human rights* (Fleischman et al, 2015: p.90).

1.5.4 Access to education

Education is an essential aspect of human capital. The prior education, as completed in home countries, is of greatest importance as plenty of migrants don't continue studying in the destination country (De Paola & Brunello, 2016). Migrants' access to education has received more international attention over the last decades, mainly focusing on the idea that

education can lead to empowerment of migrants. Separate from this large international attention, there is still a large gap between natives' and migrants' access to education (Moskal & North, 2017).

1.5.5 Role of social capital

Social relations with other migrants abroad can help to make someone feel at home in the host countries and facilitate access to resources that smoothen the process of integration. Previous notions focused on the influence of social relations on socioeconomic positions, of which Bourdieu referred to as *social capital*. While others described the relations migrants maintain with co-migrants as problematical to integration (Philimore & Wessendorf, 2018). There are different definitions of social capital, but the majority focuses on either one of these aspects: *social networks, civic participation or social cohesion* (Granberry, 2014).

Block and Maclay (2014) argue that different types of social relations can give migrants access to social networks, which in turn can lead to access to the labor market. The so-called *co-ethnic networks* can be a large tool for accessing job opportunities. Nonetheless, migrants without the necessary documentation are highly contingent on the informal job market. Informal businesses are generally excluded from formal societal structures and depend strongly on social relations and social networks. There are different theories on the effect of social networks on access to work. On the one hand some academics argue that social networks can fill the gap of not meeting (legal) requirements to work. Other authors observe that human capital and language possession has a stronger influence than social capital. Recently, more authors see that social capital banks on other characteristics, like: social class and educational background (Gericke et al, 2018). Social capital can also positively influence the access to healthcare, by the means of social and psychological support and stress relieving (Vincens et al, 2018). Glick Schiller & Çağlar (2016) speak of sociabilities- which are described as relationships that provide support, protection, income and a larger quantity of social contacts. This often occurs in case of shared experience, for example of not being able to access certain services. concerning attitudes towards migrants, one could observe that a negative attitude towards migrants can negatively influence the socio-economic integration in the host society (Zimmerman et al, 2009). Social capital or networks don't have to be necessarily created by migrants, organizations can create more regularized networks of migrants. Migrants working in the informal sector are often excluded from mainstream

social, economic and political structures. Some sort of organizational regulation, like day labor work centers, can have a positive influence on how migrants experience social integration. Migrants working in the informal sector, and therefore excluded from formal work, can profit from regularization on the labor market and this therefore can still add up to some social recognition (Visser et al, 2016). The successfulness of this regulation is nonetheless heavily connected with the geographical context and the present opportunities. But, it is important to keep in mind that social networks do not necessarily have to be initiated by migrants themselves, some sort of regulatory organization can have a positive influence on migrant integration.

1.5.6 Role of government

There are various perspectives of how governments worldwide could facilitate the integration of migrants. Penninx (2005) argues that integration policies directly relate to how migrants experience integration themselves. Policies can create a sense of belonging or a sense of exclusion. Thus, when certain integration policies are inexistent, agency becomes more meaningful. Governments also have the capability to create opportunities for migrants, by the facilitation of access to work, housing, healthcare and education. Governments determine the legal conditions under which migrants can accede these services. But, is granting these services a responsibility of governments? The role of governments with respect to legal statuses revolves partly around *deservingness*. Legalizing migrants and equip them with access to certain services holds certain risks. A less strict policy makes it harder to control the influx of people. Another possibility is 'performance-based deservingness', wherein migrants are not judged on their legal status, but rather on their professional background and intentions (Chauvin & Garcés-Masareñas, 2014). Majority of countries (62%) had policies in 2011 that facilitated the integration of migrants in their countries. They see that migrant integration is important for the successfulness of their economies. Governments can undertake different actions to promote the integration of migrants. Legal facilitations is the main contribution, but other support can for example focus on language and cultural training. Furthermore, governments can provide equal access to participation in their society (UN, 2013). Governments have some sort of moral obligation towards migrants in their country. Governments can play a facilitating or restricting role, but integration does

not exclusively rest on national policies. Migrants themselves are able to become active in host societies and by this manner realize integration.

2 Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology used for the fieldwork and further research. The research questions will be discussed first, followed by: conceptual framework, the operationalization, sampling strategy, practical challenges/relationships in the field, bias and limitations and positionality as a researcher. Underlying idea is to give insight in the research process and to reflect on the decisions taken during the research. In order to guide this research, a main research question and accompanying sub-questions have been raised. In-depth, semi-structured, interviews have been conducted with Venezuelan migrants in order to measure the influence of these concepts on integration. There has been chosen to do exclusively in-depth interviews as migration is a highly sensitive topic, which can best be measured through in-depth interviews with enough space and time for elaboration of stories and experiences. In-depth interviews are especially valuable for creating narratives about people's lives (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2015). Surveys are less applicable because they mainly focus on numbers and basic information. Migration is withal topic that should look at the stories behind these numbers. Focus groups have been excluded as migration is a personal matter, conducting interviews in groups might have affected the willingness of interviewees (respondents) to share their experiences freely. The following research questions have been used to guide this research:

Which factors influence the integration process of crisis-escaping Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?

- What were the main reasons for Venezuelans to leave their country and migrate to Medellín?
- Which role do legal statuses play in the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?
- Which personal characteristics determine the access of Venezuelan migrants to work, housing, healthcare and education?
- Which role does social capital or the absence of it play in the integration process of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín?
- How does the local government in Medellín support Venezuelan migrants in the provision of work, housing, education and healthcare?

2.1 Conceptual Framework

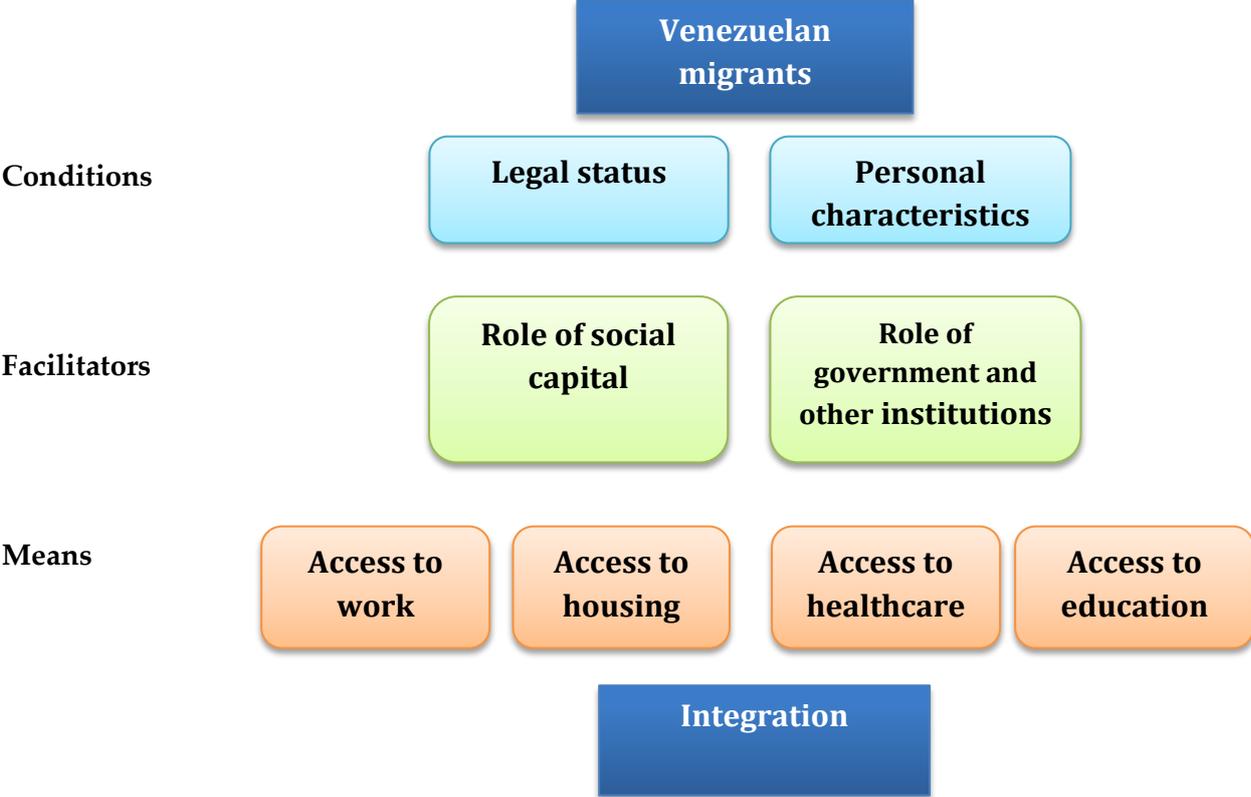


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This Conceptual Framework is based on the framework of Ager & Strang (2008). This framework can be found in **Appendix 2**. The underlying idea is that the factors legal status and personal characteristics are conditions necessary for eventual integration. Legal status determines if work, housing, healthcare and education can be accessed and if integration can take place. If a migrant is irregular for example, thus without the legal requirements to stay in a country, the government’s role decreases as they cannot provide support to migrants that don’t have the documentation needed for inclusion in the society. Other factors like social capital and personal characteristics have the ability fill this gap. Personal characteristics like professional background, attitudes and intention to stay play an important role for further integration.

Social capital and the role of the government should be seen as facilitators of integration. They do not necessarily determine whether migrants can access work, housing, healthcare and education. But, it can nevertheless smoothen or restrict the integration process. These conditions and facilitators can lead to the access to work, housing, healthcare and education

and finally this builds up to the integration of migrants. Integration can also take place if not all conditions, facilitators and means are met. If a migrant is irregular for example, it could still be that social capital and a high level of acceptance could still lead to access to work and housing for example. But in order to integrate, some aspects of the conditions, facilitators and means should be present.

2.2 Operationalization

The concepts, as elaborated upon in the conceptual framework, have to be made measurable through operationalization. The concepts are the factors that influence the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. These concepts have been made measurable through variables that have been connected to an interview guide (**Appendix 1**). The variables have been measured through in-depth interviews.

| Concepts | Variables | Methodology: In-depth interviews |
|--|---|--|
| Legal status | Type of documentation, legal status, implications | Interview questions, raised at the end of the interview to avoid suspicion. |
| Personal characteristics | Age, gender, moment of arrival, professional background, intention to stay in Colombia | Introductory questions interview guide on general information migrants to gather basic information and to comfort the interviewee |
| Social capital | Social contacts with Venezuelans and Colombians, facilitating role social contacts (access to work, housing, health care & education) | Interview questions on relation with other Venezuelans and Colombians, acceptance by local citizens and role of regularized social networks |
| Role of government and other institutions | Opportunities provided by the government, satisfaction with role government, necessities, role of NGO's and other | On the one hand interviews with migrants on the role of the government in their lives. On the other hand secondary data on government's actions and expert |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| | organizations | interview with government official |
| Access to work | Type of work, means of finding work, fastness of finding work, resources, mobility | Interview questions on profession in Venezuela, profession in Medellín and characteristics of current job |
| Access to housing | Type of housing, means of accessing housing, neighborhood, shared or individual apartment | Interview questions on the access to housing and characteristics of housing |
| Access to healthcare | Registration in national health system, health insurance, influence of legal status | On the one hand interview questions on migrants' access to health. On the other hand secondary sources on the national/local policies regarding access to healthcare and an expert interview |
| Access to education | Children primary education, ability to study, ability to validate study experience from Venezuela | Interview questions on the access to education. Second, national policies regarding the recognition of educational experience abroad. |

Table 1: Operationalization

2.3 Sampling strategy & selection of respondents

With regard to sampling strategies, three methods have been applied. First, networks played a great role in searching for respondents. The Facebook group *Venezolanos en Medellín* gave me access to a database of over 34.000 Venezuelans that are currently residing in Medellín. This network was of great importance for my research as it capacitated me to randomly select respondents out of my direct target group. Migrants have been selected in case they left Venezuela after the outbreak of the socioeconomic crisis.

The snowball-method has also been used for selection of interviewees. This mainly flowed out of the network-method. This method played an intermediating role in the sense that it facilitated me to get to know more Venezuelans in Medellín. This method smoothened the

process of selection, as migrants were more likely to participate in an interview after recommendation by a friend or family member.

Third, interviewees have been selected at random by searching for on the streets. This decision was necessary because participant selection through the network and snowball-method was rather time-consuming and not particularly practical. It was also necessary because the majority of interviewees selected by the previous methods were working in the formal sector of Medellín. After the first period of fieldwork, it became clear that the vast majority of Venezuelan migrants is working in the informal sector, chiefly as street vendors. In order to provide a more representative overview of the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín, it was necessary to use this method as well.

In total 42 interviews have been conducted during the field research in Medellín. From this group, 38 interviews have been done with migrants and 4 interviews have been conducted with experts. These expert interviews were necessary to provide more in-depth knowledge on the current migratory situation in Medellín and to give a certain context that the interviewees could not provide. The content of these expert interviews will be explained in the next paragraph on **Relations in the field**.

2.4 Practical challenges in the field

Based on the full period of field research I could say that some practical problems took place. Especially regarding participant selection for the interviews. In general there are a lot of Venezuelan migrants to be found in Medellín. A multitude of them work in the informal sector, so many street vendors are Venezuelan. Initially I did not conduct interviews on the streets because I thought it would be difficult to start an interview right on the street. Primarily because the interviews are recorded, which is often not very secure on the streets. Secondly because the length of the interview (45-60 minutes on average) makes it more difficult to conduct an interview spontaneously. Thus, in the initial phase of the fieldwork in Medellín interviews were planned beforehand. As mentioned before, in the beginning I found interviewees by using the Facebook group *Venezolanos en Medellín*. Initially I wrote private messages to members of this group, but after a while I noticed that few people responded. This made me decide to post an announcement in the group, in which I presented myself, the objective of the research and asked them to participate in an interview.

Luckily, numerous interested Venezuelans wrote me after this announcement (about 35). This permitted me to create a schedule consisting of the form of contact we had and the plans to meet up for an interview. Initially this worked very well. Yet, at some point I noticed that often respondents did or not arrive or cancelled last-minute. The interviews I had were of great value, also because a lot of respondents were willing to help me by presenting other interested Venezuelans. What I learned from this is that it is better to first get to know someone better before conducting an interview. The fact that respondents cancelled or did not arrive mainly had to do with the fact that there was not enough trust from both sides, or that too little information was given beforehand. The second phase of the field research I changed the way of approaching interviewees. I did this by searching for interviewees on public places and to conduct the interviews directly, without an appointment beforehand. This accredited me to present myself on location and to do more interviews per day. This also enabled me to select participants on location, before an interview I could ask some general questions just to know someone better. Selecting participants on public spaces also endowed me to approach certain migrants that are not using online platforms like *Venezolanos en Medellín* and often face more problems in regard to integration in Medellín. The disadvantage of conducting interviews on the streets was that interviews were shorter, as migrants were often working during the interviews. They took the time to participate in the interview, but sometimes customers interrupted the interview. This might have had a negative influence on the quality of the interviews. But interviewing migrants this way was necessary to include a rather vulnerable group, which takes up a large percentage of Venezuelan migrants present in Medellín.

Beforehand I expected Venezuelan migrants to be in miserable situations in Medellín. Based on the conducted interviews I could conclude that that is not always the case. The legal status seemed of great importance for integration. I decided to pay more attention to legal statuses and to focus more on the informal character of Venezuelan workers.

Another obstacle was finding the right place to meet. I decided to not do interviews in respondents' houses due to security reasons. In general I tried to meet at public places like universities, parks, bars, restaurants and outside on the streets. Often respondents live far away, sometimes in zones known as rather dangerous. Respondents also often do not have the money and time to travel to the place where I live, so I tried to compensate them by

visiting them in their own neighborhood. The result is that respondents and me included were often worried beforehand, as we both did not know what the intentions were of the other person. Anyhow, this tensed situation disappeared as soon as the interview started, so it did not affect the research in a negative manner. Security affected the data collection in the sense that sometimes I refused to do an interview due to security reasons. This might have been some valuable data which could have led to interesting insights. Notwithstanding, my own security was, and should be, of greater importance than conducting an interesting interview.

I also noticed that respondents were sometimes surprised to see me, as they did not expect a Dutch, blond guy doing a research about Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. Luckily my level of Spanish is good enough to gain more trust and to bridge this gap and to make people feel more free to talk. My way of approaching them online, made some people feel suspicious beforehand. One interviewee once did not arrive at our meeting. Afterwards she told me she was afraid because she did not know me and she was not sure of my intentions. Asking people directly to participate on the streets took away this suspicion.

2.5 The relations in the field

The first period of fieldwork was dedicated to interviews with migrants. These interviews were interesting and necessary, but at some moment a point of saturation was reached. I felt that some expert interviews with more background on the situation were needed in order to provide a more profound analysis of the current situation in Medellín. Firstly, I met Alfredo Sanchez through the announcement I posted on *Venezolanos en Medellín*. Sánchez is working as president of Emprecolven, a NGO that focuses on the stimulation of Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Medellín. Obviously this raised my interest, so I decided to conduct an interview exclusively directed to him. At the end of the interview I asked him if there were some similar organizations that seek to support Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. Sadly, the answer was not that many. Nonetheless, he provided me with some valuable contacts that seemed to be of great importance for the research and opened up some previously closed doors. The first and most valuable contact was Toni Vitola. Vitola was working as an opposition leader in Venezuela for VoluntadPopular. In 2014 he played a big role in the large-scale demonstrations against the regime in Venezuela. At some point the government was looking for him, he was considered as an enemy of the regime. Vitola had two options:

apply for asylum in the United States or migrate to another Latin American country. He decided the latter, he moved to Medellín so he would not be too far away from his family and friends and so he could still follow and maybe influence the developments in Venezuela. Initially he launched a local fraction of Voluntad Popular, mainly pointed at mobilizing Venezuelans in Medellín against Maduro and his government. Secondly, Vitola became vicepresident of Colvenz. This NGO sees the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia as their main objective. His experience with this topic made that he had a lot of valuable contacts for the research, which he was willing to share with me. The most important contacts were mainly working as government officials. Additionally, he connected me to other people that worked at Colvenz. Like Beatriz Suarez, working at the health department of Colvenz, where she mainly focuses on providing Venezuelans with information on how to access healthcare services in Medellín. The fourth expert interview was held with Carlos Arcila, Subdirector Human Rights at the local government of Medellín. This interview took place at the City Hall of Medellín and was meant to present the results of my research and to talk about the stance of the Colombian government towards Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

Separate from facilitating these interviews, Vitola also supported me throughout the research process. He served me with background information and invited me for different events that suited the topic of the research. By this way I visited a congress on Venezuela's social and political context which led to interesting insights.

Throughout the research process these contacts played a large role, as they had the capability to connect me to other groups of interviewees that would have been inaccessible without them. Separate from the expert interviews mentioned above, relationships with interviewees were of great importance indeed. Especially at the beginning they functioned as an opportunity to meet more Venezuelans. I stayed in touch with some interviewees; partly because of mutual interest and in other cases because I had some additional questions or remarks. Overall I could conclude that the interviewees were friendly and willing to support me, which was expressed in the often-heard phrase *A la orden*, which is a very common phrase not only in Colombia but also in Venezuela. I experienced this declaration of them stating they are 'at your service' as a well-meant saying, which did not lead to disappointments when I truly needed something.

2.6 Bias & Limitations of research

During the fieldwork in Medellín some bias might have taken place. Primarily because there have been more interviews with men (29) than women (9). This is due to the fact that the majority of interviews have been conducted with migrants working as street vendors. It might be that there are relatively more men working on the street than women. This might create some sort of bias, but looking at informal work places in Medellín you can see that the majority of informal workers are male.

The second bias might be the fact that there have been less interviews with migrants working formally (6) than migrants working informally (32). Initially, participants for the interviews were selected by the use of the facebook group *Venezolanos en Medellín*. After completion of these first interviews it became clear that most of these migrants were working formally. Although, during the first weeks of fieldwork I noticed through Colombian news messages and migration numbers that the majority of Venezuelan migrants are working in the informal sector of Medellín. In order to provide a more representative image of Venezuelan migrants, I decided to put more emphasis on informal rather than formal workers. The focus on interviews with informal migrants were necessary to give a more representative overview of the current situation in Medellín.

Another limitation of this research is the sensitivity of the topic. Venezuelan migrants left their home country due to the crisis, leaving their family and friends behind. This obviously evokes emotions, which might implicate that some migrants prefer to not talk about painful experiences. This might lead to a bias because possibly some valuable information is missing, due to the sensitivity of the topic.

3 Thematic and geographical context

This section provides an overview of the relevant national and local context of Colombia and Medellín. Understanding this context provides an important overview of the grounds on which migration of Venezuelan migrants is built.

3.1 Colombia

Colombia has a population number of 48.6 million people. Statistics show some improvements that have taken place over the last years in Colombia. Life expectancy at birth increased exponentially over the last decade, leading to a number of 74.1 years in 2016.

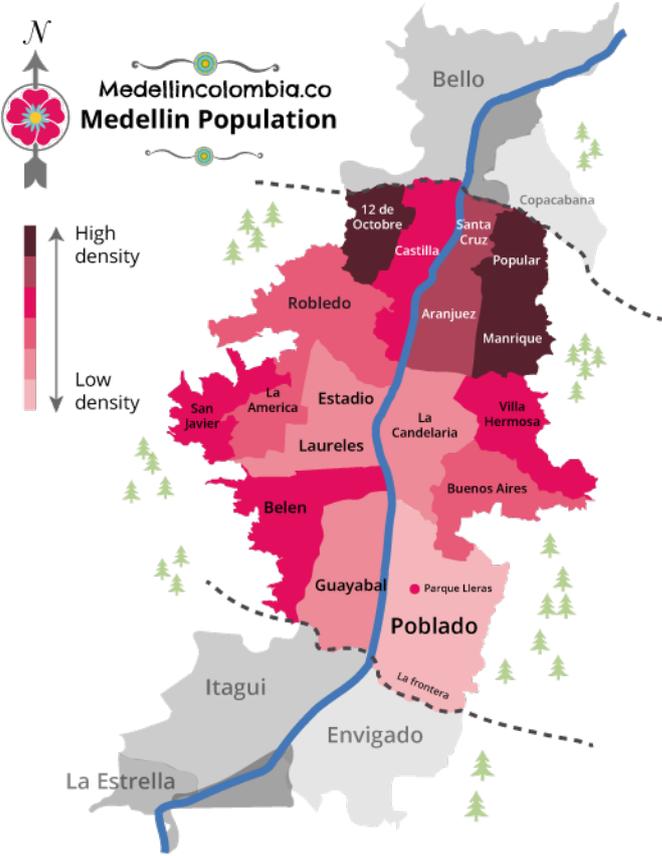
Financially speaking, improvements have been made due to both increased remittances as foreign direct investments. On the negative side, the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines slightly increased to a total of 28% of Colombia's total population. The GNI per capita, the gross national product converted to American dollars, decreased from 7130 to 6310 dollar (World Bank, 2018). Interesting to mention as well is that Colombia has a large quantity of informal employment. The percentage decreased from 62.4% in 2010 to 56.7% in 2016, this number is still relatively high compared to other countries (World Bank, 2018). This number has to be taken into consideration seen the fact that Venezuelan migrants are primarily working in the informal sector.

Colombia has a long tradition of migration. Masses of Colombians fled their country during recent decades, due to conflict and economic malaise. In total, 1.3 million Colombians (4.7% of total population) live abroad, of which many reside in the United States or Venezuela. At the same time, migration to Colombia has generally been very low (OECD, 2009). Yet, Colombia knows a very high number of internally displaced persons, about 7.3 million are registered as such. This high amount is the result of a civil war that prevailed over half a century (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). The relative lack of experience with receiving migrants has to be taken into account.

The national government has a large influence on the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Recently, elections took place in Colombia. Iván Duque, leader of Centro Democrático won the elections and will commence his presidency on the 7th of august 2018. He strongly rejects Maduro's policies and is a firm opponent of socialism. Furthermore, Duque proposed to create a multilateral cooperation fund that should provide humanitarian

assistance to Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. He also proposed to invest millions of dollars in granting migrants with housing, alimentation, education and healthcare (El Espectador, 2018). On the other hand, he has also been criticized by a fair share of the population because of his ties with former president Uribe. A large quantity of Colombians are fed up with the traditional right-wing parties that exercised power over Colombia for the last couple of decades. These elections left-wing parties got rather popular, but Duque’s right-wing party did win the elections in the end.

3.2 Medellín



Medellín is the capital of the province Antioquia and is known as the second largest city in Colombia, after the country’s capital Bogotá. The city is located in El Valle de Aburrá, surrounded by two mountain ranges. Medellín has about 2.5 million inhabitants (Ferrari et al, 2018). As **Figure 2** shows, the city is officially seen as the area between the two lines. But most citizens see the areas outside of the lines also as part of the City.

Figure 2: Population density Medellín

Neighborhoods are linked to certain strata (1-6). These strata determine the amount of taxes citizens have to pay for public services. The lower the quality of live in neighborhoods, the lower the strata (**Appendix 3**). Lower ranked neighborhoods are entitled to more social support and subsidies, for example through the means of free access to healthcare (idem, 2018). Comunas, located on top of the mountain ranges, fall under strata 1, while El Poblado and other neighborhoods in the south of the city are ranked with strata 5 or higher.

Medellín has a relatively young population, 71.2% falls within the age category of 15 to 64 years old. The unemployment rate reached 8.7% by the end of 2017. Concerning ethnicities in Medellín, the vast majority (84%) is considered as being white or mestizo. Afro-Colombians make up another 10.4% of the population (World Population Review, 2018).

For years, Medellín has been associated with high crime rates and international drug trade. Pablo Escobar was the famous drug lord of the Medellín cartel, that became the leading cartel at the beginning of the 1980s. This illegal drug trade led to an accumulation of problems, resulting in a chaotic situation characterized by high rates of violence (Moncada, 2016). This chaotic situation led to high levels of inequality and exclusion, which is still visible in Medellín's geography today. El Poblado for example is the Medellín wealthiest neighborhood, characterized by modern shopping malls, private universities and high numbers of tourists. On the other hand, various *Comunas* often lack these facilities and are characterized by poverty and inequality (Maclean, 2015).

The elimination of the Medellín cartel opened up opportunities for improvements throughout the city. The person responsible for a large transformation is Medellín's former mayor Sergio Fajardo. He won the elections in 2003 with the objective to make Medellín 'the best educated' amongst others. Fajardo intended to do so by building public parks, schools and libraries, especially in the remotest areas of the city. This was the first time that the government showed their presence in these neighborhoods, after decades of exclusion and violence (Hylton, 2007).



Figure 3: Metrocable Medellín

The underlying idea behind these investments was Social Urbanism, Sotomayor describes it as follows: *Social urbanism is also characterized by modern urban design and flashy architectural statements, as the symbolic capacity of architecture is evoked to challenge old stigmas associated with violence in spaces of previous regulation* (Sotomayor, 2015: p.374). The most famous investments were the construction of a metro cable and an electric escalator in the former most remotest areas of the city. These investments included some previously excluded citizens.

Improvements have been made, which led to a spectacular decrease of crime rates and higher living standards throughout the city. Although, there still exist a lot of inequalities between different groups and neighborhoods, leaving some citizens in vulnerable situations. The future must prove whether the city has the capacity to receive a rather high amount of Venezuelan migrants.

Recently a census has been executed by the Colombian government, this is a large-scale research on the amount and characteristics of irregular Venezuelan migrants present in Colombia. Undocumented migrants have been invited to register themselves at local government offices spread all over the nation. Initially it was meant to get a better overview of the amount and characteristics of irregular Venezuelan migrants present in Colombia. But, recently the Colombian government explained to use the census as a way to give a PEP (permission) to irregular migrants, furnishing them with access to the labor market, healthcare and the educational system (Migración Colombia, 2018). This data shall be used as background information, in order to see if data on the research sample matches the larger population.

The census has shown that 442.462 registered irregular migrants are currently residing in Colombia. The largest share of Venezuelans are living in the province Norte de Santander, followed by La Guajira (see **Appendix 4.2**). The high amount of Venezuelans in these regions is not weird seen the fact that they are located next to the Venezuelan border. A lot of migrants stay temporarily around the border zones in order to make some money and to continue their journey to other cities where they expect to find more opportunities. Interestingly, 106.389 Venezuelans have Colombian family members, of which 59.366 are currently living together with them in Colombia (RAMV, 2018). Other outcomes of the census will be discussed throughout the following section on the research sample and in the main sections on access to work, housing, healthcare and education.

4 Introducing the research sample

This first section provides an overview of the research sample. First, some general information on migrants will be presented in order to become familiar with this group. Migrants are referred to as *interviewees* or *respondents* in case it involves data of migrants that participated in one of the in-depth interviews. The numbers behind certain quotes refer to the chronology of the conducted interviews. The interviews held with Venezuelan migrants focused on a couple of themes, which will be discussed throughout this section. The second section focuses mainly on the access of Venezuelan migrants to work, housing, healthcare and education. The third section goes deeper into the role of social capital and the Colombian government in the facilitation of integration in Medellín.

4.1 Research sample

In total 38 interviews have been conducted with Venezuelan migrants in Medellín, whereof 9 women and 29 men. **Figure 4** shows that the majority of interviewees have an age between 21 and 30 years old, a bit more than 70% of the interviewees are younger than 30 years old. An explanation for this relatively high number might be the fact that several young interviewees leave Venezuela in order to support their families financially.

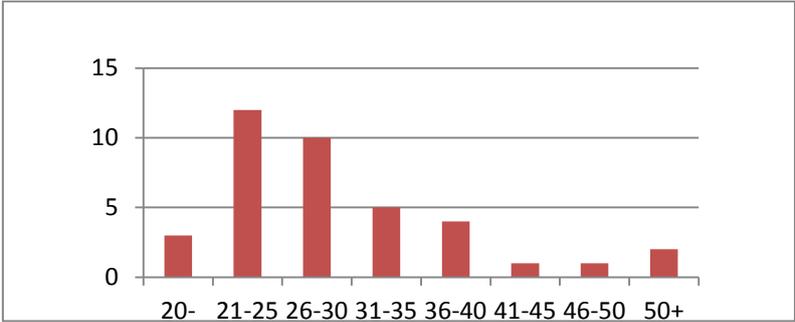


Figure 4: Interviewees' age categories

Taking a closer look at this group (younger than 30 years) shows that just 1 out of the 27 interviewees arrived in Medellín with one or two of their parents, the rest arrived without their parents. This is not weird seen the fact that many interviewees arrived with other family members, often about the same age, or friends; this happened in 14 of the 27 cases. Just 15 interviewees arrived alone in Medellín. This image gets partly confirmed by the census: by far the largest group, 161.986 migrants, migrated to Colombia without any other

family members (RAMV, 2018). This number does exclusively focus on irregular migrants, thus a large group of migrants is not included, but it does provide a rather complete overview as not a few migrants participated in the census.

Just 15.7% of interviewees are married, while 16 interviewees have one or more children. Just 6 out of the 16 interviewees migrated to Medellín together with their children. Ten interviewees migrated to Medellín without their children. Interesting to mention as well is that just 13,2% of the interviewees in Medellín knew the city before arrival, a multitude of them announced that they have never left Venezuela in their lives. Not knowing a city or country before migrating can affect the successfulness of integration in the host society.

4.2 Migrants’ background



Figure 5: Background interviewees

Figure 5 presents an overview of where the Venezuelan interviewees used to live in Venezuela before they migrated to Medellín. Most interviewees (11) were living in Maracaibo, relatively nearby the Colombian border. Another large group (10) found themselves living in Caracas, Venezuela’s capital. Barquisimeto, Venezuela’s fourth largest city, counts for 5 interviewees. As the map shows, most interviewees lived in the coastal areas, with some small exceptions. Just two interviewees were living in the border area near Cúcuta and one interviewee was living in the Bolivar-state, on the far east side of the

country. Additionally it is visible that the majority of interviewees were living in Venezuela's cities with the largest population: Caracas, Maracaibo and Barquisimeto. The census presents a comparable overview of Venezuelan migrants' background (**Appendix 4.1**)

4.3 Preference for Medellín

It is of great importance to look at interviewees' considerations for choosing specifically for Medellín. As stated before, a rather small percentage of interviewees knew the city before migrating. Not-knowing Medellín is not a reason to not choose for the city. Before migrating, interviewees did research on the characteristics of the city. They talk to friends and family that are already familiar with the city, and gather information on the image of the city. Social platforms like Facebook play an important role in this gathering of information. Medellín is not the top-destination for Venezuelan migrants: the border zones, Bogotá and Barranquilla received more Venezuelan migrants over the past few years (**Appendix 4.2**). Thus, Medellín needs to have some characteristics that make this city a more favourable destination for migration than others. Interviewees mentioned that the first motivation to choose for Medellín was the distance. Some interviewees mentioned Colombia as a good option because it enables them firstly to make a living, to send some remittances back home and at the same time being able to return. A young interviewee explained: *I chose Medellín for the job opportunities, but also because of the people. I would like to stay in Medellín for a longer period. The short distance to Venezuela enables me to visit my home country in case of emergency or for in case I want to return permanently* (15).

An often-heard argument in favour of Medellín was the pleasant climate characterized by heaps of sunny hours and cooler nights. Cities in the north of Colombia, like Cartagena and Barranquilla, are often criticized because of the permanent heat that is sometimes described as unbearable. Some specific city-characteristics are mentioned as well, like the well-functioning public transport system. Medellín has a relatively new metro system and metrocabes connecting remote areas to the central zones of the cities, which removes some pressure from transport by car. There are still traffic jams, especially during rush hours, but the transport situation is a lot less congested in comparison to other large Latin American cities. City-characteristics are not always the main drivers to migrate. Medellín was also often preferred because of the presence of family members that were already living in the

city: *I went to Medellín because I already had a nephew living here. He offered me his place to stay and helped me finding a job. Now I work as a street vendor, selling chocolates in buses (30).* Another important reason is citizenship: a large quantity of Venezuelans have Colombian citizenship which empowers them to integrate easier than in other Latin American countries.

4.4 Moment of arrival

As **Figure 6 & 7** show, the number of Venezuelan migrants and interviewees increased through time. In the beginning of 2015 just one interviewee migrated to Medellín, which did not have that much to do with the socioeconomic crisis in Venezuela. His motivation to leave Venezuela was mainly for a new employment option, as he was able to transfer his own clothing brand to Medellín. The number of interviewees increased simultaneously with the worsening of the crisis in Venezuela. The vast majority (29) interviewees fled since the beginning of 2017 up until very recently. There is a clear trend in time visible that shows that basic needs gain a more prominent position in interviewees’ motivations to leave Venezuela. The census also shows a rapid increase of Venezuelan migrants, with 2018 as the year with the highest numbers.

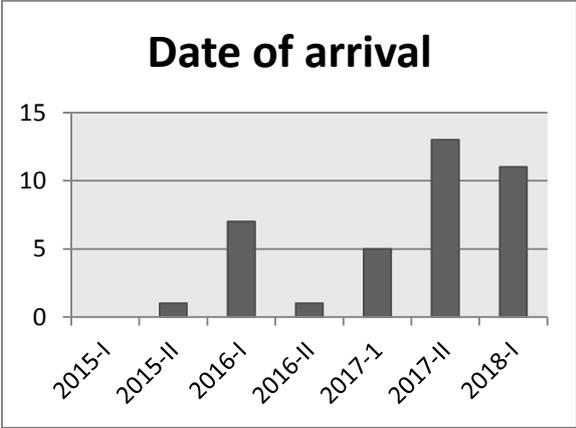


Figure 6: Number of interviewees

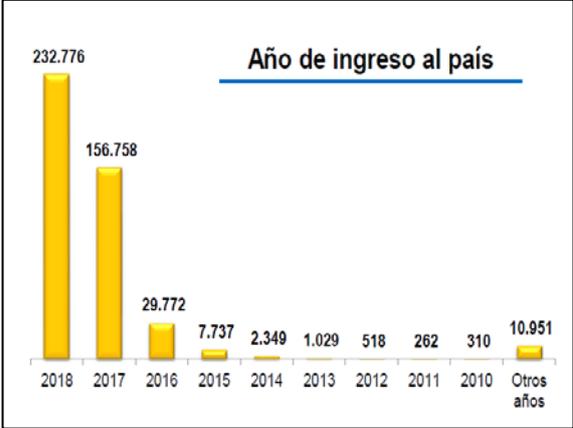


Figure 7: Date of arrival (census)

4.5 Motivations to leave Venezuela

The beginning of 2016 marked the moment on which all interviewees explained to leave due to the crisis in Venezuela, although with some different perspectives. Several argued that a lack of money, food and medicines were the main reasons to leave Venezuela. Not being able to sustain their families in Venezuela is another often-heard reason. All interviewees are currently sending remittances to family in Venezuela, or are planning to do so anytime soon

when they can afford it. The height of the remittances varies, but interviewees mentioned that remittances are considered as a large economic contribution, although not sufficient for living a wealthy life without preoccupations. The economic situation in Venezuela is the most-frequent heard motivation to leave. Interviewees mentioned various examples to describe the critical economic situation in Venezuela: *At the moment you can buy one kilogram of chicken from one month salary. Buying a pair of shoes in Venezuela equals one month of working for me. But, a person earning minimum wage has to work about half a year to buy one pair of shoes* (22). The economic situation is also related to the lack of food: *In Venezuela I had to wait 8-10 hours in line to see if there was food. Before I came here I did not eat meat in two months because it was unavailable, the first thing I did in Medellin was eat meat* (17). Getting access to cash money is also a restricting factor in Venezuela, interviewee (19) noticed that there were huge waiting lines in front of the cash machines in Maracaibo.

Maduro and his predecessor Chávez are often perceived as the causers for the deteriorated socioeconomic situation in the country. The political situation back in Venezuela is one of the main reason for the interviewees to migrate to Colombia. Interviewee 10 expressed the situation as follows:

15 years ago I went to Miami. Waiting in line to enter the airplane I made a friend, she invited me to have lunch in Miami together. The cashier, a Cuban lady, heard us talking and asked: are you guys Venezuelans? With some doubts I said yes. The lady told us: watch out for Chávez, this is exactly how Fidel started. Me and my friend looked at each other; thinking this is the typical Cuban that fled their country, complaining about everything. I told her: Venezuela is not like Cuba. Venezuela is not an island, we have petroleum. We said: that is never going to happen. Today, she is still living in Miami and I left my country and I am living in Medellín. Why do I tell you all this? To show that no Venezuelan could ever imagine that we would reach the point of our current situation (10).

This quote is important because it acknowledges that Venezuelans did not foresee the outbreak of the current crisis; also because the situation was relatively stable until 2014. Inflation had not reached very high levels and salaries were sufficient to make a living. This also came as a surprise because Venezuela used to be one of Latin America's wealthiest countries with the highest standards of living, expressed in the fact that masses of Latin Americans migrated to Venezuela in order to find better opportunities. Interviewee 5 mentioned the lack of financial freedom: *I spent two years without going to the cinema, without buying clothes and without eating in a restaurant* (5). She left the country because she noticed

that every new year she could buy less with her salary. If she was decided to stay, this implicated that everyone in her family would suffer from hunger, but if she would leave, this could lead to an improved situation for both herself as for her family members in Venezuela. Few interviewees could be labelled as political refugees, although they are not recognized as such. Interviewee 2 was active as a *guarimbero*, a group of Venezuelans protesters that fight against the government of Maduro. These protests are not accepted by Maduro, so participants find themselves in a risky situation. In August 2017 government representatives showed up in front of his house and gave him a ultimatum. He had to leave the country within ten days, otherwise measurements would have been taken. Toni Vitola, as mentioned before, found himself in a similar situation and also had to leave the country due to political reasons. Vitola could have opted for asylum application in the United States, but he decided to migrate to Colombia due to his double nationality.

Furthermore, 8 interviewees mention the insecurity as a motivation to leave Venezuela. Interviewee 16 recognized that currently homicides are very common in Venezuela, spreading nation-wide fear throughout the country. Interviewee 22, former resident of Caracas, explained that around 8 o'clock at night streets were desolated in the capital. Interviewee 31 argues that the insecurity is a by-product of the deteriorating economic situation in the country, if people cannot make enough money to even eat, they decide to rob people on the streets.

4.6 Intention to stay in Colombia and or return to Venezuela

Generally, interviewees are intending to stay in Medellín. Main motivations to stay are economic stability, friendly local people and the pleasant climate. Also the short distance to Venezuela is mentioned as a reason to stay in Medellín, migrating to countries like Peru or Chile would complicate short visits to Venezuela in case of emergency. Anyhow, there are some exceptions of interviewees that are planning to migrate to Peru, higher salaries and less requirements regarding documentation are mentioned as the main motivations to move there (21,23,32,34). Interviewee 2 argued that the Venezuelans that migrate to Colombia are well-aware of the fact that 'they are not going to make it' in Colombia. For a higher quality of life migrants need to migrate to Chile in his opinion. He will commence his journey to Chile in the near future, just like interviewee 9 and 24.

This picture gets confirmed by an official census, executed by Migration Colombia (RAMV, 2018). The results show that 395.594 (out of the 442.462 registered migrants) are intending to stay in Colombia, from which 369.506 intend to stay for a period longer than one year. Surprisingly, the official numbers (census) of migrants that are intending to return to Venezuela is rather low. Up to the census, just 38.214 migrants are intending to return to Venezuela in the short or long run. This number does not match with the explanations heard from the interviewees. All interviewees are planning to return at some point, as soon as the situation in Venezuela improves. Interviewees had no concrete plans to return anytime soon, but all of them are willing to give their home country another chance. An explanation of this low number in the census might be that the migrants that registered themselves were hoping for a permission to stay legally within the country, they are afraid that stating differently might hold implications like deportation.

4.7 Legal documentation

In order to understand how the integration of Venezuelan migrants works, different types of documentations have to be discussed. This is because integration of Venezuelan migrants strongly depends on the type of documentation they possess in Colombia. Firstly, because there are a lot of irregular migrants in Medellín and in Colombia as a whole. This lack of documentation holds large implications for the integration process, because illegal migrants cannot accede formal jobs and healthcare services amongst others. Secondly, there are a lot of Venezuelans with a double nationality. Venezuelan migrants with Colombian citizenship are free to live and work legally in Colombia, just like any other Colombian citizen. The most important types of documents will be highlighted in this paragraph, as it is impossible to discuss all types of legal documentation. **Figure 5** presents an overview of the documentation that interviewees possess in Medellín.

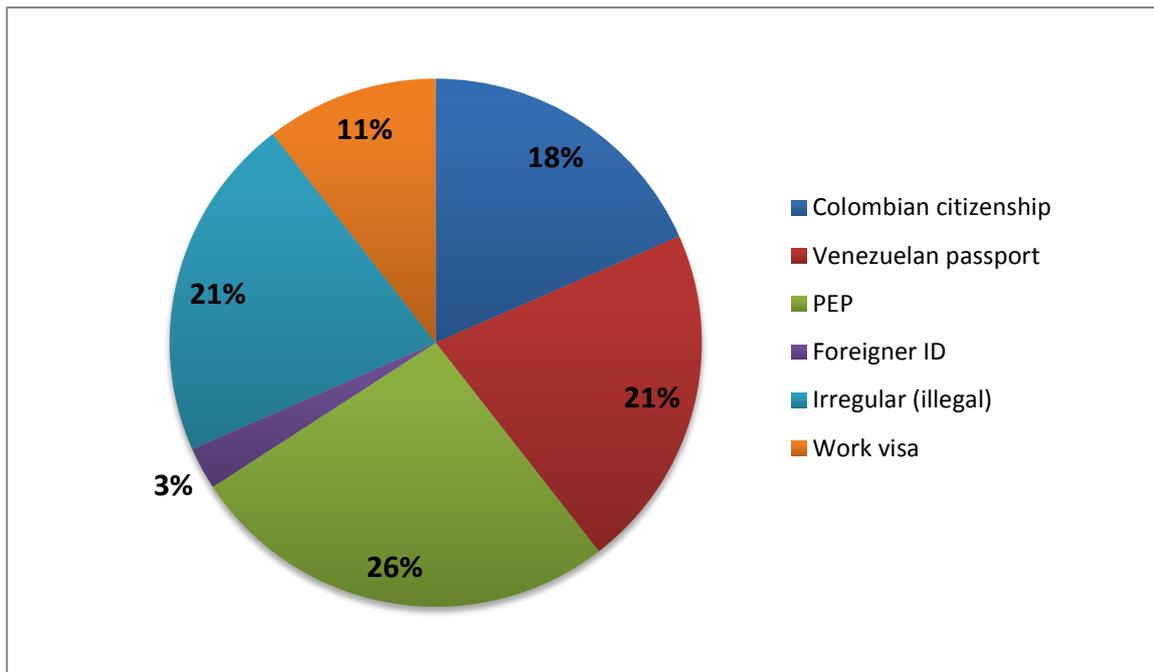


Figure 8: Documentation of interviewees in Medellín

4.7.1 PEP

As the figure shows, 26% of respondents possess a document called PEP (Special Permission of Permanence). So far there have been two moments in which Venezuelan migrants were able to obtain this type of documentation. The first documents were handed over to Venezuelan migrants in Colombia that entered the country before the 28th of June 2017; in order to obtain this document they were obliged to register themselves before the 31th of October 2017. The second moment initiated on the 2nd of February 2018 and was valid until 7th of June 2018. Requirements for this documents are: entering the country through an official migration control with a stamped passport and not having judicial backgrounds or deportation measures (Migration Colombia, 2018). This document allows Venezuelan migrants to stay legally in the country for 90 days, extendable up to a maximum period of 2 years. PEP authorized migrants to work in the formal sector, study and accede healthcare services. This does create various opportunities for Venezuelan migrants that want to become more integrated in Colombia. Nevertheless, some interviewees also criticized the document as some employers refuse to accept this document as a valid way to accede formal jobs.

4.7.2 Venezuelan passport

The second largest group, together with irregular migrants, are the interviewees that arrive with a Venezuelan passport. A Venezuelan passport permits people to stay in Colombia for a period of 90 days, extendable against a certain fee. Entering the country with just a stamped Venezuelan passport implicates that you are perceived as a tourist, which restricts one from working formally, accede healthcare and state services. Venezuelans entering Colombia with just a passport do look for these opportunities, but their legal status withholds them from doing so. Working in the informal sector is often a solution to make a living in Colombia without the required documentation. In regard to opportunities in the country, having a Venezuelan passport almost equals the situation of irregular migrants, as they neither can access services administered by the Colombian government. A Venezuelan passport permits migrants to obtain a PEP, which in turn opens up more opportunities.

4.7.3 Irregular migrants

Large numbers of Venezuelan migrants enter Colombia irregularly (see **Theoretical Framework**). Irregular migrants do not meet the legal requirements to stay or work in Colombia. This does not mean that migrants are not willing to take that risk. Many interviewees did not have a Venezuelan passport in their home country, due to difficulties of obtaining a passport at the moment. The Venezuelan governments is demanding a large sum of money for provision of a Venezuelan passport, money barely someone possesses due to the economic crisis. Provision of passports can additionally take up a very long time, some interviewees even mentioned waiting times up to a period of one year or longer. Other often-heard stories are that the website that facilitates the provision of passport was not working and that paper was unavailable for a large period of time in Venezuela. Entering undocumented implicates that migrants do not have any right concerning access to work, housing, education or healthcare.

4.7.4 Colombian citizenship

Another large group of Venezuelan migrants had the luck to obtain Colombian citizenship. Numbers of the amount of Venezuelans with double nationality vary. According to the president of Emprecolven, a NGO that stimulates Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Medellín,

about 40% of Venezuelan migrants have a double nationality. Colombian citizenship can be obtained in case migrants have parents with Colombian citizenship or in case they obtained Colombian citizenship in the past. It is important to take into account that a large group of Venezuelans are return migrants. A lot of migrants left Colombia, especially in the 1980s, and are now returning due to the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. Having Colombian citizenship signifies that they have the same rights as any other Colombian, meaning that they can work in the formal sector, have voting rights and can access healthcare and education. This legal status opens up doors which would have been closed in case of other types of documentation.

4.7.5 Visa

There are various types of visas available for Venezuelan migrants. There were just 4 interviewees that obtained a visa, this has to do with the fact that it is rather difficult to obtain one. A lot of documents are required and the company contracting you has to put a lot of effort in providing all documents, which is for some employers a reason to not start this procedure. A visa normally allows you to just work in the company that contracted you. This happened in the case of Interviewee 10 for example, who owns his own store in a commercial centre in Medellín. Interviewee 11 has been living in Medellín for a couple of years with a visa, which empowers him to own his own store focused on video games. After completion of 5 years residence in Medellín, he should be able to apply for Colombian citizenship. Positively, a visa does provide migrants with access to work, healthcare and education. Another interviewee (19) got contracted by a language school, with just a Venezuelan passport. The company supported her by furnishing all the legal requirements for obtaining a visa. There are some exceptions of migrants with visas, but the vast majority enters Colombia with a Venezuelan passport or has the luck to obtain a PEP.

4.7.6 Foreigner ID

A foreigner ID (Cédula de Extranjería) can be obtained after registering of a visa. It is a national identification card meant for foreigners working and living in Colombia (Migration Colombia). Currently, few interviewees have this foreigner ID due to the difficulty of obtaining a visa, which implicates that is also difficult to obtain a foreigner ID.

5 Access to work

Regarding integration, access to work is perceived as the most influential factor. In order to become integrated into a new city or country, employment is required. As a migrant it can be complicated to get access to work, due to various reasons. This research focuses on different aspects of work, which will be discussed throughout this section. This section first elaborates on interviewees' labor market position in Venezuela and then goes deeper into their current labor market position in Medellín.

5.1 Labor market position in Venezuela

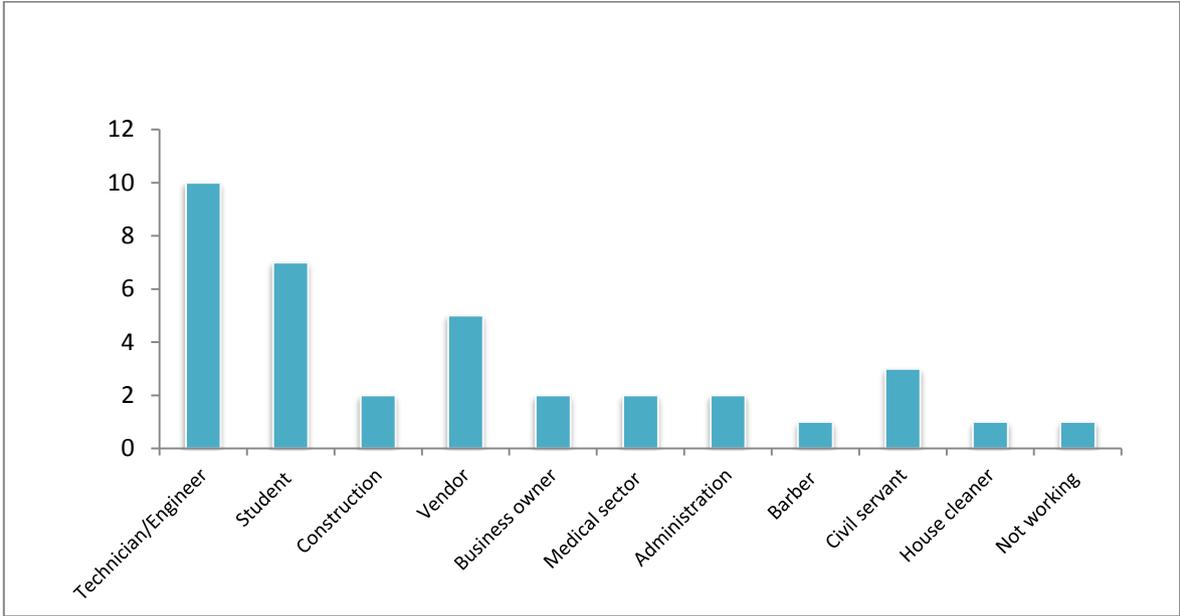


Figure 9: Labor market position in Venezuela (number of interviewees)

Let's first look at the former labor market position interviewees had in Venezuela. **Figure 9** shows that some interviewees practiced jobs in Venezuela that require a higher level of education, especially the technicians/engineers and medical workers (12). Another considerable group of interviewees (7) were studying in Venezuela, all of them were at the same time working during their studies. It is clearly visible that except for one interviewee all interviewees were working in Venezuela. Thus, a lack of job opportunities or educational background was definitely not one of the reasons to migrate for the interviewees, but rather the hyperinflation and the lack of food. From this group, 10 interviewees were previously working as a technician or as an engineer. Interviewee 8 was working as a petroleum engineer for example. When Venezuela's economy was more stable, his job furnished him

with enough money to live a wealthy life and to sustain himself and his children. When the situation worsened, his salary was not sufficient to meet the basic needs, which made him decide to leave his home country. In Medellín he would have preferred to continue his career as a petroleum engineer, but the lack of opportunities in Colombia disabled him to do this.

As **Figure 9** shows, the other interviewees practice a wide variety of professions: medical workers, civil servants, business owners, vendors and construction amongst others form part of this group. Interviewees were content with their profession and salaries in Venezuela, until the economic situation deteriorated drastically.

5.2 Current labor market position in Medellín

In this paragraph on the current labor market positions, a distinction has been made between formal and informal work. This distinction is being made because a large share of Venezuelan interviewees work in the informal sector. Toni Vitola (president Colvenz) explained that 40% of all work in Medellín takes place in the informal sector (Interview Toni Vitola). The census has shown that at the moment 104.614 irregular migrants that participated in the census are currently working in the informal sector, while just 3.326 migrants work formally (RAMV, 2018).

Regarding informal work, 23 interviewees are working as a street vendors in Medellín and 6 interviewees are doing other types of informal work. The street vendors mainly sell food, pens, coffee or jewelry. Street vendors are working all around the city, mainly in front of metro stations. Medellín knows a well-integrated public transport system, which is used by a large share of the population. This large quantity of travelers around the metro station facilitates interviewees to sell their products to passing travelers. The interviewed street vendors often work independently, in the sense that they own a stand/truck in which they sell their products. In some cases interviewees worked under supervision of a 'boss', who facilitates them by giving the means necessary for street vending.

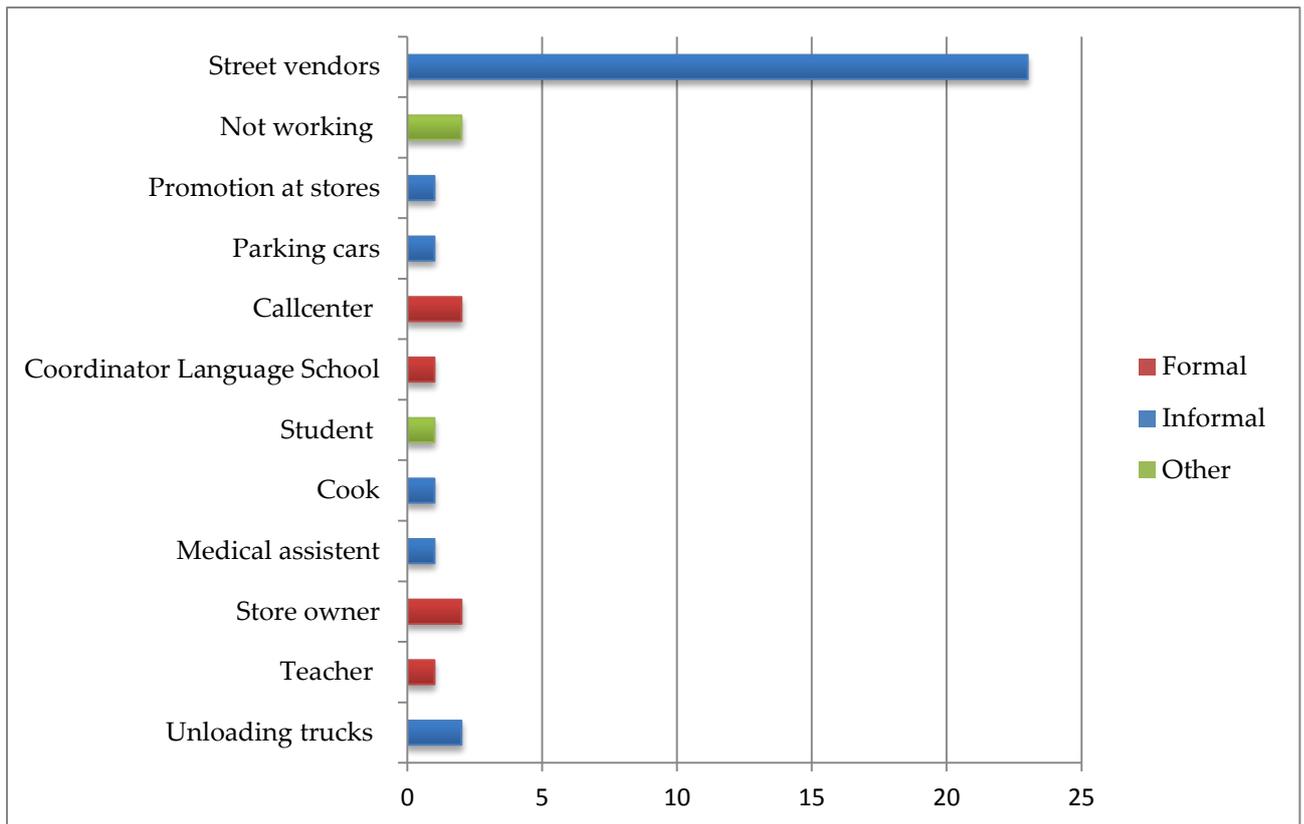


Figure 10: Current Labor Market Position (number of interviewees)

Street vendors form the vast majority of interviewees (60.5%) that work in the informal sector. **Figure 10** gives an overview of the types of work interviewees do in Medellín. As the figure shows (blue charts), informal interviewees work as: cook (1), store promotor (1), truck unloader (2), parking assistant (1) and medical assistant (1). What these interviewees have in common with the street vendors is that they get paid per day and lack access to services like healthcare.

A smaller number of interviewees (6) are working formally in Medellín (red charts). Working formally requires some specific types of legal documentation. Irregular migrants and migrants with a Venezuelan passport cannot accede formal job opportunities, due to their legal status. As explained in the paragraph on **Documentation**, a visa is the most frequent-heard documentation required for formal work. Two interviewees own a store in a commercial center in Medellín, a work visa allows them to do so. Other interviewees working formally work as: teacher (1), coordinator of a language school (1) and as call center employee (2). Furthermore, 1 interviewee is currently studying in Medellín and just one interviewee is unemployed (green charts).

5.3 Ways to access work

Work can be accessed in different manners. First, interviewees explain that they found work through walking around and talking to people on the streets. As stated before, Medellín has a large informal sector, that offers job opportunities to migrants without the required documentation. Especially in the center there are a lot of commercial activities to be found. Interviewees go to the center or other neighborhoods and ask around for job opportunities. *While buying hotdogs I figured out that they were looking for a vendor at the food stand, so I started working there* (4). Another interviewee (2) explained that they are specifically looking for Venezuelan migrants in the center of the city. By this manner he obtained a job as a cook in a restaurant in the center. Working informally makes it relatively easy to start working, as the legal processes normally required for accessing formal jobs are unnecessary. Migrants walk around in the city, talk to people and people recommend them on job opportunities. In some cases migrants can start working immediately.

Second, networks play an important role in giving access to jobs in Medellín. Friends and family can facilitate the process of accessing work, as they are more likely to support you than others you don't know. Interesting to mention is that 20 respondents (52.6%) have one or more family members living in Medellín. Most of them migrated together with their family members and in some cases family members were already living in Medellín before arrival. Already having family members in Medellín is seen as a huge advantage for integration for some different reasons. It provides some financial advantages, especially upon arrival, family members support each other financially in case they cannot find a job and sustain themselves. Often these interviewees can stay temporarily or for a longer period in the residence of their family. Interviewee 3 already had family living in Medellín, thus when she arrived she did not have to look for a residence, she directly entered the house of her grandmother. Another small group of interviewees (4, 16, 18) went to Medellín with a friend. This group might be small, but there is a larger group of interviewees that already had one or more friends living in Medellín. In total 9 interviewees (23.7%) already had friends living in Medellín before arrival. This implicates that the vast majority of interviewed migrants (32 interviewees, 84,2%) arrived to Medellín together with someone they knew before and that another large group already knew people in Medellín before migrating. Just 15,8% of interviewees came to Medellín alone, without knowing anybody. Friends are

especially important in the case of the street vendors. While searching for Venezuelan migrants, I came across a group of young men selling pens on a corner in front of a commercial centre in one of Medellín's wealthiest areas (El Poblado). What these migrants (7) had in common is that they all found this job by the means of a friend.

Networks can also be formed with Venezuelans or Colombians they got to know in Medellín. Let's first look into the role of Venezuelans in acceding work. Venezuelans help each other out by searching for job opportunities. Interviewees seem to be more likely to support each other when someone else is from their home country. Interviewee 2 & 4 argue that Venezuelans mainly support each other by catering information on job opportunities. Another young interviewee (6) shares this view, although he argues that Venezuelans see migration as an individual act. All Venezuelans find themselves in similar situations and are struggling to make their decision to migrate successful, which makes it less necessary to help each other. Interestingly, an interviewee explained that Venezuelans don't help each other out a lot, this could be out of fear. *Sometimes we are too proud, and we don't like to ask for support* (36).

Online platforms can act as an influential tool for acceding work. Facebook group *Venezolanos en Medellín* is the most popular online platform, the group has over 38.000 members. Separate from Facebook groups, there are several WhatsApp-groups that contribute a lot to the provision of information and asking for support. Interviewee: *I found work by using the Facebook group Venezolanos en Medellín. I saw an announcement of a job opportunity and I decided to respond* (24). Now she works as a street vendor, selling pastels in front of metro station Poblado. In total 19 interviewees (50%) declared to use the Facebook page *Venezolanos en Medellín* and 3 respondents are using specific WhatsApp-groups for Venezuelan migrants. Handing over information, (legal) news and opportunities are the main purposes of this platform. Separate from the large quantity of users, just one interviewee (24) acceded work through the means of this page. Thus, the influence of these online platforms on acceding work should not be exaggerated.

Interestingly, a large share of interviewed respondents (12) explained that Colombians delivered a larger contribution to acceding work than Venezuelans. In some cases this support focuses on recommending job opportunities and in other cases Colombians provided job opportunities themselves. An older interviewee intending to find work as a

street vendor, but he did not have the financial capital to buy his own food truck at one of Medellín's markets. *A Colombian man, I did not know before, working at this market paid for my food truck and facilitated me in starting up my own business* (22). The guy that supported him by coincidence passed by during the interview, greeted us and explained that Colombians should support Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

Thirdly, few interviewees use vacancies to find work. Two interviewees (6 & 9) used the application *Computrabajo*, an online vacancy platform, to look for job opportunities. Interviewee 6 is working at a call center by the means of this application and Interviewee 9 found work as an English teacher through usage of this application. Just one interviewee (19) encountered work through a 'traditional' vacancy. Interestingly, she is also the only interviewee doing the same work (English teacher) in Medellín as she used to do in Venezuela. The first two respondents (6 & 9) have Colombian citizenship, which encouraged the application of formal jobs. Interviewee 19 initially did not have the required documentation, as applications for PEP were closed for a while. In December 2017 she found a language school that assisted her by providing a work visa. This is important to mention as a lot of irregular migrants cannot accede these kind of formal job opportunities due to requirements regarding certain types of documentation.

5.4 Motivations

Interviewees that left their home country and migrated to Medellín often don't have many options in relation to work. Irregular migrants and migrants with a Venezuelan passport are unable to work in the formal sector due to their legal status. Most informal respondents did not choose for the work they are currently doing. If they encounter work, they will accept it. This work often does not match with their educational or professional background in Venezuela. Making money is the main motivation to work, the type of work is not of great importance. Most of these interviewees prefer to work formally, especially the ones with a higher educational background. *I did not study 5 years at university to sell pens on the streets. I studied 5 years to advance in my professional career* (17). This interviewee used to work as Civil Engineer in Venezuela, but his irregular status restricts him from continuing his career in Medellín. Some interviewees also prefer to work in the formal sector because working informally is less secure. Guaranteeing a solid salary is more complicated, as it banks strongly on the luck and efforts of that specific day. A young interviewee that works as an

informal truck unloader said: *When it rains, there is no work. And if there is no work, you cannot eat. On the other hand: rain does not affect your salary when you work at a company (37).* Another critique of informal work is the lack of access to healthcare. *I don't have access to healthcare, because of documentation. I have not been to doctor yet, because it is very expensive to pay for your own doctor (4).*

Separate from the informal interviewees that prefer to work formally, there are quite some respondents that prefer to work informal sector. This is due to the fact that informal work enables one to work more hours, and in turn to gain more income. The relatively low minimum wage in Colombia is a reason to not choose for formal work, as these respondents not only need to sustain themselves, but also have to support their families by the means of remittances. Interviewee 12: *I have a PEP, but I don't want to work in the formal sector because the minimum wage is too low. I prefer to work informally because I can make more money and it is not always the same.* Another interviewee (15), that sells pens on the streets, argued that he prefers to work informally because he has a responsibility towards his family in Venezuela. If he would work formally, he would not earn sufficient money to support his family in Venezuela. The fact that services like healthcare are inaccessible in case of informal work is often taken for granted.

The interviewees working formally (6) do possess the legal documents required for formal work. Additionally, they also prefer to work in the formal sector. An advantage interviewees mention of working formally is the access it provides to services like healthcare and education. Security is also mentioned as a motivation to work in the formal sector. In some cases the salaries are lower, but they are at least assured of a stable salary that provides them monthly with necessary services. Working as a vendor on the streets is seen as more insecure because salaries can vary per day. Interviewees working formally prefer to continue their professional career from Venezuela. Despite their willingness, professional background is often not recognized in Colombia. In order to exercise the same profession, Venezuelan titles have to be recognized in Colombia. *I am waiting to validate my medical title. I used to be a cardiologist in Venezuela. Now I work as an assistant of a cardiologist and at the same time I sell food by delivery. Both jobs are informal (5).* Finally, she was able to validate her title and soon she will start working as a cardiologist in Medellín. This example should be seen as an exception, as the majority of respondents have not been able to pursue a validation of their professional

titles. The main problem about validation of professional titles is that the Venezuelan government has to play a crucial role in the process. Carlos Arcila, Sub-Director Human Rights Medellín: *In order to validate titles, migrants have to bring documents from Venezuelan, that normally takes very long* (Interview Carlos Arcila). Interviewees indeed blame Venezuela for the difficulty of recognizing professional experience. In addition, interviewees argue that validating titles is rather expensive. If migrants cannot validate their titles and don't have the required documentation, they are pushed towards the informal sector.

5.5 Time spent searching work

Most interviewees found work relatively fast after arrival in Medellín. As stated before, interviewees walk around, talk to people and use their personal networks to encounter jobs. Finding a job in the informal sector can go quickly in some cases. Interviewee 27 for example received a job offer upon arrival at the bus terminal in Medellín. A Colombian lady that owns a food stand offered her to work as a vendor at her stand. The short time framework of finding a job in Medellín also has to do with the critical situation some interviewees find themselves in. Most interviewees intend to find a secure job. Initially, interviewees intended to find this security by sending their CVs to several companies. But, when this approach is unsuccessful, they need to make money in a shorter time framework. A final solution can be to sell sweets in buses or vending other products on the streets. It does not take a lot of time to start making money by this manner. Thus, often interviewees start working relatively quickly after arrival, but this is due to the fact that the lack of required documentation or the economic situation stimulates them to create an opportunity for themselves. In some cases it took longer to find work. This happens more often in the case of respondents that meet the legal requirements to work formally, as application procedures generally take longer.

5.6 Impact on economic stability

It is interesting to compare interviewees' economic situation in Venezuela to their situation in Medellín. As expected, the economic situation of interviewees changed drastically. As shown in **Introducing the research sample**, the economic situation in Venezuela was rather critical for most interviewees. Formal and informal interviewees are positive towards their economic situation in Medellín. *The minimum salary in Medellin is sufficient to survive, in Venezuela with a 'good job' it is more difficult to get around. In Venezuela I ate one slice of bread for*

lunch, in Medellín a piece of chicken (4). Food is often mentioned as the biggest difference, many interviewees just ate two meals per day in Venezuela, while in Medellín interviewees can eat three meals per day. The ability to send remittances is also mentioned as a huge advantage. The amount of remittances might not be sufficient for their family members to live a generous life, but it is a constructive contribution. One interviewee stated the following: *It is a big change: in two days working in Medellín I can earn as much as a month working in Venezuela. The situation improved for myself and for my family in Venezuela. Now I can eat well and at the same time support my people at home* (15). If interviewees work in Medellín it is relatively easy to send a 'large sum' of money to Venezuela due to the huge difference between the Colombian and Venezuelan currency. *The last time I sent remittances, I sent 10 Venezuelan month salaries, which were 2 days working in Medellín* (21).

Separate from one interviewee, all interviewees argued that migration to Medellín met with their expectations. They are content with their current salary, experience more freedom, are less stressed and can meet their basic needs.

Though, there are some more critical stories. Sometimes Colombians seek to take advantage of irregular Venezuelan migrants that don't have the legal rights to be paid minimum wage in Colombia. In some cases interviewees experienced exploitation whilst working in Colombia. A young Venezuelan lady that migrated to Colombia in 2016 found herself in that situation. *For a while I worked two shifts per day in a restaurant. From 9 in the morning, sometimes until 2 at night. They paid me 50.000 pesos, but it was not enough, that's why I started selling on the street* (26). In Venezuela she has a family consisting of eight persons. In order to sustain them, she has to send at least 100.000 (€1 = 3337.40 Colombian pesos) pesos per week.

Earning minimum wage is not sufficient to send this amount of money, so that is why she prefers to work informally on the street as she can work more hours and gain more income. Alfredo Sánchez, president of Emprecolven, argues that a *Venezuelan without documentation is subject to exploitation* (Interview Alfredo Sánchez). Similar to the young lady (26), interviewee 12 also experienced exploitation: *I worked at a supermarket from 6 in the morning until 12 at night for 20.000 pesos. I did not have the right documentation at that moment. The majority of Colombian people want to exploit because it is more beneficial to them* (12).

Thus, generally Venezuelan interviewees are content with the current income they derive from work, because it enables them to meet their basic needs and to send a small amount of

remittances to Venezuela. On the other hand, exploitation does occur in some cases. Obviously, exploitation affects their economic situation and well-being in a negative manner. Nonetheless, these interviewees had the opportunity to quit their exploitative jobs and search for a more stable, honest job.

The shift from Venezuela to Colombia might be harsh due to Chavez' former policies. Chávez is mentioned as the reason why Venezuelans are facing difficulties to adjust to the new society, as Chávez basically gave away 'free money' at some point, which did not stimulate a hard-working attitude (Interviewee 4 & 8). These interviewees explained that many Venezuelans are not used to working hard, they blame this mainly on the large quantity of social programs in Venezuela that made working hard less necessary. Now that the situation deteriorated in Venezuela, migrants have to work harder in order to make a living in Colombia.

5.7 Mobility

Working in the formal or informal sector does not necessarily have to be a permanent state. In some cases informal migrants can switch to the formal sector and the other way around. Additionally, migrants can make promotions. Their current labor market position is not immutable. Thus far, majority of interviewees have not made promotions or switched to another sector. However, there are a few cases of respondents that did make these transitions. Interviewee 9 for example: *I found work on the fourth day after arrival in Medellín. I started working as an English teacher at a language school, but I made a promotion rather quickly. After five months of working I got offered to become Coordinator at the same school where I was teaching* (9). He explains that this transition would have been out of reach without his Colombian citizenship. Two other interviewees made the transition from the informal to the formal sector. Interviewee 19 initially worked informally as a Spanish teacher, because she only had a Venezuelan passport. In that time she continued looking for a formal job, but her type of documentation disabled her to do so. When she finally obtained a PEP, she started working as an English teacher at a language school. The company supported her through the provision of a work visa, so that's how she made the transition to the formal sector. Interviewee 5 also made her transition to the formal sector. As stated before, in Venezuela she used to work as a cardiologist. In Medellín she could not continue her career due to her invalidated title. Initially, she worked as a medical assistant in a hospital in Medellín, but

now that her title got recognized she is about to continue her career as a cardiologist. Documentation and validation of professional titles should be seen as important preconditions for the transition from the informal to the formal sector.

Documentation is also the main factor that withholds this transition, as migrants don't have the documentation to work in the formal sector. It is important to take into account that this legal status might change overtime, as occurred in the case of Interviewee 19. In some cases migrants arrive with just a Venezuelan passport, but happen to obtain a PEP or a work visa in a later stage. Validation of titles can also contribute to the transition from the informal to the formal sector. A transition the other way around, from formal to informal, might be a possibility as well, but no interviewees found themselves in this situation thus far. Finally, the moment of arrival also has a large influence on this transition. As shown in the section **Introducing the research sample**, the vast majority of Venezuelan migrants and interviewees arrived in the year 2018. Time is required for making promotion or validating professional titles. It might be that more transitions will take place when time passes.

5.8 Conclusion

Based on the results concerning work and access to work, some characteristics are noticeable. First, it is clear that there is a large quantity of Venezuelan migrants working in the informal sector of Medellín. Interviewees that don't meet the legal requirements to accede formal work are pushed towards the informal sector. On the other hand, there are quite some interviewees that prefer to work informally. This is due to the fact that informal work allows one to work more hours, and in turn to gain more income. The relatively low minimum wage in Colombia is a reason to not choose for formal work, as these interviewees not only need to sustain themselves, but also have to support their families by the means of remittances. The insecurity of informal work, of not being able to access healthcare and other services, is often taken for granted. Secondly, results show that respondents working informally are indeed earning sufficient money to meet the basic costs: food, rent and remittances. Despite making long working hours, they are relatively satisfied with their work and the opportunities it provides them in comparison to their former work in Venezuela. Formal work on the other hand is fully determined by the available documentation. Colombian citizenship or a visa is often the manner to acquire formal work. Interestingly, there have been no respondents with a PEP working formally, this is weird

seen the fact that this document was introduced in order to include Venezuelan migrants in the formal sector.

Social networks play an important role in accessing work in Medellín. Networks can be formed with other Venezuelans, but also with Colombians. Interestingly, a large share (12) of the research sample explained to have found work by the means of support by a Colombian citizen. Finally, both formal as informal working interviewees declared that their economic situation improved drastically by migrating to Medellín.

6 Access to housing

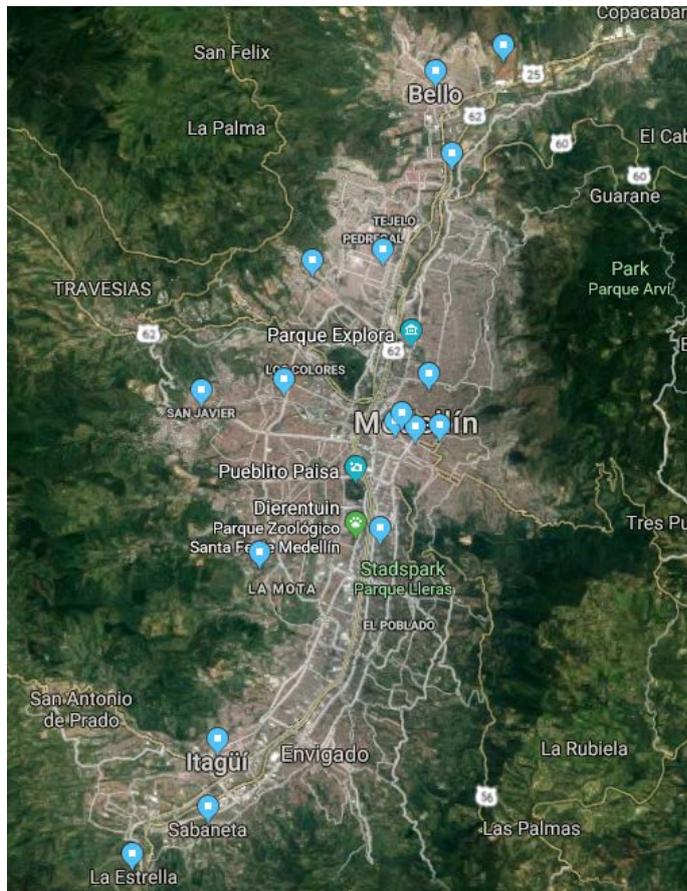


Figure 11: Housing interviewees

poorer neighborhoods. Higher-located areas, are generally poorer than lower-located areas. Neighborhoods located on top of the mountain range are mainly informal settlements, with often rather poor living conditions. The map shows as well that there are no interviewees living in El Poblado, the wealthiest area of the city. The fact that migrants reside divided over the city does not implicate that they work in these neighborhoods, majority of migrants work in the center.

Interviewees live in three different types of housing: single apartments/rooms, shared apartments or in hotels. Few interviewees have their own space to live. This has to do with the fact that it is often too expensive to pay for an own place to live. The largest share of interviewees live in apartments shared with other Venezuelans. Living together with other people has a positive effect on integration. On the one hand it provides the means to share the rent, which lowers the financial pressure. Money saved from sharing apartments can be used for other expenses like food and remittances.

Housing is one of the main concerns for Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. Especially the first days upon arrival migrants need to search for a place to stay and acclimatize after their trip. This section discusses the current housing situation of the interviewees. As **Figure 11** shows, interviewees live spread all over the city. Largest share of interviewees are residing in the center of the city, as the most commercial activities are located in the center and rents are relatively low. Furthermore, the map shows that interviewees live in both wealthier as

Some irregular Venezuelan interviewees (6) are living in hotels, often located in the center of the city. This has to do with their irregular jobs as street vendors, because often certain types of documentation is demanded for housing, which irregular migrants do not possess. They mainly live and earn money from day per day, as their payment hinges on their dedication and luck of that specific day. In that sense it is easier to pay rent per day, as they cannot afford to pay their monthly rent beforehand. Interviewee 15 for example lives in one of these hotels. He argues that it is easier for him to live there, because it allows him to pay his rent per day. Additionally there are more Venezuelans living in these hotels, which makes the situation easier, as they can help each other out when necessary. He does recognize that sharing an apartment with more Venezuelans would also be a smart solution, but he has not encountered that opportunity yet. In some cases valid documentation, like a Venezuelan passport, is required for renting an apartment. Irregular interviewees are excluded from this opportunity because they don't have this type of documentation available.

Interestingly, the majority of interviewees live with or family members/friends or with other Venezuelans. The largest group (44,7%) consists of interviewees (17) that live together with family members from Venezuela. Most of these family members were already living in Medellín before migration. It seems rather common to live with family members in case they are also living in the city. Most of interviewees that live with family members do so in shared apartments. Interviewee 2 for example, a 27-year old irregular migrant, lives in a shared apartment in the center of Medellín. He shares the room with his wife, and the common spaces are shared with six other Venezuelans. The second largest group (9) consists of interviewees that live with other Venezuelans they got to know in Medellín. The relatively high cost of rent makes it less likely to find an own apartment, for that reason various interviewees opt to live in shared apartments. Interestingly, there are no interviewees living in apartment shared with Colombians. Co-ethnic networks with Venezuelans play a larger role in acceding housing in comparison to acceding work. The third largest group (7) consists of interviewees living alone. In that case they have a small, independent room available in a larger building. The interviewees living in hotels are included in this group. Finally, 5 interviewees live together with friends from Venezuela. Social contacts play an important role in acceding housing in Medellín. Family and friends from their home country deliver the

largest contribution. It is important to mention that many interviewees expect to receive Venezuelan family members in the near future.

Upon arrival in Medellín it can be quite hard for Venezuelan interviewees to find a first residence. Interviewees used different means of accessing housing. First, a considerable group of interviewees (15) entered a house from someone they knew before arrival. Family members or friends living in Medellín offer them a place to stay upon arrival. In some cases, interviewees stay permanently in these residences, but sometimes they just use this opportunity to acclimatize and continue looking for an independent place to stay. Second, a group of interviewees (12) found a residence by the support of other Venezuelans. In some cases these are friends that already lived in Medellín and in other cases it involved Venezuelans they met in Medellín. Third, some interviewees (6) found a house by talking to people on the streets. Especially interviewees working in the informal sector see this as a better opportunity, as several owners of apartments demand the payment of a deposit, which informal interviewees generally cannot afford. Other informal migrants, working on the street, have more experience with finding informal apartments without these requirements. Fourthly, three interviewees used online platforms to search for an apartment. Facebook page Venezolanos en Medellín is mentioned as the most helpful platform. Finally, just one interviewee used an estate agent to access a residence. Thus, interviewees mainly used social contacts as a way to access housing, official channels play a minor role.

There are some interviewees that faced more problems finding a residence in Medellín. Two brothers did not manage to make enough money to pay for their rent at the beginning: *We slept on the streets for 3 days. It's terrible because you see drugs everywhere. In the morning all drug addicts are using and you have to be very much aware because an addict wants to find money against every price* (37 & 38). Now they found a small room where they sleep with 3 people, every night someone has to sleep on the floor as there are not sufficient beds for all of them. A girl they met recommended a room in the center of Medellín. The first night they went to bed without food, but at least they were able to pay for the rent. It is important to take into account that there is a group of Venezuelan migrants that live off the radar, and that did not manage to find housing due to various reasons. At the beginning of the field research I found a young migrant from Caracas, who was living on the streets in the center of Medellín. His suitcase with all his possessions got robbed on his first upon arrival in Medellín, which

implicated that he ended up living on the streets as he did not have any contacts in the city. He said that it is difficult to get out of this situation as his physical appearance makes it less likely to find a job. A large number of people, including Venezuelan migrants, end up using drugs in these kind of situations. The result of this is clearly visible while walking through some neighborhoods of the center.

This complicated situation could also be due to the price of housing in Medellín. The average rent for housing in Medellín is about 400.000 Colombian pesos. This rent might seem rather low, but considering that the minimum wage is 800.000 pesos per month, residences are quite expensive in Medellín. Interviewees living in hotels pay about 25.000 pesos per day which is actually more expensive than the average month rent. Their irregular status withholds them from living in a shared apartment.

There are some developments visible in relation to migrants' access to housing in Medellín. First, social contacts in the city are of considerable importance. The majority of interviewees live together with friends or family from Venezuela. Living together with family or friends makes integration easier, as they can share the rent and help each other out, for example by searching for a job. Not knowing people before migrating and not being able to find work can result in critical situations, as the story of the brothers shows. Second, documentation has a large influence on the type of housing. A group of informal interviewees live in hotels due to their legal status and working situation. These interviewees cannot afford to pay the monthly rent beforehand and often they don't possess the legal requirements for renting a standard apartment. Living in hotels better suits their working situation as they can pay the rent per day. Finally, just four respondents used formal channels like online platforms or estate agents to accede housing. This shows that informal channels are the most common approach to searching for housing.

7 Access to healthcare

Access to healthcare is a different story, as documentation is the main factor that determines whether migrants can attend healthcare services. There are some difficulties in regard to migrants' access to healthcare in Medellín.

In Colombia there is a distinction between public and private healthcare. Sisben is the national healthcare system that authorizes citizens to receive subsidies for accessing healthcare services. Citizens with low living standards (often strata 1 or 2) are entitled to financial compensation. The lower the strata (**Regional and Thematic Framework**), the less someone has to pay for healthcare services. In theory, Venezuelans can register themselves in this system, provided that they reside regularly within the country. A PEP also allows migrants to register themselves in Sisben. If migrants are irregular or solely possess a Venezuelan passport, they can only attend healthcare in case of emergency in both public as private hospitals (Gestión del Riesgo, 2018). The Colombian Ministry of Health made a law that distinguishes five different categories of health status. The first category is a status wherein patient finds themselves in direct risk and require immediate healthcare. Patients in the fifth category are not directly threatened and don't require direct treatment. Patients in the first two categories need to be attended rapidly, patients in the other categories need to be informed beforehand on the moment and length of attendance (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social, 2015). Private healthcare services on the other hand can be attended, but migrants have to pay for health insurance, which is out of reach for the majority of informal migrants. Soraida Varela, vicepresident of Asovenezuela, argues that a lot Venezuelan migrants are not familiar with the functioning of Colombia's health system or simply cannot afford an insurance (El Tiempo, 2018).

Beatriz Suarez, health specialist at Colvenz (Colonia Venezolana en Colombia), focuses on advising Venezuelan migrants on their rights on access to healthcare in Medellín. She endorses that documentation is the biggest obstacle to accessing healthcare in Colombia (Interview Beatriz Suarez). Irregular migrants or migrants with just a Venezuelan passport are generally excluded from healthcare services, except for cases of emergency. If there is no case of emergency they have to wait for hours and hours, sometimes they are not even attended in general. Positively, children are always attended, regardless of the criticalness of the situation.

The national census has shown that 473.513 (98,9%) irregular migrants that participated in the census can currently not accede healthcare in Colombia (RAMV, 2018). The research sample shows indeed that in total 30 interviewees (70.9%) are currently not registered in Sisben and can therefore not attend healthcare in Medellín. Just 8 interviewees (20.1%) have an health insurance, which enables them to attend healthcare when necessary. Respondents that are acceding health can do so due to their legal status, they own a PEP, a work visa or Colombian citizenship. Interestingly, from the group of interviewees that cannot accede the healthcare, 11 interviewees actually do meet the legal requirements for acceding healthcare. They possess the required documentation, often a PEP or even Colombian citizenship, which authorizes them to register themselves in Sisben. However, they have not registered themselves yet or are misinformed on their rights. In some cases it has to do with the moment of arrival, interviewees see work and housing as priorities upon arrival, access to healthcare can wait until the moment that basic needs are met. Interviewee 36 argues that a large quantity Venezuelans have not registered themselves in Sisben, out of a lack of information: *There are lot of entities that can inform you on healthcare access. I for example went directly to the City Hall in order to get information, they helped me a lot with orienting* (36).

The main problem in regard to healthcare is that some interviewees are not attended in hospitals, even not in case of emergency. A 22-year old girl with a Venezuelan passport mentioned the following: *I went to the hospital for an emergency, but they did not attend me. They told me I needed an insurance or cash money to pay for treatment. I didn't have either of those at that moment* (26). Another 26 year-old interviewee, with a PEP, faced the similar problem: *When I went to a hospital in January 2018 to check my tooth, they told me they could not attend me because I am Venezuelan. I told them I had a PEP, but they still told me it was impossible* (24). In case of the latter situation, she officially has the right to accede healthcare but she has not registered herself yet in the national health system. Interviewees that lack access to healthcare explained to simply hope that they won't get sick or they postpone their hospital visits out of fear of rejection.

I spoke about this situation with Carlos Arcila, Sub-Director of Human Rights at Medellín's City Hall. He asserted: *Venezuelan migrants have to be attended, there are some Colombians that still don't understand that, but you have to attend them in case of emergency as it is a basic human right* (Interview Carlos Arcila). He argues that irregular Venezuelans can only go to the

hospital in cases of emergency. In a normal case, let's say flu, they could still go to the hospital. But they have to take into consideration that the quality is rather low, that they have to wait hours to be attended and that insurances are quite expensive. Furthermore, he explains that: *Colombia's healthcare is in crisis. Despite having the rights, there is a crisis which counts for both Colombians as for Venezuelans* (Interview Carlos Arcila). Thus, partly he is concerned about the current situation, especially regarding human rights, but on the other hand he also understands why these problems occur.

Toni Vitola, vicepresident of Colvenz, argues that regularizing irregular Venezuelan migrants is of great importance for equipping migrants with access to healthcare (Interview Toni Vitola). The executed census, as explained in the section **Research Sample**, has the ability to include irregular Venezuelan migrants in Colombia's health system. Recently, the Colombian government explained the plan to provide irregular migrants with a PEP, which not only allows them to work formally, but also enables migrants to access healthcare services, provided that they register themselves in Sisben. A complicating factor is that this permission is exclusively going to be granted to irregular migrants that took part in the census, irregular migrants that not registered themselves are not able to obtain this permission. Vitola explained that about 30% of irregular migrants in Colombia have not joined in on the census and therefore won't be included in the provision of the permission (Interview Toni Vitola). Thus, access to healthcare mainly revolves around migrants' legal statuses. Irregular migrants and migrants with a Venezuelan passport can only attend healthcare in case of emergency. A group of interviewees with a regular status do have the rights to accede healthcare, but they are not doing so at the moment. First, this is due to the fact that they have not registered themselves yet in Sisben. Second, there is a lack of information on rights to acceding healthcare, which prevents migrants from doing so.

The plan of the Colombian government to regularize irregular migrants has the ability to provide access to the 442.462 irregular migrants that engaged in the census. The future must prove whether the Colombian state indeed can include this quantity of Venezuelan migrants in the national health system.

8 Access to education

Most students quit studying in Venezuela due to hunger and high costs of basic services. Interviewees mentioned that studying cannot be a priority when you or your family members suffer from hunger. At the beginning of 2018 there has been a research amongst some of the main universities in Venezuela (Educación de la Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida, 2017). Main result was that 60% of students quit studying, 2.1 from the 4.2 million students that finished their secondary school did not enter university and that 500.000 already accepted students refused to enter. Additionally, the 2.8 million students that study do so inconsequently, because they have to guarantee food and access to other services (El Nacional, 2018). Interviewee 26 described her situation as follows: *I arrived at a point on which it was either studying or eating. If I don't eat I will die and then I can also not graduate* (26). In total there were 7 interviewees studying in Venezuela. From this group, just one interviewee continued studying in Medellín. Furthermore, there are 4 interviewees whose children are currently attending primary education.

A 20 year-old interviewee, with Colombian citizenship (3), is currently studying in Medellín. At the moment she is studying Health Administration at a University in the center of the city: *Most difficult part of getting access to this university was that I haven't done my previous studies in Colombia and that my study from Venezuela didn't get recognized* (3). She already studied some years in Venezuela, but her study experience seemed to be useless in Medellín, as she had to start all over again. She obtained Colombian citizenship through her parents Colombian nationality, which facilitated the access to education. She explains that if you arrive with just a Venezuelan passport, you need to have a student visa or some other documents administered by the Colombian government.

Interviewee 3 is the only migrant that is studying at the moment, but the former students prefer to continue their study programs. Interviewee 4 for example became technologist in Venezuela, but he prefer to continue his career in order to become an engineer. He clarifies that this is impossible due to a lack of required documents, he only has a Venezuelan passport. He argues that in order to study he needs to show a PEP or a visa. Often diplomas from Venezuela are not being recognized in Colombia. The problem is that the Venezuelan government should play a role in this validation, but that the government currently is not

taking concrete steps to facilitate this process. Interviewee 31: *It should be possible to validate my study career, but the government in Venezuela is not helping me with providing the documents I need* (31). Interviewee 34 also argued that: *At some point I want to continue my study. But is difficult, I don't know if I can validate my title from Venezuela* (34).

A small amount of interviewees came to Medellín with their children. In total 4 interviewees have children that attend primary education in Medellín. Interviewee 9 his children are both attending school in Medellín. When interviewee 19 was looking for a school for her children, the particular school demanded Colombian citizenship as a prerequisite for registration. In the end she managed to register with her Venezuelan ID. Interviewee 36 arrived at the beginning of 2018, she immediately started looking for a suitable school for her children. She argues that a PEP is a requirement for registration of children.

Recognition of Venezuelan diplomas is the most essential requirement for inclusion of Venezuelan migrants in the educational system of Colombia. However, a lack of information about the rights to accede education prevails. Migrants can officially validate their diplomas and professional titles, but it requires some research and effort. The Venezuelan government could play a larger role by delivering the required documents for validation of studies. Similar to healthcare, education is not seen as one of the main priorities upon arrival in Medellín. Migrants first need to establish themselves in the city, primarily by finding a job and a residence. Although interviewees, especially the former students, are interested in studying and in continuing their professional careers. If they acclimatized and have the opportunity, they intend to resume their studies and careers. Finally, studying in Colombia is rather expensive and out of reach for migrants that left due to economic reasons.

Policy Colombian government

The Colombian government points out that Venezuelan students can continue their previous study from Venezuela, but that requirements depend on the concerned educational institution (Gestión del Riesgo, 2018). Every institution determines how many study credits can be validated and how many still have to be done in Medellín. Regarding validation of diplomas/titles, the concerned Colombian institution has to approve the exercised study abroad. Secondly, titles have to be recognized by the Ministry of Education in Colombia. A number of documents is required for this validation. Concerning Venezuelan children and

adolescents' access to education, the following has been announced by the Colombian government: parents of children have to approach the concerned educational institution. There are different documents that give access to education. A foreigner ID or the PEP are valid documents for access. In case that none of these documents are available, there is the option to obtain a permission (NES), under the condition that parents have to put effort in regularizing their migratory status (Gestión del Riesgo, 2018).

9 Role of the Colombian government and social capital

As mentioned before, the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín mainly rests on available documentation. The Colombian government determines whether Venezuelan migrants have the legal permission to work, accede housing, healthcare and education. In this section first attention is paid to what Venezuelan interviewees see as the actions the Colombian government must take in order to support them. The second and the third paragraph focus on the actions that the Colombian government and other non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are actually taking to stimulate the integration of migrants. Separate from (non-) governmental support, social capital also has the ability to facilitate integration. The acceptance of Colombian citizens is of great importance for respondents' perception of integration in Medellín. These factors will be discussed in the final paragraph of this section.

A large group of Venezuelan interviewees is considered as 'irregular', which means that they do not have the legal rights to work and live in Colombia. Yet, the majority of irregular interviewees is currently working in Colombia, as searching for work was the main motivation migrate to Colombia. This group of irregular interviewees speak rather negative about the role of the Colombian government. They explain to not receive any support from the government due to their irregular status. Some interviewees also fear the government due to their illegal status: *Sometimes the government pronounces that they are going to provide a PEP to irregular migrants, but I am afraid that they are only doing this to deport Venezuelans* (2). Interviewees with just a Venezuelan passport find themselves in a similar situation in the sense that they are neither entitled to formal work, access to healthcare and other services.

Generally, interviewees with a PEP speak positively about the Colombian government. Still, a small quantity of interviewees that do possess a PEP are neither very content with the permission: *The PEP is not enough. The government should provide us with more opportunities. The government complains a lot that there are too many Venezuelans working informally. We do want to work in something more stable, so they should help us by offering more formal job opportunities* (24).

Additionally, respondents with a PEP argue that the Colombian government should be more selective in the provision of PEP, as not all migrants are making the same efforts to integrate. It is in their eyes negative that provision of this permission only relies upon migrants' date of arrival, rather than their intentions and motivations to integrate into the city. The majority of

regular respondents seem to appreciate the efforts of the Colombian government. They mainly praise the PEP, because it approves migrants to stay and work legally in Colombia for a maximum period of two years. The census, as explained in section **Legal Documentation**, is also appreciated by Venezuelan interviewees.

The interviewees argue that the Colombian government should put more effort in granting opportunities to irregular migrants. A working permit is often mentioned as a solution to the problem. In addition, a few mentioned that an association should be founded that stimulates the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Three interviewees also mentioned that the Colombian government should play a more active role in taking down Maduro his government. They are upset with the fact that international organizations and governments are barely taking action and they see this partly as the Colombian governments' responsibility. Despite interviewees their recommendations, most of them do not have very high expectations of the government. The government can play a role by facilitating the access to work and other services, but interviewees see that they have to put effort themselves in order to make advances in the city.

9.1 Actions taken by the Colombian government

Carlos Arcila, Sub-Director Human Rights Medellín: *Medellín and Colombia also went through an era like Venezuela is going through now, and we were received and supported in Venezuela. So now, we have to guarantee the protection of Venezuelans in Colombia as well* (Interview Carlos Arcila).

The support of the government mainly focuses on arranging documents that allow migrants to work and stay legally in Colombia. Venezuelans with a regular status can register themselves in the national health system (Sisben), access education and work in the formal sector. Irregular migrants are excluded from these services, the census might bring a change to this as there are plans to regularize them and include them in Colombian society.

Separate from legal support, the Colombian government also provides humanitarian support. This humanitarian support is being offered through the Red Cross and Civil Defense Colombia. The following actions have been taken so far: delivering of alimentation, transfer of patients, medical consultations and first aid, hygiene kits and psychological support. This humanitarian support is principally concentrated in the border zones, as the situation is most critical in this area. Additionally, the government opened up temporary

accommodations in Cucutá and Villa del Rosario, migrants are allowed to stay there for a maximum period of two days (Gestión del Riesgo, 2018).

9.2 Actions taken by NGO's & other institutions

There are few organizations present in Medellín that focus on the integration of Venezuelan migrants in the city. Colvenz and Emprecolven, as mentioned in the **Methodology**, aim to facilitate the integration process of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. Just one interviewee out of the research sample is familiar with Colvenz, all other interviewees could not mention one NGO or a similar organization that could possibly support them.

Toni Vitola, vicepresident of Colvenz, underlines the necessity of the inclusion of irregular migrants. He sees the legal and the health theme as the main issues. On the one hand he raises: *You cannot blame Venezuelans for migrating irregularly, because you cannot get a passport in Venezuela and there is no food available* (Interview Toni Vitola). On the other hand does Colombia not have the means to receive this amount of people. The state cannot identify irregular migrants, which implicates that they cannot provide them with a visa or PEP. This results in the fact that they are entitled to informal work and cannot get accede education or healthcare. This group of migrants is living from day per day. He sees the census as the first step in the right direction; investigating the amount and characteristics of irregular migrants present in Colombia can reveal the necessities of this group. Vitola is of good hope that international organizations will take action now that the census is completed, because now international organizations have more data on the amount of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and the largest necessities. Furthermore, he argues that the Colombian government should give permission to irregular migrants to work and live legally in the country. Colvenz intends to realize integration amongst Venezuelan migrants in Colombia through activities, by handing over information and by trying to bridge the gaps between Colombians and Venezuelans.

Alfredo Sanchez, president of Emprecolven, sees more opportunities in entrepreneurship: *you can open up a business with just a Venezuelan passport, Colombia does not have very strict rules in that aspect in comparison to other countries. A form of regularizing migration is opening up businesses* (Interview Alfredo Sanchez). Separate from this idea, he also argues that Colombia's government should open up an organization that should stimulate the integration of Venezuelan migrants. Emprecolven focuses on the stimulation of Venezuelan

entrepreneurs in Medellín, through the provision of information and activities. The NGO concentrates on migrants with double nationality, as this group has more potential for entrepreneurship.

Separate from these NGO's that focus on large themes and solutions, there is another quantity of smaller NGO's. These NGO's initially focused on supporting poor Colombians, but now they try to include Venezuelan migrants indeed. Casa Encuentra is an example of this, a NGO located in a colonial building in the center of the city (Prado), a neighborhood with a large quantity of people living on the streets. Their objective is to support Colombians with some free meals during the week, by offering cheap clothes, free courses and activities. These kind of NGO's have seen a steady increase of Venezuelan migrants in their organizations, they are trying to adjust their support to the necessities of this group of Venezuelans.

Finally, Colombian churches play a significant role in supporting Venezuelan migrants. A large quantity of Venezuelans are, similar to Colombians, catholic. Three migrants (3,23,34) mentioned that a church served them with support. Sometimes they organize activities in order to connect Venezuelans that are living in Medellín, and in other cases by handing out food.

9.3 Social capital and acceptance

Not only the Colombian government and NGOs are capable of facilitating the integration of Venezuelan migrants, social capital can do so indeed. Contacts with other Venezuelans or Colombians can contribute to a smoother process of integration. Generally, it is visible that the vast majority interviewees (81.6%) are sharing apartments with family members, friends, or other Venezuelans in Medellín. Living together stimulates integration in the sense that interviewees help each other out by searching for job opportunities amongst others. Interviewees seem to be more willing to support each other when someone else is from their home country, especially when it comes to housing and job opportunities. Overall, interviewees have more social contacts with local Colombians than with Venezuelans. Majority of interviewees are rather positive about the *paisas* (inhabitants Medellín), they are described as friendly and helpful. Most of the Colombians seem to understand the difficult situation Venezuelan is facing at the moment and are therefore willing to help. Street vendors are mainly content with the local Colombians because Colombians buy the products

or services they offer on the streets and sometimes they hand them some food and drinks out while working. Formal employees pay more attention to the facilitation Colombians in searching job and housing opportunities. Some interviewees refer to the fact that Venezuela opened up their border for Colombians fleeing conflict in past times: *Venezuela is the only country that supported Colombians in the era of the narcocrisis* (16). In Medellín it is rather common to ask a stranger for help. This is highly validated by Venezuelan interviewees: *If you ask anyone for help on the streets, they help with whatever you ask for. Today for example I was looking for a school for my children. A man saw me walking with my children and said that I did not have to walk anymore and then he paid for my bus ticket* (36). The relationships Venezuelan migrants build with Colombians can be described as social capital, as it plays a large role in the integration of migrants in Medellín. A shared identity or background is not necessary, if these social contacts lead to positive cooperation, it can be described as social capital. The same counts for social contacts with other Venezuelans.

This research focused as well on Venezuelan interviewees' acceptance by Colombian citizens. Interviewees (78,6%) mentioned to feel rather accepted by Colombians, they speak positively about the local population. There are few exceptions of respondents that are less content with the interaction between Venezuelans and Colombians. In total 10 interviewees experienced some form of discrimination. Discrimination mainly involves comments made by Colombians about migrants their background. Interviewee 15: *I experienced discrimination in Medellin while looking for a job. They hear your accent and say that they don't accept Venezuelans. This especially happens in stores in the center; they rejected me because of being Venezuelan* (15). The other interviewees explained that they are often being looked at differently on the streets or receive discriminatory comments due to their background. This discrimination might occur because of a 'bad image' of Venezuelans that is circulating in a part of the Colombian society. A group of Venezuelans are responsible for an increase of common and organized crime, with participation in guerilla group ELN as the most critical development (Reuters, 2018). Secondly, Venezuelans are suspected from 'stealing jobs' from Colombian citizens. Interviewee 4 for example feels in general accepted by Colombians, but he sometimes feels that some 'bad' Venezuelans ruin their imagine in Medellin: *Sometimes I have to defend myself in that aspect, I am bothered by that. A while ago, a close Colombian friend his food truck got robbed*

by a Venezuelan guy, that took the car and left to Peru. And he said; Venezuelans are all the same. So, I had to defend myself by stating that I was different from other Venezuelans (4).

The interviewees that experiences some sort of discrimination argue that this is exceptional in Medellín. They put their experience into perspective by arguing that they generally feel well-received by Colombian citizens, but that cases of discrimination can occur.

Thus, interviewees praise some actions taken by the government: especially the introduction of the PEP. Although, interviewees without the legal documentation to stay in the country are more critical towards the stance of the Colombian government. They are excluded from the formal labor market, cannot accede healthcare and education and generally face more complications regarding integration in Medellín. The executed census will be used to provide irregular migrants with a permission to work and live in Medellín for a maximum period of one year. This might be a temporary solution for these migrants, but it does not implicate that it will indeed lead to integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. This gap for the most vulnerable group can be filled by social capital. Colombian citizens deliver a great contribution by facilitating them with information and by creating a sense of belonging. Contacts with other Venezuelans is mainly important for the access to housing. Social capital has the ability to contribute to the integration of Venezuelan migrants, even when government policies don't include them in the Colombian society.

Discussion

For this Master Thesis, in-depth interviews have been conducted with Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. Factors influencing the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín was central to this thesis.

Terminologies of migration hold large implications. The UNHCR (2018) uses the following definition for migrants: *Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons.* Goodman (2017) has shown that the use of the term 'refugees' provokes both citizen's sympathy towards this group as international attention. Venezuelans are currently labelled as 'migrants', although the characteristics of this migration flow shows that Venezuelans could be described as refugees. This is mainly due to the critical situation in which they find themselves, as they are driven to migrate due to a lack of basic necessities in their home country.

Due to legal constraints, Venezuelan migrants are pushed towards the informal economy. Zetter & Raudel (2011) observed that access to work does not exclusively build upon legal conditions. In the case of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín, a lack of documentation is a constraining factor for migrants' access to formal work. Official migration numbers (Migración Colombia, 2018) and the section *Introducing the research sample*, have shown that a large share of the migrants population is currently working in the informal sector. The legal requirements for migrants calculates on the governments' willingness to support them, which is referred to as deservingness (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). Initially, irregular migrants were not entitled to a variety state services. But the census is about to permit irregular migrants to become legally active in Colombian society. Additionally, not recognizing professional experience is stated to have a negative effect on integration of migrants (OECD, 2016) and drives migrants to the informal economy. The lack of recognition of migrants' profession indeed has a negative effect in the sense that it harms self-confidence, but it does not implicate that work cannot be accessed. Block and Maclay (2014) observed that different types of social relations can give migrants access to social networks, which in turn can lead to access to the labor market. The so-called co-ethnic networks can be a large tool to access job opportunities. Venezuelan interviewees working in the informal sector make most use of these co-ethnic networks. This is due to the fact that accession of informal jobs in

Medellín strongly revolves around social networks, because they do not meet the legal requirements to work in the formal sector. Finding a job in the informal sector depends mostly on social contacts in the informal sphere.

Access to healthcare is an important prerequisite for integration (Norredam & Krasnik, 2007; Barsanti, 2018; Fleischman et al, 2015). Other than access to work, access to healthcare mainly depends on legal documentation. Norredam & Krasnik (2007) mentioned some informal barriers to healthcare, separate from the legal documentation, namely: questions of language, psychology, and socio-cultural factors. These factors do not play a role in Medellín, as Venezuelan migrants speak the same language as Colombians and furthermore share a lot of cultural characteristics. Whether Fleischman et al. (2015) argue that migrants' access to healthcare is determined by health deservingness and furthermore on notions of citizenship, public health and human rights.

The analysis of this research has shown that access to healthcare mainly relies upon legal documentation, as irregular migrants do not have the rights to accede healthcare. However, the quantity of interviewees that do have the rights to accede healthcare not necessarily do so. Misinformation and priorities are the explanations for not fully using this right. De Vito et al. (2016) argue that irregular migrants are often not up-to-date in regard to their rights on healthcare, which is problematical as, generally speaking, irregular migrants are often more vulnerable to diseases. In this research, it has become visible that both regular as irregular interviewees are lacking information in this aspect. Additionally, upon arrival, interviewees have focused on guaranteeing a solid income and finding a place to live rather than acceding healthcare.

Similar to acceding healthcare, education is not seen as one of the main priorities for Venezuelan migrants in Medellín. There is still a large gap between migrants' and natives' access to education (Moskal & North, 2017). In Medellín this is indeed the case, again due to legal documentation. Irregular migrants and migrants with a passport are not entitled to study. Validation of previous studies in Venezuela is contingent partly on provision of documents by the Venezuelan government. The prior education, as completed in home countries, is important seen the fact that a lot of migrants don't continue studying in destination countries (De Paola & Brunello, 2016). Interviewees generally do not continue

their studies, not only due to documentation, but as well due to the high costs of studying and the complicity of validation. But, their previous studies are useless without recognition. Landau (2017) argues that legal documentation is not the main influential factor with regard to access to housing, but rather individual choices and social networks. Despite the fact that a large quantity of Venezuelan migrants don't meet the legal requirements to obtain formal housing, social networks with other Venezuelans are a significant factor. As shown in this research, the vast majority of interviewees (81.6%) live together with family members or with other Venezuelans. Not the quality and facilities of housing and ownership determine integration, but rather social capital and co-ethnic networks (Ager & Strang, 2008; Block & Macklay, 2014). Living together enables migrants to become active in different layers of society.

Despite the relatively small research sample and the qualitative character of this research, outcomes show a representative overview of how Venezuelans are coping with integration in Medellín. Secondary data, migration numbers and expert interviews provided a more in-depth analysis of the current situation in the city. In-depth interviews with migrants have shown important motivations and restrictions of the access to work, housing, healthcare and education. As Castles (2014) argued, agency increasingly becomes a more important concept in explaining current migration patterns. Structures within societies, like legal limitations, can constrain the integration of migrants. However, migrants' agency, background, motivations and social capital can fill up these structural gaps and lead to the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

Conclusion

Over the past few years, Venezuelans have been confronted with a serious socioeconomic crisis, affecting a lot of people throughout the country. Food is scarce, leading to serious numbers of weight loss, inflation rates rose to sky-high levels, resulting in the fact that the Venezuelan currency is almost useless. The deteriorated economic situation also led to extremely high crime rates, causing even more insecurity. These are just one of the mentioned reasons why Venezuelans decided to leave their country and to migrate to especially other Latin American countries. Colombia is the most popular destination, primarily because of the short distance from Venezuela. Venezuelans migrating to Colombia are enabled to guarantee a higher amount of income than in Venezuela, which leads to higher standards of living both for themselves as for their family and friends in their home country, by the means of remittances. This research sample and official migration numbers have shown that the amount of migrants present in Colombia is steadily increasing. The beginning of 2016 can be seen as the moment on which migration numbers increased as a result of the crisis, leading to a number of 232.776 (just) irregular migrants that entered the country in the year 2018. Majority of interviewees are single and leave the country alone, without any other family members (161.986). This number does not take into account that various migrants leave with friends, which is of importance as it can contribute a lot to integration. Most migrants are found around the border zones and in Bogotá. Another large number of migrants chose for Medellín. The capital of the province Antioquía, located in Valle del Aburrá, has shown to be an attractive alternative for migrants. Interviewees praised the city for its pleasant climate, its friendly and helpful inhabitants and the economic opportunities it offers.

The aim of this research was to analyze the factors that influence the integration of crisis-escaping Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

Firstly, it is important to mention that the legal statuses of migrants are the most important condition for integration. Positively, a large amount of migrants (40%) have double nationalities, both Venezuelan as Colombian. This Colombian citizenship is often obtained due to family member with Colombian roots. Having this status allows migrants to live in Colombia like any other Colombian, in the sense of acceding formal work, healthcare, education and other benefits. On the other side of the spectrum, a huge amount of migrants

are irregular, implicating they have no rights to access work, healthcare and execute other activities than just tourism. Being undocumented holds large implications for further integration in Medellín, as these services cannot be accessed. Whilst speaking of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín, it is important to take into account that there are several types of migrants in the city, with each different characteristics and implications for integration. Legal statuses should be seen as an important condition that can smoothen or limit the access to certain services, it is not the only factor influencing the integration process. A large number of migrants don't meet the legal requirements to work formally in Medellín, this pushes them towards the informal sector. This is primarily due to documentation, but this research has shown that interviewees sometimes prefer to work in the informal sector, as it enables them to gain more income than the rather low minimum wage salaries in Colombia. Economic motivations are the main driver to migrate. Interviewees left their home country out of pure necessities, so generally they accept work in *lo que sea* (whatever), even if this work does not match with their professional background in Venezuela or withholds them from accessing services like healthcare. Economic stability for themselves and their family members is of greater importance.

Access to healthcare and education on the other hand mainly confides on legal statuses. If migrants are not regularized, they can only attend healthcare services in case of emergency. This research has shown that some interviewees have been neglected in case of emergency, which is problematical considered that access to healthcare is a basic human right. There is a large group of interviewees that meet the legal requirements to access healthcare, but they are misinformed or have not registered themselves yet in the national health system. This lack of access mainly is a consequence of respondents' priorities. Upon arrival, respondents have put more effort in finding decent work and housing. Interviewees do not consider healthcare and education as their main priorities, although of great importance at a later stage. The Colombian government and other non-governmental organizations could certainly play a role in bridging the healthcare knowledge gap.

Secondly, social capital has a large impact on the access to work and housing. Majority of interviewees set forth that they already had family members or friends living in Medellín before arrival. This facilitated the access to work, as these friends and families supported them by searching for a work and by giving information. Concerning housing, there are

some online platform that offer housing. But, in practice housing is often arranged by the means of social contacts. These social contacts consist of strangers, family members or friends living in Medellín. Majority of interviewees share apartments with acquaintances, which enables them on the one hand to share the rent and on the other hand it facilitates them in accessing work, healthcare and education. Social capital mainly plays a large role in the case of irregular interviewees. Despite their legal status, social capital can empower them to still become active in different layers of Colombia's society.

Thirdly, personal characteristics like professional and educational background has a significant effect on integration. Interviewees that executed professions in Venezuela that require years of studying, like engineers and medical workers, not necessarily have more access to services, but they are better prepared and have more knowledge on how to search for opportunities. This attitude becomes visible in the knowledge they possess on the accession of certain services like healthcare, formal jobs and education.

The role of the Colombian government for the time being mainly focuses on administering legal support. The provision of the PEP is the biggest effort they made to support the integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. This permission allowed Venezuelans migrants to stay for a maximum period of two years in the country. While staying legally in the country, a number of services are accessible: formal work, healthcare and education. Humanitarian support has also been offered by the Colombian government, but this aid is mainly directed towards the border zones, where the situation is most urgent. Another important recent development is the execution of the national census. The main result of the census was that 442.462 irregular migrants are currently residing in Colombia. Migración Colombia declared that these irregular migrants will be temporarily regularized, providing them with access to basic services. This implicates that access to work, housing, healthcare and education will become less dependent on legal statuses and that social capital and personal characteristics will become more influential in the integration process of Venezuelan migrants in Medellín.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Introductory questions

- What is your age?
- What is your sex?
- What is your marital status?
- Do you have any children (how many)?
- With whom did you arrive in Medellín?
- Have you been in Medellín before?
- In which city in Venezuela were you residing before coming to Medellín?
- Have you visited other Colombian cities before migrating to Medellín (if yes, which)?
- When did you arrive in Medellín (in years)?
- What was your main occupation in Venezuela?
- What is your main occupation in Medellín?

Motivations to migrate

- What were your main reasons to leave Venezuela?
- Why did you choose to migrate to Medellín specifically?
- For how long are you intending to stay in Medellín?

Access to work, housing, healthcare and education

Work

- Are you currently working in Medellín?
- How have you been able to obtain a job (formal or informal)?
- Why did you choose to do this work?
- Did discrimination play a role while searching for a job?
- Do you feel that your work and study experience in Venezuela is being recognized in Medellín?
- How many hours per week are you working?
- Is your current salary sufficient to make a living in Medellín?

Housing

- Were you able to obtain a residence in Medellín?
- Which difficulties did you face while searching for a place to stay?
- What type of residence are you currently residing?
- In which neighborhood are you currently residing?
- To what kind of modes of transport do you have access to?

HealthCare

- Do you currently have access to healthcare in Medellín?
- Do you have a health insurance which can cover your health expenses?

Education

- If applicable, do you or your children have access to education in Medellín?
- To which extent is your study experience in Venezuela recognized in Medellín?
- Are you or your child currently studying at a private or public university?
- Has there been a certain policy that facilitates study opportunities for Venezuelans in Colombia?
- Have you been able to get access to scholarships?

Social capital

- Did you already know people in Medellín before you came here?
- Which people provided you help in integrating into Medellín?
- To which extent did you receive support from other Venezuelans?
- To which extent did you receive support from Colombians?
- In which way did they support you?
- Have you been part of any social network with other Venezuelans in Medellín?
- How did you get access to this social network?
- In which way did this social network support you?

Government and NGOs

- Did you receive support from other associations/organizations that aim to facilitate integration of Venezuelans in Medellín?
- To which extent did the Colombian government support you financially?
- To which extent did you receive support from other non-governmental organizations?
- What do you think of the stance of the Colombian government towards Venezuelan migrants?

Acceptance

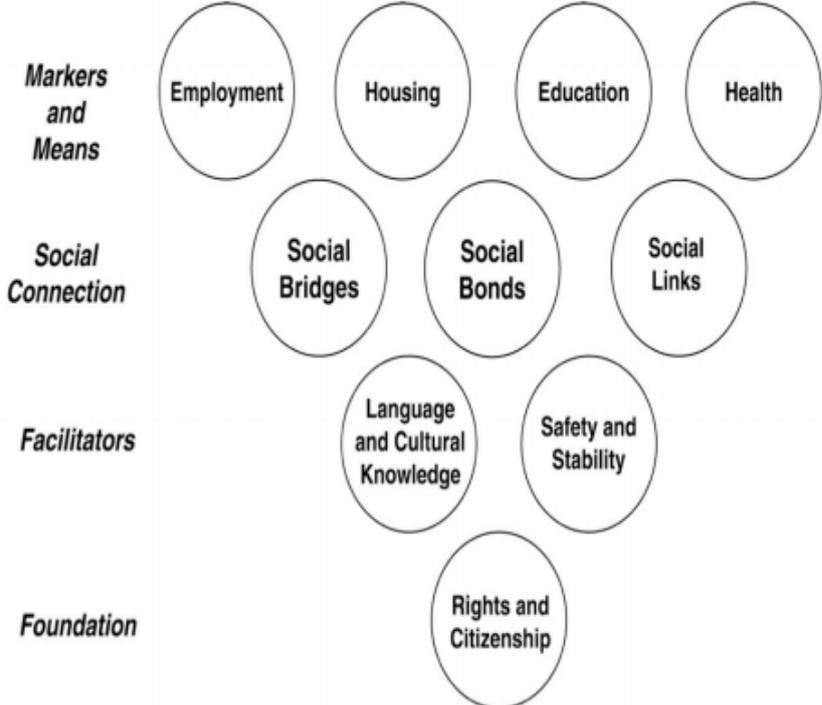
- How do you feel regarding acceptance of local Colombians in Medellín?

Satisfaction with migration

- In which way did your economic situation changed?
- In which way did your overall well-being changed?
- Did migrating to Medellín meet your expectations?

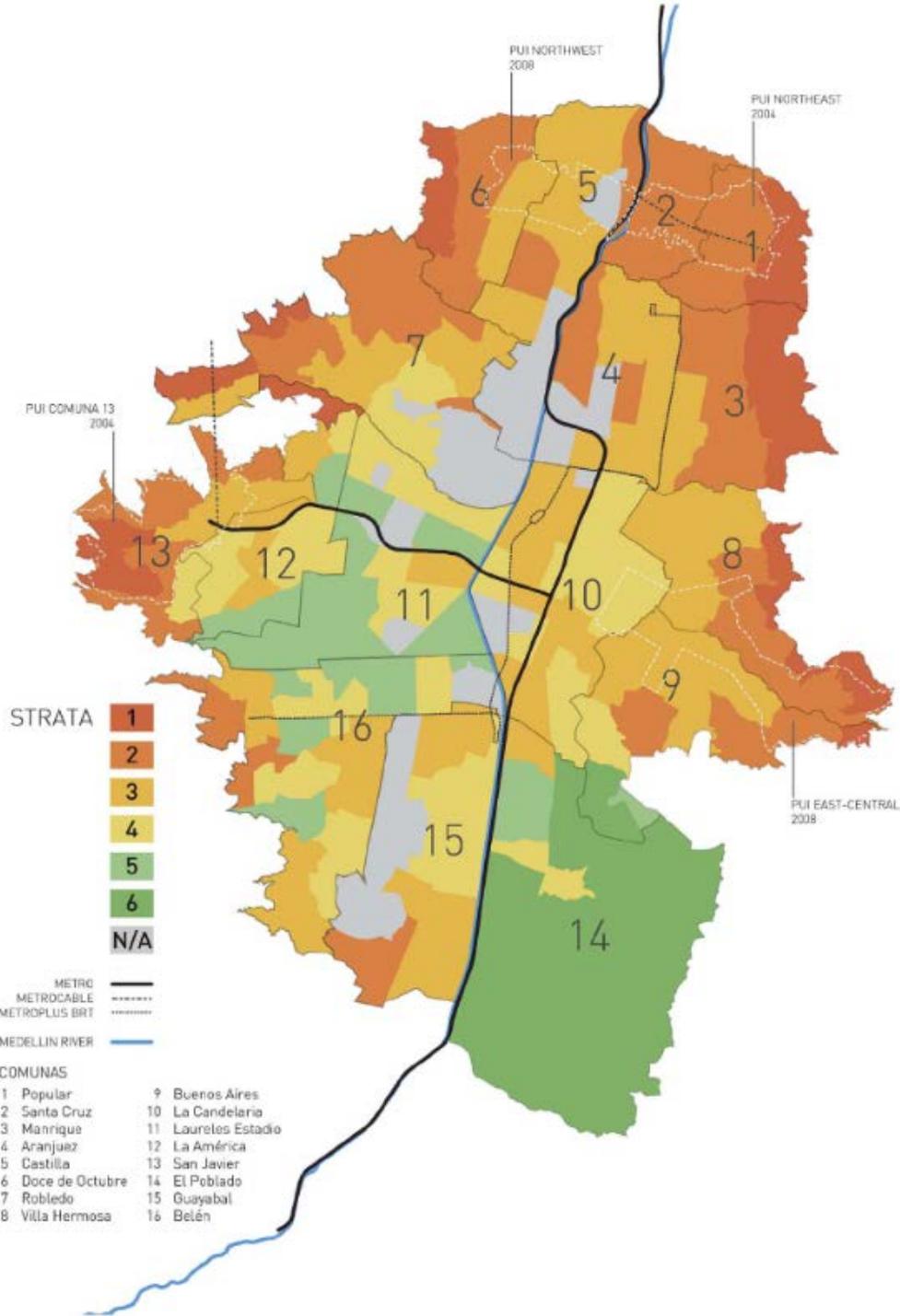
Appendix 2: Conceptual Framework Age & Strang (2008)

Figure 2-1 Conceptual Framework of Immigrant Integration

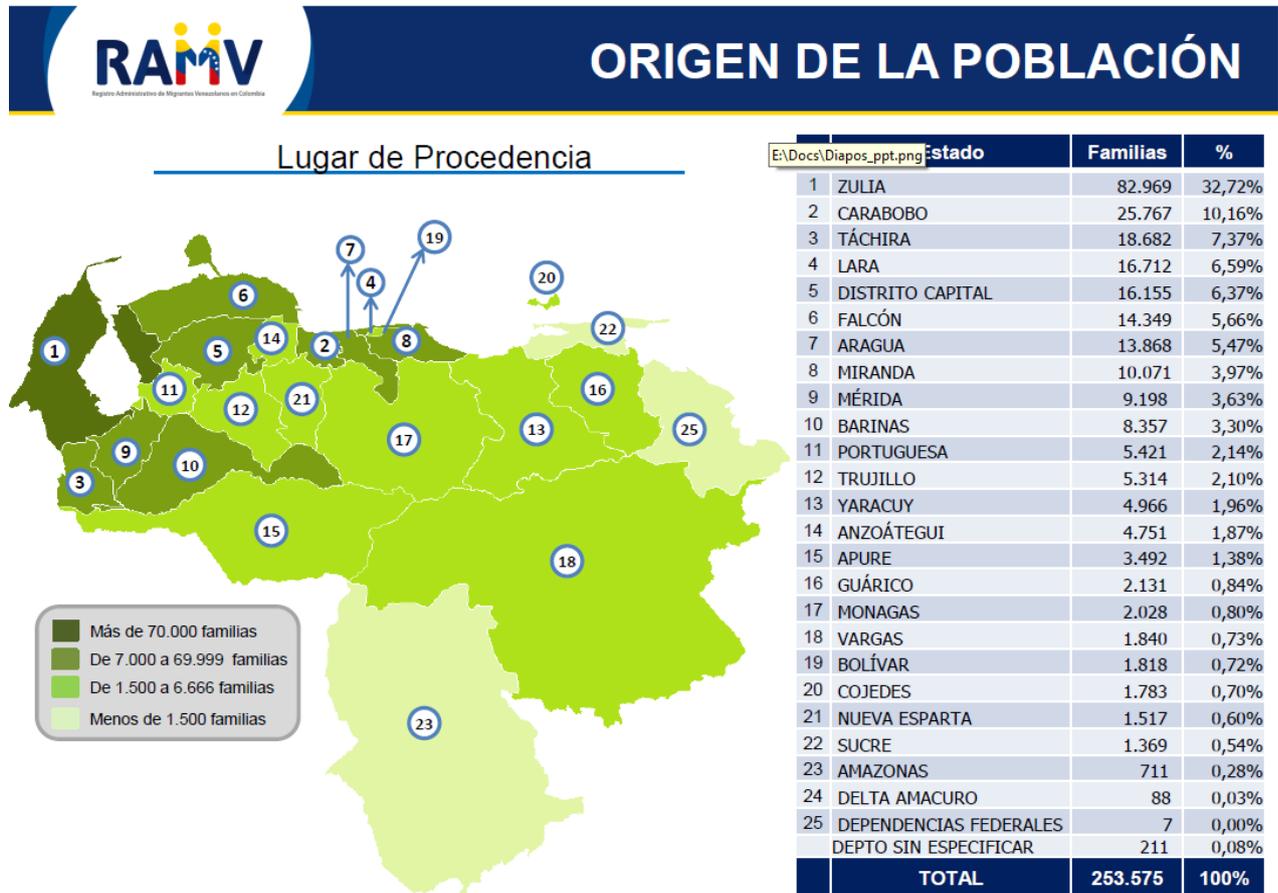


Source: Ager and Strang (2008: 170)

Appendix 3: Strata in Medellín



Appendix 4.1: Background irregular migrant population



Appendix 4.2: Number of irregular migrant registrations for census



INFORMACIÓN DEL REGISTRO

| No | Departamento | Familias | Personas | % |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1 | NORTE DE SANTANDER | 49.237 | 82.286 | 18,60% |
| 2 | LA GUAJIRA | 39.291 | 74.874 | 16,92% |
| | BOGOTÁ DC | 28.840 | 43.483 | 9,83% |
| 3 | ATLÁNTICO | 22.652 | 42.771 | 9,67% |
| 4 | MAGDALENA | 15.413 | 30.688 | 6,94% |
| 5 | ARAUCA | 16.492 | 26.261 | 5,94% |
| 6 | BOLÍVAR | 12.138 | 24.395 | 5,51% |
| 7 | ANTIOQUIA | 12.087 | 21.850 | 4,94% |
| 8 | CESAR | 11.349 | 20.148 | 4,55% |
| 9 | VALLE DEL CAUCA | 10.470 | 16.572 | 3,75% |
| 10 | CUNDINAMARCA | 7.201 | 11.517 | 2,60% |
| 11 | SANTANDER | 6.639 | 10.832 | 2,45% |
| 12 | CÓRDOBA | 3.397 | 6.165 | 1,39% |
| 13 | SUCRE | 2.342 | 5.094 | 1,15% |
| 14 | CASANARE | 3.161 | 4.547 | 1,03% |
| 15 | BOYACÁ | 2.330 | 3.822 | 0,86% |
| 16 | META | 1.880 | 3.092 | 0,70% |
| 17 | RISARALDA | 1.602 | 2.588 | 0,58% |
| 18 | TOLIMA | 1.110 | 1.715 | 0,39% |
| 19 | HUILA | 894 | 1.530 | 0,35% |
| 20 | VICHADA | 861 | 1.416 | 0,32% |
| 21 | CALDAS | 893 | 1.255 | 0,28% |
| 22 | QUINDIO | 700 | 1.171 | 0,26% |
| 23 | CAUCA | 622 | 1.084 | 0,24% |
| 24 | NARIÑO | 662 | 1.045 | 0,24% |
| 25 | GUAINÍA | 471 | 1.042 | 0,24% |
| 26 | PUTUMAYO | 591 | 890 | 0,20% |
| 27 | CHOCÓ | 136 | 210 | 0,05% |
| 28 | GUAVIARE | 74 | 76 | 0,02% |
| 29 | CAQUETÁ | 35 | 35 | 0,008% |
| 30 | AMAZONAS | 5 | 8 | 0,002% |
| TOTAL | | 253.575 | 442.462 | 100% |



9