

The Precarious Drinking Game

How Do State and Non-State Institutions Create, Enhance and Influence the
Precarity of Women Engaged in the Trago Business on Curaçao in 2019?

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Abstract

This thesis provides an in-depth account of women working in the trago business on Curaçao and how the precariousness of their lives is influenced by state and non-state institutions. The research is based on fieldwork conducted between 17 March and 24 May 2019. It has focused on the various dimensions of precarity that characterise the lives of so-called trago girls. To identify the various dimensions of precarity, I have utilised Butler's (2011: ii) conceptualisation of precarity and have broken it down in four elements, namely 1. precarity is a condition that has been politically induced; 2. within this created condition people are not met with adequate support; 3. this condition heightens the risk for people to be exposed to violence injury, death and aggression from state and non-state actors – poverty, displacement, starvation and disease; and 4. there is inadequate, or no, protection against such exhibitions of violence. This thesis aims to show lives can be characterised by an inter-play of various forms of precarity, arguably characterising the live with the term hyper-precarity. Furthermore, this thesis provides an in-depth account how various state and non-state actors influence the different form of precarity characterising the lives of women working in snèks.

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List of Abbreviations

ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	Intelligence Centre Curaçao
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Red Cross
KMAR	Koninklijke Marine [Royal Navy]
KPC	Korps Politie Curaçao [Police Force Curaçao]
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RKC	Krus Kòrá Kòrsou/Rode Kruis Curaçao [Red Cross Curaçao]
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
RST	Reserche Samenwerkingsteam [Special Police Force]
SDKK	Sentro di Detenshon i Korekshon [Centre for Detention and Correction Curaçao]
SEHOS	St. Elisabeth Hospital
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter 1. – Introduction

As a result of the recently rapidly declining humanitarian, socioeconomic and institutional agencies within the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, an increasing number of Venezuelan migrants are seeking refuge on – amongst others – Curaçao to elude famine, gain safety and seek opportunities to give themselves and close relatives in Venezuela a better chance at survival.¹ However, as mentioned by Camilleri and Hampson (2018: 13), the Dutch ABC Islands – Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao – have not been ‘particularly welcoming of forcibly displaced Venezuelans.’ Since Curaçao is not signatory to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, it does not have legislation governing refugee protection or asylum procedures, nor does it feel obliged to respect the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) call to refrain from repatriation (Camilleri & Hampson 2018: 10, 13). According to the UNHCR, the island of Curaçao is seeing an increase in the influx of forcibly displaced Venezuelans currently between 10.000 and 26.000 with the speculation of the number increasing steadily over the coming few months and years to follow.² The non-existence of protection and a rather negative attitude towards forcibly displaced Venezuelans have resulted in and are accurately depicted by the presence of a meagre policy of detention and deportation (Amnesty International 2018: 30). The international community and (local) independent organisations have responded negatively to the absence of just procedures including the opportunity for those in need to apply for asylum in Curaçao or with the UNHCR (Amnesty International 2018; Ombudsman 2018).³ Requests for change, show of initiative and responsibility have not only been directed at Curaçao.⁴ As Curaçao is one of the four constituent countries making up the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Netherlands has been urged to act and warned that it is risking violating international obligations.⁵ However, the Netherlands continuously emphasises that regarding migration and asylum on Curaçao grounds, solely Curaçao is responsible. The deflection of responsibility and just undertakings on the side of the Dutch and Curaçao governments allows a continuation of the abovementioned policy.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/venezuela-crisis-country-190117184349473.html>, accessed on 23 January 2019; Currently, the outflow of the Venezuelan population counts over four million people. Although migrants of the proclaimed largest exodus in the recent history of Latin America reposition themselves globally, the vast majority of Venezuelans, namely 3.1 million, seeks refuge regionally. According to the UNHCR, amongst others, Colombia is currently hosting 1.3 million Venezuelans, followed by Peru with 768.000, Chile with 288.000, Ecuador with 263.000 and Brazil with 168.000 forcibly displaced Venezuelans – See Appendix I for a visual regarding the dispersion of displaced Venezuelans.

² <https://nos.nl/artikel/2264040-caribische-eilanden-kunnen-grotere-toestroom-venezolanen-verwachten.html>, accessed on 13 January 2019.

³ Interview Venex; interview UNHCR; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 29 June 2019.

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 29 June 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/netherlands-should-protect-venezuelan-refugees>, accessed on 29 June 2019.

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 29 June 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/netherlands-should-protect-venezuelan-refugees>, accessed on 29 June 2019.

Result of such unwelcoming policy is an increasing number of undocumented and hidden forcibly displaced Venezuelans on Curaçao. Due to the absence of just procedures and the inability of holding a legal (refugee) status, and therefore, not being allowed to use basic social services, medical services, earn a livelihood or enjoy safe mobility, they can be rendered even more vulnerable. Some have encountered and enjoyed kind-hearted people willing to let them work as, amongst other things, gardeners, caretakers, waiters/waitresses, dentists, doctors, construction workers, housekeepers, as well as offering them shelter. Others are facing different kinds of treatment. As Curaçao vindicates its policy, undocumented forcibly displaced Venezuelans are easy and rather trouble-free targets to exploitative predators. Human smugglers and human traffickers are known to thrive in times of crises and exoduses as has been well-documented in different areas on the globe.⁶ Whilst human smugglers merely provide passage, often for high prices, human traffickers are part of long-lasting exploitative schemes.⁷ Within these schemes, people are recruited, transferred, exploited, abused, threatened and find their frequently already vulnerable position taken advantage of. Although many instances that can serve the purpose of depicting human trafficking schemes, it is the case of Venezuelan women working in bars on Curaçao that will be at the centre of this thesis. Many of these women are recruited in Venezuela, transferred across the Caribbean Sea and put to work in local bars in Curaçao, called *snèks*. There they must talk and flirt with men in order to receive *tragos*, drinks. Depending on the number of *tragos* the men they flirt with buy them, the women obtain a particular amount of money. As their income is dependent on the *tragos* they receive, these women are often nicknamed *trago girls*.⁸ Initially, this does not necessarily seem like an exploitative system. Unquestionably, there are *trago girls* that – despite working on an illegal basis as they do not possess a worker’s permit or permanent residency and frequently reside on the island without documents – enjoy relatively good money and respectable, respectful treatment. However, some find the already precarious position they live in taken advantage of and reproduced on Curaçao.

This thesis provides an in-depth account of women working in the *trago* business on Curaçao and how the precariousness of their lives is influenced by state and non-state institutions. By discussing the precariousness of the lives of *trago girls* on Curaçao, this thesis aims to add to the body of precarity literature. Going beyond labour focused notions of precarity, this thesis will focus on dimensions like gender, status, labour and race/nationality. Particularly central to this thesis is Judith Butler’s (2009: ii) more wholesome

⁶ See Moyo (2019) for his research on undocumented Zimbabweans that engaged with human smugglers and human traffickers due to securitised borders. See Jones (2016) and Cuttitta (2017) for their research on border securitisation, policing and its effects on counter-human trafficking and counter-human smuggling.

⁷ Based on interview with Jenni.

⁸ It is imperative to note that the term ‘*trago girl(s)*’ is frequently used in a derogatory way. The author chooses to utilise this term as it is used in the common tongue when people refer to women working in the *snèks* that offer female company to their clients. The author does not intent to connect a specific negative or positive connotation to the word *trago girl* within this thesis; it is merely used to denote women working in *snèks*; Please note that not all women working in *snèks* are in fact working in the *trago* business. Some women working in *snèks* are owners, cooks, bartenders or sell homemade food.

conceptualisation of precarity as a ‘politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. (...) Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection.’ This research is not so much about deducting new factors of a precarious life, precarity, or precariousness. It is more so to illustrate the lived experiences of those that find themselves in a precarious situation and through which procedures the particular precarious position of women in Venezuela is influenced and reproduced on the island of Curaçao. Thus, it aims to show the continuity in the reproduction of precarity caused by an already existent situation, if not multiple, of precarity. In addition, it provides a depiction of how dimensions and elements of precarity enable other dimensions of precarity to come into existence arguably making the lives of women working as trago girls more precarious. Many researchers have focused on identifying new dimensions of precarity or on providing an in-depth account of one or two dimensions of precarity. This thesis will look at the interplay and intersectionality of different factors and dimensions of precarity and therefore adds to theories and debates on precarity.

The question that forms the red thread through this thesis is: *How do state and non-state institutions create, enhance and influence the precarity of women engaged in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019?* To answer this puzzle statement, three sub-questions have been produced. These three sub-questions will be discussed in chapter three Trago Girls, chapter four The Government and chapter 5 (International) Aid Organisations 5; the empirical chapters. In chapter two Theory and Methodology, this thesis will explicate the concept and theorisation of precarity and associated terms, such as precarious and precariousness. Through following the genealogy of the concept different elements of precarity will be deducted which will serve as analytical tools that are utilised to answer the three sub-questions, and thus, to answer the puzzle statement. Furthermore, the methodology that underpins this thesis will be discussed. In chapter three Trago Girls, this thesis will provide an account of the lived realities of trago girls on Curaçao. It will discuss their journey to Curaçao, the (possibly exploitative) modus operandi of the snèks these women work in and the living circumstances they encounter. Lastly, this chapter returns to the concept of precarity by applying it to the provided account of trago girls’ lives. Hereby, the role of the modus operandi of human traffickers will be discussed as an actor in the production of precarity. Sub-question 1 *How are the precarious lives of women working in the trago business (re)produced by human trafficking schemes on Curaçao in 2019?* will be answered in this chapter. Chapter four The Government discusses how different policies influence the precarious lives of undocumented Venezuelans, respectively trago girls, positively and negatively. Sub-question 2 *How do state institutions create, enhance and influence the precarity of women engaged in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019?* will be answered in this chapter. Chapter 5 (International) Aid Organisations sets out an account of (international) organisations that either are actively working on Curaçao or have produced significant reports on the matter of trago girls. Both efforts, as well as international voices, will then be analysed by utilisation of precarity. Through this, it aims to show how these efforts attempt to positively alter the precarious lives of women

working in the trago business. Sub-question 3 *How do non-state institutions in the form of interest groups and (international) organisations influence the precarity of women engaged in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019?* will be answered in this chapter.

This thesis has the objective to inform those unaware of the matter or the severity of how some women working in the trago business are exploited, how governmental policies push forcibly displaced Venezuelans in undocumentedness, and thus, create the “perfect” playing field for those aiming to exploit the poor circumstances desperate Venezuelans are in, how some policies attempt to positively change human trafficking schemes, and how some organisations attempt to positively influence the situation forcibly displaced Venezuelans find themselves in. Most of all, this thesis aims to provide somewhat of a voice to those unable to speak up out of fear of negative repercussions and shed light on the poor treatment of those in need. This thesis, however, does not have the intent to push these women further into victimhood as these women are not agentless objects, rather active agents that attempt to survive and create a better life for themselves and their families in Venezuela. It does have the intent to show how policies created by the Curaçao government and the dire circumstances created by the Venezuelan government play into the creation, and are thus partially responsible for, the precarity of Venezuelan women working in snèks.

Chapter 2. – Theory and Methodology

This chapter discusses the academic debate around the theories of precarity. It will do so by touching upon the traces of the concept's genealogy that commences with a focus on labour precarity. I will make use of Guy Standing's conceptualisation of the precariat and precarity to illustrate this particular trend. In line with numerous scholars, I argue that only looking at labour-focused precarity is insufficient to understanding how various dimensions of precarity influence the lives of people. By introducing different scholars such as Judith Butler (2009), Wee et al. (2018), Ettlinger (2007) and During (2015), and their additions to the original labour-focused precarity, the importance of researching other dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and citizenship/legal status will be shown. Research on these additional dimensions of precarity will be explored next as they are of importance in analysing the precarious lives of women working in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019. Then elements from Butler's (2009) notion of precarity underpinning this thesis will be highlighted. This chapter will be concluded with a discussion concerning methodology utilised in this research and a reflection on the ethical complexities and limitations encountered.

2.1 Academic Debate

The term precarity has not been prominent within scholarly debates for an extensive period of time. It was only at the beginning of the twenty-first century that precarity and its related forms – the precariat, precarisation, precarious and precariousness – have become scholarly buzzwords. Its etymological origins lie within the Latin verb *precor/precari* meaning, amongst other things, to beg, entreat, implore, beseech, and wish for.⁹ According to Breman (2013: 134), those who beg, entreat and pray are those whose lives are characterised by instability, insecurity, uncertainty, exposure to danger and a dependency 'on the favour of another.' Lives characterised by such uncertainty are thus precarious lives (closely linked to the from *precor/precari* derived Latin adjective *precarious*, meaning doubtful, uncertain and obtained by entreaty).¹⁰

Although precarity and its related forms were interpellated into the scholarly limelight in the twenty-first century, they had been used before: in Germany, the words *abgehängtes Prekariat* were – and still are – utilised buzzwords that signified those dangling at the bottom of society as a socially detached group central to German discussions on the lower class in the 1980s (Raunig 2007: 2; Grimm & Ronneberger 2007: 3; Candeias 2008: 124). In France, the term *précarité* described those living hand-to-mouth during high unemployment and "McJobs" – 'low-pay, low prestige, low-dignity, low benefit, no-future jobs' – during the 1990s (Breman 2013: 134; Standing 2011: 9; Candeias 2008: 125; Coupland 1991: 5). After the anti-capitalist globalisation protests of 2001 in Genoa (Italy), the term *il precariato*, a combination between precarious and proletariat, was used to describe a class of people that were 'more than just people doing casual labour and with low incomes' – namely, "those who care" – and to indicate 'a precarious existence

⁹ <https://www.online-latin-dictionary.com/latin-english-dictionary.php?parola=precor>, accessed 13 July 2019.

¹⁰ <https://www.online-latin-dictionary.com/latin-english-dictionary.php?parola=precarious>, accessed 13 July 2019.

as a normal state of living' (Raunig 2007: 2; Standing 2011: 9; Breman 2013: 134; Grimm & Ronneberger 2007: 3; Hardt & Negri 2008: 102).¹¹ These terms, all signifying the in precarity living group 'the precariat', came into existence by the efforts of critical scholars of neoliberalism before the terms' interpellation into the academic limelight. According to Kasmir (2018: 2) and Neilson and Rossiter (2005: 1), it was due to political mobilisations against unemployment and social exclusion taking place in Europe in the early twenty-first century that precarity became a central concern amongst academics. Although slightly varying definitions exist, the term precarity is generally – before its gain in popularity and currently –, when labour-focused, used to designate the increasing global lack of stable work and steady incomes caused by neoliberal capitalism (Kasmir 2018: 1). In line with this definition – which is rooted in critiques on (neo)liberalism - other definitions are 'all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation', 'being a worker on call where your life and time is determined by external force', 'the precondition for new forms of creative organisation that seek to accept and exploit the flexibility inherent in networked modes of sociality and production' and the term as 'describing an increasing change of previously guaranteed permanent employment conditions into mainly worse paid, uncertain jobs' leading to 'an interminable lack of certainty' (Neilson & Rossiter 2005: 1-2, 3; Oudenampsen & Sullivan 2004).

Within this continuum of neoliberal criticism, economist Guy Standing (2011) has contributed to theories of the precariat. Although Standing has not invented the word, he has 'revived' the term precariat and added to precarity's and its related forms' centrality within scholarly debates. According to Standing, it is due to an increase of participants in the labour market and concentrated property rights causing a visible intensification of unequal income distributions that wages are forced down and security diminishes in Euro-American countries.¹² It is within this insecurity and inequality that, Standing says, a new social class takes shape within our neoliberal capitalistic society; the precariat.¹³ The precariat is characterised by three distinct factors: 1. they are positioned in a life of unstable labour and unstable living; 2. they must rely on money wages whilst not having access to non-wage benefits like pensions, paid holidays and paid medical leave. They are bearing the risks themselves and consequentially are "a broken fridge or disease away" from unsustainable debt; and 3. they are systematically losing civil, cultural, social and political rights, and, concurrently not receiving support from political parties that step up for their interests.¹⁴ According to Standing (2011: 8), the precariat differs significantly from other social classes – the small-scale group of elites, the salariat with employment security, the old proletariat (old working class) and those dying on the streets prematurely, of which only the last-mentioned group ranks below the precariat – based upon power, security and certainty. As stated by Standing (2011: 11), 'the precariat consists of people who lack seven forms of labour-related security': labour market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security. This labour insecurity would

¹¹ According to Raunig (2007: 2) it was just before the anti-G8 demonstration in Genoa that precariatization was problematised. In the years following the protest the term gained more popularity.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnYhZCUYOxs>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnYhZCUYOxs>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnYhZCUYOxs>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

characterise all precariats. This does not mean that Standing views the ‘new social class’ as homogenous. Within the precariat he distinguishes three factions, namely 1. the Atavists, those who used to be in positions of status and pride and have been deprived of such, 2. the Nostalgics, those who are migrants and ethnic minorities who do not possess a sense of home, are nostalgic and mostly keep their heads down to survive and 3. the Progressives who are denied a future, and thus are filled with depression, anxiety, anomia, alienation and anger, yet equipped with hope (Standing 2014: 11).¹⁵ It is due to this anger and hope that Progressives mobilise.¹⁶ One is not necessarily born in the precariat, but can become one; they ‘precariatise’. According to Standing (2011: 16), precarisation, the act of being precariatised, ‘is to be subject to pressures and experiences that lead to a precariat existence, of living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle.’ Thus, according to Standing’s labour-focused conceptualisation, one can become a precariat by being influenced by forces pushing one into a state of vulnerability and uncertainty regarding ‘work and lifestyle’ by which their lives are characterised by precarity.

Various aspects of Standing’s conceptualisation of the precariat and precarity have been criticised. Amongst other things, he has been criticised for describing the group consumed by labour insecurities as a class rather than a labour regime or manner of economic organisation, for proclaiming it as a ‘new class’ seemingly not present previously by which Standing denies historical processes of capitalism that go beyond the time of industrialisation, and neglecting the presence of insecurities that have characterised (informal) economies in other parts of the globe that were based upon ‘insecure, unprotected, and super-exploited workforces’ (Breman 2011: 135, 136; Kasmir 2018: 8; Vickers et al. 2019: 3). Furthermore, Standing has been critiqued for his focus on labour security. It is this specific point of critique that is pivotal to the further progress of this thesis, therefore, it will be explained in-depth hereunder. As Standing focuses on processes regarding labour, he situates precarity within labour relations (Vickers et al. 2019: 3). However, various scholars have argued that precarity is situated in more than just labour relations and capital (Wee et al. 2018; Butler 2009; Vickers et al. 2019; Ottoson 2019; Ettliger 2007; Federici 2014; Nunn et al. 2017; Vij 2013). It was in reaction to studies limited to labour-situated precarity that, in the past couple of decades, the body of literature on precarity has expanded beyond solely an economic perspective due to the efforts of scholars from various disciplines including but not limited to cultural anthropology, ecology, gender studies, urban studies, migration studies, ethnic studies and political science (Ottoson 2019; Butler 2009; Nunn et al.: 2017; Baban et al. 2017).

Before exploring various additional dimensions of precarity, it is worth exploring the distinction between precariousness and precarity. Although interlinked, the term precariousness, coined by Butler, differs significantly from precarity (Neilson & Rossiter 2005: 8). As the existence and survival of every human life is based upon human interdependency and thus vulnerable, or as Butler articulates (Butler 2009: ii) ‘anything living can be expunged at will or by accident; and its persistence is in no sense guaranteed’,

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnYhZCUYOxs>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnYhZCUYOxs>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

humans are constantly in the state of being uncertain; precariousness is inherent to human life due to the existence of human interdependency to survive (Kasmir 2018: 2; Butler 2009: 13; Neilson & Rossiter 2005: 8). Concerning precarity, according to Neilson and Rossiter (2005: 8), precariousness should be distinguished from precarity as the latter is intended for the labour market. This statement is rooted in the same sphere of neoliberal criticism as the definitions of precarity as stated hereinabove. However, as mentioned above, other writers have argued precarity's presence within various dimensions of human lives, and thus, reformulated its meaning. For example, During (2015: 20) defines precarity as effectively invoking 'the insecurity of all those who live without reliable and adequate income or without identification and/or residency papers. (...) it also applies to those with unstable, or no, access to the institutions and communities best able to provide legitimacy, recognition and solidarity.' Butler (2009: ii) defines precarity as a structural politically induced condition because of which certain populaces suffer from inadequate social and economic networks of support, concurrently maximising a person's vulnerability and exposure to various forms of aggression enacted by the state and aggression enacted by non-state actors against which states do not offer sufficient protection. Both During and Butler highlight, besides labour, insecurity influenced by political institutions, social institutions and economic institutions. Reviewing various authors, Kasmir (2018: 1) proposed a more general, rather simplistic, conceptualisation of precarity as describing and conceptualising 'this unpredictable cultural and economic terrain and conditions of life' in which work and livelihoods are insecure.' Comparing the various definitions, the apparent difference between precarity and precariousness is that precariousness is a continual state of being uncertain or unstable, whereas precarity concerns different conditions or structures that make some lives more or less precarious – more or less vulnerable – than others. Butler (2009: ii) has mentioned that precarity is lived by those who are marginalised. This does not mean, however, that precarity is constraining a select number of people and is utterly non-existent for others. It is Ettliger (2007: 324) who stated that every life is infused with precarity and that 'no one escapes precarity, although one might argue that some people who experience more constraints than others also experience more dimensions of precarity.' Ettliger (2007: 324) continues stating that 'precarity is engendered by a wide range of processes and, as it extends across space and time and also materializes (differently) in social, economic, political and cultural spheres, it is an enduring feature of the human condition. It inhabits everything from the global political economy to the vicissitudes of employment, health, social relations, [and] self-perception.' It is in line with the theorists mentioned above and Wee et al.'s (2018: 4) research on the precarious lives of migrant workers in Singapore, that I argue that trago girls are at a crossroad of various dimensions of precarity: of work – as has been discussed above –, gender, race/nationality and legal status, or in case of many trago girls, a lack thereof.

Let us now return to exploring the research of scholars that have focused on these dimensions of precarity rather specifically. Various scholars have argued the importance of inserting gender as enriching understandings of precarity (Federici 2014; Kim 2017; Butler 2009; Wee et al. 2018; Bélanger & Tran Giang 2013). According to Federici (2014: 5), assuming that labour is neutral is denying power relations and gender hierarchies existent within the working class – and arguably in other spheres of life too. Thus, she pledges

for more attention to gender as a division of precarity, rethinking gender as a division of precarity enables rethinking everyday life in relation to capitalist exploitation and accumulation (Federici 2014: 6). However, as mentioned by Platt et al. (2017: 119) few studies have focused on that dimension. Those who have, have highlighted the importance of looking at gender as a dimension of precarity. With their comparative study on migration-related indebtedness between female domestic workers and male construction workers, Platt et al. (2017: 119, 132-133) aimed to understand the role of gender in shaping risks vulnerabilities and opportunities resulting from migration-related indebtedness and concluded that, indeed, different genders encountered different risks, vulnerabilities and possibilities. In their research on precarity and gender amongst Vietnamese migrant workers in Asia, Bélanger and Tran Giang (2013: 7) sought to unpack how gender is intertwined with migration. They concluded that the pre-departure – recruitment, fees, debt bondage and pre-departure training –, their work – sort, encountered negative experience and payment – and the (compulsory) return varied significantly based on gender (Bélanger & Tran Giang 2013: 18). Both types of research thus concluded that gender formed a rather important dimension when analysing people's vulnerabilities.

According to Anderson (2000: 152), race/nationality also determines the opportunities – or lack of them – of migrants. In her working paper on demands for migrant domestic workers in the United Kingdom, Anderson (2007: 21) states that employers often referred to race(/ethnicities) and nationality – which the author believes is interlinked – when commenting on the advantages of hiring migrants. This entailed connecting specific characteristics to various races or nationalities and contrasting the different nationalities or races with one another. The author showed that by iterating the statement of her respondent which goes as follows: 'they're [Nepalese] so quiet and discreet. Filipinos are brasher. They're more social and they like to chat and gossip. They are quite pushy. Some people would say they were greedy' (Anderson 2007: 253). The connection between race, nationality and certain characteristics is important. Anderson (2007: 253-254) continues stating that in the case of au pairs in the United Kingdom, nationality was often also associated with poor circumstances in the countries of origins whereby the employer spoke positively about what the United Kingdom – and the Britain-based family – provided to the migrant and their families. Both narratives arguably recreate the demand of specific races or nationalities to work for these families. As these migrants are often discriminated, more vulnerable to animosity and live an uncertain existence due to being dependent on their host families, their lives are characterised by precarity (Anderson 2007: 260-261). Thus, the continuing migration and a continuation of uncertain living circumstances enable a constant reproduction of race/nationality-based precarity.

Citizenship provides rights and obligations to those enjoying it, and as Anderson (2000: 195) states 'if a person [is] not a citizen, it is legitimate to deny her certain rights' as she does not belong to the community. Thus, those in the possession of citizenships are granted and guaranteed specific rights that do not belong to those not possessing citizenship. It is not the case that someone without citizenship has no possibility to claim similar rights as citizens can. For example, according to Basok (2004: 49), in some instances immigrants have accrued political, social and civic rights. Although that might be the case, various

citizenship theorists have argued that when it comes to the possession of citizenship or another ‘useful’ legal status, such play ‘a decisive role in shaping the rights and services to which she is entitled and/or has access’ (Basok 2004: 49; Goldring et al. 2017: 34). According to Bloch et al. (2014: 101), the ‘precarious legality permeates many aspects of migrants’ lives and delimits their actions across many spheres.’ Such restrictions regard job opportunities, social networks, mobility, access to health care, social welfare, support, housing, food and religious practices (Bloch et al. 2014: 101; Campbell et al. 2012: 6; Wyss 2019: 82; Paret & Gleeson 2016: 281) Regarding jobs, migrants lacking a legal status have difficulty securing a stable and safe job as they often face low wages, non-existent benefits and limited, if any, basic workplace protection without the opportunity to change it (Wyss 2019: 82; Paret & Gleeson 2016: 281). Especially for undocumented people, social relations are reportedly difficult to forge due to a fear of negative repercussions. Without ones’ family and friend as well as the inability to easily forge new strong networks, the migrant receives limited support and has limited possibilities to improve oneself financially, culturally and socially, and also limits possibilities for support (Bloch et al. 2014: 100). Although there are support groups, these often tend to work together with refugees and asylum seekers, leaving undocumented people with even less support (Bloch et al. 2014: 110). Health care, even though considered a human right ‘that transcends issues of citizenship or political status’, is often not adequately provided, if provided at all. In their comparative study on health access by undocumented immigrants, refugee claimants and permanent residents, Campbell et al. (2012: 6) argue that for undocumented immigrants the access to health care for either their physical or mental well-being in the form of emergency care, primary health care and obtaining medication access is significantly more difficult than for refugee claimants and permanent residents. This, according to various scholars, is because of fear of deportation, language barriers and insufficient personal funds (Campbell et al. 2012: 6, 7, 8). In their account of refugees and immigrants in Canada, Rousseau et al. (2008: 292) show that as a result of their precarious status, undocumented people and refugees encountered shortcomings in treatments regarding chronic conditions, lacking prenatal care resulting in serious complications for mother and child, and regarding children and youth, an absence of adequate care concerning mental health issues and children with developmental problems (Goldring et al. 2017: 34). In addition, Henry (2018: 1) argues that trends of securitisation and criminalisation of migrants – closely associated with framing – have ‘intensified carceral border regimes and produced greater precarity for migrants.’ This is the case due to border regimes preventing the security of residence, enabling threats of arbitrary removal and re-traumatising effects causing serious psychological harm (Henry 2018: 168). These are just a few examples of how a legal status, or rather a lack of, form a condition – which is politically induced as they are legally produced and policed – that maximises the vulnerability of some; they show a dimension of precarity.

It is not so much that we pull away from Standing’s labour-focused view, we move beyond. As shown above, by looking at other situations of vulnerability, unsafety, uncertainty and discrimination, we discover new dimensions of precarity. It is not just additives to the labour-focused perspective, it is what Nyong’o (2013: 159) states, transformative. Arguably, it is the intersectionality of deep-rooted systems of power and oppression regarding gender, nationality, social systems, political systems and economies that

create various forms of precarity for specific people, whilst not for others. When people are exposed to multiple forms of precarity some authors speak of hyper-precariety as it is used to designate those people – often migrants who encounter labour insecurities and immigration insecurities – subjected to multidimensional insecurities (Lewis et al. 2015: 582; Canefe 2018: 40).

2.1.1 Conceptualisation

In this thesis, the emphasis lies on how the already precarious lives of Venezuelan women working in the trago business on Curaçao are influenced by the efforts and policies of organisations and the government. Butler's (2009: ii) conceptualisation of precarity 'a politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and exposure to violence without protection. Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection', will serve as the foundation to this thesis. Various indicators of precarity can be deduced from Butler's (2009: ii) statement. Firstly, precarity is a structural condition given rise to be a government or other political body. Secondly, within this created condition people are not met with adequate support. Thirdly, this condition heightens the risk for people to be exposed to violence. With violence I refer to the conceptualisation provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (World Health Organisation 2002: 4). Lastly, there is no – or inadequate – protection against such exhibitions of violence.

As mentioned above, although the original conceptualisation of precarity focuses on employment and the labour market and is thus inherently linked to economic insecurity, it is not the only dimension the term provides. In this research, the precarity of precarious women working in the trago business on Curaçao will be analysed by utilising the dimensions of gender, work, citizenship/legal status and race/nationality.

2.2 Methodology

This section discusses the methodology and research design underpinning this thesis. Furthermore, the limitations and ethical questions anticipated before and encountered during fieldwork will be touched upon.

2.2.1 Research Method

As has been discussed above, precariousness is inherent to life itself meaning that every life is vulnerable. Ettliger (2007: 324), however, iterates that everyone experiences precarity, although, some experience more than others. Arguably, women working in the trago business experience more constraints than others on the island of Curaçao do. Their lived realities marked by those constraints will be explored. Standing's notion of the precariat and precarity will not simply be denied. By adding ideas of precarity related to gender, legal status, ethnicity and the nation – and thus transforming Standing's conceptualisation to a more wholesome notion of precarity – the precarious lives of women working in the trago business will be analysed with Butler's notion, as has been mentioned in the segment above, as central analytical tool.

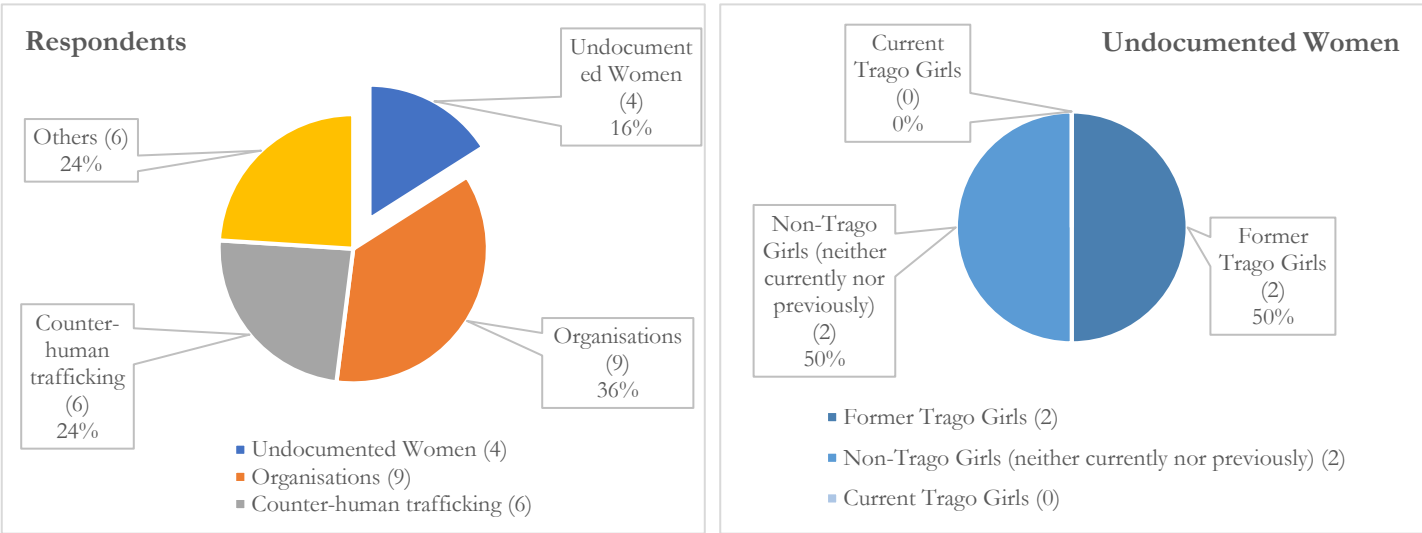
According to Ettliger (2007: 320), precarity is not limited to the specific context in which it is imposed by global events or (macro)structures, it is located in the micro-spaces of everyday life. Furthermore, although lives are indeed influenced by certain conditions, this does not implicate the human as an agentless object. It is here where I emphasise the continuously dynamic – not static – interplay between structure and agency; the interaction between 'the micro' and 'the macro'. Paret and Gleeson (2016: 280) emphasise that the significance of precarity lies within the manner in which the micro and the macro are connected. They state that 'an analysis of precarity thus calls for the study of broader political and economic shifts, and how they reshape the relationships between individuals and groups on the one hand, and capital and the state on the other' (Paret & Gleeson 2016: 280). Following Paret and Gleeson's (2016) and Ettliger's (2007) argumentation, this thesis will thus follow the ontological and epistemological lens of structurationism. Structurationist theory is defined as a theory that views social life not purely from an agentic standpoint nor from focusing on structure alone, rather on its interplay (Giddens 1984: 2). According to Giddens (1979: 5) 'structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution' meaning that structures influence agents and agents have the ability to influence structure. Specifically important to this thesis, one that aims to express how these precarious lives are influenced and enhanced by policies and different actors, is Paret and Gleeson's (2016: 280) argumentation that 'a crucial task is thus to understand how these dimensions are related, whether contradictory, reinforcing, or entirely isolated from each other.' Thus, this thesis will look at various dimension of precarity and how these are related to one another, how they can exist and how they are kept into existence.

2.2.2 Research Design, Data Collection Techniques, Sampling Methods

This thesis is underpinned by qualitative research methods carried out during my fieldwork on Curaçao from 17 March 2019 until 24 May 2019 and thereafter. This research is built around a qualitative research strategy in which academic knowledge is produced through an inductive dialogue between theory and evidence. Currently, precarity is central to this thesis. However, before my departure to Curaçao, the various

topic guides were fabricated with survival (activities) as the main analytical frame. The outcome of the interviews arguably suits the research with precarity in its centrality rather well as interviews focused on creating an understanding of the daily lives of trago girls – their needs, access to necessities, their living circumstances, their interactions with Curaçao citizen, their work circumstances in snèks –, how various organisations attempt to provide these women in their needs and the efforts of various entities to counter human trafficking. All these will be discussed in connection to labour precarity, race/nationality precarity, gender precarity and status precarity.

Different data collection tools were utilised during and after my fieldwork to execute this thesis, namely semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and over the phone), participatory observations and document analyses. The first compartment, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, have been conducted with 24 respondents between 12 March 2019 and 13 June 2019.¹⁷ Hereunder, the reader will find charts of the composition of my respondents. Regarding the respondents from organisations, I have interviewed nine different people representing the Red Cross, Famia Plania, Venex and UNHCR and Ombudsman. Of these interviews, two were held in English. The others were conducted in Dutch.



The two interviews with women formerly working in the trago business have been conducted with the help of a translator. My translator, Daniela, an undocumented Venezuelan woman herself, was in anthropological jargon the ‘gatekeeper’ to the two former trago girls women. A couple of days before the interviews took place, Daniela and I met up to discuss the interview questions and my expectations regarding the translating process. As both women understandably did not feel comfortable to speak about their experiences in public domains, we made sure to meet up in a private setting: one of the interviews was conducted inside Daniela’s house whereas the other took place inside the temporary residence of the interviewee. The language spoken by the two former trago girls was Spanish. After each of my questions, Daniela would translate it to Spanish to which the interviewee would react in her mother tongue, and

¹⁷ See Appendix II for list of interviews.

subsequently, a translation of the answer was provided by Daniela. One interview had been conducted with an undocumented Venezuelan woman that currently resides in Colombia. This was conducted in English and by utilising video calling. Besides being my translator, Daniela has been – because of all our informal conversations – a source of information to me. The six interviews conducted with people from counter-human trafficking teams have all been conducted in Dutch. Concerning the group ‘others’ – which includes a variety of people not specifically fitting in the other three boxes as they were often acquaintances – four interviews were conducted in Dutch and one was conducted in English. The interviews of the undocumented women were based on the following various themes: the journey to Curaçao, work, living circumstances, access and needs, and social interactions. Organisations were mostly asked to provide information on their modus operandi concerning undocumented people and trago girls, their role on Curaçao and their views on the current situation on the island. The respondents working for the government were all part of various entities working on human trafficking. They were asked to specify their efforts and knowledge regarding the situation of trago girls and human trafficking. My interviewees have been contacted – mainly – through snowball sampling which indicates the use of contacts to establish contact with others (Bryman 2012: 202). My research is, thus, based on non-probability sampling, meaning that I have not randomly sampled my respondents.

The second element is participatory observation. This signifies the four nights I have visited various snèks that offer their clients the possibility to receive company from (Venezuelan) women. During those four nights I have visited eight snèks. Three of those nights were executed on my own initiative. During those visits I was always accompanied by (local) men as that had been advised. One of those nights, I joined Famia Plania – an organisation that provides help concerning family planning including birth control and tests regarding sexually transmitted diseases – with whom I entered different snèks in order to reach out to the girls to provide them with information on the services Famia Plania offers and to hand out condoms. The difference in the role I had between going on my own initiative and joining Famia Plania was significant. Going on own initiative put me in the role of a customer. Especially as a non-Hispanic and non-Antillean woman, I stood out between the group made up out of Latinas and Curaçao men. However, due to the fact I was accompanied by men I did not encounter any issues. Going with Famia Plania give me insights as to how they try to actively reach out. As I was with them, I had more “interaction” with the women due to handing out flyers and condoms. I was not seen as merely a customer but as someone aligned to the organisation.

The third element, document analysis, has occurred before, during and after going to the field. Before, document analysis helped me to prepare interviews and create an analytical framework – which as explained above changed from survival activities to precarity. The document analysis during me fieldwork has continued to shape interviews, however, were also analysed to later serve writing down this thesis. Document analysis has enabled the articulation of policies enforced by the Curaçao government, the legal tension between different countries over responsibility and the enunciation of various perspectives and efforts undertaken by organisations regarding undocumented people, respectively trago girls, on Curaçao.

2.2.2 Reflections, Limitations & Ethics

Let us now reflect on this research's ethical complexities and encountered limitations during my fieldwork on Curaçao. Ethnographic fieldwork, especially those revolving around human rights and conflicts, is not without ethical quandaries. As Cassell (1980: 35-36) states, fieldwork concerns interactions between those investigating and those investigated in which the interaction is the method of producing knowledge and the ethnographer is the instrument of production. Although Cassell points out an important element of ethnographic fieldwork, an arguably more important point is to view this interaction as having consequences on the lives' of your respondents and research environment.

During my fieldwork, I have encountered various ethical complexities and limitations. As I realised the precarious position my respondents were in – one in which they were exploited, poor, hiding and fearing deportation – I encountered the dilemma of whether or not to provide financial compensation for the time they cannot use to work. As a reaction to conversations with my supervisor and my translator, I decided to not provide financial compensation in order to prevent socially desirable answers and to discourage participation out of need rather than out of willingness and ethically obtained consent. Additionally, undocumented Venezuelan women residing on Curaçao sometimes encounter exploitation and violence – as will be discussed below. When obtaining such knowledge on abuse against by respondent, I would be faced with a dilemma: does the researcher with such knowledge notify another entity and by doing that violating one's promised anonymity or does this knowledge overrule promised anonymity? To be able to tackle this issue, I could contact one of my respondents with extensive knowledge on human trafficking and victims of human trafficking to discuss possible action. However, this has not been needed as the women I have talked to that have encountered violence or exploitation are already receiving help.

A limitation I encountered concerned the inability or “unwillingness” for undocumented people to talk to me. As one of my groups of interest, concurrently the group central to this thesis – the trago girls – is a group frequently characterised by unwantedness, fear and desperation, as well as illegality and exploitation, engaging with them proved to be rather difficult. Many women did not want to or could not speak about working in snèks. It is due to their forced invisibility as a result of their undocumentedness, the oppressive policy of detention and deportation and exploitative systems of human trafficking, that attaining a connection in a safe and overt way can be rendered problematic. Some women did not want to talk as they were ashamed, scared or perceived it as a chapter closed when they had left that ‘scene’. Concurrently, undocumented people on Curaçao have to be rather careful regarding whom they engage with due to a risk of someone reporting them. For them to trust me blindly is, of course, impossible to do.

Another limitation concerns my language skills. Language-wise I seemed to manage halfway. As the languages spoken on Curaçao are Dutch, English, Papiamentu and Spanish, I often could make use of my command of English and Dutch. In meetings with formal institutions, possessing those linguistic skills was sufficient. However, it was during my participatory observation that not being able to speak Spanish has possibly withheld me from creating a connection with more respondents perchance resulting in more

information. Although Daniela helped me with translating the two interviews conducted with former trago girls, she was – due to her own status of illegally residing on the island of Curaçao – not able to access the snèk with me and thus unable to translate interactions with women inside the snèks. Furthermore, it must be noted that utilising a translator, risks the potential loss of valuable data due to incorrect or incomplete translations.

Another encountered limitation regarded my position as a female, foreign researcher. As a female, I was rather unable to access the snèks where these women work by myself as these are often spaces where local men come. Following the advice of multiple respondents, I was accompanied by (local) men and once by a group of women. This dependency limited the possibility of entering the snèks more frequently. However, I did visit a variety of snèks, which, arguably curbs the negative effect of my limit number of visits.

Chapter 3. – Trago Girls

Modus Operandi of Snèks, Daily Life as a Trago Girl and Exploitation

Within this first empirical chapter, I will discuss in length the often-precarious lives of Venezuelan women working in the trago business, nicknamed trago girls. With the use of in-depth interviews conducted with different entities working for the government, organisations and former trago girls, this chapter will depict different facets of the lives of women working in the trago business on Curaçao. Through the use of stories mainly told by Patricia and Isabella this chapter will provide an intimate portrayal of the women's everyday lived realities.¹⁸ Although their journeys in search of opportunities for survival do not necessarily start at the moment of travel to Curaçao, this chapter will commence there. After illustrating the journey to Curaçao, the modus operandi of snèks will be explained. As the lives of women working in the trago business are not merely existent within the walls of the snèks, the living circumstances of women engaged in the trago business will be discussed next. Lastly, this chapter will reflect on this data by utilising the concept of precarity as has been discussed hereabove in chapter two.

3.1 Journey

On the 10th of January of the year 2018, just days after Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro shut down air and maritime traffic, four bodies of Venezuelan migrants who drowned when crossing the Caribbean Sea between Venezuela and Curaçao washed ashore.¹⁹ The boat the deceased were on reportedly cracked under the pressure of the waves of the tempestuous sea causing the boat to sink. This was the first time – as far as was known at that moment – that an attempt made by Venezuelans to reach the coast of Curaçao ended in tragic deaths. As these boats typically carry around twenty-five to thirty-five passengers, the finding of the bodies and boat parts sparked the question as to if other Venezuelan migrants that were present on that boat lost their battle to the water or found safety on the shore of Curaçao. Since the maritime search for other deceased remained “unsuccessful”, the speculation that some on that boat disappeared on the island of Curaçao became more likely.

That presumption, indeed, was accurate. Patricia (32) was, in fact, present on that exact boat which left the Venezuelan shore at the beginning of January 2018 to never safely arrive on that of Curaçao.²⁰ It was the second time she came to Curaçao. Whilst waiting for the marriage papers of her recent marriage to

¹⁸ Due to ethical reasons the author has decided to anonymise all her respondents – apart from Carlos Rivas (Venex) who has iterated that the author could use his full name – in order to protect their true identity. The names of Patricia and Isabella have been fabricated. For an overview of the author's respondents, see Appendix II.

¹⁹ <https://nos.nl/artikel/2211372-lichamen-venezolaanse-illegalen-aangespoeld-op-curaçao.html>, accessed on 14 June 2019; <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/vier-venezolanen-verdronken-op-weg-naar-curacao~a465ed53/>, accessed on 14 June 2019; <https://www.knipselkrant-curaçao.com/trouw-vier-venezolanen-verdronken-op-weg-naar-curacao/>, accessed on 14 June 2019

²⁰ Based on interview with Patricia.

a local guy to be processed by the Curaçao government, her new husband was not able to provide her and her children with enough money. As the situation in Venezuela worsened, it was crucial for Patricia to work in order to prevent her and her family dying from famine. Therefore, it was decided that she would make her way to Curaçao per boat before completion of the processing of marriage papers. It was somewhere along the Venezuelan coast in a small town near the harbour of departure where two houses provided shelter to Patricia and thirty-three other passengers as they awaited the go-ahead sign from their two captains. As the harbour served as a drug trafficking hub, the group of Venezuelan migrants were required to hand in their phones to withhold them from photographing or contacting anyone about the illicit activities taking place. Concurrently, this prevented them from remaining in contact with family and friends who would be unaware of the location and well-being of their loved ones. They waited an entire month without communication to the outside world before the final attempt of departure to Curaçao was made. In order to limit the chances of getting caught by Curaçao authorities, departures were often scheduled around four o'clock in the afternoon. A regular boat trip could take up to eight hours depending on the quickly shifting currents of the sea. This meant that arrival near the Curaçao shoreline was scheduled around midnight which decreased the chances of being detected and thus caught by Curaçao authorities. In total three attempts were made. After having to return twice before due to the engines showing signs of malfunction, with the third attempt the boat left the Venezuelan shore, again, around four o'clock in the afternoon. According to Patricia, many of the passengers were surprised about the number of people that had to fit on that boat. However, as a result of pure desperation, everybody entered the craft. As they neared Curaçao, one of the engines failed. Because of being close to the Curaçao coast and the boat being equipped with a second engine, the trip was continued. Making matters worse, the sea's currents took a bad turn; as waves were getting higher the boat filled up with water. To refrain it from sinking the captains ordered Patricia and her fellow travellers to start bailing out water by using containers present on the boat. On top of this, the two captains started arguing about where to take the boat to as they were afraid of getting caught by Curaçao authorities. Whilst they were arguing, the second – and last – engine stopped working. This sparked complete and utter fear. Between one o'clock and three o'clock in the morning, the boat sank completely. Patricia recalled how people took their clothes off and started to float as only a few knew how to swim. She followed their lead. Whilst she was floating, Patricia's struggle to stay alive took a critical turn. Another girl grabbed onto Patricia as she tried to save herself from drowning. While being pushed down, Patricia reacted by pushing and kicking the girl continuously. She managed to free herself by elbowing her vigorously. What happened after that is a blur. The next thing she remembers is hearing someone say they were 'here already' [Curaçao] whilst holding onto a rock. When she got to the shore there were other Venezuelan people, who were in contact with those back in Venezuela that had organised the trip – highly likely part of a circuit of human smugglers and/or human traffickers–, that allowed her a phone call to someone that could pick her up. From anxiety, panic and physical exhaustion she defecated and vomited. As Patricia was waiting, her eyes wandered over the beach. She recognised the faces of four people she had been sitting on that boat with. These faces belonged to the bodies that were found that next morning.

Patricia is one of many that attempt to cross the Caribbean Sea in order to arrive on Curaçao. According to police and human trafficking experts, there is a boat setting sail to Curaçao on a daily basis.²¹ Of those departures, a limited amount gets caught by the Curaçao authorities: only one boat every one or two weeks is intercepted. Guesses are that most boats do arrive close enough to the Curaçao coast for Venezuelan migrants to get out of the boats and safely get to the shore. In case of being noticed by Curaçao authorities, following notification the coastguard will move in on the boat with their lights off.²² When close, the coastguard turns on its light and whilst shining this on the boat they will tell the people to put their hands up in the air or otherwise they will shoot. This is mainly out of precaution; often these ships will carry drugs and weapons – not belonging to the passengers – as well. A member of the Kuerpo Polisial Kòrsou (KPC), meaning Curaçao Police Force, has mentioned that it is not uncommon for the people on the boat to attempt to throw these illicit products overboard. The people on board will be arrested and, when possible, send back to Venezuela immediately. In case immediate deportation is impossible due to closed airports and maritime ports, the Venezuelans are detained in Sentro di Detenshon i Korekshon Kòrsou (SDKK), meaning Centre for Detention and Correction Curaçao. Since the closure of direct airport traffic between Venezuela and Curaçao, there has been an upsurge in attempts to come to Curaçao by boat. Although this incident was reportedly the first time a boat trip from Venezuela took such a tragic turn, it certainly was not the last.²³ Granting that incidents like the one on 10 January 2018, as described above, are not common, they seem to increase. Due to the increase in boat trips and as a result of these boats often being jam-packed, accidents occur more frequently. As reported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), there is a significant increase in deaths and disappearances on the Caribbean Sea. Whereas the IOM counted 18 deaths in the year of 2018, at the end of June 2019 the number is at 143; almost ten times higher.²⁴ Both numbers, however, are guestimates as the remains of most victims have not been found.

Patricia is one of the thousands of Venezuelan migrants that have made their way to Curaçao. Estimates currently go up to 26.000 migrants coming from Venezuela. Although Patricia has made her way to Curaçao per boat not once but twice, as the voyage described above was her second time, not all Venezuelans have entered Curaçao either through illegal means or per boat. Those who have, pay between 100 dollars (as Patricia did) and 400 dollars.²⁵ However, before the closure of maritime ports and airports Venezuelans that are desperate for the fulfilment of their basic necessities and that of their families, occasionally came by plane directly from Venezuela. According to two respondents who arrived on Curaçao per direct flight, coming to the island was merely a financial choice as the tickets were the cheapest.²⁶ People

²¹ Based on interview with Jonathan.

²² Based on interview with Edgar and video clip provided by Edgar.

²³ <https://nos.nl/artikel/2289965-in-twee-maanden-meer-dan-80-venezolanen-verdronken-in-caribische-zee.html>, accessed on 22 June 2019.

²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-un/migrant-deaths-rise-among-venezuelans-central-americans-u-n-idUSKCN1TJ1UT>, accessed on 30 June 2019.

²⁵ <https://www.hln.be/nieuws/buitenland/vluchtelingencrisis/32-venezolaanse-vluchtelingen-verdronken-onderweg-naar-curaçao~aad3f1c/>, accessed on 22 June 2019.

²⁶ Based on interview with Alexandra (not a (former) trago girl); based on interview Daniela (not a (former) trago girl);

that have entered Curaçao through that official channel often overstay their visa and, thus, enter the sphere of illegality and undocumentedness.

Within the circle of trago girls, characteristics of their journeys often differ from those solely purchasing their own ticket and overstaying their visa. Women that work in the trago business are more often than not involved in a human smuggling or human trafficking scheme. They are generally encountered by nearby relatives, friends or acquaintances. Patricia was approached by her cousin who told her that a particular individual provided Venezuelan girls who had an interest in working passage to Curaçao per boat. She was told she would work in a bar as a waitress. Through this way, Patricia would be an illegal, undocumented person right away. Just like Patricia, Isabella, who came to Curaçao in May 2017, heard from the friend of a husband about the job. After not being able to withstand the cries for food coming from her children, she left Venezuela to go to Colombia. As it later became impossible for her and her husband to earn enough, they decided she would take the job on Curaçao and work as hard as possible in order to pay her husbands' ticket to join her on the island. Isabella came per plane. By travelling to Curaçao by plane and having a visa, Isabella entered the country legally. To make sure she would be allowed in the country, the human traffickers provided her with 1000 dollars. This amount of money is needed to show immigration that you can provide for yourself. Besides them providing her with that money, they also paid for her flight. In the cases of both Patricia and Isabella, travelling costs would make up part of their debt. With this debt, they became part of a human trafficking scheme which I am tempted to call an unequal, exploitative relationship of interdependence and the exploitation of the already precarious position these Venezuelan women are a victim of. Both Patricia – with her first trip to Curaçao – and Isabella decided to make their way to Curaçao to work in the bar. As they arrived at the airport or a secluded space on the north-eastern side of Curaçao, they were picked up by the owners of the snèk or those working for them. Upon arrival, the women were told that they would start working either the next day or a couple of hours after the advent. Little did Patricia and Isabella know about the exploitative specifics of the work they would be forced to do as 'trago girls'.

3.2 Modus Operandi of Snèks

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the name trago girl is derived from the system through which women working in snèks theoretically earn money. The word snèk is Curaçao/Papiamentu for a local bar. More often than not, a snèk is just your common 'alongside-the-road-bar'; a place where you will mostly find men after work with a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other. However, some snèks offer their clients the company of women often originating from Venezuela, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. In a derogatory way, some people call snèks where women nicknamed trago girls work *puta snèks*,

Currently airspace traffic between Curaçao and Venezuela has been closed. Coming to Curaçao by plane can still be done via other countries, however, getting into Curaçao – even when possessing the right means and requesting official entrance, is difficult.

meaning whore bars. It is imperative to note that merely a fraction of all snèks utilises trago girls. Due to this often happening more so covertly and it not being registered, it is rather impossible to provide numbers on how many of such snèks exist. However, during my ride with a cab driver, I asked if any trago girls working in bars on the street we were driving on. Within in two minutes of driving slowly, he already had pointed out eight whilst saying: ‘Over there, women work in the evening’, ‘and there’ and ‘do you see that small blue house? There they work as well.’²⁷ As he took me to a road infamous for its ‘puta snèks’, I saw three different snèks lined up next to each other. All of them were providing men with beautiful women. This shows that it is not limited to merely two or three bars but is rather more widespread. Although not all snèks offer the company of women, in this segment we will discuss the modus operandi of snèks that do so.

Commonly, shifts of women employed as so-called trago girls commence around seven o’clock in the evening and last until around four or five o’clock in the morning. They often enter the bar fully adorned in evening clothing, wearing high heels and having their faces charmingly painted with make-up. Loud Latin-American tunes fill the room, mounted to the walls big flat-screen televisions often provide the bar guests with football or boxing matches and a Venezuelan flag frequently decorates a space on the wall. As the women arrive at the snèk, they find themselves a seat at a table or at the bar where they will attempt to engage with the men present in the snèk. Through ‘just being pretty and flirting’, as Patricia has phrased it, a trago girl aims to receive a trago, meaning drink, from the man. As he buys himself and Patricia a drink, she receives a *ficha*, meaning token or coin.²⁸ With that coin, she can later show the bar owner how many tragos she has received and thus how much money she should receive. The money that the client she spends her time with splurges on his own beverages is irrelevant when it comes to how much the woman gets paid. She only receives money for the drinks that are being provided to her. From the revenue of a drink, a percentage goes into her pocket and the rest ends up in the bar owners’ wallets. Depending on the prices of the drinks, regularly ranging from six to ten guilders, it depends on the rules set by the bar as to how much they would receive. In the bars where Patricia and Isabella worked, a drink cost 6 guilders of which they would receive 5 guilders. In another bar, La Tasca, where on 9 September 2018 a police raid took place, one drinks cost 10 guilders of which the women would receive only 2 guilders.²⁹

3.2.1 Human Trafficking

Besides the usage of flirtation, this engagement seems relatively benign. This form of labour is merely a method to satisfy the women’s aspiration to provide their families with capital. However, these women are often victims of bigger human trafficking schemes. According to Anti-Slavery International:

²⁷Based on interview with Markus.

²⁸Because of the *ficha* they receive, some people call the women working in the bar *ficheras*. However, the nickname trago girl is most commonly used.

²⁹ Exchange is roundabout ANG 1 = EUR 0,51; ANG 1 = USD 0,56.

*'human trafficking involves recruitment, harbouring or transporting people into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion and forced to work against their will. (...) Many people who fall victim of trafficking want to escape poverty, improve their lives, and support their families. Often, they get an offer of a well-paid job abroad or in another region. Often, they borrow money from their traffickers in advance to pay for arranging the job, travel and accommodation. When they arrive, they find that the work they applied for does not exist, or the conditions are completely different. But it's too late, their documents are often taken away and they are forced to work until their debt is paid off.'*³⁰

This description applies flawlessly to the cases of Patricia, Isabella and other women that have entered the trago business on Curaçao. As mentioned above, Isabella and Patricia were recruited for this job. As they arrived on Curaçao they have built up a significant debt. Their debt includes their travel expenses (for boat or plane), rent for the first month and food for the first month. According to respondents, debts often ranged from 1200 to 2000 dollars. This debt can be paid off by working in the snèks. The repayment itself could take quite some time as in one shift Isabella made 40 guilders and Patricia made 75 guilders.³¹ In case all the money they earned would be pushed towards the repayment of their debt it would take them approximately, with both of them having around 1800 dollars debt, 1.5 to 3 months to be debt free. However, not only are these women required to pay off their debts, after the first month they need to pay for their accommodations and aliments. Money used as repayment of debts is often directly deducted from a girls' income by the bar owner, frequently leaving them with limited amounts of money, if any. Communication concerning the amount of debt left is often non-existent, creating confusion for the girl working in the snèk regarding how much longer she would have to wait until she reaps the benefits of the work she is doing.

Besides leaving the girls in the dark regarding the amount of debt they still have to pay off, some snèks work with penalty systems. Depending on the rules set by the bar, women working as trago girls could receive fines for going to the bathroom more times than allowed, looking at their phones during work, going outside, being two minutes late to work, eating during work, forgetting to pass on information regarding product shortage and also when leaving during worktime to sexually engage with a man.³² In addition to these fines, there sometimes would be additional expenses. A respondent mentioned that for special occasions such as an all-white party, women would have to purchase special attire resulting in the trago girls needing to take out an additional loan to afford the purchases.³³ Furthermore, for trago girls to safely get to their jobs they often make use of illegal cab drivers which they have to pay for themselves. Both fines and unforeseen additional costs would then, indeed, be included in their total debt. It can be said that this penalty system serves a purpose of elongating the duration of a woman's stay, employment and exploitation, as well as the elongation of the owners' personal merit and revenue. By continuously adding to the debt of the

³⁰ <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/human-trafficking/>, accessed 01 July 2019.

³¹ Isabella: ANG = a little less than 22,50 USD; Patricia: ANG 75 = a little over 42 USD.

³² As men would have to pay the bar for sexually engaging with these ladies, this rule in itself is very exploitative as they are paying the bar for sexual activities with the woman. Theoretically the woman should receive that money later on, however, in practice this often remains questionable.

³³ Based on interview with Marcie.

women working as trago girls, they will have to continue working there to pay off that sum of money. It is because of this system of increasing debt that girls often feel pressured to give into the wishes and coercion of owners to prostitute themselves to earn more money sometimes risking contracting a sexual transmitted disease or infection and falling pregnant. When denying to engage in sexual activities, the women get pressured psychologically as well as physically: ‘This woman, she was not Venezuelan, (...) was recruited in Santo Domingo. She was one of the many women. At a certain moment in time, when she noticed she had to prostitute herself, she said “absolutely not.” Then they [owners of the bar said: “Okay, then you will not receive food.” She got locked up in a room, completely naked. They took all her clothes of her body. She remained naked. Two days without food, no one heard from her. But hey, she was not the first one. There were women before her that also were in those situations. And when they [the bar owners] notice that you are strong (...) they will dump you at immigration and you will be deported out of the country automatically.’³⁴ Not only the lingering fear of deportation is utilised by bar owners to pressure women to engage in sexual activities with men visiting the bar, also threats regarding hurting the families of the women are used. These threats are, because of them being recruited by people within close social proximity, taken very seriously.³⁵

As mentioned, neither Patricia nor Isabella was aware of the full extent of this exploitative practise. Women are often lied to about the content of the job. They were told they would be waitresses in restaurants or bars, but ‘nothing disrespectful’ as Patricia recalled the conversation with her cousin. However, as they arrived, they quickly learned otherwise. To reduce flight risk, bar owners sometimes take personal documentations away. As Isabella was picked up at the airport, she heard that she would start working only three hours later. The first bar where she worked, she describes as being hell. She worked twelve hours per day, seven days a week with only a thirty-minute break. As her bosses kept all the money she made “to put towards her debt”, Isabella was not making any money. She had to resort to begging clients for food in order to eat and following continuous pressure to make more money and threats coming from her bosses allowed men to touch her breasts and buttocks. ‘It was harder to make money. As she did not want anyone to touch her, the men would go straight to the girls that let men touch them’, my translator explained. This left it hard to make money. Exact explanations of what women do in snèks were often avoided, but when being in snèks you could see many of the women flirting, dancing, hugging and sometimes kissing the men that bought them drinks.

Besides getting pressured into allowing men to sexually touch her body, Isabella was forced to put more strain on herself. As she was not receiving any money, was desperate to get her husband to come to Curaçao and eager to send money to her children and family in Venezuela, not to even mention taking care of herself, she took up another shift at a different bar. In this bar she took up a five-hour shift working from twelve o'clock in the afternoon until five o'clock in the afternoon. She ended up working 17.5 hours per day

³⁴ Based on interview with Edgar.

³⁵ Based on interview with Marcie.

seven days a week; the first shift was from twelve o'clock in the afternoon to five o'clock in the afternoon, the second was from seven o'clock in the evening till five o'clock in the morning. Although working in the first bar she started working at was described as hell, Isabella described the second bar as being fine. Instead of thirty girls present in the bar, there were only four of them. This meant that the chances of receiving more tragos were significantly higher. Furthermore, the owners, an older couple, did not force Isabella to do anything sexual as 'they only asked me to flirt a little bit'. Au contraire to the first bar, in the second Isabella received money. This segment within Isabella's greater story shows that not all snèks that host women are equally as exploitative. Although multiple snèks provide illegal workplaces, not all of them are part of human trafficking schemes.

3.3 Living Circumstances

As women finish up the shift in the bar, they leave the premise often by making use of the services of either illegal, independent cab drivers or someone who is aligned to the bar. Spaces of mobility are frequently limited to the bar and the apartment due to long shifts and fear of getting caught by Curaçao authorities. Although stories from trago girls share characteristics, regarding their living circumstances this group of women do not possess a collective, homogenous storyline. The narratives surrounding the conditions of their apartments differ significantly. It ranges from women that have their own rooms only sharing the total apartment with three others to women who experience exploitation and mistreatment once again. A difference must be made between those victims to human trafficking, who exist within an unequal, exploitative relationship of interdependence which is difficult to escape from, and those stepping on Curaçao grounds by own means or through human smuggling, with their own money and deliberately choose to work in snèks as women that provide (mostly) men with company. A common theme amongst undocumented people, (former) trago girl or not, was that finding a place to live on Curaçao as an undocumented person can be relatively strenuous. Besides the existing inner trepidation of being turned in to Curaçao authorities when taking a risk to find shelter, undocumented people are an easy target to extremely high prices, bad living circumstances and – also outside of the snèk – degrading behaviour. When looking at undocumented people, respectively women working in the trago business that have fallen victim to human trafficking schemes, more often than not the living situation people find themselves in are dire.

Edgar, a respondent in a counter-human trafficking unit, pointed out that not only inside the snèks but also outside women are caught within an exploitation scheme as a result of added rules to their mobility, privacy and usage of necessities, and the receipt of fines when transgressing such set boundaries.³⁶ He stated: 'there, where the ladies stay are also rules. They stay with four people in a room so small it fits only two beds [bunkbeds]. They can see everything of each other; they do not have any privacy.' Having to share your room or even your bed and a lack of privacy has been mentioned multiple times. There have been

³⁶ Based on interview with Edgar.

stories circulating about people rotating mattresses so at least once every x-number of days you are sleeping on a mattress.³⁷ Having your own bed seems more of an exception and luxury than the rule of thumb. Edgar continued: “They are allowed to use the air conditioning for only one hour. After that it has to be turned off and only the use of a fan is allowed. Sometimes they are allowed to go out for a bit, but in case they are five minutes past curfew they will receive a fine. “Okay, you are too late: 50 guilders fine.” “Oh you are sick today, okay 80 guilders fine.” Also, the ladies have to take care of their own food. So they cook, but the homeowner also eats along but without paying anything. These are all forms of exploitation.’

During her time working as a trago girl, Patricia lived with fourteen other undocumented migrants in a building which was owned by a woman from the Dominican Republic. The Dominican woman rented out a couple of rooms often crammed with beds requesting 400 guilders from everyone regardless of the size of their rooms, the bed size or the number of roommates – everyone paid the same amount of money. Patricia mentioned she was feeling relatively comfortable as she was sharing a bed and room with only one other girl whom she befriended. In other rooms three beds were placed and six people had to share those. Although those rooms were bigger, Patricia did not envy them. Even though her bed had to be shared with one other person, the kitchen, fridge, bathroom and shower had to be shared by all fourteen people and the house owner. As there was no laundry machine or dish washer the place was filled with dirty clothing and dishes quickly piled up. To still keep it clean there would be a cleaning schedule which, of course, the owner was not included in. If it was your day, you had to clean the entire house. Furthermore, due to not making a lot of money having food was an important commodity. Having to share your fridge with others invoked the sense of having to be careful that no one was stealing your food. Isabella lived in a house with two bedrooms. These two bedrooms provided 8 people, who were all forcibly displaced Venezuelans that worked in a snèk, with a bed they had to share a kitchen and bathroom for 350 guilders per month. Although Isabella was told food and electricity would be paid for, this was not the case, therefore adding more financial strain on her. As Isabella did not have enough money, she sometimes ate less or shared the expenses of food with acquaintances. This currently still applies to Patricia, who gave birth to a child that is dependent on her mom being able to produce breastmilk. Luckily, Patricia currently lives in a better house. The house has four bedrooms which is shared between four women. Thus, Patricia has her own bedroom that she shares with her infant child and shares a kitchen and bathroom with the other women for an amount of 300 guilders per month. Although, as mentioned above, the living circumstances of trago girls are not at its best, it was clarified by Patricia that two of the women she currently shares a house with are in fact working as trago girls. This shows that even there is not a particular set of exploitative standards installed everywhere.

In addition to precarious circumstances regarding their livelihood (food, mobility, income, shelter), women engaged in the trago business frequently are victims to abuse in private spheres. It has been iterated that Venezuelan women working in snèks have engaged in intimate relations with local men sometimes

³⁷ Based on documentary Nieuwsuur; based on interview with Jenni.

resulting in the birth of children.³⁸ Some of these relationships have turned abusive – men have hit these women leaving their faces and bodies with bruises or keep them in their house thereby robbing them of their freedom.

3.4 Precarity

As mentioned in the introductory chapter to this thesis, this work aims to show how the lives of undocumented Venezuelan people on Curaçao, specifically the so-called trago girls, are characterised by various forms of precarity. Again, when we talk about precarity, we look at situations in which people are more likely to be exposed to aggression, poverty, starvation, displacement, and diseases as a result of lacking social and economic safety nets due to political actions (or lack thereof) and absence of adequate protection (Butler 2009: ii). It is obvious that stating precarity is merely existent on Curaçao denies the horrid circumstances Venezuelans are living in within the borders of their motherland. Therefore, this segment will commence by briefly discussing the precarity-marked lives of Venezuelan migrants before they set foot on the island of Curaçao. Subsequently, this segment will point out which types of precarity are identifiable.³⁹ Additionally, this thesis will discuss the (re)production of precarity by examining human trafficking schemes/exploitative schemes within the snèks they work.

Currently, Venezuela is characterised as a country in crisis as humanitarian, socioeconomic and institutional agencies have been declining resulting in the creation of insecure and unsafe lives for millions of its inhabitants.⁴⁰ Because of hyperinflation, severe food shortage, power blackouts that sometimes last days causing food to spoil, and extremely low salaries – sometimes only six dollars per month – many Venezuelans are facing (acute) malnutrition.⁴¹ According to Caritas, ninety percent of the households in Venezuela have a poor diet, forty-one percent have encountered days on which they have not had any food, sixty-two percent scavenge on the streets and seventy-eight percent of people eat less.⁴² These numbers continue to rise with especially kids being the victim of it.⁴³ Furthermore, the once praised health care system has been deteriorating with rapid speed. According to the Pharmaceutical Federation of Venezuela, there is

³⁸ Based on interview with Carlos.; Based on interview with Rosia; Based on interview with Amber; Based on interview with Jayce; Based on interview with Arie; based on interview with Markus.

³⁹ As to the governmental influences that enable such precarities to take place will be discussed in Chapter four The Government.

⁴⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/venezuela-crisis-country-190117184349473.html>, accessed on 23 January 2019.

⁴¹ Based on contact with Daniela 4 June 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/venezuela-suffers-nationwide-blackout-latest-power-outage-190722234059831.html> accessed on 26 July 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/venezuelas-healthcare-system-continues-deteriorate-190611105538904.html>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

⁴² <https://www.caritas.org/2019/02/malnutrition-venezuela/>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

⁴³ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/venezuela-prevalence-malnutrition-among-children-grows-economic-crisis-deepens>, accessed on 26 July 2019; <https://www.caritas.org/2019/02/malnutrition-venezuela/>, accessed on 26 July 2019; <http://thevenezuelacampaign.org/poverty-hunger-malnutrition/>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

an eighty-five percent shortage of medicines, a ninety percent deficit of medical supplies and a significant decrease in employed doctors due to low wages resulting in a shortage of qualified personnel leaving many urgent cases untreated (Sinergia A.C. 2017: 3).⁴⁴ Furthermore, there has been a lack of vaccines resulting in the reoccurrence and intensification of epidemics such as zika, HIV/AIDS, diphtheria, the measles and malaria (Sinergia A.C. 2017: 1, 3).⁴⁵ Additionally, there has been an increase in violence within the country. As mentioned by HRW, there have been numerous arbitrary arrests and detentions ‘to repress and intimidate civil society, political opponents, or any voices that might criticise the government or publicly express discontent.’⁴⁶ Detainees often suffer from inhumane treatment and torture, sometimes resulting in death.⁴⁷ Additionally, during anti-government protests security forces have executed extrajudicial killings regarding protesters and according to Aljazeera, there have been police crackdowns in specific neighbourhoods that Maduro arguably fears as an occurring source of the anti-government opposition.⁴⁸ Besides politically motivated murders, there is an increase of homicides amongst civilians. It is estimated that every eighteen minutes one Venezuelan dies due to violent events (Caraballo-Arias et al. 2018: 515). Because of violence, deterioration of adequate medical attention and lack of food, the mortality rates – specifically infant and maternal mortality – have spiked.⁴⁹ The government has created this situation of vulnerability, uncertainty and unsafety – they created this situation of precarity – for its civilians and is doing anything but providing its population with necessities, nor is it protecting their rights or accepting help from foreign governments and organisations. The lives of the Venezuelan people are undoubtedly characterised by precarity as Venezuelans are in a position created by the government in which they experience poverty, starvation, diseases, abuse, displacement and violence perpetrated by the state and non-state groups without adequate protection against such forms of aggression and violence.

It is safe to say that the rights of people in Venezuela are deteriorating without much opportunity for them to change the tides. Due to the above-described issues concerning malnourishment, violence or untreated medical urgencies, sometimes resulting in death, many inhabitants of Venezuela are desperately looking for a way of improving their and their family’s living circumstances. The precarious position which Venezuelan people find themselves in is a rather perfect scenario for exploiters. As human traffickers act

⁴⁴<https://www.npr.org/2018/02/01/582469305/venezuelas-health-care-system-ready-to-collapse-amid-economic-crisis?t=1564153913630>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

⁴⁵<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/venezuelas-healthcare-system-continues-deteriorate-190611105538904.html>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

⁴⁶<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/24/addressing-human-rights-and-humanitarian-crisis-venezuela>, accessed 26 07 2019.

⁴⁷<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/24/addressing-human-rights-and-humanitarian-crisis-venezuela>, accessed 26 07 2019.

⁴⁸<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/24/addressing-human-rights-and-humanitarian-crisis-venezuela>, accessed 26 07 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/03/venezuela-violent-response-demonstrators>, accessed 26 07 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/venezuelas-healthcare-system-continues-deteriorate-190611105538904.html>, accessed on 26 July 2019.

⁴⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/27/infant-mortality-in-venezuela-has-doubled-during-crisis-un-says-politicised-aid>, accessed on 26 July 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/04/04/venezuelas-humanitarian-emergency/large-scale-un-response-needed-address-health>, accessed 26 July 2019.

on this possibility of exploitation, the precarity that had been present before coming to Curaçao is reproduced. Firstly, it should be mentioned that Venezuelans come to Curaçao as a result of larger economic and political shifts. Following Paret and Gleeson (2016: 280), who – as discussed in chapter two – opt for identifying larger mechanisms with regards to understanding precarity, migration initiated by Venezuelans should not be seen as purely agentic. It is not precisely a voluntarily choice that pushes Venezuelan migrants towards Curaçao – although possessing agency to make decisions – it is arguably steadily increasing income inequalities and product shortage that forces these people to find ways to provide their livelihoods and that of their families elsewhere. Purely because of their dire economic status, which currently characterises most of those possessing the Venezuelan nationality and those residing with Venezuelan borders, Venezuelan migrants are an easy target for human smugglers and human traffickers. It must be mentioned that not only because of their nationality, Venezuelans are finding themselves in a precarious position. It is also because of their ethnicity (which often correlates with their national identity) that Venezuelan women find themselves in situations of precarity. Just like the research conducted by Bloch et al. (2014), Venezuelan women are stereotyped. Various respondents and informal conversations with men have pointed out that some men deem Venezuelan women as more attractive as they are considered more serious and down to earth compared to Dominican women, which is why men sometimes like them more. Furthermore, compared to Curaçao women they are more affectionate: ‘I had a girlfriend from Venezuela that would wake up when I got home during the night. She would make me food and sit with me until I finished it’, a respondent – Markus – told me when describing the allure of Venezuelan women,’ an Antillean woman would tell you to do it yourself.’⁵⁰

When ending up in a human trafficker’s web on Curaçao, the Venezuelan woman that works in the trago business finds herself in various situations of precarity. Starting with labour-oriented precarity, one can undoubtedly speak about precarious circumstances, even when taking human trafficking out of the equation, regarding the work these women do. Firstly, the women who work in snèks as so-called trago girls, do not have a steady income. As described above, they do not possess a consistent hourly nor daily wage. Rather, they are reliant on the number of drinks they receive which is dependent on how many girls work in the bar, how many men visit the bar and, sometimes, how much they allow men to do to them; their income fluctuates. Then, as has been described concerning the situation Isabella found herself in, there is often the question if they even get paid. Their income is thus, unquestionably, unstable. Furthermore, they are not provided with protection against falling ill – the payments stop when they do – and against encountering difficult clients during working hours. Rather, women working in the trago business might encounter difficult and unsafe situations due to their work and pressure created by their bosses. Regarding their actual labour, there are no policies in place or policed that protect women from working extremely long hours without breaks or food or that protect them from working too many days. Standing (2011: 11) also speaks of securities regarding opportunities to move upward in ‘the rankings’, develop oneself skill-

⁵⁰ Based on talk with Arie; Based on talk with Markus.

wise by receiving training and possessing a collective voice on the labour market. These are of course by far non-existent. Many of these factors are not non-existent because there are no rules in place regarding work. To be more precise, they are non-existent because they can be. This is arguably based on the fact that many of these women reside in Curaçao as undocumented people and the treatment such people receive.⁵¹ In line with Platt et al. (2017: 120), it is often migrants that fill low-paid jobs characterised by the three D's: dirty, dangerous and degrading. Jobs categorised as 3D occupations are often underpinned by high degrees of dependency upon employers and a lack of close social support networks. As described above, trago girls who are involved in human trafficking schemes are solely dependent on their employer – who is part of a human trafficking scheme – regarding their payment, working circumstances and treatment which enables labour precarity. As they are solely dependent on their employer – who already exploits these ladies on the work floor – and they frequently do not have any other social contacts, women encounter livelihood precarity: it is unsure if they have the ability to meet their nutritional needs causing them to be dependent on the help of clients and fellow trago girls. Furthermore, they are exploited regarding shelter for which they pay too much money and are sometimes exploited further due to the existence of rules and punishments.

Of course, purely blaming human traffickers only is not sufficient, as we will see in chapter four The Government. However, it must be mentioned before explaining how governmental measures influence the precarious lives of women working in the trago business, that the actual work performed by these women has a positive side that from time to time influences precarity positively: it is a rather complicated double-edged sword. Although the debt systems in which they find themselves can be viewed in a negative light due to the appearance of human trafficking schemes – which indeed can take horrendous forms – in some cases women are in fact able to safely work, pay off their debt and concurrently send money to their families to survive. It must be pointed out that the precarities that characterise the life of one person does not merely constrain that particular individual. When women working in snèks are able to send money back, this will increase the vulnerable position of family members positively. However, when a trago girl does not receive any money, the family members – whose survival is dependent on the income of all family members – will experience the repercussions of not receiving additional money meaning that precarity expands towards others; precarity can 'spill over' to the sphere of family life.

In line with Wee et al. (2018:2), I argue that the human traffickers and bar owners play a key role in reproducing the precarious live of trago girls. However, at times, bar owners can play a role in offering the opportunity to reduce vulnerabilities and reducing precarious lived lives although working an ever-remaining precarious job. Exactly this two-edged sword brings us to an important point that must be kept in mind throughout this thesis. Whilst the majority of this thesis is on the subject of women employed in the trago business that have experienced exploitation, intimidations and mistreatment, some trago girls do not experience those circumstances. Pointing out the exploitative human trafficking schemes these women are

⁵¹ This will be discussed in further depth in the following chapter, chapter four The government.

often victim to, does not indicate a collective, homogenous storyline amongst trago girls. Diversity can also be found within this group of women. Whereas it has become clear hereabove that respondents Isabella and Patricia both were, in fact, victims to human trafficking schemes, the chapter also aimed to show how not all trago girls are victims of human trafficking and not all snèks that offer the company of these ladies are equally as exploitative.

Above the possible journeys to Curaçao, the modus operandi and the living circumstances of women working in the trago business have been discussed. We have seen how the lives of women working in the trago business can be characterised by multiple forms of precarity. Thus, as we have established an account of the precarious lives of women working in snèks and the exploitative schemes that frequently underly this business, in the next chapter we will explore how various forms of precarity exist and come into existence due to Curaçao policies and existing structures such as citizenship. e.

Chapter 4. – The Government

Policies and executions re (un)documented and migrants human trafficking

As has been presented in chapter two Theory and Methodology, the precarious positions of people are partially determined by governmentally implemented policies. This chapter will discuss such policies set out by Curaçao authorities that influence the lives of undocumented people on Curaçao, respectively trago girls. Firstly, we will look at the asylum procedure – or rather a lack thereof – and the most prominent, and arguably one of very few policies employed by the Curaçao government, which is the detention and deportation policy. Secondly, the chapter will discuss campaigns and police efforts surrounding trago girls to counter human trafficking. By referring to two current cases, namely Freedom and Venus, this chapter will provide a more in-depth account of what goes into building a case against human traffickers. Thirdly, the political grey zone of responsibilities between Curaçao and the Netherlands will be discussed. Lastly, the concept of precarity will be used to reflect on the influences these policies have on the re(production) of the precarious lives of women working in the trago business.

4.1 Asylum Procedure, Detention and Deportation

As briefly mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, the Curaçao demeanour regarding forcibly displaced Venezuelans has rarely been regarded just and humane. Various entities have characterised Curaçao as ‘not proven particularly welcoming of forcibly displaced Venezuelans’, as ‘arguably the worst country within the region regarding the treatment of forcibly displaced Venezuelans’ and as a place where ‘the fate of Venezuelans seeking refuge on the small island of Curaçao [...] could very well be the worst in the Americas (Camilleri & Hampson 2018: 13; Refugees International 2019: 4).⁵² The criticism has been directed at the country’s two main policies: the asylum procedure through which forcibly displaced Venezuelans can apply for asylum and the detention and deportation policy.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which even though considered universal frequently remains symbolic, everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution.⁵³ The right to opt for asylum has barely been respected on the island of Curaçao. As the country did not have legislation governing refugee protection or asylum procedures, the UNHCR took over this role (UNHCR 2017: 4). Together with the local branch of the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNHCR has conducted various Refugee Status Determination (RSD) assessments until 5 July 2017 (UNHCR 2017: 2). On that date, the task of registering those in need of protection provided by the UNHCR was transferred to Curaçao authorities (Amnesty International 2018: 10). According to various advocacy organisations, Curaçao authorities have yet to issue asylum laws and policies that make it possible for those seeking refuge

⁵² Based on interview with Lara.

⁵³ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>, accessed on 25 June 2019.

to request international protection efficiently and safely (Amnesty International 2018:10).⁵⁴ Those undocumented (Venezuelan) detainees who explicitly have sought to apply for asylum after the transfer of responsibilities to Curaçao authorities have reportedly been told such asylum procedures do not exist or, when a request for asylum was filed, were left without a response (Ombudsman 2017: 13). Additionally, some detainees are either unaware of their right to legal support or are denied any (Refugees International 2019: 13).⁵⁵ According to a news site, those that want to request access to asylum procedures when entering Curaçao legally per plane, have to request this with immigration which shares the same booth as the department of removal.⁵⁶ Concurrently, the paperwork that has to be filled out is in Dutch. Arguably, both factors create a situation in which filing asylum requests becomes restricted.

As abovementioned, before 5 July 2017 registration was in hands of the Red Cross and UNHCR. This resulted in the distribution of a few official UNHCR Refugee Certificates. However, those in possession of an official certificate continue to encounter hardships. Isabella is an example of that. Despite acquiring an official certificate in 2017, Isabella's life has not been particularly easy. As the obtainment of a certificate does not grant the holder a work permit, providing in her livelihood remains arduous. Isabella's husband currently works illegally in construction, and thus, is able to provide them with some income. Besides encountering difficulties making a living, those holding a certificate have encountered abuse and threats. My translator explained Isabella's story:

*'Many months ago she [Isabella] got "caught" by the police. She was on a bus on the way to her work. It is common here that, [as] they know that mostly illegal people don't have enough money to afford their own transport by taxi so normally they go by bus, that the policemen just come into the busses asking everyone for their ID. In that moment, she already had that refugee letter and she was always carrying that everywhere. So, the policemen said with a really rude attitude "what are you doing here" and she said, "I have my refugee [status papers]" and he said "that is not valid here."'*⁵⁷

Isabella described that she was keeping relatively quiet as she did not want to have any trouble, so she just mentioned the existence of her refugee documentation. Still, they decided to take Isabella to the police station:

'They put her in the police car and took her to the police station. There the police in charge in that area came to her with one lady that is really known from immigration, and they said really rude things to her like "you girls are like little whores, coming to this island for prostitution."

⁵⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/03/venezuelan-exodus/need-regional-response-unprecedented-migration-crisis>, accessed on 30 July 2019.

⁵⁵ Based on interview with Jenni.

⁵⁶ <https://caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl/2019/06/20/vluchtelingencertificaat-van-de-vn-heeft-nog-steeds-geen-waarde-op-curaçao/>, accessed on 4 July 2019. Please note that the information of the source has not been verified by another source.

⁵⁷ Based on interview with Isabella.

The moment she remembered her husband's phone number she asked to make phone call. Her husband showed up to the station together with 'one of the richest men of Curaçao' as my translator narrated Isabella:

“[they said] you need to let her go because she did not do anything, she has everything in order.” The policemen said, “Yeab but it is just a piece of paper”. “Yeab but it is still worth something. It is still legal, and she has the right to be here as a refugee.” ’

Although at time of signing the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 Curaçao was an integral part of the Netherlands, the Netherlands did not declare that the Refugee Convention of 1951 extended to all constituent countries.⁵⁸ Thus, the Curaçao government was allowed to decide for its own country to rectify the convention.⁵⁹ Curaçao decided to not sign it, and thus, is not signatory to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. This body of law describes a refugee as someone 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.'⁶⁰ Although this body of law would apply to some, those fleeing from Venezuela due to famine and lack of much-needed medicine do not fall under this notion of refugees. However, various countries surrounding Curaçao have signed the – non-binding – Cartagena Declaration on Refugees of 1984. Building on the Declaration of 1951, this declaration takes the conceptualisation of the term 'refugee' beyond that of the 1951 Refugee Convention by including 'persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.'⁶¹ This conceptualisation would provide the right to apply for asylum to many more Venezuelans than the Declaration of 1951 does. Unfortunately, Curaçao is not a signatory to this declaration either.

The reader might wonder if there is any international body of law protecting undocumented people on Curaçao. Since the country is signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) detained undocumented people can go against deportation by opting for non-refoulement by addressing Article 3 Prohibition of torture of the ECHR.⁶² However, those detained reportedly did not have knowledge regarding this option or did not gain access to a lawyer (Amnesty International 2018: 26). The lack of just asylum procedures and the lack of knowledge on the existence of procedures have resulted in forced

⁵⁸ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/NLD/CAT_C_NLD_CO_7_33166_E.pdf, accessed on 30 July 2019.

⁵⁹ Based on interview with Jenni.

⁶⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>, accessed 20 June 2019.

⁶¹ https://www.oas.org/dil/1984_cartagena_declaration_on_refugees.pdf, accessed on 9 July 2019.

⁶² https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf, accessed on 19 June 2019.

repatriation of which some may have violated Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Amnesty International 2018: 35, 46).⁶³

Concluding that asylum procedures, although claimed theoretically present, are not in place, the prevailing policy is detention and deportation. In the crushing report of Amnesty International (2018: 11), this policy was called ‘an “active removal strategy” in response to the growing numbers of Venezuelans arriving and staying in Curaçao illegally.’ ‘Illegal’ Venezuelans that were found would be arrested, detained and when possible, immediately deported. Due to shut down of direct airspace connections between Curaçao and Venezuela, arrested Venezuelans are currently not being send back immediately after the commence of their detention. Instead, they are being detained in the SDKK. According to Patricia, who was detained and deported in 2017, the circumstances were bad. She told me the story about her detention in the SDKK barracks in reaction to my request to describe the moment she felt most unsafe. Before she got deported, she spent 6 days in jail.⁶⁴ She said: ‘They give you food there three times a day, but all the food is rotten.’⁶⁵ Reportedly, there is a lack of hygiene, inadequate bed linen, the outside area does not have shade and detained migrants told Amnesty International that ‘they had been kept locked inside for two consecutive days without being allowed outdoors’ (Amnesty International 2018: 11). According to Patricia, guards also sexually abused women. Sometimes guards would say: ‘Hey come here. You know, we can talk about your situation. About how we can get you out of here’, my translator explained. Then a guard would take the woman to the guards’ area and sexually abuse her. This did not happen to Patricia, but to the girl that was sleeping on the same bed in the SDKK. According to Amnesty International (2018: 11), some detained migrants were asked to perform sexual acts in exchange for sanitary products. Besides reported abuse, Amnesty International (2018: 11) has also mentioned detained Venezuelan migrants being subjected to punitive and degrading treatment. According to the factsheets from the SDKK, 867 Venezuelans were detained in 2017 (Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving 2018: 37). Most of them remained in the barracks rather short-termed, like Patricia, others were kept longer. Regarding deportation, in 2017, the fate of deportation from Curaçao back to Venezuela concerned 1203 Venezuelans (Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving 2018: 27). Compared to 2016 in which 539 Venezuelans were deported, the amount doubled. In the first four months of 2018, 386 Venezuelans were sent back (Amnesty International 2018: 11). Numbers going beyond the first four months of 2018 have yet to be made public, thus, it is unknown how many people have been detained, deported and if there are cases in which detention has lasted longer than three months.

It seemed like after Amnesty International’s report, as has been addressed multiple times above, the “witch hunt” for undocumented Venezuelans had been put on the backburner. According to lawyer Achim Henriquez in Trouw, it quieted down: undocumented people were only arrested if they were found by

⁶³ Based on interview with Jenni, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-mensenrechtensituatie-op-curaçao-is-dramatischer-dan-ooit~b3ffa3ea/>, accessed on 4 July 2019.

⁶⁴ Please note that the word jail was used by my translator. To not cause confusion the author wants to make clear that there are ‘special’ barracks for detained undocumented migrants.

⁶⁵ Based on interview with Patricia.

accident.⁶⁶ However, that passive attitude proved temporal and changed early 2019. In January and February of 2019, two police raids against illegal residence were performed resulting in the arrest of more than thirty people. According to Henriquez, an enormous police force was involved in the performance of those raids which ‘no longer point to by-catch, but to targeted (police) investigation into Venezuelan refugees.’⁶⁷ Multiple undocumented Venezuelan respondents have mentioned that they have encountered police searching for Venezuelans.⁶⁸ It has been mentioned that police officers come on buses and request the bus passengers to take out their identification papers. Because of fear of detention and deportation, my respondents said to avoid public transport. Furthermore, two out of four respondents have mentioned that they have encountered police checking identification papers on the side of the road or at supermarkets.⁶⁹ Whilst sitting in the car and being asked about their documentation, Patricia informed the police that she was indeed undocumented and pleaded for her to be let go. Alexandra pretended to blend in as Curaçao. In the end, Patricia was let go as in the eyes of the police officer she was considered a good woman. Alexandra was detained for four days after which she got deported. As mentioned, Patricia has witnessed an abusive atmosphere within the SDKK. Although Alexandra, who was detained and deported in 2017, did not speak of sexual abuse, she did, however, experience bad attitudes from most officers. She described the situation as followed: ‘They said to my face “you [Venezuelan women] are whores, you just go to Curaçao to take our husbands.”’⁷⁰ A respondent has mentioned that such incidents are almost impossible to occur as cameras were installed the year of 2017.⁷¹ However, both Alexandra and Patricia were detained in 2017. It is unclear if cameras were installed after they were deported, or if the measure does not prevent intimidation and abuse from occurring.

4.2 Countering Human Trafficking, Police Involvement and Campaigns

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, trago girls frequently find themselves within human trafficking schemes. Various groups work together to counter human trafficking and the influx of undocumented people.⁷² That is being done through the use of awareness campaigns and police efforts. Hereunder will be explained how a police case concerning human trafficking is created and what happens with the ladies working in the snèks that are being picked up by the police. Before diving into the fieldnotes, it is important to highlight two pieces of Dutch/Curaçao criminal law. According to Dutch (and Curaçao)

⁶⁶ Trouw is Dutch newspaper. <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-mensenrechtensituatie-op-curacao-is-dramatischer-dan-ooit~b3ffa3ea/>, accessed 4 July 2019.

⁶⁷<https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-mensenrechtensituatie-op-curacao-is-dramatischer-dan-ooit~b3ffa3ea/>, accessed 4 July 2019.

⁶⁸ Based on the interview of Alexandra, Patricia and Isabella.

⁶⁹ Based on the interview of Patricia and Alexandra.

⁷⁰ Based on interview with Alexandra.

⁷¹ Based on Interview with Corey.

⁷² Examples are the RST, KPC, Royal Navy, Customs, OM, Interpol, VDC and ICC. Not all groups will be discussed in depth as the author has not interviewed workers of all groups.

criminal law, someone is found guilty of human trafficking ‘when he who gives someone else through coercion, violence or other factuality or through the threat of violence or other factuality, extortion, fraud, deception or abuse of dominance, abuse of a vulnerable position or by giving or receiving payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person who controls, recruits, transports, transfers, accommodates or assumes control over the other for the purpose of exploiting that person or removing his or her organs’ (Wetboek van Strafrecht 2012: art. 2:239:1a).⁷³ Exploitation of another person, according to criminal law, includes at least prostitution, other forms of sexual exploitation, forced or compulsory labour, slavery and practices similar to slavery (Wetboek van Strafrecht 2012: art. 2:239:2). When looking back at the stories of Isabella and Patricia, the reader might agree that according to the law stated above they indeed were victims of human trafficking. Both women, however, were never part of police investigations. Although they have not been part of a police case, currently there are certainly efforts made to prosecute and convict human traffickers. But how are these cases build and what happens to women that are found during police raids in snèks?

A trafficking investigation commences with a tip, either anonymously or overtly. According to Edgar, it is frequently a client of the women that reports his/her suspicion of abuse.⁷⁴ Depending on the conditions in which these girls live and work, different approaches will be taken by the KPC. If needed, for example in case of women being locked up, the KPC will act as quickly as possible. In case it is less emergent, they will first try to collect as much information as possible before planning a police raid. The police raids are generally kept as quiet as possible for as long as possible in order to limit the chances of the snèks being informed, and thus, able to hide the women and potential evidence of the employment of these women.⁷⁵ This has happened frequently. According to Catharina, there are evening shifts in which multiple snèks will be checked.⁷⁶ Patricia encountered moments in which a raid or check was executed while she was working in the snèk. ‘Once in a while they [the police] just go for a police control’, my translator said, narrating Patricia’s story.⁷⁷ And in that moment someone said the police is coming and they dropped everything. They would run like in the movies. And they would get in the back side of the bar. It was a big fence and they would hide in a tube that was under the ground.⁷⁷ In case the raid is successful, collection of evidence continues. The police look at various objects signalling the presence of human trafficking. Various signals are the presence of tokens that women working in snèks receive, administration that states how many tokens they have received and thus how much money they should obtain, the presence of dance poles, locks attached to the outside of doors with which the women can be locked up and the presence of condoms.⁷⁸

⁷³ Please note that only art. 2:239:1a was mentioned above. Art. 2:239:1, under the header ‘Crimes against personal freedom’ goes until art.2:239:1i.

⁷⁴ Based on interview with Edgar.

⁷⁵ Based on interview with Marcie.

⁷⁶ Based on interview with Catharina.

⁷⁷ Based on interview Patricia.

⁷⁸ Based on interviews with Catharina; Based on interview with Terrence; Based on interview with Edgar; Based on PowerPoint presentation provided by Jenni.

After the raid, the women come into the care of Slachtofferhulp [victim support] Curaçao.⁷⁹ Normally a possible victim receives a week to rest.⁸⁰ Within this week they receive the basic provisions, shelter, a medical check-up and a psychological assessment to see if they should receive further psychological assistance. It is key to not have them talking to police so they cannot put these women under pressure, force or manipulate them to extract information. After one week they must decide whether they want to participate in the investigation. In case they do, they will be heard and evidence will continue to be gathered by the police. With the evidence and interviews of witnesses and victims a case is build. This process can take up months. After all the possibly collectible evidence has been accumulated, slowly but surely the case will be brought to court. During the time in between the raid and the end of a trial the women will remain under the care of victim support. There they provide the women with ‘bed-bath-bread’, meaning basic necessities, shelter and a listening ear. Additionally, these women are protected 24-7 during the first two months after the raid has taken place. Concurrently, for their safety, the women only allowed to have contact through victim support. All of this costs a lot of money. According to minister of justice, Quincy Girigorie, it is not Curaçao but international organisation that pay for the protection and care of victims.⁸¹ In 2018, Mr. Girigorie responded with the following words to reports insinuating that the government supports the women financially: ‘A crazy idea, and where does it come from? I want to make it very clear that the government is not investing money in what they call trago girls.’⁸²

Besides attempting to arrest, prosecute and convict human traffickers, Curaçao authorities also try to prevent human trafficking by seeking to reach women in Venezuela before they decide to come to Curaçao. In the year of 2017, the campaign ‘Trago? No!’, meaning Drink? No!, was started.⁸³ The Public Prosecutor's Office and Department of Justice launched this campaign to bring awareness to the Curaçao population and women working in snèks on Curaçao about the forms of human trafficking. Thus, the campaign targeted both the Curaçao population as well as Venezuelan women that were considering to come to Curaçao to work. The Public Prosecutor's Office has also created a website with the name ‘Un sueño traicionero’, meaning a treacherous/deceitful dream.⁸⁴ It was programmed to be found when people in the coastal area of Venezuela and in the city Caracas would type in ‘trabajar en Curazao’, so they can be informed about the risks they might encounter. According to the de document Aanpak illegale migratie van Venezolanen [Tackling of Illegal Migration of Venezuelans], by the 9th of January 2018, the site had received 9000 hits (Raad voor de rechtshandhaving 2018: 25). The Facebook page received reportedly 284.766 visits

⁷⁹ Based on interview with Marcie.

⁸⁰ Please note that the words ‘possible victim’ are being used as one is truly a victim when they regard themselves as such and of course when supported by evidence later in court.

⁸¹ <https://antilliaansdagblad.com/nieuws-menu/18477-twee-trago-meisjes-bescherm>, accessed on 10 July 2019.

⁸² <https://antilliaansdagblad.com/nieuws-menu/18477-twee-trago-meisjes-bescherm>, accessed on 10 July 2019.

⁸³ See Appendix III for a visual.

⁸⁴ <https://unsuenotraicionero.com/>, accessed on 22 June 2019. See appendix VI for visuals.

of which, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office 99% were female (Raad voor de rechtshandhaving 2018: 26).⁸⁵

4.2.1 Cases and Police Involvement

The number of cases currently in process is limited. This is frequently due to fact that Curaçao has been dealing with a number of things.⁸⁶ Besides countering human smuggling and human trafficking, the police and special taskforce have to focus on liquidations, narcotics, firearms and criminal gangs present on the island. The police therefore is jerked back and forth between different themes according to what is the priority of the day. Furthermore, different institutions have a lack of capacity, which forces them to choose some cases over others. Currently, the Public Prosecutor's Office wants to structurally execute two to four investigations a year.⁸⁷

During my stay the most recent cases were Freedom (bar Ling Hua) and Venus (bar La Tasca) that had been started in 2018.⁸⁸ These were the first big cases in years concerning human traffickers being brought to court and women being protected on the island of Curaçao.⁸⁹ In both cases the women were exploited and badly treated. In the case of Freedom nineteen ladies were retained. Just some of them ended up being considered a victim. After their check-ups, it became clear that, although physically healthy, these women suffered – and still do – from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and experience a lot of stress and anxiety.⁹⁰

According to respondents and news outlets, not only the owners got arrested and are being charged with complaints of human trafficking and/or human smuggling. In case Freedom, besides the female Venezuelan bar owner (main suspect), the handyman, her husband and her daughter were arrested.⁹¹ Amongst others, in case Venus, a police officer and a woman who worked as a trago girl were arrested as well. Venus' arrested trago girl initially was considered a victim, however, she chose the side of the main suspect. During the investigation it became clear that the woman was the owner's right hand and helped the owner recruiting and keeping an eye on the other women that worked in the snèk. More shockingly might be the detainment of a police officer. Although there are many policemen making an effort to counter human trafficking, some are involved in the schemes themselves or know about the existence of such

⁸⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/suenotraicionero/>, accessed 22 June 2019.

⁸⁶ Based on interview with Catharina.; Based on interview with Edgar; Based on interview with Jonathan.

⁸⁷ Based on interview with Catharina.

⁸⁸ <https://koninkrijksrelaties.nu/2019/06/24/vijfde-aanhouding-in-onderzoek-tres-belle-naar-mensenhandel-o-curacao/>, accessed on 10 July 2019; <https://www.knipselkrant-curacao.com/paradisefm-vijfde-verdachte-opgepakt-in-tres-belle-onderzoek-naar-mensenhandel/#more-263855>, accessed on 10 July 2019.

⁸⁹ Before victims of human trafficking would be send back to their countries.

⁹⁰ Based on interview Marcie.

⁹¹ The handyman has been arrested as he has driven these ladies from their residence to their work. The daughter of the main suspect has been arrested on the basis of human smuggling, as she housed the women, and human trafficking as she walked around on the work floor and was in charge of administration. It has been said that the husband was not so much involved with the women.

schemes. Not reporting one's knowledge on a serious crime/offence makes someone guilty of passive complicity. It is imperative to note that this does not automatically infer active involvement. Although it does not imply active involvement, it is an offence, and thus, punishable. The arrested officer in case Venus is prosecuted for passive complicity to human trafficking. After my departure from Curaçao another raid was successfully executed, adding a new case to the list: Tres Belle concerning the bar Hot Chicks/Hot Wings.⁹² Within this case, a travel agent was arrested. The travel agent provided in consultation with the snèk owner plane tickets from various countries to Curaçao to the women. According to the public prosecutor he cannot state merely doing his job. The man is currently suspected of complicity in human trafficking.

Unfortunately, the involvement of police officers in snèks or the exploitation of the status of undocumented people does not seem to be a one-of-a-kind-story. During my time on Curaçao, I have encountered two people who exchanged similar stories. One of my respondents – Gerard – , iterated his irritation about someone who works for the coast guard and 'oppresses those girls.'⁹³ As I stepped into Markus' car, he told me: 'I have another story for you', after which he shared a story along the same lines as the ones above.⁹⁴ Markus, a cabdriver, explained that he received a call from a Venezuelan, undocumented woman. She asked him to pick her up at a shopping mall. Once she got into the car, she asked him to turn down the music. As he did that, she burst out in tears. She explained to Markus that she was on her way to pick up the belongings that she left in her last residence as she ran away from her local boyfriend. Too afraid to go by herself, she asked her to drive her there and wait in the car. She asked him before arriving to the house to drive away and call the police in case she did not return to the car in ten minutes. As they arrived at the property, her boyfriend was sitting on the porch like he had been awaiting her arrival. To show him that there was a man accompanying her, my Markus turned on the light in the car. Within ten minutes of her getting out, she returned after which he dropped her off at the shopping mall again. 'You know what is the crazy thing', my Markus said, 'he is a cop.' Obviously, it is story likes these, that can create tension between teams working on human trafficking.⁹⁵ This existent distrust, although not immense, does show itself. It does that through not being able to enter each other's system, i.e. the systems used by different entities that counter human trafficking are not open to everyone, and raids are kept as quiet as possible for as long as possible to avoid information being passed on.⁹⁶ This distrust towards police is also present with undocumented people as police are not carrying out a particularly welcoming policy, as has been mentioned above, and as human traffickers often tell them that they have connections with the police and immigration which makes interaction with the police more risky.⁹⁷

⁹² Based on interview with Chantal; <https://www.knipselkrant-curaçao.com/om-onderzoek-tres-belle-mensenhandel-mensensmokkel/>, accessed 12 June 2019.

⁹³ Based on informal talk with Gerard.

⁹⁴ Based on informal talk with Markus; Please note that this woman was not working in a snèk.

⁹⁵ Based on interview with Jonathan.

⁹⁶ Based on interview with Jonathan.

⁹⁷ Based on interview with Catharina.

4.3 Political Grey Zone

Who is responsible for the poor treatment of undocumented Venezuelans on Curaçao? Who can be held responsible for the lack of just systems that should provide a chance at protection, if not protection itself? Those are questions one can ask. Lucidly, the most obvious answer is Curaçao. However, besides criticising Curaçao and urging it to change its course regarding its treatment of Venezuelans, international voices have also directed their discontentment towards the Netherlands.⁹⁸ Some have iterated that according to the Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden [Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands] foreign affairs and defence are carried out in collaboration of the four constituent countries – the Netherlands, Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten – of the Dutch kingdom; they are kingdom affairs. In accordance to this fact, some people state that the overseas' influx of Venezuelans falls under either of these categories, and thus, are in the opinion that the Netherlands is responsible for the current treatment Venezuelans encounter on Curaçao as well and therefore should act.⁹⁹ Indeed, it is true that foreign affairs and defence are kingdom affairs, however, it has been made explicit that admission to and expulsion from the country of Curaçao falls under Curaçao state affairs (Rogier & Biegelaar 2018: 28-29, 51). Their policies regarding admission and expulsion have been inscribed in the Landsverordening toelating en uitzetting [Ordinance Admission and Expulsion] (Ltu).¹⁰⁰

The argument that admission and expulsion is not a kingdom affair but a state affair, is frequently utilised by minister of foreign affairs Stef Blok (and others) to justify passivity on the side of the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ However, according to article 43 of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands all constituent countries are responsible for promoting the realisation fundamental human rights and freedoms, legal certainty and reliable, good governance within their own country.¹⁰² Concurrently, safeguarding these rights and freedoms, certainties and reliable, good governance is a matter for the Dutch Kingdom as a whole.¹⁰³ Based upon this, one can argue that the Netherlands, as well as Curaçao, Sint Maarten and Aruba, can all be held responsible for the violation of human rights – specifically the violation of article 3 of the ECHR – reportedly currently occurring on Curaçao. Such statements have in fact been iterated by occupants of seats in the House of Representatives of the Netherlands.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the argument that admission and expulsion are Curaçao state affairs prevails.

⁹⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 29 June 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/netherlands-should-protect-venezuelan-refugees>, accessed on 29 June 2019.

⁹⁹ Based on interview with Simon.

¹⁰⁰ For more information see <https://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/XHTMLoutput/Actueel/Cura%C3%A7ao/144218.html>, accessed on 08 July 2019.

¹⁰¹ <https://nos.nl/artikel/2233100-blok-nederland-gaat-geen-vluchtelingen-uit-venezuela-opnemen.html>, accessed on 08 July 2019.

¹⁰² <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002154/2017-11-17>, accessed on 08 July 2019.

¹⁰³ <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002154/2017-11-17>, accessed on 08 July 2019.

¹⁰⁴ <https://koninkrijksrelaties.nu/2018/10/11/blok-geeft-geen-krimp-in-debat-over-opvang-van-venezolaanse->

Interestingly, Curaçao has requested help from the Netherlands twice within a couple of months' time. In October, the Prime Minister of Curaçao, Eugene Rhuggenaath, requested help from Netherlands whilst stating that given the larger capacity of the Netherlands 'our brother, or rather our bigger brother, must help us.'¹⁰⁵ In January, Rhuggenaath requested help from the Netherlands once again. However, this time he addressed article 36 from the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This article entails that the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten have to provide each other with help and assistance.¹⁰⁶ The only assistance the Netherlands has provided was EUR 132.000 for the detention centre. Both requests for help are barely met with action. More often than not, the fact that Curaçao is autonomous, and thus, responsible for issues regarding migration is reiterated once again.¹⁰⁷ Arguably, by the Netherlands not reacting to this request they allow the precarious lives of trago girls to continue and for precarity to be reproduced.

4.4 Precarity

In the previous chapter (chapter three Trago Girls), we have taken a closer look at the precarious lives of Venezuelan trago girls. Thereby, a picture of the hardships and challenges these women frequently face has been painted. I argued that these descriptions show the result of politically construed conditions that leave them vulnerable to various forms of violence such as poverty, disease, starvation and physical, sexual and mental abuse whilst not receiving adequate, if any, protection. In this segment, this thesis will discuss the politically induced conditions – policies, police efforts and counter-trafficking measures – that create the environment in which exploitation and abuse occurs and the precarity trago girls are subjected to are influenced. As mentioned earlier, before setting foot on the island of Curaçao the lives of women working in snèks is already precarious. Because chapter three (segment four) has provided an account as to how precarity is existent in Venezuela, this chapter will focus on precarity on Curaçao. However, it is vital to understand that Venezuela has a role in the recreation of precarity on Curaçao. The importance of this will be discussed by looking at how both governments enable the recreation of precarity.

It is arguably the exclusion from citizenship that forms the main source for the precarity of trago girls as, following (Bélanger & Tran Giang 2013: 5), 'migrants are subject to structural precarity, given their limited rights in the destination countries' considering that they do not receive the same rights due to not possessing citizenship. Anderson (2000: 195) argues that 'while citizenship rights guarantee that citizens' basic human rights are met, these rights do not derive from humanity but from membership to the community. As well as a guarantee of rights, then, citizenship therefore becomes a device by which demands

[vluchtelingen/](#), accessed on 09 July 2019.

¹⁰⁵ <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2255600-nederland-moet-curacao-helpen-met-vluchtenlingestroom-uit-venezuela.html>, accessed 01 August 2019.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.gobiernu.cw/nl/nieuws/persberichten/ondersteuningsverzoek-aan-nederland-inzake-impact-migratie-venezuela/>, accessed 01 August 2019.

¹⁰⁷ <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2255600-nederland-moet-curacao-helpen-met-vluchtenlingestroom-uit-venezuela.html>, accessed 01 August 2019.

on the state are controlled and this denial is perceived as legitimate.⁷ In the case of trago girls, their undocumentedness limits access to medical care, to basic resources, to safe and steady jobs, to mobility and to creating a social network. As they are not part of the Curaçao community, the state does not feel obliged to be responsible for their well-being or aiding in providing their livelihoods. The government of Curaçao states that the Curaçao community and economy, specifically the labour market, are not able to absorb a big influx of thousands of migrants.¹⁰⁸ In line with this statement, expressions of migrants as not belonging on, or sometimes even threatening the well-being of Curaçao and its population, have surfaced.¹⁰⁹

It is this precarity regarding citizenship/legal status, the absence of adequate asylum procedures and the detention and deportation policy, that enable the existence of other forms of precarity. As trago girls are undocumented, they do not possess certain rights including the right to work or to reside on the island of Curaçao. The position of not being allowed to be on the island makes it easy for human traffickers and snèk owners to consciously take advantage of these ladies sometimes by imposing extreme work conditions that are not changeable by the women themselves.¹¹⁰ Therefore, one can state that citizenship precarity can lead to being subjected to labour precarity. This abuse can take place as women fear to be arrested, detained and ultimately deported back into the dire circumstances Venezuela currently “offers”. The fear of being deported and potentially losing all income prevents women from contacting the police if they even have the chance to do so. Thus, these women will continuously be subjected to low, irregular income, bad working circumstances and abuse as the potential to negotiate for change is limited, and thereby, further elongating if not upholding the duration of this exploitation. Concurrently, trago girls face exploitation regarding their living circumstances as they have to pay high rents for little space and reduced mobility making their livelihoods precarious. Arguably, if this fairly aggressive policy of detention and deportation had not been in place and temporary residency accompanied by a temporary worker’s permit was accessible, bad working circumstances and exploitation would decrease as women would not fear deportation thus being able to open up more easily. As such is not available, the detention and deportation policy and the inability to apply for a just asylum procedure through which their status precarity could be redefined, forces undocumented Venezuelan people into illegality. This illegality and detention and deportation policy enables, is argued above, multiple precarities of which labour precarity is one.

In accordance to Lewis et al. (2015: 582) and Canefe (2018: 41), I argue that trago women often are in a state of ‘hyper-precarity’ – a state in which there are multiple constraints as a result from different power relations concerning gender, ethnicity/nationality, labour and socio-legal status – which mainly results from their lack of legal status and the detention and deportation policy. We have already seen an example of hyper-precarity namely how the interaction between status and labour creates a situation of unfreedom, uncertainty and vulnerability. There are however, arguably, more.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.gobiernu.cw/nl/faq/situatie-venezuela/blijft-curaçao-venezolanen-terugsturen-ondanks-de-situatie-daar/>, accessed on 29 July 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Based on interview with Marcie; Based on interview with Carlos.

¹¹⁰ Sometimes the terms human traffickers and snèk owners are applicable to the same person.

Gender precarity is existent in multiple instances. It has been expressed in chapter two that male and female migrants experience differing realities of migration regarding pre-migration, work and return. As this research has not focused on men, I will refrain from exploring the differences between undocumented Venezuelan men and women on Curaçao. However, it is obvious that men are not working as trago girls in snèks, rather as construction workers, making them arguably less vulnerable to sexual exploitation than women. Furthermore, gender precarity plays out in private spheres. Women, as described in chapter three, sometimes commence an intimate relationship with a man that lives on the island and encounter gender-based violence. Gender-based violence refers to the use of violence (physical, sexual, psychological or economic ‘including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty’) to directed at a person due to their gender.¹¹¹ This form of violence is deeply rooted in long-standing gender-inequalities and closely associated with ideas of male superiority and female subordination whereby violence is used to create and enforce such hierarchies (Burazeri et al. 2005 :197; Simister 2012: 11). According to Burazeri et al., it is women that are most empowered (high education and high status) that are more likely to report violence, thus, creating a situation in which they can gain protection against such violence (Burazeri et al. 2005: 200). Because of their undocumented status, undocumented Venezuelan women, respectively trago girls, can barely report the violence that is inflicted on them. Arguably, the strict removal strategy minimises the ability to report violent behaviour against these women. It is not that there are no possibilities whatsoever to report violent instances, however, one can wonder how well-known the existence and accessibility of these possibilities are.

Race/nationality-focused precarity is intertwined with gender precarity. As mentioned, Venezuelan women are stereotyped as more pleasing women than the Antillean women and characterised as more serious than other women working in the trago business. This stereotype, especially that of the pleasing and flirtation woman, is a structure that will continuously be reproduced on the work floor. Due to the owner’s instruction to flirt with customers their stereotype is upheld and concurrently reproduced. It is due to their status as undocumented person and the linked fear of deportation, that this cannot be addressed, negotiated or changed. As there is a demand for that sort of attention, human traffickers will abuse the precarious situation in Venezuela to meet this demand whilst continuing to create other forms of vulnerability, unsafety and uncertainty created by their illegality.

It must be understood that, indeed, human traffickers exploit these women, whereas Curaçao authorities – with the exception of a few individuals – do not have the intend to exploit them. However, Curaçao and Venezuelan authorities surely can be held accountable for creating a perfect situation in which human traffickers can thrive. As mentioned earlier, the Venezuelan government does not take care of its inhabitants causing desperation which is then capitalised upon by those with intend to exploit. It is for many the option to survive which is not offered by their own government that drives them into the arms of traffickers. It is thus precarity that is utilised by traffickers. This precarity is reproduced on Curaçao. Even

¹¹¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>, accessed on 30 July 2019.

with good policies this would be the case as human trafficking arguably does not cease to exist completely, however, it is more difficult to do so since the ability to report exploitative practices is not countered with fear of immediate deportation.

This segment has pointed out how politically construed situations – such as enable the detention and deportation policy, the use of exploitation, and asylum procedures – subjection of trago girls to various forms of violence that have been depicted in chapter three and thereby interpolating them into a state of ‘hyper-precarity’. It has been discussed as to how these various forms of precarity are connected to each other, whereby I have argued that status precarity is the catalyser for other precarities to come into existence. It has been argued that these dimensions of precarity can come into existence due to the construction of this situation in which human traffickers can exploit these women by Venezuela and Curaçao – as well as being “allowed” by the Netherlands as has been touched upon hereinabove. In chapter three it has been iterated how Venezuela adds to this situation. In this chapter, it has been shown how these politically construed conditions in Curaçao create a situation of fear which is a situation people make use and abuse. Therefore, again, I argue that Curaçao and Venezuela make it easier for human traffickers to operate.

Chapter 5. – (International) Aid Organisations

Local Efforts, International Voices and Governmental Responses

Within this chapter, this thesis will discuss the interactions of (international) aid organisations on Curaçao. This chapter will commence by describing the help provided by organisations locally: how do they try to help undocumented people? If applicable, how does the organisation provide help specifically to women working in the trago business? After discussing local efforts, this chapter briefly discusses the voices of different international organisations – of which some have been briefly mentioned hereabove – and what the government’s response has been. This chapter will be concluded with the discussion of how these efforts influence precarity.

5.1 Local Efforts

Although Curaçao is a small island, various local organisations (or local branches of international organisations) and foundations have risen to action with regards to the dire situation of Venezuelans on Curaçao. Even though there are more present on the island, the different entities that will be described here are Human Rights Caribbean Foundation, Fundashon Salú pa Tur, Famia Plania, Krus Kòrà Kòrsou, and Venex.

Since the beginning of July 2019, Fundashon Salú pa Tur [foundation Health for All] has officially opened its doors. Fundashon Salú pa Tur has come into existence as a reaction to the need for medical attention for undocumented people and refugees, and the inability for them to get treated in St. Elisabeth Hospital (SEHOS) and by other health care providers.¹¹² This foundation aims to provide health care to (Venezuelan) migrants without residence papers and refugees on Curaçao and other islands in the Caribbean.¹¹³ Their first clinic aims ‘to provide a safe space for migrants to access a general practitioner and receive pregnancy check-ups’.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the clinic will focus on preventative measures such as vaccinations, diabetes care and blood-pressure check-ups.¹¹⁵ The foundation runs on support provided by the UNHCR and Stichting Vluchteling Nederland [Refugee Foundation the Netherlands], material donations, financial donations and volunteers.¹¹⁶ Currently, the services provided by the doctor within the

¹¹² https://www.delftopzondag.nl/nieuws/vaste-rubrieken/90132/-curaçao-kan-de-vluchtelingenstroom-niet-aan-?redir&fbclid=IwAR20yj2CBh1jsNHC3xl_sXtnBh7xKMLcOm_mauGyHPlrPPcCG4cwfG1bSyI, accessed on 14 July 2019.

¹¹³ Based on interview with Carlos.

¹¹⁴ https://www.gofundme.com/helpgivehealthcare?fbclid=IwAR2uEDKSGAfOWYQXw8umef7ih_B11QFWVev_roamM7hZifArb6zkQJ2pTNA, accessed on 15 July 2019; <https://www.facebook.com/salupatur/>, accessed on 15 July 2019.

¹¹⁵ https://www.gofundme.com/helpgivehealthcare?fbclid=IwAR2uEDKSGAfOWYQXw8umef7ih_B11QFWVev_roamM7hZifArb6zkQJ2pTNA, accessed on 15 July 2019.

¹¹⁶ <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2293475-nieuwe-kliniek-op-curaçao-voor-onverzekerde-venezolaanse->, accessed on 14 July 2019; https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2293475-nieuwe-kliniek-op-curaçao-voor-onverzekerde-venezolaanse-2019.vluchtelingen.html?fbclid=IwAR1VNIg_K2c5ko3DYqbGGO1tGUkMMRMWqDovz_qymoWKX-taxkYBT0B4Nbg, accessed on 14 July 2019;

foundation are free of charge. In case medication has been donated and is present within the clinic, that will be free of charge as well. When another health care provider has to come in, the costs will have to be paid by the client. Janszen, the founder of the foundation, hopes that health care providers will consider providing 'second-line health care' "free" of charge as well.¹¹⁷ Just days after opening, the clinic is full of activity, Carlos told me about Janszen's clinic: 'I went there two or three days ago with the doctor (...) and she told me, at that moment she has treated 136 people and she has a big, big list, I mean a waiting list, so yeah, they are working hard'.¹¹⁸ As the government has iterated that undocumented people visiting the clinic will not be bothered, this clinic may as well be able to safely provide health care to those in need.¹¹⁹

Not only does the organisation work with the two international organisations mentioned above. It also collaborates with the above-discussed Human Rights Caribbean Foundation and Venex.¹²⁰ Venex is an organisation created by Venezuelans and for Venezuelan people residing within Curaçao borders regardless of their legal status.¹²¹ It was founded in 2012 due to Venezuelans on Curaçao needing a new option to receiving help. Since September of the year 2014, Venex has been formally registered as an organisation. The organisation, existing out of five official Venezuelan workers who do not receive any money and, according to their last administration, have received help from around 500 mostly Venezuelan volunteers, attempts to respond to the needs of their fellow Venezuelans.¹²² The organisation creates events to increase integration and interaction between Venezuelan and Curaçao people, monitors human rights, provides social help, connects Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao to other organisations, and collects clothes and medicine which are donated to people in need in Venezuela and on Curaçao. In June, Venex has started handing out clothing and food on a weekly basis to those most in need by utilising a church and laying out clothing to choose from.¹²³ Just recently, around the beginning of July, Venex commenced doing daily house visitations to assess the living circumstances of fellow Venezuelans and respond to their needs.¹²⁴ To the question as to how they receive aliments, clothing and medicines, Carlos said 'there are a lot of [local] people helping'.¹²⁵ Despite its dedicated volunteers, the work is continuously getting harder and more demanding as the foundation is barely receiving financial aid and the amount of people needing help is increasing over time. Even when I met up with Carlos from Venex between seven and nine o'clock in the evening, he was

¹¹⁷ The costs will be paid by the foundation. <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2293475-nieuwe-kliniek-op-curacao-voor-onverzekerde-venezolaanse->, accessed on 14 July 2019. <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2293475-nieuwe-kliniek-op-curacao-voor-onverzekerde-venezolaanse->, accessed on 14 July 2019;

¹¹⁸ Based on interview Carlos Rivas.

¹¹⁹ Nieuwsuur, broadcast, 14 July 2019.

¹²⁰ https://curacao.nu/nieuwe-kliniek-voor-kwetsbare-onverzekerde-patienten/?fbclid=IwAR2DKIDWQlsQ8RBV2fQJ3AngAp_upmZ-kIzq_sisN75RVQCU51SbZ_G1MOU, accessed on 14 July 2019.

¹²¹ Based on interview with Carlos Rivas; based on document provided to the author by Carlos Rivas.

¹²² The five official workers possess legal residence. Some of them have been living on Curaçao for over twenty years.

¹²³ See Appendix V for pictures.

¹²⁴ Based on contact with Carlos Rivas in July

¹²⁵ Based on interview with Carlos Rivas.

still busy regarding the work he does for the organisation besides working a regular job. In addition to financial donations, they are in need of a place where the organisation can move into, legal assistance and medical assistance (although now Fundashon Salú pa Tur offers some already). Furthermore, this organisation is not receiving any help from the government. In fact, a response from the government seems too much to ask. The organisation has handed in a proposal, but now, over a year later the government has not responded to it yet. This is unfortunately in line with other organisations that have handed in proposals and have not received a response.

Another organisation concerned with providing care to undocumented people is Famia Plania. As part of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), an organisation that delivers ‘sexual and reproductive health care services around the world, fighting for sexual rights’, Famia Plania helps people, regardless of their nationality and legal status, with family planning, pregnancy prevention and tests.¹²⁶ Since 2008, this organisation has provided help to sex workers, a category some women working in the trago business fall under, in the form of providing free femidoms (female condoms) and other forms of contraception against the purchase price. Mid December 2018, a project that focuses on providing health care to vulnerable groups which will be contacted by an outreach staff member. In May, I had the pleasure of joining Famia Plania on a night of fieldwork.¹²⁷ In the snèks where the ladies work, we handed out small flyers with information on the services provided by Famia Plania, the organisation’s contact details and femidoms. The younger men present in snèks sometimes received male condoms. The give-away of condoms and information were accepted by the women working in the snèks with content. Some of the women also confided to the workers of Famia Plania about some concerns they were having. With this Famia Plania is one of the few, if not the only organisation, specifically focusing on reaching out to women working in snèks. A thorn in the eye of Famia Plania is the lack of capacity, money and knowledge. It is only the question if the new programme can be kept going.

Although I have not personally spoken to the organisation, the Human Rights Caribbean Foundation should be mentioned as a local (and regional) actor that puts in effort to better to current situation of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented people. The non-profit organisation Human Rights Caribbean Foundation has been founded on 10 December 2018 concurrently being the 70th Anniversary of the Declaration for Human Rights.¹²⁸ The foundation, founded by citizens with a growing concern regarding lacking respect for human rights of Venezuelans coming to Curaçao and other islands in the Caribbean, aims to promote human rights in Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire and the broader Caribbean.¹²⁹ The organisations takes up the function of centre of knowledge, mediator, supporter and central coordinator. This organisation can be seen as aiming to give those having to hide because of their undocumentedness a voice.

¹²⁶ <https://www.ippf.org/>, accessed on 15 July 2019; Based on interview with Rosia.

¹²⁷ Based on fieldnotes.

¹²⁸ <https://ser.cw/files/2019/05/Ieteke-Witteveen-Human-Rights-Caribbean-Foundation.pdf>, accessed 15 July 2019.

¹²⁹ <https://ser.cw/files/2019/05/Ieteke-Witteveen-Human-Rights-Caribbean-Foundation.pdf>, accessed 15 July 2019; <https://www.facebook.com/hrcaribbean/>, accessed 5 March 2019.

As part of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the local branch called *Krus Kòrà Kòrsou* (RKC), provides assistance to various people residing on the island of Curaçao. Abiding by the seven principles of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality – the local branch provides help to those in need disregarding nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions, as everyone is entitled to a relief of suffering.¹³⁰ Amongst the people requiring help are undocumented Venezuelans and Venezuelan refugees. As above-mentioned in chapter four, before 5 July 2017, on which the task regarding registration of undocumented migrants was transferred to the government, the RKC and UNHCR collectively shared this responsibility. Subsequently and currently, the RKC is tasked with providing medical help to those not insured, first aid, courses, evacuation plans, sheltering, disaster management and plans, and execute projects regarding the elderly, sheltering, reparation of houses and people with a disability. The RKC aims their help towards all people residing within Curaçao borders of which undocumented Venezuelan people are part of. When asked how they help undocumented people, my respondents from the RKC said that people come to the building of the RKC where their needs are evaluated and taken care of. Regarding the question as to how many undocumented people come to RKC, my respondent answered, ‘we do not count them.’¹³¹ They did mention, however, that they are being visited daily. That people walk in and ask for help became clear throughout my conversation with my interviewees from RKC as a family in need of assistance visited the RKC and waited 1.5 hours for the interview to finish to receive help. Most requests for help are medical, but the RKC has also provided help concerning rent and cases of workers exploitation. Regarding women working in the *trago* business and sex workers – which are, as mentioned above, sometimes coexistent terms –, the RKC has not had a program specifically directed at this demographic group. Just like the other organisation mentioned above, the biggest issue the RKC is facing is a lack of money: ‘we are good in terms of organisation, but financially it is difficult.’¹³²

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that people legally residing on Curaçao who are not necessarily part of an organisation have also helped many Venezuelans. It has come to my attention, that there are individuals and churches that provide medical attention, food, housing or relatively well-paid, non-degrading jobs to undocumented people to without a permit and refugees.¹³³ A common problem is the lack of capacity, knowledge and money to perform work. The only organisation with a specific program with an active approach to help women working in *snèks* is *Famia Plania*.

There are some obvious shared struggles: a lack of money, a lack of qualified personnel and the non-responsiveness of the government to handed in proposals and reports.¹³⁴ However, similar principles

¹³⁰ <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/fundamental-principles-commentary-010179.htm>, accessed on 20 July 2019.

¹³¹ Based on interview with Amber and Jayce.

¹³² Based on interview with Amber and Jayce.

¹³³ Based on interview with Patricia; Based on interview with Isabella; Based on talks with Daniela; Based on talks with Markus; Based on interviews with Carlos Rivas; Based on the document provided to the author by Carlos Rivas.

¹³⁴ Based on interview with Carlos Rivas; Based on interview with Winston and Monique.

and goals have been iterated by multiple organisations as well: different organisations emphasised the importance of the freedom of forcible displaced undocumented Venezuelans on Curaçao and they frequently spoke about forcible displaced undocumented Venezuelan as migrants or refugees which stands in sheer contrast with often by the government iterated word “illegal person”.

5.2 International Voices and Response from the Curaçao Government

As mentioned above, various organisations have spoken negatively about how undocumented forcibly displaced Venezuelans are being treated on the island of Curaçao. Some organisations have been briefly touched upon in the chapters above. This segment will discuss organisations like Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, Refugees International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): What do they do on the island of Curaçao and what are they saying exactly?

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a non-profit non-governmental organisation that investigates and reports abuses of human rights across the globe.¹³⁵ By utilising advocacy directed at different actors like businesses, governments and armed groups they hope to positively influence bodies of law and policies.¹³⁶ By doing this the organisation promotes the safeguarding of human rights and human life. With their report on the exodus happening within Venezuela – produced in 2018 – the organisation attempts to do exactly that. In their report, HRW has iterated that ‘no [Caribbean] country has adopted a special permit for Venezuelans to legally stay and most of the countries do not have laws to regulate the asylum-seeking process’, to which Curaçao is not an exception.¹³⁷ Besides criticising the absence of asylum procedures, the HRW has mentioned to have received credible reports that state the active conduction of raids, harassment – both physically and verbally – and detention without the option to gain access to legal support.¹³⁸ Above all, the organisation is in the opinion that the Netherlands is answerable for violations that have occurred and continue to occur within Curaçao border including the violation of non-refoulement.¹³⁹ It must be noted, that the organisation does not provide help in the form of legal, social or medical support on the island, nor is it stationed on Curaçao.

¹³⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/about-us>, accessed 25 July 2019.

¹³⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/about-us>, accessed 25 July 2019.

¹³⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/03/venezuelan-exodus/need-regional-response-unprecedented-migration-crisis>, accessed on 30 July 2019.

¹³⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/03/venezuelan-exodus/need-regional-response-unprecedented-migration-crisis>, accessed on 30 July 2019.

¹³⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/03/venezuelan-exodus/need-regional-response-unprecedented-migration-crisis>, accessed on 30 July 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 30 July 2019; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/netherlands-should-protect-venezuelan-refugees>, accessed on 30 July 2019.

Refugees International is a non-profit non-governmental organisation that – as the name already suggests – works on refugee issues across the globe.¹⁴⁰ It says to challenge ‘governments, policymakers and administrations to improve the lives of displaced people around the world.’¹⁴¹ It does that by doing advocacy concerning the need ‘for lifesaving assistances and protection for displaced people’, and, concurrently promoting ‘solutions to displacement crises.’¹⁴² In 2019, the organisation has produced one report on the matter of undocumented Venezuelans on Curaçao based upon field research conducted in the month February (Refugees International 2019).¹⁴³ This fieldwork has predominantly broad forth the crackdown by Curaçao authorities on undocumented Venezuelans residing on the island and has criticised efforts executed by Curaçao authorities with regards to their strict active removal strategy (Refugees International 2019: 4, 13). Also, Refugees International (2019: 5) has iterated that the entire Kingdom of the Netherlands is responsible for the realisation and safeguarding of fundamental human rights, freedoms, legal certainty and good governance – that, I have argued as well in chapter four.

Another organisation that has to be mentioned is the International Committee of the Red Cross. The ICRC should not necessarily be mentioned for voicing opinions publicly, like the advocacy organisations HRW, Amnesty International and Refugees International do. The ICRC is an independent and neutral organisation that helps those affected by conflict and armed violence. On Curaçao, the ICRC has focused on providing forensic support. This has been applied in the case of the tragic boat incident as described at the beginning of chapter three. Thereby, the ICRC aims to ensure proper and dignified handling of bodies, the identification of the deceased and to contact family members about the passing of their loved ones.¹⁴⁴ The ICRC frequently communicate their findings with authorities – in this case the Curaçao authorities – confidently. According to their annual report, the ICRC has consulted Curaçao on their detention facilities, issues related to health and issues related to migrants, immigration, detention and missing people (ICRC 2018: 275, 289-290).¹⁴⁵

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a global organisation that is dedicated to protecting the rights, saving the lives and building better future for forcibly displaced people/communities, refugees and stateless people.¹⁴⁶ As mentioned above, before 5 July 2017 this organisation was registering Venezuelan refugees together with the Red Cross. After the transfer of the task of registration to the government, the UNHCR left the island. However, they continue to monitor the

¹⁴⁰https://www.refugeesinternational.org/homepage-ri?utm_expid=.7bmUD4N1TKOy86J1TsnByA.1&utm_referrer=, accessed on 29 July 2019.

¹⁴¹https://www.refugeesinternational.org/homepage-ri?utm_expid=.7bmUD4N1TKOy86J1TsnByA.1&utm_referrer=, accessed on 29 July 2019.

¹⁴² <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/what>, accessed on 29 July 2019.

¹⁴³ <https://www.undispatch.com/venezuelan-refugees-in-curacao-are-facing-abuse-detention-and-deportation/>, accessed on 29 July 2019.

¹⁴⁴ Based on interview with Dirk.

¹⁴⁵ Based on interview with Dirk.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/about-us.html>, accessed 01 August 2019.

situation. Additionally, not too long ago, the UNHCR has renewed its offer to help the country of Curaçao with the registration of forcibly displaced people. Curaçao has not taken them up on the offer.

One more report must be mentioned with particular regard to human trafficking: the so-called Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. This report is produced annually in which it discusses how countries respond to human traffickers – ranking countries from tier 1 (best), tier two, tier two watch list to special cases – and what measures it takes to counter it. In the TIP report of 2018, Curaçao was placed on Tier 2 (U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2018 : 54). In the TIP report of 2019, Curaçao has been demoted to the Tier 2 Watch List. This was due to detention and deportation of victims of human trafficking 'who did not immediately agree to cooperate in the case against their traffickers' and traffickers not being vigorously prosecuted and not convicted (U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2019: 165). Concerning case Freedom, which will be briefly touched upon below, nineteen ladies were retained. Just some of them ended up being considered a victim. Edgar from one of the counter-trafficking teams said the following about sending back potential victims of human trafficking:

Interviewee: 'From the moment we have two or more women, it is more than enough. But in this case, we had seven. So, it is more than enough. But we retained nineteen. The ones who do not want to talk, we send back.'

Interviewer: 'They will be deported?'

Interviewee: 'Yes. When the ones that did not want to talk learned that these women [those who talked] were treated well by Curaçao, more women wanted to talk. And I said: "It ends here. You are going back, we have more than enough." Do you understand?'¹⁴⁷

The various organisations that have mentioned above have made similar or overlapping recommendations, including – but not limited to – like, amongst other: 1. ensure access to adequate asylum procedures; 2. creating campaigns to counter Xenophobia; 3. Preventing arbitrary arrests (or prolonged detention) of asylum seekers; 4. Involvement of the Netherlands regarding support and carrying responsibility; 5. Provide access for detainees to legal support; and 6. Ensure that detention decisions will be reviewed by a court on a regular basis (Amnesty 2018: 51).¹⁴⁸

The report that has been created by Human Rights Watch, has received a considerable amount of criticism as the government has critiqued the organisation's methodology and has denied its findings. Quincy Girigorie has not addressed the organisation's key findings that regard the absence of safe asylum

¹⁴⁷ Based on interview with Edgar.

¹⁴⁸ Based on fieldnotes concerning gathering; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/netherlands-should-protect-venezuelan-refugees>, accessed on 30 July 2019; Some smaller organisations based on Curaçao, like Venex and the Human Rights Caribbean Foundation share such views.

procedures, the arbitrary detention and deportation policy and the raids imposed on Venezuelans.¹⁴⁹ Regarding the various complaints on the violation of human rights, the Curaçao government as well as the Dutch government frequently state there are none: “The media also reported that the Dutch government stated that Curaçao does follow international laws and treaties and that it “laments the perception that human rights are violated on Curaçao.”¹⁵⁰ Regarding the TIP-report, the response has been more positive despite Curaçao being demoted from Tier Two to Tier Two Watch List. As iterated by Chantal, she was fairly disappointed concerning the demotion of Curaçao on the TIP-report as it was motivated by the fact that many victims of human trafficking were sent back. Indeed, that was the case. However, recently, new approaches have been developed with more of a focus on taking care of the victims and bringing the cases to court.¹⁵¹

5.3 Precarity

Hereabove, this thesis has briefly discussed the efforts and beliefs of various organisations that either are settled on Curaçao or have monitored and reported on Curaçao. I argue that, especially the smaller organisations present on the island seem to have been able to influence the precarious lives of undocumented people, respectively trago girls. This is due to their more direct and better targeted help. Due to providing clothing, help regarding physical/sexual abuse cases, food, medical care and a voice, Venex, Salú pa Tur, the Red Cross, Human Rights Caribbean Foundation and Famia Plania positively influence various forms of precarity. Although seemingly not booking too much success, international organisations are arguably crucial to altering the precarious lives of undocumented people. It is these organisations, I argue, that through monitoring, reporting and advocating can change a particularly politically induced structure – like a change in status precarity for Patricia by getting the government of Curaçao to acknowledge her refugee status as legitimate reducing her vulnerability, unsafety and uncertainty – and therefore able to influence the lives of these women more positively.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/15/letter-curacaoan-and-dutch-authorities-venezuelan-asylum-seekers>, accessed on 22 July 2019.

¹⁵¹ Based on interview with Chantal; Based on document analysis.

Conclusion

This thesis concludes that the lives of trago girls are indeed characterised by constraints, uncertainty, unsafety, and instability – their lives are characterised by precarity. Following various scholars, I argue that merely utilising labour-focused precarity as analytical lens when analysing the uncertainty, unsafety and instability of one’s life does not suffice (Federici 2014; Wee et al. 2018; Bélanger & Tran Giang 2014; Platt et al. 2017; Anderson 2000; Paret & Gleeson 2016). I have argued that various forms of precarity characterise the lives of women working in the trago business. The forms that have been identified and discussed are gender precarity, race/nationality precarity, legal status precarity. It has been argued that these forms of precarity are connected to one another – they enable each other – and collectively make the lives of people characterised by these forms of precarity more vulnerable – more precarious – than others. As the lives of women working in the trago business are characterised by multidimensional forms of constraints, they can thus be rendered hyper-precarious. Of these dimensions of precarity, especially precarity with regards to the legal status one possesses – or lacks – has been identified as pivotal to the (re)production of precarity and, arguably, the facilitator to the possible occurrence of other forms of precarity.

The first sub-question – explored in chapter three – *How are the precarious lives of women working in the trago business (re)produced by human trafficking schemes on Curaçao in 2019?* aimed to illustrate constraints and problems encountered in the daily lives of trago girls. Thereby this chapter discussed the third element of Butler’s notion of precarity. I have stressed that when analysing forms of precarity characterising the lives of undocumented people, respectively trago girls, one should be aware of where the migrants come from and why they decide to leave their country of residence. Indeed, in the case of the trago girls it was imperative to discuss the situation that plays out within Venezuelan borders and the dire circumstances these women are subjected to. It is important as these circumstances and their desperation to survive form the catalyst for the further existence and reproduction of precarity in other countries. As has been briefly described in chapter three – and further in chapter four – the precarious situation in Venezuela and its larger economic and political shifts open up the “playing field” to human smugglers and human traffickers. Although human smuggling is a crime, it is human trafficking that especially influences the already precarious lives of Venezuelan women working in snèks. Human traffickers utilise the already precarious existence of these women by luring them into their web and recreating precarity by putting them in the snèks on Curaçao. There these women are exploited, abused and mistreated – they have a low, irregular income (if any), they work long hours, they work six to seven days a week, there is no paid medical leave, no additional benefits –; their lives are characterised by labour precarity. Thus, concurrently to depicting the precarious lives of Venezuelan trago girls on Curaçao, this chapter has discussed the modus operandi of human trafficking schemes underlying the existence of certain snèks in which trago girls work. Besides labour precarity other forms of precarity have been identified, such as gender precarity, race/nationality precarity, legal status precarity. The existence of these forms of precarity have been described in chapter three, however, have been discussed predominantly in chapter four in relation to the political aspect allowing these forms to exist.

The second sub-question – discussed in chapter four - *How do state institutions create, enhance and influence the precarity of women engaged in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019?* aspired to illustrate how these forms of precarity are able to exist. It hereby focused on the first-mentioned element of Butler’s notion of precarity in which she emphasises the role of political actors in the creation of precarity as a politically induced condition. By discussing the lack of a just asylum procedure and the existence of the detention and deportation policy, the legal status precarity imposed on these women deepens as they are in a constant weary state due the active removal strategies. I have argued in chapter four that, although the detention and deportation is carried out by the police, there are some processes that seek to positively influence the lives of trago girls such as campaigns and counter-trafficking efforts in the form of building cases and bring traffickers to court. These efforts, however, are sometimes made more difficult due to tight communal connections resulting in police members that know the snèk owners – thus sometimes seeing stuff like abuse and exploitation through the fingers and/or possibly tipping of the snèk in times of raids. Furthermore, chapter four has briefly touched upon the tension between the Netherlands and Curaçao with regards to whom is responsible for the Venezuelan immigrants that have sought refuge on the island. As mentioned, it has been a vicious circle concerning the communication between the Netherlands and Curaçao: Curaçao has stated it cannot deal with this situation all by itself and the Netherlands continuously seems to deflect responsibility – that arguably is present on the basis of article 43 and, after its call for help in January, article 36 of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Although it is indeed true that according to the law governing admission and expulsion of people entering Curaçao the responsibility lies with the Curaçaoon authorities, it can certainly be stated that legality does not implicate (a guide for) morality. Perhaps this statement, in the case of Venezuelans escaping dire circumstances, if not fearing for their lives due to political reasons, should prevail and should drive the various motionless countries, like the Netherlands, to action.

Whereas chapter four discussed the influence of governmental policies on the precarious lives of women working in snèks, chapter five focussed on the influences of international and local aid organisations and thereby discussed the third sub-question, namely *How do non-state institutions in the form of interest groups and (international) organisations influence the precarity of women engaged in the trago business on Curaçao in 2019?* The chapter aimed to depict the efforts undertaken by local and international aid organisations. In this chapter, I have argued that both international as well as local organisation have the ability to positively influence the precarious state of trago girls. However, I argue that specifically the locally based organisation have a more direct positive effect on the precarious lives of trago girls, whereas, bigger organisations’ advocacy has a bigger chance of adjusting political policies – especially with regards to status – and therefore can create change on a bigger scale.

Regarding the epistemological and ontological standpoint of constructionism this thesis is build on, this thesis has shown how particular structures – gender, citizenship, race/nationality, labour and the intersectionality of these dimensions – create vulnerable, uncertain and unstable lives. At the same time, these structures are reproduced. It has been made clear throughout this thesis that the ability to change the

situation is limited, however, it is not impossible. Arguably through contacting specific organisations, trago girls are still able to positively influence their own lives and able to influence structures by speaking up through organisations such as Venex and the Human Rights Caribbean Foundation.

Lastly, it must be emphasised that I have argued that the Venezuelan and Curaçao governments are responsible for and involved in the continuation of the (re)production of precarity as together they create a rather nice environment for human traffickers to operate in. The government of Venezuela has created a situation in which its citizens are desperate for opportunities to change their livelihood – a thing human traffickers make use of. It is however the Curaçao government adds to the rather effortless exploitative schemes as their policies cause fear and thus leverage for the human traffickers to further exploit and oppress these women. Especially this specific point should be discussed when speaking about wanting to stop human trafficking otherwise these practices will continue.

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Appendix I – Map Regarding the Dispersion of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Venezuelan refugees & migrants in the region
 As of March 2019

R4V RESPONSE FOR VENEZUELANOS
 Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela



Source: Response for Venezuelans

Appendix II – List of Interviewees

Interview reference / Name	Research Unit	Date of Interview	Location
Jenni	Other	11 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Corey	Counter-human trafficking	23 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Edgar	Counter-human trafficking	25 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Jonathan	Counter-human trafficking	3 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Winston	Organisation	14 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Monique	Organisation		
Lara	Organisation	18 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Dirk	Organisation	12 March 2019	Alpien aan den Rijn, The Netherlands; Call
Amber	Organisation	30 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Jarce	Organisation		Willemstad, Curaçao
Carlos Rivas – real name	Organisation		Willemstad, Curaçao
Patricia	Undocumented Venezuelan – former trago girl	15 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Isabella	Undocumented Venezuelan – former trago girl	18 April 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Daniela	Undocumented Venezuelan – Translator	30 March 2019 – continuous contact	Willemstad, Curaçao
Aleksandra	Undocumented Venezuelan	7 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao- Colombia; Videocall
Marcus	Illegal cab driver	30 April 2019; 1 May 2019; 18 May 2019; 23 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Marcie	Organisation	14 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Arie		21 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Gerard	Other	24 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Roos	Organisation	14 Mei 2019; 17 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Mike	Other	10 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Charital	Counter-human trafficking	13 June 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao- Berlin, Germany; Call
Catharina	Counter-human trafficking	17 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Terrence	Counter-human trafficking	13 May 2019	Willemstad, Curaçao
Simon	Other	8 March 2019	Alpien aan den Rijn, The Netherlands

Appendix III - Example of Campaign Trago? No!



**EEN DRANKJE MET EEN
BITTERE
NASMAAK**

In verschillende horecagelegenheden op Curaçao is steeds vaker sprake van jonge buitenlandse vrouwen die aan mannelijke bezoekers vragen een drankje (un 'trago') voor hen te kopen. Zij krijgen hiervoor een kleine commissie. Achter de schermen vindt echter een duister systeem van uitbuiting en mensenhandel plaats, waar deze meisjes onbedoeld in terecht zijn gekomen en het slachtoffer van zijn geworden.

ALS U VOOR HEN EEN DRANKJE KOOPT DRAAGT U BIJ AAN HET INSTANDHOUDEN VAN DEZE PRAKTIJK. DAT IS NIET ALLEEN IMMOREEL, MAAR OOK STRAFBAAR.

**VERMIJD TRAGOMEISJES.
DOE NIET MEE AAN
UITBUITING EN MENSENHANDEL.**

Trago? NO!

Trago? No! is een campagne van het Ministerie van Justitie en het Openbaar Ministerie Curaçao.
www.tragono.com

Translation of text Right side of corner:

In various establishments on curacao there is an increasing case of young, foreign women who ask male visitors to buy them a drink (un 'trago'). They receive a small commission for this. Behind the scenes, however, a dark system of exploitation and human trafficking takes place, into which these girls have accidentally ended up and have fallen victim to it.

If you buy them a drink, you contribute to maintaining this practice. That is not only immoral, but also punishable.

Avoid tragic girls. Do not participate in human trafficking? Trago? No!

Source: <https://twitter.com/OMCarib/status/910113902800891904>

Appendix IV – Un Sueño Traicionero

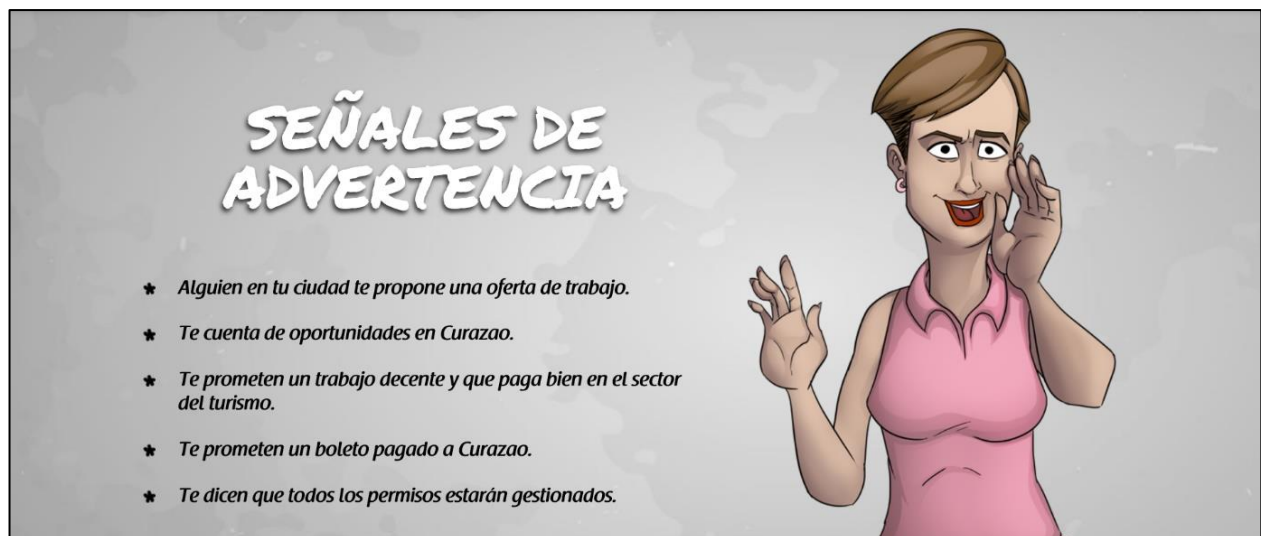


Translation:

A treacherous dream.

If you are offered a job to work in Curaçao, you are being deceived and you are submitting to illegality. You can be a victim of sexual exploitation and abuse

Source: <https://unsuenotraicionero.com/>



Translation

Warning signs

- someone in your city offers you a job offer
- Tell you about opportunities in Curaçao
- Promoted a ticket paid to Curaçao
- They tell you t ou start with one of your passages when you arrive at curacao.
- They tell you that all the permissions will be managed

Source: <https://unsuenotraicionero.com/>

Appendix V



Source: Carlos Rivas