



LANDSCAPES OF BELONGING

The Negotiation of Citizenship in Dominican Urban Life
Worlds between Dominicans and Haitian and
Venezuelan Migrants

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Abstract: Across the Dominican Republic and beyond, the politics of belonging and citizenship continue to breed stigmatization, xenophobia and social exclusion. The following ethnography, based on a three-month research period in 2019 in the Dominican Republic, explores the negotiation of belonging and citizenship between the triangular relation of Dominican, Haitian and Venezuelan residents in the urban landscapes of Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital. This paper discusses how repertoires of belonging are informed by normative ideas of modernity, nation and race and how these hegemonic imaginaries are translated and copied onto the urban social fabric, materializing in every day interactions, in spatial regimes as well as encoded onto physical bodies. Furthermore, this work captures voices and perspectives opposing the dominant canon of belonging within the *barrio* and beyond. This work demonstrates that the social fabric within the studied urban spaces is defined by a vastly differing positionality of Haitian and Venezuelan migrant subjects. Haitian and Venezuelan subjects are integrated into racial and modernity hierarchies as two opposite poles, in which the Haitian subject is allocated at the bottom bestowed with the role of the African and primitive anti-thesis to Dominican ideas of belonging whereas the Venezuelan subject is idealized as the white and Hispanic alter ego to the Dominican nation. Thus, the unequal triangular relation between the three actors, Dominicans, Haitians, and Venezuelans constitute a stress field, which unveils and catalyses the modes, in which urban ideas of Dominican belonging and citizenship are negotiated as well as contested.

Key words: Citizenship, Repertoires of Belonging, Identity, Race, National Imaginaries, Migrant Subjects

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1. Introduction

Our age of globalization is marked by flows of capital, goods and information transcending beyond the confines of national borders, connecting the world to an ever-broadening marketplace. This accelerating pace of global flows has however not translated into free movement for humans around the globe. Thus, transnational migration remains vastly restricted and repressed, reflecting the stark global inequalities that continue to exist in our age. Over the past decades, “mass migration” has become the theme that has sparked conflict and polarized societies, catapulting it to an increasingly crucial political and social question in numerous societies around the globe.

Transnational migration becomes a powerful theme in the social and political arena as it frequently translates into the confrontation of the host society with the migrant population, provoking the renegotiation of fundamental questions of national identity, belonging and citizenship in relation to the “other”. Thus, contemporary trajectories of transnational migration and movement alter the very nature of naturalized ideas of national identity and citizenship as new actors, sites and scales are constantly produced and come into being (Isin 2009, 370). In other words, the introduction of migrant subjects into social settings challenge monolithic assumptions about national identity, transforming ideas of citizenship and belonging into contested stress fields. Citizenship needs to be understood not merely as legal status but also as practice in the realm of the social. Thus, citizenship is essentially a relation of self-making as well as being made, a process which is entangled within webs of power linked to the nation state as well as civil society (Ong 1996, 738). Subsequently, exclusion and inclusion are also negotiated within repertoires that lie outside of the official and formal realm; however remain under the shadow of hegemonic notions of belonging and non-belonging in cultural and racial terms (Ong 1996, 738). Subsequently, being a citizen is a process of negotiation, which is informed by normative criteria of race, nation and civilization, rooted in the deep and lasting impact of the colonial encounter (Kapur 2007, 539).

The following ethnography explores the fundamental themes of belonging and citizenship by zooming into micro social spaces in the urban landscapes of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (DR) and by analysing the triangular relation of Dominican, Haitian and Venezuelan subjects. The Dominican Republic is a nation that barely receives international attention and is in the foreign and western gaze frequently reduced to the stereotypical

tropical paradise consistent of palm trees, beaches and sex (Cabezas 2009, 3). However, the Dominican Republic is also a nation born out of colonialism that remains riddled by socio-economic inequalities and poverty, despite stark economic growth (Gregory 2012, 28). Additionally, the Caribbean nation receives extensive transnational migratory flows, most notably of Haitian and Venezuelan migrants. Haitian migrants have been present in the Dominican Republic for the past one hundred years. Initially employed as cheap labour in the Dominican sugar industry, nowadays Haitian migrants continue to be largely allocated in the lower echelons of the labour market mainly in the agricultural sector as well as in the informal sector of urban areas (Wooding 2004, 14). Thus Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic translates to a constant flow of cheap and perceived compliant labour. Haitians make up around 6% or approximately one million of the Dominican population, many of them being second or third generation Haitians (Refworld 2018). However, formal citizenship is frequently denied to Haitian-descendants making the risk of deportation and abuse by authorities a constant reality. In recent years, the country has also experienced the rapid influx of Venezuelan migrants. Scholarship on Venezuelan migrants in the Dominican Republic is a fairly understudied field as the entry of great numbers of Venezuelans into the Dominican Republic is a current phenomenon. Similar to many countries in the region, the Dominican Republic has become a harbour for Venezuelans leaving their crisis-crippled home country. Over the past five years, the number of Venezuelans in the Dominican Republic increased by 650% with approximately 26.000 Venezuelans present in the DR by 2017, making them the second largest immigrant group after Haitians (ONE 2018). Both migrant groups share transnational migration trajectories as well as urban spaces with Dominicans, where multiple life worlds overlap and merge through encountering and interacting with one another.

This thesis will explore how belonging and citizenship is negotiated between the three groups of Dominicans, Haitians and Venezuelans within everyday life in the urban spaces of Santo Domingo. This work is based on an ethnographic research conducted over a three-month period, spanning from the beginning of February until mid May 2019 in the neighbourhood of San Carlos in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. San Carlos is a *barrio* adjacent to the old colonial quarter of Santo Domingo and a neighbourhood, which reflects urban life worlds where Dominican residents as well as Haitian and Venezuelan migrants carve out livelihoods for themselves and their social surroundings, sharing relations and spaces. The core of this research constitutes the following central research question. *How do*

repertoires of belonging and citizenship inform the negotiation of exclusion and inclusion of Haitian and Venezuelan migrants among Dominicans in everyday life?

Questions of citizenship and belonging in social structures marked by transnational migration are of immense societal relevance. The negotiation of belonging and citizenship is particularly interesting in urban spaces as migrant populations and host society frequently share everyday interactions and relations, marked by multiple repertoires ranging from racialization, national tropes to strategies of resistance. Urban space is an essential arena, in which multiple migratory trajectories overlap with the host society, making them dynamic sites of negotiation of belonging in “lived space” (Holston and Appadurai 2015, 189). Racialization remains, particularly in postcolonial societies, a fundamental element within the national imaginary and identity and becomes an essential element of the hegemonic repertoire of belonging, informing social systems of in and exclusion. Resistance is another essential aspect, engaged in the negotiation of citizenship and belonging, as it holds the potential to redefine and claim ideas of inclusion and citizenship.

Subsequently, this research aims to contribute to the body of work on citizenship and belonging by exploring how Dominicans, Haitians and Venezuelans interact and negotiate social positions and produce meaning of inclusion and exclusion in everyday non-official and non-institutional spaces and practices by looking through an anthropological lens. Furthermore, the scientific relevance of this research is spear headed by the study of the triangular relation of Venezuelans, Haitians and Dominicans in urban landscapes as the study of the positionality of Venezuelan migrants in Dominican society is novel and thus contributes in filling a research gap.

The research project was conducted on the basis of an ethnographic methodology, thus ethnography informed theory along the research and the writing process.

The dimension of the ‘field’ was a comprised geographic area, concentrating around a few blocks of the neighbourhood with the so-called back yard *Quinto Patio* as the geographical centre of the research activities. Additionally, the ‘field’ span around the area of the daily market *Mercado Modelo* also called *Pequeño Haití*, adjacent to the blocks around *Quinto Patio*. The idea of urban space, where everyday politics of making a living are intrinsically fused with politics of belonging and happen within a web of local power relations and a multiplicity of political, cultural and historical trajectories was central in constructing the research ‘field’ (Low 2009, 22).

Access to research participants and social relations were primarily forged through my role as a neighbour in *Quinto Patio* and in the process of me increasingly becoming a constant figure in the neighbourhood through frequenting social spaces such as corner stores, the gym, the market and the street in itself. By frequenting the same places and interacting with the same people, I was able to establish social relations with increasing levels of familiarity and trust over the course of my three-month stay in the neighbourhood, in the *Quinto Patio* and the adjacent streets. Furthermore, I got into contact with participants through the snowball effect of participants and friends introducing me to additional people, giving me the opportunity to extend my network of contacts.

Beyond the research participants in the field, I sought to include the voices of those involved in Afro-movement activism outside San Carlos with the intention of reflecting local voices and perspectives concerning resistance to hegemonic imaginaries of belonging and claims to citizenship.

The ethnographic material, applied for this work, has been gathered and transcribed in a three-month period between beginning February 2019 to mid May 2019. The ethnographic sources comprise of field observations, informal conversations and verbal interactions, preserved in field- notes and diary as well as formal interviews, conducted with the help of audio recordings. Subsequently, this ethnographic research applied several ethnographic methods, which supplement each other and allow for a profound and thorough look into life worlds and social fabric in the 'field'. At the core of the used methods lays 'Participant Observation' (PO). PO stretched throughout the research as observing while participating in everyday activities of the neighbourhood was essential in grasping a deeper understanding of patterns of everyday social interactions and gaining glimpses into the emic perspectives of the research subjects (Bocogni and Scrooten 2018, 211). Subsequently, PO allowed me to explore the entangled life worlds within their contexts by avoiding major deviations of the subject's behaviour for the sake of the researcher's gaze (O'Reilly 2012, 92). Spaces and activities I participated in were typically banal, such as engaging in the everyday chores of the yard such as washing, cleaning and chatting on the stairs or drinking café and smoking cigarettes at a stand on the market street. Therefore, I generally took on a role of 'moderate participation' where I was at the 'scene of action' however only occasionally actively participating (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 23). Thus, my primary approach to PO in the 'field' was to remain in the backseat as an observer and listener rather than an active agent.

Moreover, an essential method used in the pursuit of this research was interviews. In addition to planned and recorded interviews, a valuable source of information was collected

through informal conversation and to a lesser degree opportunistic chats. The format of informal conversations was often the most appropriate approach as to introduce and speak about certain, often-delicate themes without enforcing too much pressure on the participant. Furthermore, the open ended and free flowing set up of informal conversations allowed the participant to utter opinions and convictions without me channelling and influencing the outcome too much into one direction through pre-planned questions (O'Reilly 2012, 15).

Nonetheless, in addition to open and informal conversations, the research also entailed recorded interviews on the basis of topic lists. This series of interviews were conducted towards the end of the research period once a solid relationship marked by trust was established between the participants and me. The recordings of these interviews are valuable supplements to the previously discussed methods of data acquisition as they allow the in depth exploration of certain topics as well as recordings allow exact citations without reconstructing the participant's account. Through these interviews, oral and life histories were evoked, adding contextual knowledge, beyond the pre-arranged and therefore limited research topics, allowing insights into opinions, feelings and thoughts reflecting the profoundness and irreducibility of the human experience (O'Reilly 2012, 126). The participants conducted the interviews with oral consent, agreeing to audio recordings as well as the use of the information for the purpose of this research. Moreover, source-material research and textual analysis were part of this research's methodology, including the collection of image materials, information materials, social media messages, etc.

Furthermore, carrying out this ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic as a white European man generated specific positional and ethical questions. Thus, when embarking on the research period I regarded it as imperative to reflect on the knotted histories of anthropology with European colonial projects around the globe as well as my own role, fitting the "emblematic racially privileged male anthropologist" (Berry et. al 2017, 536). Hence, I was aware of the very real trap that I as a white European ethnographer was prone to reproduce hierarchies of power, dating back to the colonial encounter (Berry et. Al 2017, 537).

As a white European in the 'field', my presence was frequently met with confusion and curiosity, however during my stay I was gradually integrated into the social and ethnic categories present in the *barrio*. In San Carlos, despite its close proximity to the tourist zone *Zona Colonial*, Europeans and North Americans are rare sights and almost completely absent. Consequently, I was seldom identified as a white European or American but frequently categorized as Venezuelan. Thus, my own role and position was often highly

context and space dependent. In my immediate environment I was able to introduce myself as a German anthropology student. Subsequently, particularly in the first weeks I found myself bestowed with the role of the ‘visitor’, not fully entrusted by the community to be able to navigate the social codes of the neighbourhood. Over the course of the research, the position of the ‘visitor’ transformed gradually to a more ‘naturalized presence’ in my immediate environment.

Furthermore, my position in the ‘field’ was essentially determined by my whiteness and the privilege attached to it. As chapter four will discuss in depth, a fair hue and straight hair are not only widely perceived signs of beauty but also symbolic currency in the extremely racialized social landscapes in which I was present. Subsequently, my whiteness as well as foreigner status considerably determined my position in the social hierarchies and assigned a highly privileged position to me. Apart from those positions and roles bestowed on me in the context of the deeply racist Dominican society, I actively tried to determine my own role and position as a foreigner, a researcher, a neighbour and friend, trying to avoid further power asymmetries between the research participants and myself and ‘normalizing’ my peculiar presence. Ethical conduct during my stay in the ‘field’ as well as the writing process was crucial for this work. Furthermore, certain names of research participants are changed in order to obscure and make certain identities and relations anonymous.

This thesis will be constructed around five separate chapters. This introduction will be followed by three ethnographic chapters, which form the core of this work as well as a conclusion. The second chapter explores the “social and spatial landscapes of belonging”. This chapter consists of a descriptive account of the research field and the relevant actors as well as a contextualization of the socio-economic positionality of the field in the wider city of Santo Domingo. Repertoires of belonging as well as the manner in which Haitian and Venezuelan subjects step in and out of ideas of modernity and civilization will be elaborated. The third chapter will explore racialization and the construction of racial belonging in everyday life. Concepts of negrophobia and anti-Haitianism will be introduced and discussed within the context of the construction of the Dominican imaginary. Bodily appearance and its manipulations as tactics of performing Dominican identity will also assume precedence in this chapter as well as the Venezuelan subject as a master trope of whiteness. The fourth and final ethnographic chapter will focus on resistance and strategies of survival. The chapter will start out by looking at alternative imaginaries among Haitian research participants and will then expand the scope by exploring the Afro-movement as an agent, claiming citizenship and redefining blackness. This chapter will conclude by looking at further organized forms of

resistance of Haitian-Dominicans as well as Venezuelan relation to resistance. The final chapter will contain the conclusion; contextualizing findings of this work as well as suggesting fields and questions for further research.

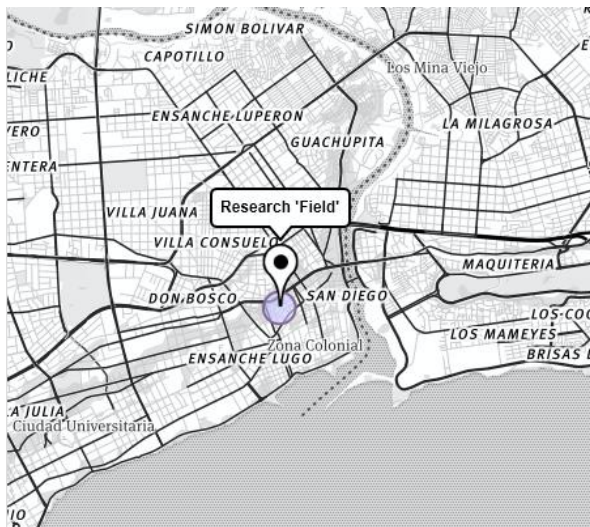
Chapter 2. The Spatial and Social Landscapes of Belonging

San Carlos is one of the oldest *barrios* in Santo Domingo and lies in the heart of the city on the soft hills above the old colonial city. Two major streets run through the neighbourhood, the *Avenida Mexico* and the *27*, cutting connections between the eastern part of the capital to the western part. The streets are filled with trucks and cars, pouring into the city as well as buses or *guaguas* and collective taxis or *carritos*, which find their start or ending point in San Carlos.

The central location makes San Carlos a hub for commercial activities of all sorts. Two commercial streets *Avenida Mella* and *Calle Duarte* are lined with large super markets, jewellery stores, department stores and apparel shops. The central traffic passages of the quarter are bordered with large concrete apartment blocks. The labyrinth of blocks, which fills in the space between these major traffic connections are riddled with buildings. Most of the buildings are one to three stories high and made out of concrete and painted in bright colours. These wafting concrete structures are interrupted by ornate facades dating back to the first half of the 20's century as well as wooden houses with tin roofs, squeezed behind the sidewalks.

San Carlos has various faces. The neighbourhood is home to a humble middle class; working as public school teachers, nurses or small business owners. The quarter also harbours a bustling informal sector of street vendors and all kinds of services. Furthermore, San Carlos has gained a fairly seedy reputation of being a *barrio caliente*, a "hot neighbourhood" referring to vibrating, rough and dangerous parts of the city.

This research zooms into a few blocks of San Carlos, squeezed between the two avenues, *Avenida Mella* and *Avenida Mexico*. The narrow streets are lined with repair shops, tiny cafeterias, clothing stores, including *colmados* or corner stores, which also serve as bars and social hubs of the neighbourhood. On the sidewalks, washing and sewing machines are paraded in the hope to be sold whilst stands are set up, selling empanadas and juice. At the corners wait *motoconchos*, motorbike taxis for clients, backgrounded by streets wrapped in clouds of exhaust fumes and all kind of noises.



1. Map locating the research 'field'



2. Map showing the Market area and *Quinto patio*

The *Quinto Patio* is a yard concealed inside a block. A small alleyway made out of rubble leads from the street into the yard, which is home to around thirty families. People provide accounts of the yard's history as an epicentre of crime and the underworld, home to gangsters, assassins and pimps. The neighbours agree that in comparison to the past the *Quinto Patio* has become a “sanctuary, a cemetery” with more unity and solidarity compared to the old days.

Some residents of the *Quinto Patio* have lived in the yard their whole life. Many of them have migrated from the countryside to the capital, especially from the poor southern regions. Others came to San Carlos from other *barrios* of Santo Domingo such as *Los Mina* or *Guachupita*, neighbourhoods, which are marked by poverty and delinquency. Hence, for many living in *Quinto Patio*, coming to San Carlos translated into the search for opportunity and social upward mobility. However, most of the people of the *Quinto Patio* lived humble lives, many of them not having fixed employment or stable incomes, relying rather on offering domestic services, working in construction, *motoconchos* or as *banqueras*. Some of the residents received governmental support such as food stamps and contributions to utility costs and schooling material. Furthermore, a large part of the residents of the *Quinto Patio* ceased in paying rent or utility costs following the deaths of their respective landlords. Subsequently, the yard was home to families and persons with differing incomes, resources and living conditions. The majority however, disposes of very limited resources and account for the humble people of the neighbourhood.

Only one block away from *Quinto Patio* lays the market. *Mercado Modelo*, which was often referred to as *Pequeño Haití*, held an even worse reputation than San Carlos as a

whole. The market spans around a few blocks where all sorts of goods are offered daily. Towards *Avenida Mella* the pungent smell, the pack of stray dogs and the swarms of flies hovering over the innards tossed in the street indicated the spot of the butchers. Further up were the tiny stores and stands of the *botanicas*, selling herbs, candles and all kinds of ingredients used for natural medicine and practices related to magic, *21 divisiones* and *vodou*. Following the main market road, little stores were packed with beauty products and stands sell coffee, snacks, and vegetables. Fighting cocks were presented in wire cages on the sidewalks and on big blankets, everything from used shoes to old radios and broken watches are laid out. Women sat under parasols offering their services of braiding hair, cutting nails and pedicures. Behind the blocks, making up the market, were large warehouses filled with sacks of onions or construction materials. In front of the buildings are frequently parked the luxury cars of the *patrones*, the bosses, who own businesses and stores around the market. The Mercedes or Porsche SUV's are a bizarre sight in the neighbourhood, which is distinct by necessity and hustle.

2.1 Citizens at the Margins

This chapter opened by briefly introducing the neighbourhood of San Carlos and the research relevant sites. However, before delving into the spatial and social relations between the research subjects, it is necessary to sketch out the wider socio-spatial context in which the neighbourhood and its residents are situated within.

It had become part of my morning to stop by Vido's empanada cart on the market. Vido was busy rolling out the dough and keeping the sizzling oil at the right temperature. Vido has sold empanadas for thirty years and knows everybody who passes by, by name and is with his joking and cheery manner some sort of local institution on the market. I was waiting with three others for the empanadas to be pulled out of the oil pot when three pick up trucks came out of nowhere racing down the street. On the back stood heavily armed police officers packed in bulletproof vests and firmly holding assault rifles. The white pickup trucks were painted with big letters reading "DICAN" – "Dirección Central Antinarcóticos". The first two cars of the anti-narcotics squad roared off while the third car stopped in front of Vido's stand. Everybody in the street stopped, turning their heads around. Three policemen jumped off the platform and walked to a man, who was vending vegetables on a plastic cover on the other side of the street. They commanded the vendor under the eyes of the audience to put his hands up against the wall and began to search his pockets. Vido's forehead fell into wrinkles, staring grimly towards the scene and yelling *abusador*. Vido proclaimed to the crowd around him that the police would always abuse the working people arguing sternly that the drug squad

did not search for drugs but for money. The policemen returned to their truck and raced off leaving the humiliated vendor and the heated crowd behind. Vido threw his arm towards the nearby presidential palace, blaming the government for the daily subjugation of the people.
(Vignette, field notes)

The small vignette above illustrates the abuse and the mistreatment of the working people and residents of the neighbourhood by governmental authorities. The police and military, which are frequently patrolling the area armed with assault rifles and shotguns, are the most visible governmental presence in the quarter. The police and military presence, intended to provide a counterbalance to crime and violence is however often perceived and experienced as abusive force, with vendors and residents fearing the extortion for money. Thus, I observed how people and friends acted seemingly careful and lowered their voices when police were approaching. The highly militarized and oppressive policing present in San Carlos stands in stark contrast to the tourist area *Zona Colonial*, which lays only one kilometre away and where the police are branded as ‘friendly helper’ without rifles and camouflage, which is substituted for blue and white uniforms.

Another actor perceived as a rather oppressive force than a support system is the *Ayuntamiento*, the municipal government. The vendors are obliged to pay a fee, which is collected every morning by representatives of the local government. The fee is allocated to clean up the market and remove the trash. However, vendors told me that the *Ayuntamiento* does often not remove any trash from the streets at all. Hence, the fee is frequently perceived as theft and abuse facilitated through governmental structures.

Furthermore, running water is only sporadically allocated to the *barrio*. During my stay, the country experienced a severe drought and the quarter was left without access to running water for two weeks. In the following months, water was serviced into the ‘barrio’ only two days per week while the more affluent neighbourhoods were free of any water shortages in this period. Subsequently, residents of San Carlos and particularly of the market suffered under severe neglect and abuse from governmental representatives and services.

Moreover, San Carlos’ residents are frequently framed as second-class citizens and socially disposable members of society as the context of long lasting elite and middle-class anxieties about the urban poor, interwoven with the discourse of the neo-liberal city, criminalizes and delegitimizes the urban poor (Leal Martínez 2016, 542). Santo Domingo’s urban landscape is transforming rapidly. Sprouting securitized apartment towers and malls are the fruit of neoliberal ‘urban renewal projects’, designed to transform large parts of the

inner city into ‘safe and liveable’ spaces for the educated middle- and upper class (Leal Martínez 2016, 539). *Barrios* like San Carlos constitute the anti-thesis to the promotion of neo-liberal urbanism that includes the commodification and development of the inner city. Marginalized parts of the city are stigmatized as being chaotic, plagued by street vendors and petty crime as well as pollution (Leal Martínez, 542). This image is frequently promoted and reproduced by media as the following quote from a local newspaper shows.

“A space of overcrowding, of unhealthiness, of violation of public spaces that combined show a chaotic panorama that worsens over time. ...The city council collects solid waste regularly, but due to the large production of garbage in the area are the streets almost always dirty.” (Diario Libre, 2018)

The above quote extracted from the article “*El Pequeño Haití*”: *una zona de caos y desorden en la ciudad*”, published July 2018, in one of the most influential daily newspapers, rearticulates the assigned positionality of the neighbourhood as outside of the acceptable and legitimate category of urban living. Subsequently, San Carlos and particularly *Mercado Modelo* are stigmatized as no-go spaces where rules of civility are apparently invalid, translating into exclusion of the inhabitants from modern and neo-liberal conceptions of citizenship. This marginalization is mirrored by the widespread disenchantment with politics expressed by the neighbourhood’s residents, which frequently articulated feelings of distrust, neglect and exploitation towards the state authorities resulting in apathy towards political engagement. Hence, when this research explores belonging within San Carlos’ social worlds, it is imperative to perceive the ‘field’, which this research describes, as located at the social margins of the urban society of Santo Domingo.

2.2 The Spatial and Social Anatomy of the Neighbourhood

After briefly exploring the marginalization of the neighbourhood and its residents in the wider scale of the city in the previous fragment, this section will dive into the exploration of the social and spatial fabric within the ‘field’.

“Look, here it’s very different to the countryside because in the *campo* for example you need whatever, they help you out that’s showing solidarity, right? When I need a glass of water for example and I tell you give me a glass of water, in the *campo* they’d give it to you. But here it’s not the same, if you don’t have the money for water, you’re not gonna drink [laughter]. No not here ...” (Yaneiry, interview excerpt).

Yaneiry is a young woman who works in a *banca* across *Quinto Patio*, selling lotto tickets and phone balances. Yaneiry shares her story of her journey to San Carlos from the *campo* the countryside in search of better work opportunities with many residents. The quote above echoes one face of the everyday life in the neighbourhood, where stolen chicken and clothes picked from the washing line are as much a harsh reality as armed robbery and street fights, where distrust often serves as protection and theft as a strategy of survival.

However, the neighbourhood is also the stage where social life, solidarity and overall community take place. Water shortages or power blackouts were bridged by infrastructures created through solidarity and collective efforts by the neighbours themselves. In the two weeks without running water in mid February 2019, big concrete water reservoirs inserted into the ground were opened up for everybody in the need of water. Buckets, canisters and small portable pumps were lent out and a network of hoses was quickly put together allowing everybody to fill their barrels and tanks with water. In the afternoons, a crowd of women gathered in *Quinto Patio* to play bingo and in the night times the speakers were turned up and neighbours sat together smoking hookah. The *colmado* across the street not only provided the street with groceries and household products but was also a spot where people congregated, sharing bottles of beer and soda. Thus, the neighbourhood translates also into a system of spaces filled with everyday encounters and interactions, constituting the locations where human consciousness and experience as well as social relationships are taking spatial and material forms (Low 2009, 26).



3. Impressions of *Quinto Patio*. Photos by the author.

Dominicans, Venezuelans and Haitians live in close proximity. However, Haitians are noticeably segregated in a sense that Haitians almost exclusively occupy several micro-spaces, such as buildings and corners. The market forms the centre of the Haitian community in the neighbourhood, where Haitians and Haitian-descendants exclusively inhabit most of the apartment buildings. A side road of the market harbours a Haitian Baptist church and on the main market street, nearly all stands and stores owned by Haitians, often catering to Haitian clients by offering Haitian groceries, Haitian rum and cigarettes as well as Haitian music and films.



4. Impressions of the market. Photos by the author.

However, Haitian spaces are not limited to the immediate market. Thus, Haitian micro spaces can be also found one to three blocks away from the market. Two of the buildings that make up the block of *Quinto Patio*, are entirely occupied by Haitian residents. In addition to this, an inconspicuous facade across the street stands a hostel catering to Haitian merchants, with a kitchen serving Haitian food. Accordingly, even though the market and the adjacent blocks are inhabited by Dominicans and Haitians alike, segregation between the two groups remains pertinent to an extent, as micro-spaces especially apartment buildings are often exclusively Haitian and others being exclusively Dominican. Phara, a 26-year-old Haitian woman lives in one of the large buildings on the main market street, which is exclusively home to Haitians and their children.

“You already know that I am from Haiti. I am born in a place in a village called *Jacmel* and with three I went to live in Port au Prince, the capital. I wasn’t with my mother because she was a merchant ... She lived here and went to Haiti to buy [goods]. With six I came here during vacation and then I came and stayed, I always went to school here.” (Phara, interview excerpt)

A large number of Haitians and Haitian descendants living around the market share a journey similar to Phara’s mother or Phara’s, having come to San Carlos as traders or merchants and eventually staying, opening businesses and starting families. The first Haitians arrived in the sixties and seventies in the area as merchants occupying the adjacent blocks that continue to harbour a large transient population of merchants and workers, traveling back and forth between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Despite migration histories spanning over generations, the majority is not in possession of a *cédula* the national identification card and relies on visas or remain undocumented. Together with her mother, Phara runs a small stand selling coffee and empanadas. She had to leave her studies in dentistry as the university fees for Haitian foreigners became unaffordable. Phara’s story exemplifies the position of many Haitian migrants and Haitian descendants in the neighbourhood, who lack many privileges Dominicans hold and whose everyday life is marked by humble living conditions or necessity.

The number of Venezuelans is by far less compared to Haitians and Haitian descendants present in the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, Venezuelans have become an integral part of San Carlos, with many working in the informal sector and without papers, selling lemonade or *Arepas* in the streets. In the *Quinto Patio* lived Victor and Carla, a Venezuelan couple who arrived in the Dominican Republic in 2016. Their apartment was located next to mine and we quickly became friends. Victor and Carla’s story resembles the trajectory of many Venezuelan migrants in the country.

“In the first months after our arrival we were hungry... hungry! One meal a day was often all we could afford. We started to sell coffee and lemonade in the *Zona Colonial*. They [the tourist police] treated us like dogs, like dogs! That’s why we went to San Carlos where they treated us better.”
(Victor, interview excerpt)

Victor’s account tells of hardship and despair in the first months upon arriving in the DR, following political and economic turmoil in his home country of Venezuela. Venezuelan research participants were frequently recounting stories of hardship and exploitation by employers who underpaid or did not pay them at all for certain jobs, taking advantage of their

status as undocumented migrants. “This country is not easy for migrants” was a statement made by Carla, which speaks to the sentiments shared amongst many undocumented Venezuelan migrants I spoke to such as Renzo. Renzo, a young Venezuelan man, who worked in the gym at the block during the day and in a hotel as a lobby boy during the night, reiterated those feelings by pointing out that as an “illegal immigrant” he gets paid only a fraction of wages paid to Dominicans. Whilst the topic of exploitation within the labour market is frequently reoccurring, the issue of deportation surprisingly is almost absent in conversations. However, Victor was willing to speak about the situation of their undocumented status.

“A year ago they were deporting many Venezuelans and we had to hide when they were coming to collect us on the trucks. I remember they were coming and I was running into a Chinese store and hiding there for hours. But now it calmed down, I am not afraid of immigration anymore because they know that there is a crisis in Venezuela, now they only take Haitians”.

(Victor, conversation excerpt)

Victor’s response regarding deportation not being a primary concern was recurrent amongst Venezuelan research participants. The quote above also shows that the political and economic crisis in Venezuela serves as the legitimization of the presence of Venezuelan migrants. Additionally, the quote alludes to the very different trajectory Haitian migrants face in the country. However, before delving into the Haitian trajectory in the next section it is worthwhile to further understand the life worlds of Venezuelan migrants in San Carlos.

Many of the Venezuelan participants I had the chance to speak to were able to transgress from initial occupations in the street such as selling lemonade or snacks in the street to better paying occupations off the street. Victor for example found work as a driver and worker for a *patron*, a man owning a hardware store while Carla worked in the administration of a beauty product manufacturer. Others worked as taxi or *Uber* drivers or oversaw their own stands selling pizza. Thus, in the years since their arrival, many undocumented Venezuelan migrants experienced social upward mobility, which is however frequently connected to extremely long working hours and personal sacrifices. As an example Victor works twelve hours, seven days a week, others such as Renzo worked two jobs during the daytime and the nighttime.

The above outlined narrative of exploitation and hardship is frequently substituted by another theme of gratefulness and brotherhood towards the Dominican people.

One night Victor was knocking on my door after he had come home from work. We walked a few blocks up the hill, where a friend of his runs a pizza and juice stand. Eduardo is from the same region in Venezuela as Victor, however they only met in the Dominican Republic. They hugged each other affectionately before we sat down on the plastic chairs to wait for the pizza to bake. Over the loud music, blasting from the *colmado* behind us, Victor started to tell us about the connection between Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. His story went from Dominican national hero *Juan Pablo Duarte* pleading for exile in Venezuela, to Dominican immigration into Venezuela engendered by the petrol boom. Victor finished his story by interlocking his fingers while holding his hands up exclaiming, “Venezuelans and Dominicans are like this”. Eduardo nodded adding that Venezuelans are very well treated and respected in the Dominican Republic.
(Vignette, field notes)

Dominicans also reflected this welcoming attitude in the neighbourhood, who commonly expressed empathy and solidarity with the Venezuelan migrants.

“Well, I see them as good because they are here because in their country the situation is bad, the situation is tough... and they come here to work same as me, I come from the *campo* to the capital to work, isn't that true?”
(Yaneiry, interview excerpt)

Venezuelan participants frequently expressed gratefulness and appreciation of Dominican hospitality during my stay. Victor posted acknowledgments on Facebook and wore a wristband showing the Dominican flag as a sign of brotherhood as he proudly proclaimed. In the light of xenophobia, which Venezuelan migrants face across the region, the Dominican Republic was often hailed as “the only country that welcomes and treats Venezuelans well”. Various Venezuelans such as Eduardo reflected this attitude. He told us about the solidarity and help he received from Dominicans by explaining how the *colmado* next to his stand allowed him to use the spot and electricity for free and added “they wouldn't do the same with a Haitian.” Eduardo proclaimed that Venezuelans would be taken into houses and given water and food whereas Haitians on the other hand would be left on the street exposed to the dangers.

Eduardo's example shows clearly how Venezuelans are experiencing integration into the local neighbourhood through inclusion into the moral economy. Even though Venezuelan migrants in San Carlos mostly lack official status, they frequently find access to different forms of employment within the informal sector as well as in grey areas of the formal sector. Despite experiences of exploitation and hardship, the Venezuelan trajectory is also significantly marked by acceptance and inclusion into the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

However, Eduardo's story suggested that Haitians are not granted the same privileges as Venezuelans. Thus, despite overlapping histories of migration, Venezuelan experiences seem to differ vastly from the Haitian trajectory. The exploration of this stark distinction between Haitian and Venezuelan migrant subjects by Dominicans marks the outset for understanding negotiation of belonging and citizenship between the three groups.

2.3 Citizenship and Belonging

The twin notions of nationality and citizenship define the modern conception of full membership and belonging to a society. Subsequently, the idea of formal citizenship generally refers to the membership in a nation state and the linked assortment of political and civil rights (Holston and Appadurai 1996, 187-190). However, the concept of citizenship has to be understood beyond the static definition of a relation of rights and obligations between state and citizen as it disregards non-institutional and non-official negotiation of citizenship and belonging in everyday life settings (Lazar 2013, 1). Thus, we must ask questions about the actual constitution of political membership and subjectivity in a given context.

Urban spaces such as the *barrio* are essential sites in where belonging and citizenship is negotiated and lived in space. The city and its urban landscapes are arenas in which formal citizenship is frequently overwritten by other forms of negotiating substantive membership and belonging. This confusion around the meaning of citizenship arises from the issue that in practice "that which constitutes citizenship substantively frequently is independent from its formal status" (Holston and Appadurai 1996, 190). Hence, poor and marginalized citizens, holding formal citizenship, are in fact frequently excluded from actually participating and possessing rights as full members of society. 'Substantive citizenship' is thus something that can be negotiated relatively independent from formal status, as formal citizens possess frequently virtually similar access or lack of access to socio-economic and civil rights as documented non-citizens or undocumented residents (Holston and Appadurai 1996, 190). That means that non-nationals, a status Haitian and Venezuelan migrants in the neighbourhood frequently hold, are indeed meaningful subjects, considering their engagement in the negotiation of citizenship and belonging beyond the formal realm.

Thus, the everyday experience of Dominican, Haitian and Venezuelan residents, in this case, of inhabiting *the barrio* entitles them potentially to the "right to the city" (Bauder 2015, 253-255). The idea of the "right to the city", coined by Lefebvre, suggests that all

inhabitants, including illegalized migrants potentially hold the right to “participate in the production of urban space, social relations and the lived experience” (Bauder 2015, 255).

Subsequently, this ethnography perceives citizenship as to study “how we live with others in a political community” (Lazar 2013, 1). Citizenship is indeed stretching beyond traditional boundaries. As Isin argues, citizenship is also negotiated in urban, transnational or digital scales, making it a dynamic “‘institution’ of domination and empowerment that governs who citizens (insiders), subjects (strangers, outsiders) and ‘objects’ (aliens) are and how these actors are to govern themselves and each other in a given body politic” (Isin 2009, 371). Ong’s conception of cultural citizenship adds on to Isin’s ideas as she views citizenship as “cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state its hegemonic forms that establish criteria of belonging within a national population and territory” (Ong 1996, 738). Thus, the hegemonic framework in which repertoires of belonging arise, remains closely tied to the nation and its imaginaries, resulting in highly selective and narrow window of negotiation of who of the migrant subjects can be enfranchised and incorporated into the urban space as citizen subjects (Bauder 2015, 255). Also, in the *barrio*, practices and beliefs, negotiating citizenship and belonging, are produced and performed within a web of hegemonic discourses and imaginaries, assigning Dominicans and Haitian and Venezuelan migrant subjects vastly different positions.

2.4 Anti-Haitianism and Spatial Regimes of Exclusion

To understand the negotiation of citizenship and belonging we need to explore the hegemonic discourses and imaginaries of the nation, looming over the *barrio*. Stuart Hall conceptualizes the nation not only as a political entity but also as ‘systems of cultural representations’ through which an imagined community is interpreted, reminding us that nations are socially constructed and imagined (Hall 1996, 612). Systems of cultural representations or national imaginaries and ultimately ideas of nationality come into being through the “narration of a story which people tell about themselves in order to lend meaning to their social world” (Ram, cited in Wodak 153, 1994). This narrative, constructing ideas of national belonging is fed by several discursive strategies such as ‘myth of origin’ and the fictitious idea of an ethnically distinct and homogenous people (Wodak 2009, 24).

In the Dominican context, anti-Haitianism is essentially tied to the national ‘myth of origin’ and to overall Dominican identity. Anti-Haitianism is a complex discursive construct,

inherently entangled with the self-image of the Dominican Nation and identity and has to be understood as an authoritarian and dominant ideology that frames Haitians as the “scapegoats of a society that considers them racially and culturally inferior” (Sagas, cited in Tavenier 2007, 99). Dominican identity feeds off the constant opposition and distinction to their neighbour Haiti, a phenomenon deeply rooted in history (Wooding 2001, 14).

Haiti, gained independence from the French colonizers through slave revolts in the early 19th century, claiming a post-independence identity of a black nation. Haitian independence was followed by Haiti occupying the entire island including the Spanish colony on the eastern part of Hispaniola for 22 years until 1844, when the Dominican Republic gained independence from the Haitian occupation (Howard 2007, 728). Thus, Dominican independence and the myth of the nation’s foundation lies in defeating Haiti, standing in stark contrast with Haiti’s independence through a liberation movement from colonial powers. Consequently, Dominican identity was formed under the influence of pro-Hispanism and anti-Haitianism (Howard 2001, 18). The omnipresent reference to the occupation by Haiti feeds into the national historic discourse in which the Haitian invasion and the eventual defeat and “liberation” is stylized to the national trauma as well as the birthing of the Dominican nation, bringing Haiti as nemesis into being, a narrative that continues to be inherent to the official discourse around the Dominican nation in schools and textbooks (Howard 2007, 728). However, scholars agree that the racist and xenophobic aspects of anti-Haitianism stem largely from 20th century nation building projects, particularly promoted under the Trujillo dictatorships (Howard 2001, 19-20). Trujillo’s policy of ‘Dominicanization’ was rooted in a “vulgar version of Social Darwinism”, promoting an ethnically white and Hispanic national body of Dominican people while feeding a narrative of threat posed by the mixture with “African Races” (Wooding 2001, 20). The ‘Dominicanization’ project culminated in ethnic cleansing campaigns most notably the “parsley massacre” in 1937 in which 20 to 30 thousand Haitian and darker hued Dominicans were murdered (Gregory 2014, 247). The dictatorship under Trujillo reintroduced and manifested the negrophobic and anti-Haitian discourses, permeating education and public institutions. Anti-Haitianism continues to be a tool of political elites to date so as to obfuscate social and economic mischiefs and inequalities (Gregory 2014, 248). Thus, deportation and the denial of citizenship to Dominican-born people of Haitian descent persist. The waves of expulsion and deportation of Haitians escalated in the Dominican Constitutional Court ruling in 2013, which sought to revoke the citizenship of children of undocumented Haitian immigrants born in DR after 1929. The progrome-type situation, marked by the forceful deportation of thousand

Dominicans of Haitian-descent was only stopped and the court ruling revoked through immense international pressure (CMS). Anti-Haitianism is not only crucial in the construction of Dominican national identity but anti-Haitian tropes also leak deeply into the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

“Okay I will tell you why ... umm...we like Venezuelans better than Haitians. Firstly the situation of Venezuelans is very, very different to the Haitian one. To both happened bad things, that’s true. But the Venezuelans aren’t here because of their fault ... but because of the ones who govern them, which are the ones who do them like this. Do you understand? But in Haiti, even if the president could be good they are like this because they are used to be like this, lets say in this life mode of poverty. Because if they would be more intelligent you know they wouldn’t multiply so much, now they are too many. This country [Haiti] is overpopulated because it’s too many (people) for this piece of earth but they don’t think about that, all they think about is having kids, having kids, having kids. That’s not smart ... So when the earthquake happened in Haiti many people gave them a lot of money and yet nothing happened it stayed the same, there was no help because they don’t cooperate, they don’t cooperate that their country gets better, that they progress. No they leave it and come here... here where we are better, they come. However, Venezuelans, look they fight because they don’t want to live like this. Because it’s not their fault or in their hands, but it’s the fault of the one who governs them! But in Haiti that’s not the case. Venezuelans have an attitude to stay low, they know that they are not from here but they want help and they can get it, not like the Haitians who want to come and think now it’s theirs.... Here isn’t Haiti they have to understand that, here is not Haiti. So what I want to say is that this poverty and this low life, it’s inside of the Haitian people, of course not all of them and I know Haitians and have Haitian friends and they are good and think like a normal person umm they are intelligent ... You know its not because they are Haitian that’s only a nationality but the majority has this mentality of poverty like they don’t want to progress ...” (Cindy, excerpt WhatsApp voice note)

The above voicemail was sent to me by Cindy, a Dominican participant as to explain the difference between the Haitian and Venezuelan migrants to me. The excerpt exposes how the Venezuelan subject is constructed as victim, deserving of solidarity whilst the Haitian subject is not only framed as culpable and inherently inferior but also as a threat, jeopardizing Dominican sovereignty.

The anti-Haitian narrative is echoed, reformulated and expressed in several layers in San Carlos. The most vial and visible manifestations of anti-Haitianism in everyday life are outbreaks of blatant anti-Haitian jargon in the streets of the neighbourhood. Thus, *maldito haitiano* or *madan* the Créole word for lady, turned into an insult, are examples of insults used among Dominicans and Haitian descendants alike. However, despite anti-Haitian jargon

being common and normalized, anti-Haitianism seems to remain a delicate topic among the residents and is treated as a taboo topic in public as I could frequently observe that voices were lowered and the surroundings checked, before starting to speak about Haitians. Thus, anti-Haitianism is in the neighbourhood mostly covert, wrapped in beliefs and worldviews, perceived as monolithic truths, interwoven in everyday interactions and conversations. Contemporary politics and media reproduce and feed off the image of the Haitian nemesis to the Dominican nation by linking contemporary Haitian migratory flows to the historic discourse (Gregory 2014, 248). During my time in the Dominican Republic, the political unrest in Haiti following the corruption scandal around Haiti's president *Jovenel Moïse*, led to increased migration into the Dominican Republic. Haitian migration was frequently framed as invasion triggering associations with the historic invasion and occupation, by the media as well as by neighbours, commenting on the situation. Striking was however that this imagery of the "Haitian invasion" describing the situation of migration at the Dominican-Haitian border was translated and copied onto the neighbourhood itself. A conversation between Estefani, a lady living in the alley way and Raul a carpenter and the caretaker of the gym, exemplifies how the discursive trope of the Dominican nation under the "Haitian threat" is emulated from the national level to the territoriality of the neighbourhood.

Raul was smoking a cigarette and reading the newspaper. To my question of what he was reading, he replied that he was reading about the border crisis and how the government tried to stop the Haitian migrants. Raul shook his head saying that they will not be able to stop them whispering "Its an invasion". A few days later I caught up with Raul and Estefani. The conversation turned towards the Haitians in the neighbourhood. Raul sighed, "They take us out, they will be more than us!" repeating "Its an invasion here". Estefani nodded pulling her arms apart gesturing an expansion "Now the Haitians are everywhere. There are too many, back in the day they only used to be over there". Estefani pointed towards the blocks of the market.

This short excerpt shows that perceptions about space and place that make up the neighbourhood are highly territorialized and divided in perceived Haitian and Dominican spaces. Thus, the market or *Pequeño Haití*, where everyday practices and interactions among and between Dominicans and Haitians alike take place embodies local power relations and is beyond being a geographical place also a imaginary space constructed upon a multiplicity of political, cultural and historical trajectories (Low 2009, 22). Subsequently, the place and space in the neighbourhood are socially produced by the people who live in them, as well as nurtured by an underlying web of discursive structures (Low 2009, 22). When speaking about

Haitians, I observed that people frequently nodded or pointed into the direction of the market, despite Haitian housing, hotels and kitchens extending beyond the market into the blocks around *Quinto Patio*. By locating and assigning “the Haitian” to the market, a specific and confined geographical entity, the national imaginary frames Haitians as ‘the other’ and hence living segregated from ‘Dominican territory’ was constructed. Beyond restricting “the Haitian” to the market, constructing ‘otherness’ in order to align the spatial imaginary with geographic realities were also made by negating Haitian presence outside the market.

Jose, Raul’s younger brother, was my landlord and a known man around the block. Jose is a tall and strong Dominican man in his late forties, who grew up in San Carlos and took over the carpentry workshop of his father, which he turned into a gym and recently bought the line of apartments leading from the gym along the alleyway into the yard. I had the opportunity to spend many evenings sitting on the stairs in front of the gym talking to Jose. When I asked Jose if any Haitian neighbours would live in *Quinto Patio*, he identified only one old Haitian lady despite at least two Haitian families living in the yard, one of them being tenants of Jose. By intentionally reducing the number of Haitians living in the yard, he produces an imagination of space and place that fits into the narrative of territorial exclusion of Haitians. Jose acted upon the anti-Haitian narrative on several occasions when Haitian couples and families showed interest in renting an apartment but were consistently rejected, as Dominicans were favoured. However, regardless of Jose favouring Dominican tenants, Haitians frequented his gym and were often default selections in the case that no Dominican was interested in the housing. Thus, opportunistic motives such as harvesting the benefits from Haitian clients frequently diluted the manifestation of anti-Haitian imaginaries in spatial regimes of exclusion.

Furthermore, symbols of the nation noticeably marked territorialized spaces as symbols of the nation possess the power to claim figuratively territoriality, the spatial expression of power (David Storey 2012, 11). The Dominican flag hung from balconies, stores and was tucked into walls all over the *barrio* as well as murals, depicting national symbols such as the Dominican coat of arms and national heroes such as independence fighter *Juan Pablo Duarte* were ubiquitous. Particularly during February around the celebrations of the Dominican Independence Day, celebrating the attainment of independence from Haiti, a variety of Dominican flags were displayed in the community.

The abundance of publicly presented Dominican symbols of the nation all over the quarter were supplemented by Venezuelan national symbols. Hats and ribbons tucked into clothes, adorned with the Venezuelan colours and stars were common sights in Santo

Domingo. The open display of Venezuelan national symbols is, apart from the flaunting of national pride, also a symbol and currency in the moral economy of everyday life. The flags were often worn and shown in the connection to Venezuelan vendors. In this context the flag became a symbol in the moral economy, translating into a visible sign promoting acts of solidarity and compassion towards Venezuelan migrants.

Haitian symbols of the nation are however almost absent. “You can’t put up a Haitian flag, they will burn you” was the answer I frequently heard when asking why no Haitian symbols of the nation are openly exposed. Displaying the Haitian flag in public spaces is taboo and socially scrutinized, following the anti-Haitian discourse portraying Dominican sovereignty under threat. However, subtle symbols of pride and national belonging are indeed present in the Haitian community around the market. Inside the Haitian hostel, frequented by Haitian traders and merchants, guests were wearing beanies showing the Haitian flag as well as on the streets of the market people wore bandanas, t-shirts and wristbands imprinted with the Haitian flag. Furthermore, invisible markers of territoriality, particularly soundscapes are fundamentally carving out Haitian spaces. Thus, entering the main market road is accompanied by a change in music. Dominican music such as *dembow*, *merengue* and *bachata*, which swells on the street from *colamdos*, balconies and cars all over the neighbourhood largely disappear or melt together with Haitian popular music, afro-beats and Haitian traditional *rara* music. The Haitian music filling up the main market street, forms and claims space as Haitian. The music serves as an iconic cultural element, signifying the nation and synonym to “Haitianess” without using traditional and overt symbols of the nation (Tim Edensor 2002, 17). Despite Haitians claiming and occupying space through subtle symbols, the neighbourhood remains dominated by Dominican symbolism. Subsequently, symbols of the nation reflect the asymmetrical negotiation of space between Dominicans, Venezuelans and Haitians as Haitian spatial expression of power is particularly marginalized and socially frowned upon.

2.5 The Modern-Backwards continuum in the Dominican Imaginary

Exploring the spatial regimes shows that the relationship between the lived and imagined world has collapsed as spatial realities are produced and interpreted under the weight of the historical/national discourse (Newell 2012, 253). Spatial practices and their corresponding imaginaries materialize relations of power and difference. Thus, *Pequeño Haití* is brought into being as a space harbouring ‘the other’, mirroring the territorial rift

between the Dominican nation and the discursively produced nemesis Haiti. The conception of the Haitian ‘other’ in the *barrio* feeds of the same hegemonic discourses around the Dominican nation in opposition to Haiti as discussed before. Thus, the production of the ‘other’ is not primarily derived from interactions with Haitians and Haitian-descendants but much more formed through abstract ideas, feeding off fundamental binaries of good and evil and modernity and regression.

One night outside the gym gate, like many others, Jose was eager to tell me about his idea of Haitians and I listened to his monologue. He tipped with his finger against his chest “the Haitians have something inside their hearts... something very evil”. Jose portrayed Haitians as being in the possession of an “inherently bad” core, which inevitably differentiates them from the Dominican people. Jose emphasised this naturalized distinction by extending it to the land, painting a picture of the natural richness of the Dominican Republic, praising the fertile soil and the abundance of fruits and vegetables, opposed to the arid and infertile land of Haiti. This narrative of melting the inherent characteristics of the people with ideas of soil and land produces “the Haitian” in an almost mystical realm where lines between the real world and fantastic imaginations are blurred. Crucial is that “the Haitian” is always brought into being along binaries and in contrast to *dominicanidad* or national Dominican identity. This narrative echoed by Jose’s monologue was frequently integrated into everyday conversations circling around Haitians among Dominicans. Thus I observed that the attributes evil, criminal, aggressive and overall savage were consistently assigned to Haitians.

“I am afraid of them, I don’t know they are like savage”, “You can’t have a calm conversation with them, like we do, they are always aggressive and scream”, “I am afraid that they will kill me.”, “The Haitians are evil.”
(Excerpts from several conversations)

The ascribed attributes allocate “the Haitian” to a realm outside the moral and reasonable citizen by bestowing them with features such as amorality and savagery associated with animalistic and asocial traits. The production of “the Haitian” as inferior and un-human, while posing a threat to the Dominican nation, is yet again informed by the historically forged anti-Haitian myth of origin and the national imagination, reducing Haiti to the African, un-modern and ‘savage’, embodying the counterparts to the Dominican self-image as a modern and white nation (Hazel 2014, 82). Subsequently, the construction of citizenship and belonging among the residents in San Carlos continues to be shaped by the

normative yardstick of civilization superiority, modernity and race, rooted in white supremacy and the colonial encounter and imagination (Kapur 2007, 537).

Modernity and civilization continue to be inherently linked to postcolonial identity and persist to set the normative standard of the ‘good citizen’ (Ong 1996, 738). Subsequently, modernity is crucial in the production of citizenship and belonging. As an ideology of dichotomy, it produces monolithic categories in the fashion of an “aesthetic of opposites” of the modern “we” and the “other”, existing outside modernity and therefore outside the idea of the nation (Pratt, cited in Newell 2012, 252). Thus, Newell, whose ethnography on identity formation of Ivorian youth in the urban landscape of Abidjan shows parallels to the case of San Carlos, conceptualizes a dichotomy between modernity and ‘the savage’, constituting an essential axis along which inclusion and exclusion is determined. Ideologies of modernity are aligned with the colonial project of the civilizing mission and continue to legitimize social hierarchies and systems of exclusions as echoed in the neighbourhood (Newell 2012, 14). The following example illustrates the expulsion of “the Haitian” to a realm outside of modernity, where the imagination of the savage Haitian character is reiterated through the connection to magic and religious practices, portrayed as negative, dangerous and innately un-modern.

Botanicas are part of the market as much as flower or vegetable stands. The little stores sell an array of objects from herbs, little bottles filled with medicine to bones, coins and old dolls used for magic and religious practices. Milanio, an old man living alone with his three dogs in *Quinto Patio* sat on the curb in the yard together with Estefani’s sister Angelica. We talked about the neighbourhood and I took the opportunity to ask them about the *Botanicas* and about their perception of witchcraft. Angelica shook her head “There is a lot of witchcraft here, over there [pointing towards the market] they sell all kind of weird things”. Milanio sadly lifted his shoulder “That’s the illness of them [Haitians] ... because of that [witchcraft] their country is like this”.
(field notes)

Milanio’s and Angelica’s association of Haitians with witchcraft and dubious practices is common around the block as Phara’s comment underlines.

“When a Haitian buys at the *Botanicas* they [Dominicans] always say it’s for witchcraft and black magic to commit evil, but that’s not true but they always say that ... The Dominicans say that the Haitians do it but they [Dominicans] do it too”. (Phara, conversation excerpt)

Linking practices such as magic and *vodou*, doomed as irrational and abnormal within the discourse around modernity, reproduces ideas about backwardness and the lack of progress, as inherent Haitian feature, standing in direct opposition to the “modern Dominican nation”. Thus, the framing of witchcraft is one example of how deeply entrenched backwardness/modernity dichotomies are within the anti-Haitian discourse and reproduced and mirrored in the local life worlds in the neighbourhood reiterating that modernity serves here as ideology of social evolution, locating “the Haitian” at the bottom (Newell 2012, 14).

Likewise the Venezuelan subject is integrated into the linear path of social evolution and into the dichotomy of modernity. However, Venezuelan migrants are frequently allocated in direct opposition to the Haitian bottom role. The elevation of Venezuelans was common as Dominicans frequently referred to Venezuela as progressive and powerful country, attesting Venezuelans’ respect and acknowledgement in regards to their countries regional and geopolitical importance. Thus, Venezuelans were recurrently portrayed as modern and progressive in opposition to Haiti and even the Dominican Republic itself. Likewise, Venezuelans themselves expressed the superiority of a modern and progressive Venezuelan nation. Victor and Carla for example consistently described Venezuela as an advanced country frequently contrasting it to the Dominican Republic, positioning themselves on the linear lane towards modernity above Dominicans. The portrayal of Venezuelan power, morals and education was frequently met with the lowering of the DR to a country, which lacks these three pillars. This idea of superiority was also more specifically directed towards the neighbourhood where the inhabitants were frequently described as *barrial*, ‘ghetto’ and as lacking in drive to progress and bettering their living situations.

“The ignorance among this people [Dominicans] is large. They don’t want to buy a pump, they wait until the neighbour helps them out, they don’t progress.... The Dominican Republic is different, Venezuela is a rich country with technology not like here.” (Victor, excerpt from a conversation)

For Victor, living in the neighbourhood and the adaptation of everyday habits such as throwing the trash at the corner was connected with embarrassment and sentiments of lowering his own cultural level. Moreover, the idea of possessing a “higher cultural level” than the Dominican residents in the quarter was expressed by Victor, proclaiming to teach Dominicans “how to be a good citizen” by for example instructing them not to throw trash on the ground. The examples above reflect that citizenship in DR is closely linked to “one’s access and proximity to authentic modernity” (Newell 2012, 12). Therefore, ideas of

civilization and modernity associated with Venezuela gave rise to claims of legitimacy and authority of Venezuelan migrants in the neighbourhood.

Subsequently Haitians and Venezuelans are integrated as the two opposite poles on the linear hierarchy of modernity. These proximate power arrangements in the community copy regional power hierarchies with Haiti at the bottom, the Dominican Republic in the intermediate position and Venezuela on top (Gregory 2014, 49). Thus, the negotiation of belonging in the community is deeply interspersed by the historic/national discourse of anti-Haitianism, feeding off the binary trope of modernity and backwardness as well as inscribed by the reflection of global power relations. Modernity possesses as an ideology of dichotomies, the power to include the seemingly white Venezuelan and Dominican subject into a common trajectory of civilizational superiority while situating the seemingly black Haitian subject on the lower end of social evolution.

2.6 Division of labour

However, before we turn to the discussion of race we need to take a look at the division of labour as a further naturalized system of exclusion. The division of labour is closely aligned with anti-Haitianism as the discourse used to be embedded and produced in relation to the Dominican sugar industry in the 19th century when the country relied on Haitian seasonal migrant labour (Gregory 2012, 246). This labour system dating back to the colonial era produced boundaries in terms of “physical and emotional realms” which developed into markers of identity, placing Haitians at the bottom of the social division of labour (Howard 2007, 728). Whereas many Haitians and Haitian-descendants remain within the exploitative and backbreaking sugar industry, since the 1990’s, Haitians are also entering new fields in agriculture as well as in construction (Howard 2007, 27). However, the historically crafted construction of the Haitian “labour power condition” remains largely the same as they enter at the bottom of the social division of labour (Gregory 2012, 260).

This was also reflected in the neighbourhood where the majority of Haitian men living around the block worked in construction. The allocation of Haitians in sectors associated with physical labour was met with the widespread perceptions among Dominicans that Haitians are strong and tough labourers. This perception of constructed by Dominicans was heavily affected by the perception of Haitians possessing racially innate physical attributes such as strong bodies, strong muscles and tough skin. The racialization of Haitians and the justification of their allocation to low level physical labour within the division of labour is

also mirrored in continuing notions of Haitians as disposable labourers, linking back to colonial perceptions of slavery and the migratory labour in the sugar industry (Gregory 2012, 260). The Haitian position in the labour market differs greatly from the Venezuelan position. The presumed appearance of Venezuelans as white and ‘cultured’ provide Venezuelan migrants with a high degree of upward mobility in the labour market. Hence, the service industry of Santo Domingo hires Venezuelan migrants to a great extent, with young Venezuelans working in up-scale restaurants, bars and clubs, spheres in which Haitians are completely absent. Ruth a 24-year-old Haitian woman living together with her teenage brother next to my apartment in the yard, summed up the difference between Haitians and Venezuelans in the labour market.

“Dominicans always say that they want more Venezuelans and not Haitians. But others say that the Haitian works harder, more productive and they [Haitians] do work that Dominicans don’t do and because of that they prefer Haitians. Or lets say they prefer Haitians in the industrial field or in construction. The architects, those people have their benefit ... they have their benefit in them [Haitians]. But they don’t have any benefit for taste and for ... intelligence they say, no! They prefer Venezuelans ... for the appearance.”
(Ruth, interview excerpt)

The heightened racialization of Haitians and their positioning as disposable work subjects was also prominent in the *barrio*. Phara explained how Chinese businesses in the area such as restaurants and supermarkets would hire Haitians at extremely low wages and dismiss the workers in the clock pulse of three months. Jose depicted a similar situation, praising the Chinese in the neighbourhood for becoming the bosses of “fifteen Haitians in only a few years”. Hence, Haitians are positioned as exploitable and disposable labour, a dynamic that resembles a master-servant relation. This perception is so deeply entrenched in the collective consciousness of the neighbourhood that it was adapted by Victor when he explained to me how he used to carry out the lowest works by saying “we had to do work like Haitians”. Additionally, the Haitian position in the labour market is profoundly entangled in racist and negrophobic imaginaries as exemplified by Phara’s quote.

“For them I’m always Haitian ... without ID and with my dark skin they never give me work. But with your skin [white] ... they give you easily work”
(Pahra, excerpt from a conversation)

Hence, the quality and value of Haitian labour is politically constructed within social distinctions of race, national origin and citizenship (Gregory 2012, 49). Despite or because of

such weak Haitian claims to the labour market, many carve out opportunities outside of wage labour and the Dominican labour market. The informal sector and transnational networks form an important infrastructure for Haitian commercial activities in the neighbourhood. Thus, many Haitians, working in the informal sector are self-employed and the owners of small-scale businesses such as the coffee stand Phara oversees with her mother or the juice bar next to *Quinto Patio*. Trade is another fundamental sector in the neighbourhood in which Haitians are heavily engaged with. Ruth, who runs an online business selling women's apparel in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, explains the Haitian presence in trade and entrepreneurship with the lack of access and job opportunities as a driving force towards entrepreneurship. Thus, in the socio-political milieu, where full citizen rights and access to the labour market are difficult to obtain for Haitians, transnational networks gain in importance (Gregory 2012, 263). Thus, transnationalism a "process by which immigrants build social fields which link together their home and host societies" is a resource, producing tight knit networks across the borders, assembling into an infrastructure through which goods are sent back and forth between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 1-2). Hence, Haitians are carving out alternative niches outside or at the margins of a division of labour, which is stacked against them. The transnational links between Haiti and the Dominican Republic operate as lifelines sustaining livelihoods and are the foundation of a considerable part of the commercial activities in and around the market.

2.7 The Haitian, Venezuelan, Dominican Triangle - An Asymmetrical Relation

This chapter introduced concepts of social and spatial regimes that negotiate belonging and citizenship in the neighbourhood of San Carlos. The above discussed systems and regimes of exclusion are all deeply infected by the national ideology of anti-Haitianism. The discourse of anti-Haitianism is definitively imperative in order to understand the social fabric of the neighbourhood, however it is just as important to mention that the dominant discourse and tropes of anti-Haitianism are not collectively and in their totality copied and reproduced by residents of the neighbourhood. Hence, observations and conversations showed that the stigmatization and demonization of Haitians was indeed contested in everyday interactions, diluting the stark oppositions proposed by the discourse.

"Of course I treat them [Haitians] the same... like I treat a Dominican, like I treat anybody, why? Because they are also people, like us.... But there are

many people that say that Haitians are bad and do evil, you know. But same as Haitians, Dominicans do evil too” (Yaneiry, interview excerpt)

Thus, the actual *convivencia*, the coexistence between Haitians and Dominicans in the neighbourhood was apart from bad also often regarded as good and *sin problemas*, without any problems by Dominican residents. However, deeply entrenched anti-Haitianism caused deeply anchored distrust and caution between the two groups. Phara provided one account of the Haitian perspective on *convivencia* in the *barrio*:

Interviewer: But Phara tell me, how is the *convivencia* here in San Carlos? There are many different people here, right? There are the Dominicans, the Haitians and Venezuelans. What do you think about the *convivencia*?

Phara: Oh well ... when you see the Dominicans living with the Haitians, for them ...they want that all the Haitians leave. They say that the Haitians take their place ... that the Haitians take their work away but that’s a lie. They don’t like to work and the Haitians work ... and they say “the Haitians take my work away” all that is a lie. They don’t like to work, they like to sell drugs, to live good, to drink every Sunday, the weekends ... they make a lot of noise. [laughter]

Interviewer: “Yes, [...] I talked to some Dominicans here and they often told me “the *convivencia* here is very good””

Phara: “They say that but they don’t believe it in their hearts [laughter] ... The ones who live with the Haitians ... They actually don’t like the Haitians.”
[....]

“They always abuse Haitians. I tell you, there was a place where it has been a problem but this place had many Haitians, many Dominicans, they called the immigration that they take the Haitians. After they took the Haitians away they entered their houses and took everything, even the houses.”
[....]

Interviewer: “And do you interact more with Dominicans or more with Haitians during your days?”

Phara: “With Haitians, with Dominicans only at the business nothing more. I used to speak more with Dominicans because of school but nothing more than that.”

(Phara, interview excerpt)

The interview with Phara emphasizes that the collective memory and the everyday experiences of abuse and marginalization marks Haitian-Dominican relations and even though Haitians and Dominicans share and coexist in spaces and take part in joint interactions, inter-relations often remain purpose driven.

In contrast Venezuelan-Haitian relations largely remain unaffected by anti-Haitian ideology even though the Venezuelan participants of this research were often indeed very aware of Dominican-Haitian dynamics. This relation can be exemplified by an anecdote by my Venezuelan neighbor and friend Victor. He recounted how he used to hug his Haitian coworkers, and calls them brothers, earning him confused looks by Dominicans, who would be repulsed to show this kind of affection towards Haitians. He recounted this story several times as to describe his relation towards Haitians. However, Victor also condoned the Dominican perspective, adopting it partially. Hence, Victor recounted how Dominicans would describe Haitians as dirty, “living, cooking and sleeping in an overcrowded room” and added that he could not confirm that, however Dominicans would know best how Haitians would behave in their country. Victor’s perspective shows that Venezuelans are commonly not reproducing anti-Haitian discourse in its entirety but are frequently complicit and compliant to the Dominican hegemonic frameworks.

This chapter showed that the triangular relationship between Dominicans, Haitians and Venezuelan subjects, present in the neighborhood, builds onto deeply asymmetrical foundations. Belonging is negotiated fundamentally differently for both groups despite Haitians and Venezuelans sharing similar migration trajectories and members of both groups often not possessing formal Dominican citizenship. This chapter showed that in addition to legal status, citizenship in San Carlos is profoundly produced through interactions that transfer socially constructed distinctions into formal systems of exclusion (Gregory 2012, 74). Thus, the everyday politics of making a living are inevitably entangled with politics of identity and belonging. However, the social and spatial regimes of exclusion and inclusion are crafted and lived under the hegemonic national and anti-Haitian narrative and imagination, which are informed and aligned with normative criteria of civilization and modernity. The infused ‘migrant subjects’ into the fabric of the neighborhood unmask the complex and power laden negotiations of citizenship (Kapur 2007, 537). Whereas the Venezuelan subject is framed as aligning with the cultural norms of modernity and civilization, the Haitian subject is allocated outside the boundaries citizenship is constructed upon, regarded as ‘other’, not only as an alien to the nation but an ‘abject’ to its very foundations, exposed to restraint, persecution and social stigma (Kapur 2007, 537). However, this asymmetrical triangular relationship between Dominicans, Haitians and Venezuelans cannot be understood without exploring race and ‘white supremacy’.

Chapter 3: Race and Belonging

Race is a myth, however an extremely powerful and persistent one, which continues to drip deep into the fabric of the neighbourhood. This research looked at race as a concept, as “a human invention whose criteria for differentiation are neither universal nor fixed but have always been used to manage difference” (Mevorach 2007, 139). Thus, race must not be explained as biologically fixed category but analysed as formed within historic and social relationships (Mevorach 2007, 139). Consequently, this thesis treats race as a product of “social arrangements and political decision making” (Perry 2011, 23). Existing scholarship agrees on the centrality of the role of race in Dominican society. As in many postcolonial societies around the globe, race in the Dominican Republic is forged into the ideological foundation of the nation and perseveres to be innately entangled with national identity as well as citizenship.

In the historic national discourse the Dominican Nation comes into being as a catholic, Hispanic and white nation even though the idea of whiteness is not necessarily aligned with the historic central European imaginary of “pure whiteness” but rather informed by Iberian points of reference (Tavenier 2008, 97). However, most importantly is the notion of whiteness defined in opposition to blackness and ‘Africaness’ and thus constitutes rather a continuum approximating whiteness. The contemporary hegemonic racial imaginary is the legacy of Spanish colonial racism and slavery, 19th century racial pseudo-sciences, 20th century cultural neo-racism and essentially anti-Haitian ideology, permeating and residing fundamentally within the Dominican racial discourse. The bipolar Haitian-Dominican narrative is fundamentally inscribed into the Dominican hegemonic racial imaginary as Haitians are presumed to oppose the catholic, Hispanic, racially white Dominican identity pillars with the total contraries of *vodou*, cultural Africaness and racial blackness. Consequently, Dominican identity translates into not being Haitian and the negation and externalization of blackness (Tavenier 2008, 97). In a country like the Dominican Republic, where the ancestral roots of the vast majority lie not only in Europe but also considerably in Africa, the longing for whiteness and the negation of blackness, not only among the elite but also among the popular classes in the *barrios* is as bizarre as it is tragic and echoes thoughts on the ‘black subject’ within the postcolonial world.

“The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the

unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence.” (Fanon 2008, 178)

This chapter will explore race at the centre of the repertoire of belonging by analysing the role of racialization of Dominican, Haitian and Venezuelan identities and particularly the meanings and categorization of racialized bodies within the polar racial imaginary of external blackness and internal whiteness. The exploration of racialized bodies will particularly delve into aspects of performance and mimicry of *dominicanidad* and how particularly Haitian bodies are modified and shape shifting as to approach the Dominican racial ideal. Furthermore, this chapter analyses the Venezuelan racial position within the neighbourhood.

3.1 Racialization: Race Making in Everyday Life

Race is constructed and reproduced through the process of racialization by which ideas about race come into being through attaching meaning to perceived phenotypical, cultural or appearance differences and are acted upon (Murji and Solomos 2005, 1). Hence, racialization is the process of categorical organization of perceived diversity into racial groups according to biological differences as to construct ‘differentiated social collectivities’ (Miles in Howard 2007, 729). The products of this process are racialized identities, which translates into a system of belonging where certain groups, possessing certain physical appearances, are explicitly excluded and others included (Howard 2007, 730).

The residents of San Carlos are of all shades, however the large majority is of darker hues or in Yaneiry’s words “in the *barrio* almost everybody has the same colour”. Nonetheless, the process of racialization fundamentally underpinned everyday life in the *barrio*. This is most visibly expressed by the ubiquitous rhetoric of difference used in daily interactions from the street to intimate relationships within families. The formation of racial identities frequently starts from early childhood onwards (Murji and Solomos 2005, 8). This could be also observed in the neighbourhood for example when Milanio sat in the yard rocking a little boy on his lap singing “*negrito de coco, negrito de coco*” referring to the boys dark hue. Racialized forms of address are common and the norm in interactions. Subsequently, skin colour categories are manifested in colour code terms that are applied in everyday interactions to negotiate social positionality (Howard 2001, 3). On one hand the terms *prieto/prieta*, *negro/negra*, *moreno/morena* refer to darker hues as well as facial features associated with blackness. On the other hand *rubio/rubia* and *blanco/blanca* refer to fairer hues and ‘whiter’ features and carry commonly a positive connotation. The terms

prieto and *negro* were however often perceived as insults or applied in conversations, speaking about a third person but rarely used as forms of address as particularly *prieto* carries stark negative connotations. The term *moreno* was applied to lighter skinned people as well for darker hued people, where the term acts as a euphemism, substituting the negatively connoted expression *negro*. Alejandro, a local artist and activist, explained the racialized terminology as the following.

“For example “*prieto*” is a typical word from here which has more of a negative connotation. It’s normally used to lower the ... like “don’t think too much of yourself in the end you’re black”, that this makes you less than somebody who is more of a colour than you, which is white. And many times they use, like you say, “*moreno*” as a euphemism, which is already so assimilated that it’s used by default. Because I tell you amongst the black population the word “*negro*” is used like an a term of endearment too lets say when you talk to your partner with “*mi negro*”, “*mi negra*” ... But more so the word “*moreno*” is used to refer to the black population because the understanding is that that calling them “*negra*” is offensive because being black is something bad.” (Alejandro, interview excerpt)

In the neighbourhood the racialized terminology corresponds to general positive ideas of whiteness. Thus, fairer hued residents frequently proudly explained their colour with Spanish and white ancestry, framing those whiter ancestors as *gente hermosa*, beautiful people, opposed to bloodlines of *prietos*. Jose’s daughter Cindy, a medicine student, stated that the people of the yard are *gente fea*, referring to many darker hued residents, having their roots in the southern regions. Her mum joined the conversation, telling about her white grandpa, adding that she however “unfortunately turned out dark”. This exemplifies that internalized racism and the orientation towards whiteness are deeply entrenched in the collective consciousness of the *barrio*. The process of classification and establishing hierarchies by using the proximity to ‘whiteness’ as a criterion racializes as well as normalizes social relations. The ‘normalization’ process of ‘whiteness’ implies that the idea of whiteness becomes the norm whereas the non-white and particularly ‘blackness’ is framed as an exception despite the fact that the non-white population constitutes the numerical majority (Reiter 2005, 2013). Proximity to ‘whiteness’ acts as symbolic capital and marks ones belonging to the white-framed ‘*dominicanidad*’, the national identity. Subsequently, racialization makes race the modality through which meaning is produced and subjects and identities as well as social collectivises come into being, alongside the hierarchical continuum between ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’.

3.2 The Externalization of Blackness: Negrophobia and Anti-Haitianism

As much as ‘whiteness’ is claimed as inherent to the Dominican nation, ‘blackness’ is expelled to the “realm of the foreign” (Gregory 2012, 61). Since the nation’s birth, Dominican racial imaginaries have developed under the mist of negrophobia, detaching its racial identity from ‘Africaness’ and blackness in itself (Torres-Saillant 1998, 134).

“We, Dominicans, have a very ridged belief that we are not black. Like if you’d ask a Dominican he would easily answer “I am not black, I am Dominican”. They deposit their entire identity in their nationality like a form of negating this root, which always has been a fruit of shame because it was never desired.” (Alejandro, interview excerpt)

The quote by Alejandro mirrors the widespread beliefs that blackness is indeed external to *dominicanidad*. The hegemonic idea is to remove oneself and negate blackness “the fruit of shame”, however whiteness is for the predominantly mixed population of the Dominican Republic also rather difficult to obtain. These two polar frames of reference are substituted by an in-between category the ‘*indio*’, hinting towards pre-Columbian indigenous inhabitants of the island, which were however extinct with the arrival of the Spanish. The in-between space enables the denial of African heritage while accounting for the non-white hue, the majority of the population has. Hence, the racial category *indio* permits people of mixed ancestry to escape the notion of blackness (Torres-Saillant 1998, 134). African ancestry and blackness are externalized and associated to be innately and exclusively Haitian (Tavenier 2008, 99). Thus, the idea of the *indio* substitutes blackness as it accounts for darker hues while being adjacent to whiteness on the racial continuum (Torres Saillany 1998, 140).

The negation of blackness and its substitution was also mirrored in the *barrio*. Cindy for example expressed a typical self image in the *barrio* by starting “I am not *negra*, I am *india* ... I am *morenita*”. However, more noticeable than the reference to the racial in-between category of *indio* was the externalization of blackness from ‘Dominicanness’ and the meaning making of blackness as an inherent Haitian attribute. Two incidents were particularly telling of this phenomenon in the neighbourhood.

Yaneiry was sitting on the counter of the *colmado* across *Quinto Patio*, eating fried salami and bantered with Fulero, a young man working behind the counter. Somebody addressed Yaneiry with *negra* to which Fulero responded: “you’re not *negra* you’re *morena*”.

Yaneiry: “I am *negra*, ok lets say *morena*.”
Fulero: “That’s not the same thing”

Yaneiry: “Well, I am not Haitian ... And you?”

To Yaneiry’s provoking question Fulero responded by pulling down his hat and showing his hair saying “no! I am not, look!” (fieldnote excerpt)

The interaction of the two shows on one hand how contextual and fluid racial colour codes are applied. But more importantly this short conversation shows the perceived importance to distinguish the own identity from Haitians. Fulero proves his *dominicanidad* by presenting his hair, which was slightly less curly than the small curls associated with Haitian racial signifiers. Thus, Fulero uses his biology to prove that he belongs to the racial Dominican identity. The body as racial signifier in relation to the nation is central in the negotiation of belonging and will be later on explored in length. And so, notions of blackness with the idea of “the Haitian” also overlap in the neighbourhood. Blackness as external to *dominicanidad* was also exemplified by the phenomenon of referring to dark hued Dominicans as Haitian. When Estefani’s niece fell ill, Estefani explained the situation to a neighbour and referred to her niece, which had no strings to Haiti as “*la prieta, prieta... la haitianita*”. This interaction shows how Dominicans with dark skin are symbolically excluded from the category of ‘Dominicanness’ because their dark hue hints towards blackness and African ancestry. Assigned ‘Haitianness’, even though symbolic and in an endearing form, shows how black bodies are symbolically excluded from the Dominican nation as a proximity to whiteness cannot be assigned. Blackness and ‘the Haitian’ or the racial imaginaries and anti-Haitianism are melting together and become synonymous of each other. Frantz Fanon described blackness in the context of the “Weltanschauung of a colonized people” as “an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation” (Fanon 2008, 82). And indeed in the Dominican racial imaginary ‘the Haitian’ becomes deformed to a “master trope of blackness”, deficient of any ontological resistance (Gregory 2012, 232). This expulsion of blackness, ‘the Haitian’ and the ‘other’ within the national imaginary is echoed in San Carlos. Despite the vast majority of the residents being of darker hue and overt racism was indeed frequently denied among residents, racialization and the normalization of white supremacy and black exclusion were dominating ideas of belonging in the everyday life of the neighbourhood.

The anti-Haitian discourse has traditionally been an ideological tool of the elite to oppress and silence the black and darker lower classes as well as marginalize the Haitian migrant subject and continues to do so (Tavenier 2008, 96). As the previous parts have alluded to, the ‘othering’ process of Haitians in the neighbourhood is entangled with racial

imaginaries. This was exemplified when a seven-year-old girl from the yard saw the picture of a dark skin woman who was barely a shade darker than the girl herself. However, her immediate reaction was to yell “*guacala* [expression of disgust] *haitiana!*”. The coupling of Anti-haitianism and negrophobia binds perceived biological, social and political otherness together feeding into the naturalization of the Dominican-Haitian dichotomous relation. The following quote by Phara underlines that everyday relation and interactions are infused with racially laden anti-Haitianism.

“In school they always treated you different you know how Dominicans are. They always wanted to molest you for being Haitian but that never hurt me [laughter] for being *morena*, for being *negra*. They say that they are *blanco* and we are *moreno*...” (Phara, interview excerpt)

As the previous chapter has discussed, racial otherness extends to the division of labour and fundamentally the black Haitian body. The allotted innate race specific attributes extend also to sexuality. Black bodies and particularly black female bodies suffer a long history of hyper-sexualisation within the white colonial imaginary. Thus, global colonialism, slavery and neo-colonialism have led to a continuing stigmatization of black bodies as ugly and unsightful but “simultaneously and paradoxically as hypersexual” (Candelario 2000, 229). Hyper-sexualization is additionally a phenomenon attached to migrant subjects, which are frequently prone to sexual exploitation and abuse (Lazar 2013, 15). In the racialized and *machismo* climate of the neighbourhood, Haitian woman were frequently framed as objects of desire as much as they were perceived as threats and “dirty”. Jose described the Haitian female body as incomplete and lacking “something” in comparison to Dominican female bodies. His attested distortion and deficiency of Haitian female bodies reduces them to inferior abnormalities. Additionally, he framed Haitian woman as sexual threats by assigning a sexual condition to them, which he called *cocomordan*. A myth that through the hard work Haitian woman would execute, particularly the carrying of heavy loads on the head, the vagina muscle would contract during sexual acts and trap the male genitalia inside the woman. Jose’s example shows that the Haitian female body is racially and sexually otherized. Phara recounted the sexual entitlement of Dominican men towards Haitian woman.

“Sometimes a Dominican man speaks with you and when you don’t want to they tell you “you’re Haitian, ... you’re with me, you’re *negra*. They tell “you, you’re *negra* you have to be with me obligatorily”” (Phara, interview excerpt)

The racialized abuse of Haitians in the neighbourhood has many faces and has its firm place within the everyday life of the neighbourhood. Negrophobic and anti-Haitian ideologies are furthermore often internalized and reproduced from Haitians and Haitian descendants themselves, as the following vignette will introduce.

As the shades got longer and the sunrays turned to a deep orange in the afternoon hours, the heat got more bearable and the sidewalks filled with people. Over the past weeks, it had become my routine to visit the small stand at the side of the road on the market street, during the course of my days. Phara ran the little stand together with her mother Madan Monet. Squeezed between stands, selling flowers, herbs and fruits, the three wooden tables of Madan Monet were packed with thermoses filled with coffee and tea, bread and rolled out empanada dough. As always, I was sitting behind the stand on the wall between Phara's cousin's CD stand and her aunt's stand filled with Haitian groceries.

The narrow street was packed with stands and people as well as filled with music, conversations, exhaust fumes and a mixture of good and bad smells. People passed by, buying cigarettes or cups of coffee. Others disappeared into the yellow building behind the stand. Phara also lived in the building together with her mum and her brother just as about twenty other Haitian families and Jason. Jason was a young boy of around ten years, who lived with his father in the yellow house. In the afternoon hours, he would often play in the street in front of the house. This day he was coming home from the homework club with a plastic sword jumping around the entrance of the building. Like many other afternoons he ran up to Phara and me to sing one of his songs or to chat. As he was swinging his sword in front of us, a lady passed by the street with a tiny girl, stumbling alongside, holding her hand. Jason yelled, "that's my sister!" Phara argued that the girl is merely his cousin, however Jason persisted that he has two siblings one of them being the little girl. He quickly added that they were darker and uglier than himself. He yelled out "my sister looks like a piece of charcoal and she has a really ugly nose like this". Jason formed his hands into fists, holding them in front of his face while slowly moving them apart. After throwing back his head, he pointed to Madan Monet, who was cutting vegetables to fill the empanada dough saying under laughter "an ugly nose like hers". Jason, the son of a Haitian mum and dad, proudly proclaimed on other occasions to be "*puro dominicano*" and just as many people with Haitian descent in the neighbourhood, replies in Spanish to creole and only reluctantly switches to creole. Jason points with his plastic sword towards the sky and runs up the stairs into the yellow building. Phara stares into the void, giggling a sad laughter. (Vignette, field notes)

Jason exemplifies the common internalization of anti-Haitianism and negrophobia by Haitians and Haitian descendants common in the neighbourhood. Other Haitians I spoke with had adopted the Dominican construction of history and showed understanding with anti-Haitian sentiments as justified by the historic occupation. Others like Jason framed Haitians alongside anti-Haitian tropes as "savages and murderers". This adaptation went so far that I

observed an altercation, which cumulated, in a group of Haitian descendant men yelling to another Haitian descendant girl “shut up *maldita Haitiana*”, a common insult for Haitians. As alluded to in the vignette, the internalization of anti-Haitian ideas is intrinsically connected to race and biological features. Statements made by Dominicans such as “Oh God, I don’t want to be blacker (*más prieta*) than I am” were mirrored by similar statements made by Haitians such as “She is a really ugly African”, a statement made by a Haitian woman towards a Haitian girl. Ruth’s account emphasizes how whiteness (or the proximity on the continuum to ‘whiteness’) as social hierarchical order is internalized and adopted by Haitians as well.

“People say “Ay, I am very black I am getting a lot of sun” I see that. I understand it because I, I have a colour, its like it would be between the two [black and white]. Because when I was little I can show you a picture, I was white. So they always regarded me as the most beautiful one out of my sisters. Why? Because they were black, they looked very black. So I am perfectly aware what every colour thinks, like I am in the middle that’s what’s happening.” (Ruth, interview excerpt)

This section laid out that negrophobia is ubiquitous in the neighbourhood and that the local racial imaginaries reflect a racial yardstick, which continues to negotiate and inform positionality and belonging by the means of the proximity to whiteness amongst Dominicans as well as many Haitians.

3.3 Body Politics: Appearance and Performance of ‘Dominicanidad’

Bodies are essential in the construction and negotiation of power, citizenship and belonging as bodies have to be understood as “sites in which constructions of differences are mapped onto human beings” (Brown and Gershon 2017, 1). This section will look through the lens of body politics as to further comprehend the inner workings of racial inclusion and exclusion in the polity of the neighbourhood. As the previous parts made unmistakably clear, black bodies are ‘transgressive bodies’ which are marginalized, excluded and denounced (Brown and Gershon 2017, 2). Thus, in the Dominican context, the systemic regime of race places and classifies bodies, alongside a white/black dichotomy. This binary between the racial imaginary of white supremacy and negrophobia colonizes and translates onto the body. Subsequently, the non-white body becomes shaped by practices of containment and control in which the white body serves as the ultimate reference (Brown and Gershon 2017, 1).

The racialized body as identity signifier is closely connected to the concept of the ‘somatic norm image’, which describes physical (somatic) characteristics that are internalized

by a group as its ideal and norm. Norm in the sense as it measures the aesthetic appreciation and ideal, since barely any individual of its group actually embodies the somatic norm image (Candelario 2007, 223-224). The somatic norm image in the Dominican Republic continues to echo the Spanish colonial norms of the “Iberian variant” of whiteness where features identified with white somatic norms are believed to be desirable and beautiful whilst “features identified with black somatic norms are universally construed as ugly and undesirable” (Candelario 2007, 224). This distinctive formulation of whiteness and racial identity is apart from biological and phenotypical features also enacted through racialized beauty practices. Beauty culture is indeed crucial as through beauty practices whiteness is deliberately encoded onto the body. Thus physical beauty, as mundane as it sounds, is in the Dominican context inherently intertwined with the somatic norm image and serves as a corner stone in identity production as well as acts as a form of social and cultural capital that possess considerable exchange value for economic capital (Candelario 2000, 138).

The importance of beauty culture leads to hair, as hair is the principal bodily race signifier in the Dominican Republic, before facial features and skin tone. The role of hair as a race marker is interestingly of enormous importance, and becomes a symbol of the everyday engagement of belonging. Two categories of hair are usually distinguished, *pelo malo*, bad hair, which refers to Afro and kinky textured hair and *pelo bueno*, straight hair. Thus both categories of “good” and “bad hair” carry explicit racial connotation of white and European or black and African bodies (Candelario 2000, 131-140). Alejandro illustrated the criticality of the binary notion of *pelo bueno* and *pelo malo* in the in- and exclusion of bodies in relation to the Dominican racial imaginary.

“Here it works like this, like we consider ourselves white, *un pelo crespo* [kinky hair] or *pelo malo* [bad hair] like they say here, is not acceptable because you see that the majority of the people who work in the public sector, they demand you to come with only slightly curly hair, with hair, you know, tied back without curls because curls are seen as not presentable, dirty, of people which are not appropriate to serve anybody or represent a company. Umm that’s why there is kinky hair ... and everything you can do to remove yourself from blackness the better. Like you see that also a lot, how couples get together, that from little onwards they are preoccupied, especially females, to marry somebody with a lighter skin to “better the race”. So I would say that we are people that live in the belief, that only being white exists and every bit you can get closer to the white the better. “Here are no *negros* and neither *pelo crespo*””. (Alejandro, interview excerpt)

As much as hair is a crucial racial signifier it is also a marker, which can be compromised and altered. Beauty practices and styling enable the transformation of kinky hair into straight *pelo bueno* and offers the ability to transgress racial identities (Tavernier 2008, 102). Subsequently hair is essential in the racialization of bodies despite not being an unalterable biological fact. However, the encoding of whiteness through straightening, otherwise kinky hair, is a gendered practice, which is particularly applied by women as “technique of the body” as to externalize and alter their racial code (Tavernier 2008, 101-102). Subsequently, hair becomes a trope of the everyday performance of *blanqueamiento* or whitening where signifiers of whiteness, such as straight hair are encoded onto the body.

As mentioned previously, the vast majority of San Carlos’ residents possess darker features and naturally curly and kinky hair textures. However, the image of the neighbourhood is coined by women with straightened hair, supplemented by a dense web of beauty salons offering hair-straightening services. Estefani is one of the few women who wore her natural and curly hair. She recounted how she however straightens her hair for job interviews, exemplifying that the norms of bodily appearance seep into an array of social and economic fields. The twin notion of *pelo malo – pelo bueno* is deeply anchored in the consciousness of the residents and straight hair is synonymous with beauty. This shows that bodily appearance is also in the neighbourhood of great importance and the performance of beauty overlaps with the performance of belonging and racial and national identity. Thus, Beauty and hair treatment and texture appear banal at first, however they are intrinsically entangled in the performance of the somantic norm image of the Dominican body.

Subsequently, hair is essential in the racial reading of bodies in the Dominican context. Ideas around hair are additionally infiltrated by anti-Haitianism and affect the way both “light- and dark-skinned Dominicans view and care for their hair”. Thus, the texture of hair is an imperative marker of racial boundaries between Haitians and Dominicans (Tavernier 2008, 101-102). In the context of the neighbourhood, the notion of *pelo malo* was frequently interchanged by *pelo haitano*, Haitian hair, showing that kinky hair texture was explicitly allocated outside the Dominican body and assigned to the Haitian body. The following short vignette exemplifies how kinky hair textures are equated to Haitian racial markers following the dichotomous pattern of Dominican/Haitian, white/black, and beautiful/ugly.

The painter, a man in his sixties, was sitting on a bucket painting the wall of the apartments leading down the alleyway towards the yard. In the past days

he had painted the walls with a cream colour and was now adding a blue ribbon on the bottom of the wall. He was chatting with a Haitian lady who was also in her sixties and lived upstairs in one of the houses adjacent to the yard. He stood up from the bucket and joined her in the shade on the other side of the alleyway and quickly got flirty. He made her compliments such as praising her as *negra fina*, a euphemism for dark skinned woman, who possesses “fine facial feature”. Once the lady went upstairs he turned to me and told me he likes her, however the painter raised his eyebrows and pointed out that she would have to change her hair. Her hair was braided in cornrows with little bundles of natural hair framing her face. He mumbled, “she has Haitian hair, that’s ugly, she has to change that”. (vignette, field notes)

In the *barrio*, hair is also a crucial racial signifier for the categorization and distinction between Haitian and Dominican bodies. However, as previously discussed, the biological condition of hair is adaptable through beauty practices. The alteration of hair texture towards straight hair is not exclusive to Dominican women but was also a fundamental tool for Haitian women. The adaption of straight hair becomes indeed a cultivated performance of Haitian women, mimicking and encoding *dominicanidad* on their bodies in order to transform their racial identity and thus positionality on the social ladder. Ruth for example straightened her hair arguing that transforming her “Haitian hair, *pelo malo*” into straight hair would make her appear Dominican. According to Ruth, her straight hair in addition to her perfect command of the Spanish language altered her appearance towards a Dominican body as she recounted: “So with straight hair you can determine what they think of you, the two things hair and language”. Hair as a performative signifier that produces their signified enables Haitian women like Ruth to include themselves into the racial imaginary of *dominicanidad* and thus escape anti-Haitian sentiments. Subsequently, the application of beauty practices by Haitian woman is intrinsically connected to performing bodily symbols of *dominicanidad* or performing the Dominican body. Hence, whiteness or the proximity to whiteness is not reduced to a biological reality but a negotiated symbolic good and capital (Reiter 2013, 62).

The field of bodily production of *dominicanidad* and whiteness through manipulating the body and its visible signifiers is however not limited to hair. The mimicking and performance of whiteness is also enacted through a more sinister and disturbing method of altering skin colour through the application of toxic chemicals. Skin colour is similar to hair, not mere organic matter, but a highly visible and powerful racial signifier through which relationships with the self and others are negotiated (Tate 2015, 2). The lighter the skin shade the closer a body is positioned to the Dominican somatic norm image, making the shifting of skin shades through beauty practices an additional field of bodily modification. Many little

stores and stands on the market sell apart from hair bundles for braids and weaves also an array of chemical bleaching ointments and creams, stacked to high towers and piles. Haitian women with bleached skin are a common sight around the market. The performance and indeed the will of approximating whiteness, enacted through the bleaching of Haitian bodies, echoes the inhumane and perverted colonial imaginary which is so deeply manifested in the Dominican racial regime. At this point it needs to be explained that the practice of skin bleaching is by far not limited to the Haitian or Dominican context but a global phenomenon. In the Caribbean, skin bleaching has been extensively studied within Jamaican popular classes, who seek to whiten themselves for personal, social and economic benefits, as white skin equates to a “pretty body image” similar to the Dominican context (Charles and Mclean 2017, 783). Thus, the practice of skin bleaching as to approximate white beauty standards is a common phenomenon amongst former plantation and slave societies of the region and the intention to alter the biological condition rooted in colonial skin shade hierarchies or pigmentocracy continue to affect the social organization as well as the psyche of the ones outside the somatic norm image of whiteness (Tate 2015, 28). However, in the *barrio* skin bleaching takes on a further meaning, as it additionally serves as a method for Haitian bodies to enter into *dominicanidad*. Ruth depicted the intrinsic connection between the psychological condition of skin shade shifting of black bodies with the deeply racist and unjust political and social order.

“Its like generation after generation, *los negros* when they were mistreated by the whites, they said “If I would be whiter that wouldn’t happen to me. So the adult tells that to his children and the son grows up thinking the same. So the son has its own children and raises them with the same [ideas]. So generation after generation until nowadays there is a trait to believe that, and I don’t blame them ... I don’t blame them.” (Ruth, interview excerpt)

One dimension of altering the body, mimicking whiteness, serves for the performance of *dominicanidad* or as Phara formulated it “to appear more Dominican”. Another layer of body modification of Haitian and black bodies apart from Dominican performativity is however internalized racism and negrophobia rooted in the colonial psyche (Tate 2015, 29). Therefore, the aesthetic preference of lighter skin translates into colourism and self-hate, produced and reiterated in the face of the hegemonic racial imaginary of white supremacy in which black bodies are vilified and lowered to ugly and anthropoid (Tate 2015, 29). Ruth explained this relation between intrinsic negrophobic self-hate and the desire of shade shifting towards lighter skin.

Ruth: “It’s that the majority of black people have a problem with their colour ... mostly the Haitians; they always try to change their skin colour.”

Interviewer: “Like with products?”

Ruth: “Yes with products, with chemicals, so because there are people that do it simply because they want that ... white the colour light is beautiful like when you look white you look beautiful you look light. Because you know black is darkness and who likes to be darkness? Nobody right? Everybody wants light!

You would not like to stay blind; when you are blind you see a permanent darkness because you don’t see light. So the *negro* thinks the following, if he would look a bit lighter in a photo, the photo would look prettier. Also when you go to the photo shops they clean the face if it’s black, like with a filter. Like it’s a disaster but deadly, everybody wants to go towards white.

On the other hand there are people who are born with a little bit lighter skin so the maltreatment of the sun and the work and all that, the skin changes its colour that makes that the skin tone changes and we aren’t as pretty as we naturally are, you understand? For example, my colour is a little bit lighter but when I get a lot of sun during work and moving around I am getting a bit darker so the ones who know me from before tell me “you were more beautiful back then” because I was a little bit lighter and that colour looked prettier, you understand?” (Ruth, interview excerpt)

This section discussed how the body and particularly the two major racial signifiers of hair and skin are manipulated in order to externalize, encode and perform the ideological code of *dominicanidad*. Haitians, as racially marked subjects and weak or non-existent claims to the nation, mimic those bodily symbols of Dominican identity as to negotiate their belonging and inclusion in the Dominican racial imaginary and thus the nation and society (Gregory 2014, 74). The intention of Haitian subjects in the neighbourhood to master “models and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider” reflects Haitian claims to citizenship by altering their bodily signifiers as Haitian bodies fall outside racial, social and political boundaries, making citizenship entitlements not available (Isin 2009, 371). The mimicking and imitation of the Dominican body fits into the idea of Ong’s concept of cultural citizenship as they negotiate the hegemonic forms of race that establish criteria of belonging. This negotiation of belonging is indeed a dual process of “self-making” as Haitians manipulate their bodies and thus their positionality, claiming inclusion as well as “being made” within webs of power linked to the nation state and society as the anti-Haitian and racial discourse continues to position the Haitian subject outside the nation and citizenship (Ong 1996, 738). Subsequently, race is a crucial category within the repertoire of

belonging not only of the nation, but also in the everyday fabric of the neighbourhood. The highly racialized Haitian and Dominican identities and hence bodies become stress fields of belonging and signifiers of inclusion and exclusion in the Dominican nation and beyond.

3.4 The Imagined Venezuelan as a Site of Whiteness

The position of the Venezuelan subject on the racial ladder differs vastly from the Haitian trajectory. The observation that “Many consider Venezuelans more beautiful because people think they are whiter than Dominicans” made by a Dominican student sums up the widespread racial image of Venezuelans in the Dominican society. Thus, Venezuelans are vastly considered as white by Dominicans and are commonly integrated into the racial hierarchy, not only above the Haitian subject, but above the Dominican subject as well. This three-part racial pyramid made up by Haitians, Dominicans and Venezuelans was an image that was constantly reproduced in social interactions.

Santi, a Dominican friend of Victor and Carla, who was married to a Venezuelan woman, came one day to visit the Venezuelan couple in the evening. They were sitting in the yard in front of the small apartment drinking soda and eating *arepas* when Santi noticed Victor’s tanned lower arms. He was amused by the darker arms and lesser tanned and lighter shoulder saying “Haitian” pointing on the lower arms, “Dominican” pointing on the less tanned shoulders, and “Venezuelan” while pointing at Victor’s face. He repeated similar jokes on several occasions equating the couples’ tanned skin to “becoming Haitian”.

Santi himself was married to a darker hued Venezuelan woman nonetheless he sustained a racial imaginary, which associates Venezuelans with whiteness. The assigned whiteness to Venezuelans is indeed crucial in the triangular negotiation of social positionality in the neighbourhood. David, the teenage brother of Ruth, reiterated this intrinsic connection between Venezuelan social status and assigned whiteness.

David: “They [Dominicans] treat them well ... you can see that in the street, it’s very hard to find a Dominican who says to a Venezuelan “look *maldito venezolano* [damned Venezuelan] I am better than you” or that. No, I haven’t heard that yet.”

Interviewer: “And that... Why do Dominicans think so well about Venezuelans?”

David: “Well to tell the truth I think that the majority of Haitians are black right, 90% say that Haitians are black and of the Venezuelans, who come here, are very few who are black ... that’s why I think that.”

(David, interview excerpt)

David draws a direct comparison between the rejection of Haitian blackness to the acceptance of Venezuelan whiteness. The idea of the Venezuelan white body is indeed essential in the racial landscape of the neighbourhood; particularly the imagined physical beauty of the Venezuelan woman is lifted to an idealised image of whiteness and femininity as well as an object of desire (Gackstetter Nichols 2013, 172). Thus, the idea of the Venezuelan woman becomes an archetypical trope of whiteness within the Dominican racial imaginary. In everyday interactions and conversations the perception of the Venezuelan woman is synonymous to the white beauty ideal exemplified by Santi’s casual impression “Venezuelan women are good, like white” or Raul proclaiming to hire a Venezuelan woman for the juice bar next to the gym he was planning to open. Miguel, a young Venezuelan man working in the gym, echoed the Dominican gaze and idealization of the Venezuelan female body by arguing that Dominicans would allow and appreciate Venezuelans in the country, “because of the woman, Venezuelan women are beautiful, white. Dominicans like that”. Subsequently, whiteness, and particularly white female bodies are essential in Dominican perceptions and categorizations of the Venezuelan migrant subject in the neighbourhood, placing them on top of the racial hierarchy. However this idealization is frequently paired with the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of Venezuelan women. In the Dominican eye, the imagined Venezuelan, mirrors the somatic image of the ideal Dominican body, lifting the imagined Venezuelan to an alter-ego position of Dominican identity.

In order to understand Venezuelan perspectives on race and their own racial position it is necessary to briefly dive into Venezuelan national and racial image. The official national discourse has traditionally framed Venezuelan society as a racial democracy, marked by mestizaje and racial integration of Afro-descendants, European descendants and indigenous peoples (Angosto Ferrández 2014, 373). The myth of racial democracy outlined the Venezuelan racial situation as hybridized social body, also described as *Café con leche*, where people of all races and mixtures belong to all social strata. The Venezuelan racial discourse indeed acknowledges a mixed and hybrid ancestry, giving non-whites considerable access to social mobility compared to other nations in the region (Wright 1996, 9-12). However, the project of mestizaje and racial democracy has also obscured and co-created colonial racial hierarchies with the ideal of whiteness and whitening as its process. Thus,

white ideals of beauty are similar to the Dominican context closely associated with national identity (Gackstetter and Nicholas 2013, 172). However, many Venezuelans I spoke to were regarded as white in the neighbourhood while they accounted to be seen as *mestizo* or *negro* in the Venezuelan context. In addition, Venezuelan research participants did not adopt the idea that Dominicans are *blancos* or *indios* but acknowledged Dominican self-identifications as *claros* repeatedly with laughter and confusion. Nonetheless, I observed how the Dominican idea of whiteness was indeed adopted by Venezuelan participants during interactions with Dominicans as to earn symbolic capital and social prestige.

Furthermore, the idealization of the white Venezuelan woman is not exclusive to the Dominican imaginary but also deeply entrenched in Venezuelan perceptions. The Venezuelan white female body serves indeed as avatar of national identity and beauty ideal (Gackstetter Nicholas 2013, 172). Carla, who was identified as white in the ‘barrio’ perceived herself not belonging to the “beautiful, tall and white people” but as small and indigenous looking. Her husband encouraged her to approximate whiteness through bodily modifications such as dying her hair blond and applying green contact lenses. Thus, similar as in the Dominican context, whiteness remains the aspired ideal whereas black physical features and blackness in itself are assigned to an inferior position in the Venezuelan racial imaginary even though not to Dominican extents. Hence, Venezuelan participants frequently applied vocabulary such as *pelo malo/pelo bueno* and favoured white physical features, reflecting whiteness as beauty ideal (Gackstetter and Nichols 2013, 174). For example, Victor claimed to be not as racist as Dominicans, distancing himself from blatant negrophobia, whilst upholding and performing ideas of white supremacy, idealizing white beauty and rejecting black physical features.

Despite the similarities in Venezuelan and Dominican racial imaginaries, it is important to note that the anti-Haitian component of racial discourse is missing. Thus, the relation between Venezuelans and Haitians in the neighbourhood differs crucially from the Haitian-Dominican stress field. Phara emphasised on this dissimilarity.

“Here on the market used to work many Venezuelans. Some [Venezuelans] worked by my house, they are good people not like Dominicans. We never had problems with them. They treat *negros* well, they have nothing to do with that [Dominican-Haitian situation].” (Phara, conversation excerpt)

Quotes like these demonstrate how Venezuelans in the neighbourhood are acting largely outside the anti-Haitian discourse, thus everyday interactions with Haitians are barely marked by overtly negrophobic repertoires.

This chapter explored race as a crucial element within the repertoire of belonging in the *barrio* and delved into the importance of racialized bodies, positioned on an imagined racial continuum towards a white somatic norm image. Dominican bodies are judged upon their white leaning features, whereas blackness is expelled and externalized to “the Haitian”, stylized to the antithesis to the Dominican body and racial identity. The Venezuelan exemplifies in the Dominican imagination whiteness and is thus not merely accepted but idealized, elevating the Venezuelan subject to an alter ego of the ideal Dominican racial body. Subsequently, race once again co-creates, reproduces and deepens the asymmetrical triangular relation between Dominican, Venezuelan and Haitian subjects in the neighbourhood of San Carlos.

Chapter 4. Changing the Narrative – Strategies of Survival and Resistance

The repertoire of belonging in the neighbourhood unfolds under the ubiquitous cloud of hegemonic national and racial imaginaries, forging the Venezuelan, Haitian and Dominican subjects into hierarchies of power and producing systems of exclusion for black and Haitian spaces and bodies. Deep inequalities, dehumanization and marginalization caused by the racist and anti-Haitian power structures remain however not uncontested and sparks of alternative imaginaries and resistance permeate the hegemonic status quo. This chapter will explore these counter narratives and ideas by hearing voices inside the *barrio* and beyond, by listening to voices of activists, who resist and redefine what it means to be black in Dominican society by promoting a racial repertoire of belonging, which includes black bodies.

4.1 Alternative Imaginaries Inside the *Barrio*

The profuse and widespread internalized negrophobia and anti-Haitian narrative within the neighbourhood, which the previous chapters discussed, is the overwhelming frame in which belonging and identity are produced and negotiated. However, alternative narratives of positive Haitian self-images and black pride occasionally disrupt this hegemonic web of discourses. Various Haitians living in the neighbourhood strongly opposed the previously discussed phenomenon of denial of Haitian roots and rejected the idea of becoming Dominican. The two young Haitian women, Ruth and Phara, who appeared throughout this

paper, exemplified great pride in their Haitian nationality as well as their blackness. Phara consistently described the DR as a racist and hostile country, reasoning her conviction towards not becoming a Dominican national.

“I never want to be Dominican, I will always go to my country, I always have my passport and visa. Yes ... I don't want to be part of this country because of the racism of them [...] They will not change. They say that they are white; they say that they are white and not black. They are very racist! Even if a mother has a child here they don't accept that and don't give the baby documents [citizenship]. It's better not to have a baby here. If they don't accept it here it's better to have it in your country or another country.”(Phara, conversation excerpts)

Dominican racism was a fundamental reason for Phara's rejection of becoming a Dominican national, attesting her dignity and independence from the country by referring to her Haitian passport. Additionally, Phara reclaimed Haitian self-determination through contesting the hegemonic narrative of Dominican superiority over Haiti, replacing it with a narrative of mutual, if not Dominican dependency on macro political level.

“If not for business there wouldn't be a single Haitian here in this country. They need the Haitians. If they close the border to Haiti, sometimes they say “no Dominican truck comes to the country, to Haiti” and they close the border for fifteen days to a month. You hear the screams of the Dominicans in the radio and television they plead with the Haitians to open the border because without Haitians there is no business. Everything stays there.”
(Phara, interview excerpt)

This switching of roles, assigning a position of power to Haiti and portraying Dominicans at the mercy of Haitian labour and migration, reclaims Haitian agency and power. Ruth who proudly showed me her Haitian passport and visa shared similar views of a positive Haitian self-image. Thus, the frequent pursuit of Haitians to appear Dominican does not necessarily disqualify the presence of Haitian national pride in the neighbourhood. Transnational migrant identities are indeed fluid and complex, as in them several hegemonic contexts of host as well as home societies, such as nationalism, race and ethnicity are confronted as well as reformulated, reshaped or resisted (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 5). Haitian national pride was frequently accompanied with the acceptance of blackness as Ruth's explanation of her idea of Haitian identity exemplifies.

“Well, to be Haitian means for me that I come from the black race, that I come from the slaves and that's it. I don't have a problem with that because that's history and everybody lives their individual lives in different ways with

different consequences and benefits. [...] Being black has a lot of meaning for every person and mostly for those who live suffering and mistreated by the whites when they say “*ay maldita negra*” so black people who know what they are referring to reply with a lot of pride you know.... We are proud to be black but when they say “*maldita negra*” I reply nothing, you know? For me that doesn’t say anything, what the fuck is the problem? I don’t reply because for me its like shit coming out of the mouth because somebody who uses his mind doesn’t say such thing. The one who says that doesn’t know what he says, because of that I don’t have to reply, those are black people and white people that live in the tradition of the past.” (Ruth, interview excerpt)

Ruth’s self-confidence in her nationality and pride in her black identity was shared by several Haitian research participants. However, positive connotations with blackness were frequently tied to racialized ideas about the black body. Thus, even though the negrophobic narrative was put into question, positive perceptions of blackness continued to be informed by racialized notions reasoned by biology and phenotype. This is illustrated by Phara’s explanation of her black pride and belonging to the “black race”. “Black! To be strong! Because black people are strong, in every sense. Black people resist more ... the skin, a white person cannot get a lot of sun.” The emphasis on the biologically strong and resistant black body echoes the reduction of blackness to strong and hard workers in the colonial imaginary. David, Ruth’s brother expressed similar positive ideas about black physicality in relation to a positive black self-image.

“Oh, because in the majority of sports we black people are the strongest. In the majority of sports, we black people are stronger than others and that.”
(David, interview excerpt)

The quote exemplifies again that David’s image of blackness remains connected to positive connotation of the physicality of black bodies particularly in the context of sports. However, David’s source for a positive black image transgresses the Haitian-Dominican sphere into transnational representations of blackness in basketball and African-American pop culture such as hip-hop. Thus, David, a promising basketball player himself, frequently listened to African-American hip hop artists such as *Xxxtentacion* and found a role model in African-American basketball player *Lebron James*. David’s encouraging idea of blackness exemplifies how mass-mediated forms of African-diaspora culture and particularly black American culture constitute a powerful counter force in the politics of imaginations in the *barrio* (Gregory 2012, 61). Positive representations of African-American culture and success are through mass media, particularly the Internet, highly accessible to the youth of the neighbourhood, contents which contest the Dominican narrative of negrophobia and set

impulses to valorize and recast black racial identity (Gregory 2012, 23). Subsequently, transnational ideas of blackness offer an outlook to escape the Dominican racial imaginary and total exclusion of blackness.

Nonetheless, black resistance in the *barrio* is meagre and the glimpses of black pride barely escape the hegemonic racialized narrative. However, internalized racism and self-hate among black people in the neighbourhood remain also not utterly uncontested. Ruth gave a powerful testimony, denouncing a colonized mentality of thought patterns rooted in white supremacy and practices of bodily whitening through bleaching and toning as described in the previous chapter.

“I hate when I see a black person like that [bleached skin]. Because there is a problem, nature doesn’t fail, nature doesn’t fail. If you are black and you try to whiten yourself that doesn’t change you from being black damn it. And if you put a filter you still look as dark as the rest. If black people do that they give the whites reason to believe that they continue to be slaves. As if they want to maintain slavery. So *gente bruta* [senseless people] say with their mouth that they don’t want to be slaves but they work for slavery, they support slavery. Everything they do is for slavery in contrast to what they say with their mouths. So that’s a big problem, it’s fatal. ... They enslave you because you permitted them to do so.” (Ruth, interview excerpt)

Ruth expresses a powerful and hopeful will to defy the colonization of black consciousness of innate notions of inferiority and self-hate, resonating Fanon’s words “I am not the slave of the slavery that dehumanized my ancestors” (Fanon 2008, 179). However, her perspective definitely ignores and simplifies the dual phenomenon of systemic oppression and internalized racism. Subsequently, even though the *barrio* remains strongly in the grip of the racial hierarchies, imprinted by anti-Haitianism, tentative voices among the residents exist, disrupting and contesting the dominant norms of meaning.

This section shows that transnational identities such as Haitian identities in the *barrio* are negotiated in a realm that spans around more than one place and beyond the boundaries of the nation state in which they are present, translating to an existence in diverse ‘habitats of meaning’ sourced from differing cultural repertoires (Vertovec 2010, 573-578). Thus, Haitian transnational social fields introduce an altering Haitian and black imaginary, feeding into the construction of a counterpace of sociocultural belonging and citizenship that stretches beyond the confines of *dominicanidad*.

4.2 Afro-Movements – Claiming Black Dominican Identity

In the Dominican society in which inequality is deeply internalized and manifested in the racial imaginary and the social and cultural forms through which people relate to each other in everyday life, the claim to equal rights which embodies citizenship, confronts the authoritarian culture that permeates all social relations. Thus, citizenship must also be understood in the sense of going beyond state-centric or legally based provisions and notions and as creation of new rights that emerge from specific struggles such as black exclusion and marginalization (Dagnino in Caldwell 2007, 138). Pro-black activism in the Dominican Republic plays a central role in contesting anti-black socio-political structures as activists assume positions of active social subjects by participating in the process of claiming and redefining rights for black Dominicans. Hence, black activism claims a new sociability by shaping, demanding and manifesting new rules and ideas for living in a racially more just and inclusive society. Subsequently, the development of this new, more inclusive sociability translates into a practice of citizenship within civil society (mostly outside of the juridical-political spheres) (Caldwell 2007, 139).

In Santo Domingo the *Zona Colonial*, the colonial quarter, which lays only one kilometre away at the foot of San Carlos, is a meeting point for the creative and activist scene of the city and a hub for events, around the theme of blackness and resistance. Thus, the Dominican Republic harbours a considerable amount of organizations and individuals, who are dedicated to redefining and valorising a collective black identity within Dominican society, forming the countries afro-movements. Dominican afro-movements, compared to similar movements in the US for instance, is still very much in its “first stage”, as put by two artists and activists, Carolin and Alejandro. According to Alejandro, this first stage consists of finding a voice and a common language through the creation of spaces and platforms. Carolin shared similar ideas about how the afro-movement is confronted with the challenge to find a black consciousness and to reevaluate Dominican history in face of consistent and chronicle negation and manipulation of information about black presence in the DR. Thus, Carolin argues that even though Dominican black activism is not an entirely new phenomenon it is indeed a lengthy and slow moving process.

“Well I think these movements are not new and they have grown over time. Obviously when we speak about something that grows we think that that needs to happen quickly. I feel that everything in life takes time, like when you plant a seed. When you plant a seed for a tree to give you shade it’s a process. You have to plant it and to take care of it, plant it in a fertile soil and wait for the

process that that plant, that seed grows to a tree so you can enjoy the shade. I feel all the Afro-movements in Dominican Republic are in a process of constant growth [...] One example, at the end of the day the seed I will plant is there to stay for the next ones to come. For the girls, who will like me feel fear and shame for their hair or their skin colour in one moment of their lives. But what will be the mechanism for that they can learn who they are?" (Carolin, interview excerpt)

Many activists as well as Alejandro and Carolin found their way to the afro-movement and pro-black activism through personal struggles tied to beauty and self-image. The experience of judgement upon anti-black aesthetics caused "everyday wounds of colour" yet again highlights the significance of hair and beauty in relation to the racial discourse also within the movement (Caldwell 2007, 90). Furthermore, impulses of diaspora actors are crucial in shaping black resistance in the DR. Cross-national flows are indeed crucial in the conception and redefinition of race as different ideas and notions cross borders.

"I feel that there is maybe a lot more influence from the diaspora from abroad than from the people from within. But how I said, that is because of many aspects, which have to do with the lack of confidence and the lack of information in general [in DR]. [...] There is a local movement but I feel that there is still missing a lot. It lacks more integration and more acceptance" (Carolin, interview excerpt)

According to Carolin, the diaspora is assigned with a crucial role and transnational ideas of blackness appear to be central impulses on the Dominican afro-movement. However, despite the transnational and particularly American influence, the Dominican afro-movement is concerned with carving out an approach, which is specific to the social political and historical context of the DR. Thus, the black mobilization in the DR is similar to other afro-movements in the region, with the diaspora simply being a site of exchange and inspiration (Hooker 2016, 215).

Altering narratives and articulation of black bodies and contesting the hegemonic racial imaginary are missions at the forefront of the Dominican afro-movements. Empowering natural signifiers of blackness, particularly the wearing of Afro hair, instead of straightened hair, are crucial in contesting body aesthetics in relation to the larger social and political discourse, permeated by notions of white supremacy. The afro-movement contests these normative notions of beauty of acceptable and unacceptable bodies by claiming blackness as an intrinsic part of the Dominican body and the nation. Thus, a 'subversive imaginary', defined by those accepting their own blackness arises as opposition and contestation of the hegemonic Dominican imaginary (Ricourt 2016, 5).

Imperative in the fight to change the anti-black racial imaginary and promote the valorisation and inclusion of black people is representation. Alejandro and Carolin are pursuing and collaborating on photographic projects to produce new portrayals of black Dominicans and to bring their existence into light as to empower black Dominican identity and hence take part in a co-creation of a ‘subversive imaginary’.

“It is very difficult to develop, to have confidence in your appearance if there are no examples of people who look like you in social media in the press and television. What people consume the most now is *Instagram*. I say that my work is also the fruit of this frustration. Something curious happened because in Spain where I lived for a long time I was black, they treated me like a *negro*. Here I am white. So I decided consciously to search and realize projects with majority black participation of mostly black people and people of darker skin tones who I don’t see being represented in social media. ... I like to include black people in my projects above all woman who work with me and also add their perspective which isn’t often reflected.”

(Alejandro, interview excerpt)

Alejandro’s and Carolin’s work of reimagining their bodies and the subjects of their work with positive significance is primarily directed towards other black people to empower and contest internalized ideas of negrophobia and anti-black racism. Carolin emphasized the importance of black appearance and representation alternative to the negative normative image describing them as the vehicle and “bridge of reality to who you really are”. Hence, according to Carolin, the distribution of positive images and representation of blackness through social media are crucial in fostering empowerment and self-esteem of black Dominicans.

“I feel that with the access to the internet and social networks which are where the people pass most of their time, on their phones and computers. When a black girl and including myself sees another black woman reaching her dreams and talks about her hair and colour as part of her narrative, not like a topic of victimization but a topic of empowerment, a topic of ability, a topic of “wow how incredible”... yes there really is a new pride. Because all of that is creating empathy of one person towards another, motivating her to also become proud of who you are. So I believe that *negritud* is at the end of the day something that accompanies everybody in this country and in different parts of the world because everywhere are at some point also black people. So I feel like that that connects us with the reality that we have to accept us.”

(Carolin, interview excerpt)

Indeed are signs of a tentative transition towards an aesthetic of black beauty visible with natural Afro hair at its centre. Institutions and infrastructure of this path towards a new

black self-image and appearance away from white beauty ideals are natural hair salons, specialized on hair care and beauty practices of Afro hair opposed to the often chemical straightening practices of other salons.

“There has been a great change in recent years, above everything more superficially, it’s the hair because there have been, you see that at the numbers of [natural hair] salons that have been opened, which are also spaces of where community is created and where mostly women take the lead. There used to be three important ones and now there are fifteen or twenty for natural hair. And not only lets say what is considered the centre of the city but also in *barrios* and in places outside of Santo Domingo where is a higher population of black people and where is more need for those kind of salons.”

(Alejandro, interview excerpt)

Alejandro explains that the number of natural hair salons is expanding over the city indicating a change in beauty practices and the perception of black aesthetics also extending towards the *barrios* and the less privileged parts of the city. Originally the Dominican afro-movement and natural hair movement is so far mostly restricted to the artistic scene and small fractions of the urban middle class. Carolin, herself having originated from the *barrio*, perceived the extension of the afro-movement outside of social bubbles and towards the *barrios* as a major challenge, arguing “that there is a limitation to information and platforms that permit pride to be generated in those *barrios*”. Similar convictions are elicited by Alejandro who attests that the essence of the afro-movement is indeed starting to spill over to *barrios* and the people who arguably most suffer from the discourse of black vilification and exclusion.

“Its getting there now [to the *barrios*] the movement gets to those parts now. But I tell you its something that stays and starts in artistic or theatre environments because those are spaced that are much more open to change and advancement.... It’s natural that this wave of change can be found here in the capital where there is more of this but now there is also more pride arriving to the *barrios*. Like I tell you, many known [natural] salons have prices which are not accessible to people with humble resources but now they are opening [natural] hairdressers on both sides of the bridge with lower prices. [...] There is acceptance within this part of the population. What I see know is [that hair is] a source of change in place of a source of shame or of a bad thing.”

(Alejandro, interview excerpt)

Alejandro’s description gives rise to a hopeful outlook that positive images of blackness will further trickle down and manifest in the social web, also in *barrios* such as San Carlos. This section shows the centrality of new liberating forms of self-representation most

importantly of natural hair. Activists such as Alejandro and Carolin exercise their own membership and rights of a Dominican blackness of inclusion expressed in their photography and hence claim citizenship for traditionally excluded and negated parts of society (Caldwell 2007, 134). Thus, the construction and redefinition of new collective black identity, contesting marginalization, constructs also a collective political identity as well as active citizenship through the process of claiming black self-determination and resistance to hegemonic imaginations (Caldwell 2007, 174). In Dominican society, citizenship was never the expression of a common culture. Citizenship is much rather understood as the mediating institution between dominant and dominated groups (Isin and Wood 1999, 68). The afro-movement in the Dominican Republic is indeed a crucial actor in redefining the position of black Dominicans in everyday negotiation of belonging and the claim to citizenship.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This ethnography has explored the negotiation of belonging and citizenship, by zooming into the social fabric of urban landscapes of Santo Domingo. As to make sense of the findings and information given throughout this work it is useful to go back to Hall's idea of the conceptualization of the nation as a construct, produced through a 'hegemonic system of cultural representations' (Hall 1996, 612). During the course of this ethnography, a web of dominant discourses was exposed, assembling into this 'hegemonic system of cultural representations' and infusing the social fabric of the *barrio*, providing the fundament for the negotiation of belonging, inclusion as well as exclusion. The normative imaginary of the white and culturally Hispanic Dominican national body, co-produced and manifested through the discourses of anti-black racism and anti-Haitianism, promoted by the elites since the birth of the nation, hold the marginalized social landscape of San Carlos tight in their grip. Thus, this ethnography exposed that the hegemonic web of discourses, serving as the yardstick for national belonging and inclusion, is vastly copied and mirrored within everyday interactions between Dominicans, Haitians and Venezuelans in the *barrio*. Subsequently, the presence of the two distinct migrant subjects of Dominicans and Venezuelans barely subverts the hegemonic ideological foundation of belonging but are integrated into the hierarchical order alongside the ideals of *dominicanidad*.

However, the positionality of Haitian and Venezuelan subjects on the hierarchical order of belonging differs vastly. This research finds that the Venezuelan and Haitian migrant subjects are stylized into two opposite poles on the continuum of belonging, transforming the two migrant groups into a catalyst as well as a mirror of Dominican internal struggles of national and racial identity, chasing whiteness whilst running from blackness.

The triangular relation between the three groups must be indeed understood as deeply asymmetrical as the Venezuelan subject fulfil the Dominican national desire of a white, Hispanic, civilized and modern nation whereas the Haitian subject is assigned with the role of the scapegoat and becomes a vessel in which the categorical otherness to imagined *dominicanidad*, hence blackness, savagery and backwardness is deposited. Thus, this paper exposes that the national narrative, assigning ‘the Haitian’ with the role of the anti-thesis of the Dominican nation is reproduced within the *barrio*. The Venezuelan subject follows the opposite trajectory. Venezuelans also remain outside the Dominican nation, but are unlike Haitians not marked as aliens and subaltern because the attached notions of modernity, whiteness and Hispanic heritage, are elevating ‘the Venezuelan’ to an ideal and alter ego of the Dominican nation. Subsequently, notions of belonging and citizenship are negotiated and articulated on a continuum between the two ends of the Haitian antonym and the Venezuelan alter ego.

Furthermore, this ethnography explored apart from the positionality of Dominican, Haitian and Venezuelan subjects also the repertoire by which belonging and positionality is negotiated and comes into being within the *barrio*. Race is a fundamental element in this repertoire of belonging, as particularly racialized bodies are crucial in the every day negotiation of social position in the neighbourhood. The Dominican somatic norm image of whiteness translates into inclusion into the nation, whilst blackness translates into exclusion. Thus, bodies are encoded with physical signifiers, most importantly hair and skin tone, determining not only beauty but also the level of *dominicanidad*, measured by the proximity to whiteness. This ubiquitous racialization with negrophobia at its core, is internalized by all three subjects, resulting in internalized racism among darker hued Dominicans as well as Haitians. The racialization of bodies in the *barrio* alongside the axis of whiteness and blackness supports Ong’s argument that notions of whiteness are closely tied to the negotiation of citizenship as whiteness translates into ideas of modernity, shaping the ideal of the ‘good citizen’ (Ong 1996, 738).

This research found that the stark racialization and importance of physical signifiers within the realm of belonging and citizenship gave rise to the alteration of bodily markers.

The modification of precisely hair texture and skin colour was a widespread strategy of manipulating racial codes and thus codes of belonging within the urban landscapes. Interestingly, apart from Dominican women, Haitian woman also applied practices of bodily whitening as to integrate and approximate their physical appearance towards the somatic norm image of *dominicanidad*. A finding that supports Ong's idea of cultural citizenship as a dual process of "being made" within webs of power, here most importantly, the hegemonic racial discourse in connection to anti-Haitianism as well as "self-making", where actors take direct part in the negotiation of their position within those webs through approximating *dominicanidad* through shape shifting (Ong 1996, 738). As Haitian as well as Dominican subjects engaged in whitening practices, Venezuelan subjects complied with norms of white supremacy and benefitted from the common perception of Venezuelans as master tropes of whiteness.

Additionally, this ethnography found that the modernity-backwards dichotomy is another crucial theme within the repertoire of belonging in the *barrio*, confirming Kapur's suggestion that citizenship continues to be sourced not only from normative criteria of race and white supremacy but also from ideas of civilizational superiority and the discourse of modernity (Kapur 2007, 537). In the *barrio*, the Haitian and Venezuelan migrant subjects unmask the relation between citizenship and the modernity axis of in- and exclusion as 'the Haitian' is framed as outcast as backwards and savage in contrast to the accepted and elevated progressive and modern Venezuelan. Thus, the notion of the 'savage Haitian' marked the distinction to the civilized and modern Dominicans as well as Venezuelans and expelled 'the Haitian' to an imagined realm of barbarism. This research finds that such anti-Haitian notions, inferiorizing Haitians, paired with negrophobia, were not merely reproduced by Dominican subjects but importantly frequently internalized by Haitians and Haitian-descendants as well, adopting large parts of anti-Haitian rhetoric and articulations. The anti-Haitian trope of 'savageness' was also echoed in the division of labour in the neighbourhood as Haitians were reduced to physical and disposable labour. The Venezuelan research participants however, typically rejected anti-Haitian discourse despite aligning with the predominant pattern of racialization, present in the neighbourhood. Additionally, Venezuelan research participants accepted, articulated and claimed a superior civilizational and modern mode to the other groups.

Furthermore, the boundaries of belonging between the three groups constructed upon the essentialized, naturalized and fixated racial and modernity hierarchies and anti-Haitian ideology are visibly maintained and produced in the spatial regimes within the *barrio*. This,

research found that the Dominican imaginary, framing Haitians as territorial threat jeopardizing the nation, was reproduced within the scale of the neighbourhood. Thus, real segregation of micro-spaces and fictitious spatial imaginaries of the neighbourhood, assigned Haitians to spaces outside the Dominican spatial realms while also echoing fears of a Haitian invasion on the level of the neighbourhood.

Thus, this research confirmed that space, harbouring everyday practices and interactions, embodies and materializes local power relations in geographical as well as imaginary spatial regimes, nurtured by an a multiplicity of political, cultural and historical discursive structures (Low 2009, 22). The production and interpretation of spatial regimes under the web of discourses provoked indeed the collapse of the relationship between the lived and imagined world (Newell 2012, 253). Thus, this research exposed that socially constructed distinctions, informed by imaginaries of exclusion, are transferred and materialized into spatial systems of exclusion.

Additionally, this paper also explored the contested character of citizenship and belonging by analysing counter narratives within the *barrio* and providing a broad view over the existent agents, resisting and redefining the national imaginary of *dominicanidad* and blackness. The discussion of the afro-movement shows how a collective political identity as well as active citizenship through the process of claiming black self-determination and resistance to hegemonic imaginations is constructed and produced (Caldwell 2007, 174). This research found that the representation and promotion of a ‘subversive imaginary’ claiming black *dominicanidad* is the fundamental process in which citizenship and belonging for traditionally excluded black population is claimed and manifested. However, in the *barrio*, even though tentative signs of contestation are present, resistance frequently remains within the normative mechanisms of racialization and profound and more holistic critique and approaches to black and Haitian emancipation remain vastly limited to the creative scene and parts of the middle-class.

This research added an in-depth ethnographic account to the essential theme of the negotiation of belonging and citizenship, which stretches far beyond Dominican urban landscapes permeating numerous societies around the globe. In this research project, ethnography has essentially informed theory, demonstrating that urban spaces and the everyday life it harbours are essential arenas in which belonging and citizenship is negotiated and filtered through normative repertoires of belonging. Hence, the social fabric within the urban landscape is weaved under the dome of hegemonic discourses of race and nation, determining categories of in and exclusion and thus informing imagined as well as

materialized systems of exclusion. However, as much as normative repertoires of belonging are mirrored, ideas of belonging do exist in a constant stress field, where meaning is altered and manipulated as well as contested and resisted.

Thus, this ethnography contributed to the body of scholarship on transnational migration in relation to citizenship as an informal institution and particularly contributed to the understanding of the complex role of the Haitian subject in the Dominican society by adding voices and perspectives from urban landscapes. The relevance of this research is further marked by the novel study of the Venezuelan migrant subject within Dominican social fabric, making this research a pioneering endeavour in this direction.

The scope of this research has been limited, hence crucial aspects and themes could not be given sufficient attention during the course of this work and important questions remain unanswered. Subsequently, in this final part of the conclusion, several themes and questions, which demand further research will be suggested as additions to the foundation, this paper has provided. First of all the Venezuelan subject in the Dominican society demands further attention as to understand how Venezuelan positionality changes over time as well as to observe whether Dominican perceptions of Venezuelan migrants transform or remain stable. How do the vastly positive Dominican perceptions about Venezuelan migrants impact Venezuelan social mobility? How do Venezuelan migrants adopt anti-Haitian ideologies over time or develops the Haitian-Venezuelan relation towards sentiments of solidarity?

Furthermore, black as well as Haitian resistance against the hegemonic web of discourses in everyday life demands further studies. In what ways and to which degree is the Dominican afro-movement present outside of the creative-scene and middleclass cocoon but in the marginalized urban parts of society? Are expressions of a positive black self-image gaining foothold in the urban *barrios* in Dominican social landscapes? How does a ‘subversive imaginary’ of a positive black self-image relate to and contests the ideology of anti-Haitianism? Hence, it appears necessary to continue research particularly into the direction of pro-active agents with claims to disrupt the status quo and promote subversive ideas of the Dominican society. Subsequently, this research adds a stepping stone towards the understanding of how belonging and inclusion is negotiated within urban Dominican society and shall serve as inspiration and foundation for further research as to comprehend the complex webs of in- and exclusion as well as to dissect possible approaches and potential forces in creating a more just, equal and inclusive society.

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Appendices

Appendix A - List of Illustrations

Cover page – Perez Célis, “Untitled”

1. Map locating the research ‘field’
2. Map showing the market area and *Quinto Patio*
3. Impressions of *Quinto Patio*
4. Impressions of the market area

Appendix B – List of Participants

Jose (late forties) is a Dominican man, who grew up and lived in San Carlos all his life. Born to a doctor and a carpenter, Jose’s background can be described as humble middleclass. He owns the gym and several apartments, adjacent to *Quinto Patio*, which he is renovating and extending, serving according to him as an investment and security for his family’s financial future.

Raul (late fifties) is Jose’s older brother. During the time of the research he had recently returned to the capital and helped Jose with the management and the construction of the apartments. Raul was an expert in carpentry and interior design and build furniture as an additional source of income.

Cindy (18) is a Dominican girl that studied Medicine. She partially grew up in San Carlos, where her grandmother lived and frequented *Quinto Patio*.

Yaneiry (23) is a Dominican woman, who joined her aunt and cuisine in San Carlos to seek opportunities for herself and her daughter. Coming from the country side in the south of the country, Yaneiry had lived in the capital several times and was going back and forth once in a while.

Estefani (48) is a Dominican woman, who lived together with her sister Angelica adjacent to *Quinto Patio*. Estefani grew up in *Quinto Patio*, left to live in another part of the city and

later on returned to San Carlos. After Estefani lost her job in a gym, she set up a food stand at the street.

Phara (26) is a Haitian born woman, who worked and lived with her mother and brother at the market. She immigrated to DR at a young age and spent most of her childhood, youth and young adult life in Santo Domingo. Phara did not hold Dominican nationality but a legal status in form of a long-term visa.

Jason (10) is a Dominican born boy of Haitian descent. Jason lived together with his father at the market, where several aunts and cousins of his also lived. Despite being born in DR did Jason lack official documents, certifying his Dominican nationality.

Ruth (24) is a Haitian woman, who spent most of her life in DR. However, Ruth did not possess nor aspire to hold Dominican nationality and had legal status due to a long-term visa. She lived together with her teenage brother in *Quinto Patio*. Ruth studied modern languages at university and ran an online apparel business between Haiti and DR.

David (16) is a Dominican teenager of Haitian descent and Ruth's brother. His parents had migrated to Chile, seeking a better future for the family. David, who lived with his older sister, was looking forward to join his parents in Chile and dreamed of eventually getting to the US.

Victor (41) is a Venezuelan man, who migrated with his wife Carla to DR in 2016. Victor grew up on the countryside and acquired after a turbulent youth humble wealth, owning a house and two cars in Venezuela. Victor hoped to move back to Venezuela as soon as possible and dreamed of opening a car parts shop. He regularly sent remittances to his children, which remained in Venezuela.

Carla (43) is a Venezuelan woman, who came together with her husband Victor to DR in 2016. She increasingly practiced the Christian faith and joined an evangelical church in Santo Domingo, becoming the center of her everyday life apart from work.

Eduardo (35) is a Venezuelan man, who migrated to DR in 2016. Eduardo was living together with his boyfriend in San Carlos, where he also ran a pizza and juice stand.

Renzo (22) is a Venezuelan man who migrated to DR in 2016. His family had remained in Venezuela to whom he regularly sent remittances. Renzo hoped to return to Venezuela as soon as the political and economic situation in Venezuela would improve.

Miguel (21) is a Venezuelan man who migrated with his wife and his child to DR in 2017. Miguel had plans to return to Venezuela, however he expected to stay in DR for several more years.

Alejandro (24) is a Dominican man, who was part of the creative and activist scene of Santo Domingo. Alejandro, the child of a Dominican mother and a Spanish father, grew up in Spain and choose later on to move to DR. Apart from working in a design agency, Alejandro realizes his own projects.

Carolin (26) is a Dominican woman, who was part of the creative and activist scene of Santo Domingo. Born in a *barrio* in La Romana, a typical sugar industry town, Carolin came to Santo Domingo where she works as costume designer for movie and video productions as well as the owner of a second hand clothing store. Furthermore, Carolin realizes projects, often in collaboration with other local artists such as Alejandro.