The Dark Side of Paradise

Vulnerability, Precarity, & “Illegality” experienced by Irregular Venezuelan Migrants on Curaçao

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11 August 2023

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Word Count: 27573

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Ajay Bailey. Your patience, understanding, guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this entire process have been of immense value. Thank you for not giving up on me.

Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude for Melinda and Dorra for trusting me with your stories and connecting me to your friends and acquaintances and offering support and encouragement throughout the process. Without you this would not have been possible.

A special thanks goes out to Kayleigh Serry for accompanying me during the interviews, translating, and being an absolute joy to be around. I am also grateful to Mr. Stomp and Eileen for helping out with several interviews.

Lastly, I want to thank my family, friends, and my partner, who read my thesis, gave notes and support, and most importantly stood by me and cheered me on during this research process. It has been a long, difficult road and I could not have done it without you. *(Special thanks to Max, Mau, Tom, Romy, my dad and sister)*

Outline

Acknowledgements……………………………………………………………..……...…2

Outline………………………………………………………………………...………..3

Chapter 1. – Introduction…………………………………………………...……...5

Chapter 2. & 3. – Theory……………………………………………………...…...7

2. Irregular Migration…………………………………………………..…..7

2.1. A short History………………………………………………..……..7

2.2. Terminology……………………………………………….………..8

2.3. The role of the State……………………………………..……..9

3. The Irregular Migrant…………………………………………..………15

3.1. Vulnerability……………………………………………………...……15

3.2. Precarity…………………………………………………………………..17

3.3. Illegality…………………………………………………………………..18

3.4. Conceptualization……………………………………………....………20

Chapter 4. - Methodology…………………………………………………………22

4.1. Operationalization of the Concepts………………………………………22

4.2. Research Design & Methodology………………………………………...23

4.3. Research limitations…………………………………………. ……..28

Chapter 5. – Setting the Context…………………………………………………..30

5.1. Curaçao…………………………………………………………...…30

5.2. History – Dutch Colonial Rule & the Netherlands Antilles………………...…31

5.3. Economy…………………………………………………………....……..32

5.4. Migration in the Caribbean……………………………………………………32

5.5. The Venezuelan crisis & migration……………………………………………33

Chapter 6. - Migration crisis on Curacao…………………………………………….36

6.1. Migration crisis: Curaçao's response………………………………………..36

6.2. Treatment upon Arrival…………………………………………………...38

6.3. Detainment ………………………..…………………………………...40

6.4. Responsibilities, Asylum, & obstacles to regularization………………………45

Chapter 7. – Irregular Venezuelan migrants – Living on Curaçao…………………………..47

7.1. Housing……………………………………………………………….…..48

7.2. Employment…………………………………………………………………49

7.3. Education……………………………………………………………..……51

7.4. Healthcare…………………………………………………………………52
7.5. Safety……………………………………………………………………......53
7.6. COVID-19…………………………………………………………….......55
Chapter 8. – Local & International Aid & Civil society……………………………......58
8.1 – Civil Society…………………………………………………….….……62
Chapter 9. – Discussion…………………………………………………….……...64
Chapter 10. – Policy recommendations & NGOs…………………………..……..67
Conclusion…………………………………………………………………..…..69
Bibliography…………………………………………………………………......71
Appendix 1 – Interview guide……………………………………………...…...86

1. Introduction

The economic & political crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, characterized by the deterioration of socioeconomic, humanitarian and institutional agencies, has led an increasing number of Venezuelans to seek refuge in the surrounding countries, in order to evade famine, violence and conflict, and to gain safety and to find opportunities that could improve their chance at survival (Corrales & Hidalgo, 2017). Situated 65 kilometers north-west from Venezuela, is a Small Island Developing State that became a destination for many Venezuelans; Curaçao. It is estimated that around 17.000 Venezuelans live on Curaçao with irregular status, with the numbers expected to increase as there are no foreseeable improvements to the situation in Venezuela (Amnesty International, 2023). This increase in Venezuelan arrivals, over the last 10 years, has triggered an unwelcome reception on the already densely populated island, consisting of approximately 148.925 residents (Camilleri & Hampson, 2018). Curaçao is not a signatory to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and it does not have an effective refugee and asylum protection framework; a consequence of the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010. Additionally, the island's economy has suffered significantly from the crisis due to the loss of Venezuelan tourists, trade relationships, as well as the loss of its longstanding partnership in the oil industry (Jones, 2020). A non-existent protection procedure, a high rate of unemployment, the small size of the island, limited resources, a deteriorating economy, and a negative attitude towards displaced Venezuelans has led to a restrictive approach to migration management characterized by detainment and deportation (Amnesty International, 2018).

The absence of just and humane procedures has been widely criticized by international and local organizations as it has placed Venezuelan migrants in precarity, creating conditions that make them vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation, and death. These critiques were not limited to the government of Curaçao, but were also directed towards the Netherlands, one of the four constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Due to the tumultuous and ambiguous construction of responsibilities drafted in the Kingdom Charter, the situation awaiting those who have fled from Venezuela to Curacao is one that lacks an asylum process, protection, safety, as well as the safeguarding of human rights; a direct result of the unsettled referral of responsibilities during the decolonial process and lack of guidance through this transition (Jones, 2020). However, the Netherlands has predominantly upheld its stance that Curaçao is solely responsible for asylum and migration issues on their territory. All of this has manufactured a space in which Venezuelan migrants must resort to hiding and endure the aspects of irregularity. Their legal status in conjunction with the policies and negative attitudes towards them limit their access to social and medical services, job opportunities, adequate living conditions, and safe mobility.

In 2020, uncertainty takes a new shape as the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold and leaves the world in a state of crisis (Laborde, et al., 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Smith & Wesselbaum, 2020). This crisis affected aspects of our lives beyond health as the pandemic

and the subsequent COVID related measures had socio-economic ramifications. The impact of COVID-19 exacerbated the pre-existing inequalities among States and people (Warren & Bordoloi, 2020). The vulnerability of irregular migrants is reshaped and amplified as borders close, lockdowns and curfews are implemented, businesses shut down, unemployment increases, and national health is at risk. Curaçao, despite being considered a 'developed' country, falls under the category 'vulnerable' as well, as its economy is highly sensitive to the actions of hemispheric powers and external shocks (Jones, 2020). Although it is not the primary focus of this study, this research is conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and considers the effects it had on the vulnerabilities and precarity of irregular migrants on Curaçao.

This thesis provides an in-depth account of irregular Venezuelan migrants living on Curaçao before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and how the precariousness of their lives and their vulnerabilities are influenced by state institutions, the Kingdom & Geographical relations, non-state institutions and civil society. This objective will be realized by looking at the limitations of the state to 'control' irregular migration as well as the consequences of their migration approach on the irregular migrants. The aim is to compliment the body of literature on irregular migration specifically regarding their precarity, vulnerability and imposed "illegality". Drawing on the works of Standing (2011), Gilodi et al., (2020), and Coutin (2000), these conceptualizations will be contextualized within the sphere of Curaçao as its geographical location, sensitive economy, colonial history, and semi-autonomy mold them. The primary objective is to analyze how precarity, vulnerability, and illegality take shape by looking at the lived experiences of irregular migrants on Curaçao, and how stakeholders and circumstances have created, influenced, and enhanced them. The question that this research aims to answer is: *In what ways are precarity, vulnerability, and illegality experienced by irregular Venezuelan migrants, produced, influenced, and amplified by state institutions and non-state actors, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic?* In order to answer this question 3 sub-questions have been created. The first question: *How did the political, historical, and economic context of Curacao shape their migration policies & how did this produce and amplify the precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao?* Chapter 5 and 6 answer this question as chapter 4 is dedicated to setting the context, covering the economic, historical, and cultural factors which have influenced their current restrictive migration practices, and Chapter 6 outlines the response of the State to the migration 'crisis' and consequences of these policies on the journey of Irregular Venezuelan migrants and the manner of treatment they encounter in the context of their reception, detention and deportation experiences. Chapter 7: the living conditions & vulnerabilities, illustrates the lived experiences and dimensions of precarity, illegality, and vulnerability. Sub-question 2 *In what ways do the precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants take shape on Curaçao & what impact did COVID-19 have on them?* Will be answered in this chapter. Chapter 8 local & international aid outlines how non-state organizations and actors have helped irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao through direct aid, advocacy, and monitoring reports. This chapter aims to demonstrate the efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities, precarity, and illegality of Irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao. Sub-question 3 *How do non-state institutions, international organizations, and civil society influence the precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants?* Will be answered in this chapter.

2. Irregular Migration

This chapter covers the theories surrounding irregular migration. It will showcase the history and evolution of migration, the academic debate on the role of the State regarding its existence, and other factors that may play a part in irregular migration overall. This chapter means to demonstrate why irregular migration exists and persists. Migration is a tale as old as time for humankind. However, the nature of migration has taken many shapes over the course of history. The ease at which one moves, the borders they cross, the barriers they encounter, the rules that come with it, the perception towards those that move, the consequences and experiences, they all have changed many times over. One of the factors that had a major impact on these changes is the development of the nation-state as the main form of political organization in the sixteenth century (Echeverría 2020). From this point forward, the ease at which one moves became contingent on the national borders crossed and the laws and actors regulating them. Although there had always been measures to control the movement of unwanted populations at the local level (based on race or religion), never before had spatial movement been considered solely based on whether they had complied, or failed to comply, with a certain set of abstract regulations, particularly in the western hemisphere (Sciortino, 2013; Zolberg, 2003). Thus, commences the criminalization of movement across national borders, consequently creating illegal migrants through these restrictions. Migration in and of itself can only be made illegal through the nation-states' rulings, which often depends on multiple factors, such as which pathways were taken to get to the country, where the migrants are from, whether they have work lined up, or family residing in the country, etc. This interaction between rules and the migrant is what generates the lives of the irregular migrant. The history of irregular migration is a summation of the attempts by states to "monopolize the legitimate means of movement in order to gain control over the configuration of the population" (Torpey, 1998; Sciortino, 2013). According to Echeverría (2020), there are four phases of the evolution of irregular migration that can be distinguished, even though the interaction between control and migration varied geographically and historically.

2.1. A short history

The first phase, the period between the 1600's and the first world war, is marked by European colonialism, whereby millions of Europeans emigrated across the globe (Echeverría, 2020). Colonialism created a system of global interconnection of resources and people, as well as the pollical subordination of colonies, a system which primarily benefited Europe (Achiume, 2019). This was around the time that nation-states became the primary form of political organization, connecting territory to a type of people and nation (Torpey, 1998). This period initiated an *urge* to start controlling borders and population, but the capacity or need was not there yet. The second phase, during the interwar period, marked the ability to control borders and the population. As technological advancements and a stronger assertion with nationalism made surveillance more effective and desired, leading to a restrictive and racialized turn against migration (Ngai, 2014; Scortino, 2013). The third phase, between the end of the Second World War and the 1970's, showcases the illusion of 'migration management (Garcés-Mascareñas,

2012). It represented a time in which the capacity to control populations was increased, yet there was a high demand for labor migrants due to the loss in the workforce. This phase is also characterized by decolonization, which transformed western Europe from a Global source to a global destination of migrants, predominantly from former colonies to the former colonizing countries (Natter, 2014). The fourth period, from the 1970's to now, is characterized by clashing relations between migratory pressures and receiving states. Migration became a problem to solve, as this loss of control was perceived as a threat to the Sovereign State (Sciortino, 2000; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2012). The economic crisis of the 1970's is said to be the root of globalization and the beginning of the age of migrations (Castles & Miller, 1993). This period is marked by a vast array of economic transformations: neoliberalism was imposed, peripheral economies restructured, transnationalism materialized, communication and transportation technology advanced, and production processes shifted from local to international (McNevin, 2009; Castles & Miller, 1993). Around the 1990s irregular migration gained a great deal of attention as the so-called migration crisis commenced and irregular migration became a widespread social fact, not only for the high-income regions of the planet, but now also involving the medium and low-income ones (Zolberg & Benda, 2001). Irregular migration officially became a global, structural phenomenon (Echeverría 2020; Cvajner & Sciortino, 2010; Düvell, 2006). In the 1990's, an unlimited supply of migrants in conjunction with states upholding restrictive policies but failing to maintain control of the influx of migrants led to the title 'the migration crisis' (Castles, 2004).

2.2. Terminology

The terminology used to describe migrants varies depending on context, bias, agenda, or knowledge acquisition (Bakewel, 2020). Migration studies often classify migrants into forced and voluntary categories, distinguishing between refugees and economic migrants (King, 2009). However, the majority of human migration falls between these two extremes, as many migrants are driven to leave their home countries as a means to improve their wellbeing, without direct force (Bakewell, 2020). The term economic migrant has been used to inspire unwelcome reception, and emphasize their presence as illegal (Kaye, 2001). These migrants are also referred to as 'illegal' migrants, but this term has been heavily criticized for suggesting that the people themselves are illegal, instead of the act of migration, which has led to discrimination and abuse (Gambino, 2015; De Genova, 2002) The terms "irregular" and "undocumented" have emerged as alternatives to the previously used term "illegal" in the last few decades. The terms irregular and undocumented refer to the people who are 'unlawfully' residing on another country's territory, due to unauthorized entry, longer stay than permitted, or unauthorized employment (Pace & Severance, 2016). Although the term 'irregular migrant' has also been criticized by several scholars as being too broad, alternative terms have been proposed such as 'precarious migratory status' and 'liminal legality', or 'unauthorized' and 'clandestine' migrants, as they are more inclusive (Kubal, 2013; Goldring et al., 2009;

Menjívar, 2006; Bakewell, 2020; Düvell, 2006). Terms and categories are sometimes necessary, but it is crucial to remain critical of generalizations and simplifications while acknowledging that States have the power to classify migrants based on their own agendas (De Genova, 2002). "Irregular migrant" refers to a migrant's non-compliance with the rules set by authorities regarding entry, residency, or employment (Van der Leun, 2003). This term encompasses the interaction between political regulations and mobilities, extending beyond the specific migration flow (Sciortino, 2004). It is important to note that the boundary between 'regular' and 'irregular' migrants can often be fluid, overlapping, and dependent on specific socio-historical contexts (Baldwin-Edwards & Kraler, 2009; Echeverría, 2020; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2012).). Irregularity is a temporary condition that can change as migrants move in and out of irregular status, as States possess the power to regularize or deport them (Schrover et al., 2008; Finotelli & Sciortino, 2013).

The term "illegal migrant" not only oversimplifies and generalizes, but it also perpetuates prejudice. Such rhetoric can serve the interests of the state without being contested and contributes to a distorted reality created through "methodological nationalism" (Castles, 2010). While some scholars argue for critical examination and limited use of the term "illegal migrant" in academic works, it is essential to recognize that "illegality" is a social and political construction imposed upon migrants, representing a forced lived experience rather than an inherent characteristic of individuals (De Genova, 2004; Willen, 2007). Thus, when referring to "illegal migrants," it is not the individual but rather a phenomenon created by the state and experienced by the migrant.

A Refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951). It is a term that is "earned" based on how vulnerable they are, and can only be given by the State, if the State in question is a signatory to the convention. Venezuelan migrants do not fall under this category, they occupy a more nuanced space, they are not 'just' economic migrants. Thus, a more fitting term to describe their movement is "survival migration," is a term coined by Alexander Betts, referring to people fleeing the economic consequences of political situations rather than persecution (Betts, 2013).

2.3. The role of the State

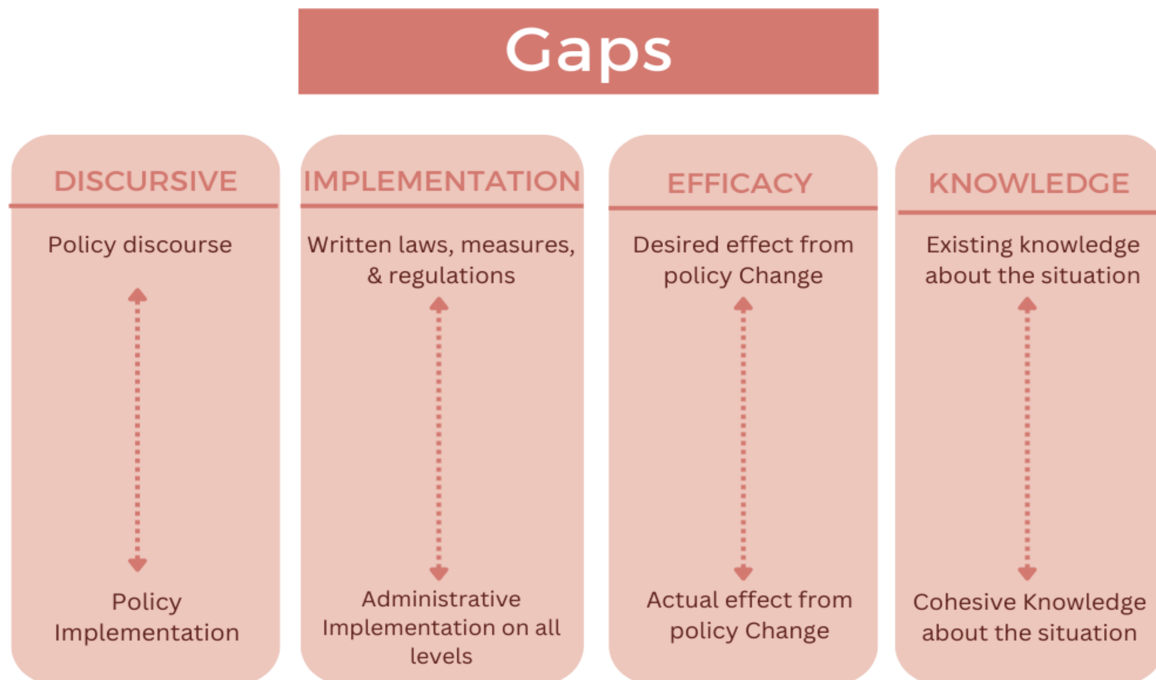
States have played a crucial role in the formation of current migration patterns, regarding destination countries, but also countries of origin. They can catalyze migration through colonialism, political repression, military occupation, war, recruitment, and forced transfer (slavetrade) (Castles et al., 2014; Vezzoli, 2014). Colonial and historical ties between states are still prevalent through the concentrated number of global migrants on a relatively low number of migration corridors (Czaika & de Haas, 2014; Vezzoli, 2015). State violence and authoritarianism does not significantly impact overall levels of emigration, despite the link between forced displacement and state violence (de Haas, 2010; Czaika & de Haas, 2012). Migration is not always a response to push and pull factors, but also a function of aspirations and capabilities. Autocratic states may put administrative obstacles in place to prevent the

emigration of their citizens, thereby inhibiting the capacity to migrate, despite an increased aspiration, or inhibiting the capacity to migrate through the legal channels and directing those eager enough to pursue unauthorized migration (De Haas, et al., 2019).

One principle of State sovereignty that has prevailed under contemporary international law is the right to exclude non-nationals, with some exceptions (Achiume, 2019). Economic and irregular migrants do not fall under these exceptions; which means that the State still has the unfettered right to exclude them. Thus, irregular migration and the illegalization of migrants who entered without the proper documents and permissions, would not exist without the laws, regulation, and control enforced by States. At first glance, the existence of irregular migration seems like a 'failure' of the State. Their goals did not align with their aspired outcomes, there was a gap, an inability to control and manage their population and borders as well as protect the legitimacy and sovereignty of the nation-state (Echeverría, 2020). Irregular migration is a problem that States are trying and unable to solve. Many scholars support this theory, but there are some that argue that irregular migration is actually a choice, either explicitly caused or tolerated by the State.

The 'gap hypothesis' suggests that states may have limited ability to fully align their policies with desired outcomes (Cornelius, et al., 2005). This gap between goals and outcomes appeared to be growing simultaneously with the increase in hostility towards immigrants (Cornelius, et al., 2005). Calling this a failure, however, suggests that States actually possess or once possessed the ability to completely align their policy with outcomes. This is a misleading notion of sovereignty, as States have historically been imperfect and variable (Joppke, 1998). Regardless, there are those who believe that States are losing a once held control over migration, with the blame placed on the rise of globalization (Cornelius, et al., 2005; Castles & Miller, 1993; Czaika & de Haas, 2011; Schinkel, 2009). Within the gap-hypothesis literature, there are numerous shapes the gap can take on besides the difference between policy goals and outcomes. Model 1 details the four gaps that could lead to the existence of irregular migration.

Model 1: Gap Hypothesis



Causes for gaps

anti- migration rhetoric implies restrictive policies follow, but the reality tends to be milder.
(Echeverría, 2020)

Organizational culture of bureaucracies & their discretionality.
Corruption, budgetary constraints, attitudes towards informality, and lack of coordination
(van der Leun, 2003; Czaika & de Haas, 2011)

Policies interact with social actors who may have other agendas and behavioural patterns.

Additionally, the effects of migration take time. short-term benefits are oversold and long-term costs are hidden.
(Freeman, 1995)

If the knowledge which preceeds policy design & implementation is inconsistent with the actual facts, the policy will be ineffective.

CHOICE

INABILITY

Migration policies are rules that States enact with the goal of impacting the volume, origin, direction, and composition of migration (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). They are usually a compromise between competing interests and actors, which is why the disclosed and actual goals are often contradictory (Czaika & de Haas, 2013). Al though it appears that migration policies have become more restrictive, thereby suggesting that States have been ineffective in controlling migration, migration policies have actually become more liberal since the 1990's overall (de Haas et al., 2018). This phenomenon suggests that there might be a significant discursive gap between rhetoric and actual policies enforced (Freeman, 1995; de Haas, et al., 2019).

2.3.1. State inability

The efficacy and knowledge gap refer to the inability to control irregular migration despite genuine desire to stop it. These gaps are the result of the intrinsic limitations of the state, the external factors and pressures on the State, and the factors and processes within State territories.

Table 1: Factors inhibiting State's ability to control irregular migration

Intrinsic Limitations	External factors & Pressures	Internal Factors & Pressures
Misunderstanding migration mechanisms and a Miscalculations of a country's ability to influence them (Garces-Mascareñas, 2012)	Globalization: intensifying global social relations, connecting distant localities in such a way that they impact local reality and vice versa. (Giddens, 1990)	the growth of the informal sector, and the service dominated economic complex & decline of manufacturing-dominated industrial complex (Sassen, 1998)
Result of faulty knowledge production & Policy design (van der Leun, 2003; Scott, 1998)	Economically: intensifying push-pull factors, deregularization & informalization of sectors, delocalization of industries, &decline of unionized labour. (van der Leun, 2003; Castles & Miller, 1993)	Ecology of illegal residence: types of support offered to migrants despite the written laws. Offered by actors in their field of work, volunteerwork, or criminals (Duvel, 2011; van der Leun, 2003)
limited anticipatory abilities, administrative loopholes, unintended consequences, administrative inefficiency, competency issues, budgetary restrictions, and corruption	Politcally & Socially: human rights regimes & international institutions decrease the State's control on migration. Social capital & networks have improved due to transportation & communication innovation (Lopez Sala, 2005; Castles, 2004; Miller, 1993; Sassen, 1998)	Agency & resillience of migrants inhibit the State. They strategize to overcome policy barriers and avoid state controls. Some actively choose irregularity as it offers more economic opportunities & flexibility. (Epenshade, 1995; van der Leun, 2003; Garces-Mascareñas, 2012)

2.3.2. State Choice

The implementation and discursive gaps are the result of the State's choice to allow irregular migration to take place. (Brochmann & Hammar, 1999). This can be explicit or reluctant. The first considers the State as an entity that *creates* and perpetuates the possibility for irregular migration to exist as the State benefits from its presence. The second sees irregular migration as a by-product of modern state functioning, where States *tolerate* it. There are three identified ways and reasons for States to tolerate or produce irregular migration.

Table 2: Motivations for the State to allow irregular migration to take place

State Sovereignty	Governmentality Techniques	Self-restraint
Soveriegn power is validated through the bestowel and denial of legal personhood. (Agamben, 1998; Schmitt, 2008)	Techniques which create a system of self-imposed social order (Foucault, 1979)	Toleration of migrants is self-imposed to the rise of rights-based politics
The exclusion of the migrant from social benefits is what validates the existence and power of the citizen. (Coutin, 2005; Agamben, 1998)	Migrants are subjected to a system of dams: categorizations, selection processes, and surveillance which incites self-discipline and fear (Chavez, 2007)	States balance the tension between the need for cheap & exploitable labor provided by migrant workers and anxieties from the local population surrounding competition (De Genova, 2002; Sassen, 1996)
Their presence and seperation of irregular migrants serves as a tool for Sovereign power.	The goal is not complete exclusion, but to make the path to inclusion more strenuous. This keeps them vulnerable and exploitable (Chauvin & Garces-Mascareñas, 2012)	The policies & discourse may not allign with actual management of migration. The State balances the needs of workers and employers through this contradiction (Castles, 2004)

2.3.3. (Unintended) Consequences of restriction

Measuring effectiveness of migration policies and implementation is nearly impossible, as undocumented migrants are exactly that: not documented, and thus not easily and accurately measured. Additionally, countless factors could be interfering with the process of migration management. For example, From the 1980's onwards, the US border control was intensified, and around 2008, Mexican immigration to the US decreased. The notion that this was the result of effective and increased border management was disputed as other factors were at play here as well. There was a decrease in US labor demand due to the 2008 economic crisis, the economic conditions in Mexico improved, and Mexico's population growth slowed down (Villareal, 2011). This example suggests that policy effectiveness can only be measured when the context and interactive factors are considered, and even then, it is hard to collect data comprehensively as irregular migrants are forced into hiding. Expanding on the example of the

Mexico-US migration corridor, it can illustrate how restrictive migration policies can have counterproductive and harmful consequences (Cornelius & Salehyan, 2007). Through border enforcements, unauthorized migrants were redirected to hazardous routes, and relying on smugglers, thereby increasing migrant mortality (Cornelius, 2005). Stricter border controls actually increased unauthorized migration as it discouraged many who were already in the US from returning to Mexico. The main effect of border enforcement and restrictive policies is a decrease in migrant circularity (Massey, et al., 2015). Restrictive policies lead to a similar result regarding asylum seeking migration, an increase in short stay visa rejections for asylum seekers led to an increase in unauthorized border entries in European countries (Czaika & Hobolth, 2016). The restrictive policies and asylum rejections lead many asylum seekers to resort to irregularity (Standing, 2011). Advocates of reform point to the benefits of legalizing undocumented migrants, as it would increase tax revenue, end abuse and exploitation of undocumented migrants, and increase the wages of everyone and boost economic growth (Standing, 2011).

These theories showcase that irregular migration can take place at the hands of the State: due to their inability to control them, or their choice to allow their presence. Over the last decades, a growing concern over security issues, including terrorism and crime, has shaped restrictive migration rhetoric, policies, and the priorities of States (Miller and Baumeister, 2013). However, as discussed above, the words, the policies, the laws, and the implementation concerning immigration control do not always match intention nor outcome. Whether intended or not, overall, restrictive policies and attitudes create vulnerabilities due to their separation from citizenship (De Genova & Peutz, 2010). The next chapter will illustrate the theories regarding the lived experiences of irregular migrants as a result of these anti-migration practices.

3. The Irregular Migrant

This chapter provides an overview of the theories on the experiences of the irregular migrant, highlighting the common patterns that emerge. Although irregular migrants share common traits and experiences, there will always be individual and contextual differences. This chapter will discuss the academic debate surrounding three theories associated with irregular migration: precarity, vulnerability, and illegality. This chapter will utilize Standing's (2011) conceptualization of precarity and expand on his definition through the dimension of legal precarity (Goldring, et al., 2009). Additionally, the work of Gilodi, Albert, & Nienaber (2022) will be utilized to outline the understandings of vulnerability and how they relate to the experiences of the irregular migrant. The formulation and discernment of "illegality" will be explained through the works of Scholars like Coutin (2000) and De Genova (2002). These concepts will be explored in the context of irregular migration, with a key focus on legal status and its implications.

3.1. Vulnerability

Vulnerability is a prominent concept in academic literature, policymaking, and migration discourse (Flegar, 2018). However, there is a lack of clear conceptual understanding and usage of the term (Turner, 2021). Some scholars argue for distinguishing vulnerability from precariousness, because much of the vulnerability of migrants is the result of policy and systems and does not represent themselves as individuals (La Spina, 2021). Others emphasize the risk of portraying migrants as helpless victims or using labels and stereotypes (Freedman, 2019; Sajjad, 2018). Legal definitions of migrant vulnerability often categorize migrants into distinct groups based on perceived degrees of vulnerability, leading to different legal statuses and associated privileges and restrictions (La Spina, 2021).

Across disciplines there are various definitions of vulnerability, the most common conceptualizations relate to risk, capacity, autonomy, and dependency. It refers to a *higher susceptibility* to discriminatory practices, violence, social disadvantage, or economic hardship than other people within the State (IOM, 2019). Additionally, vulnerability is often associated with *limited capacity* to respond to or withstand and recover from external stressors, stemming from the unique relationship between individual, household, community, and structural characteristics and conditions, (IOM, 2019; Gallopín 2006; Paul, 2014). However, this definition has received criticism for shifting the focus and blame onto the supposed limited capacity of those facing harm, potentially leading to stigmatization and marginalization (Gilodi, Albert, & Nienaber, 2022; Brown et al., 2017). Instead, attention should be directed towards identifying and addressing the factors that cause these limitations, avoiding insinuations of personal fault. By redistributing blame to external factors, actions can be taken to alleviate these limitations. Moreover, vulnerability can also entail *a reduced level of autonomy* and *increased dependency*. Through the application of a feminist lens, this definition reflects the masculine ideologies surrounding individuality in western society, implying invulnerability and independence (Cole, 2016). A distinction is made between the helpless and vulnerable, those who are dependent and require protection, and the capable and invulnerable,

those who can participate in society (Peroni & Timmer, 2013. Although this definition can be true, it can be misconstrued as inherent rather than, once again, inflicted. The application of this definition as a frame for migrants can insinuate that the members of society are not vulnerable or dependent (Butler, 2016).

There are various conceptualizations of vulnerability, including innate, situational, structural, and experiential (Gilodi, Albert, & Nienaber, 2022).. *Innate vulnerability* refers to 'natural' characteristics such as gender, disability, age, sexuality, and race that place individuals at a higher permanent risk (Virokannas et al, 2020). *Situational vulnerability* relates to personal, political, economic, and environmental factors that expose individuals to risks which are continuously changing and interacting (Mackenzie et al., 2014). *Structural vulnerability* recognizes the interplay of social, institutional, legal, economic, and ecological phenoma that create situational conditions of vulnerability and focuses on the structural violence they are exposed to such as, systems of oppression, inequality, and exploitation embedded in societal institutions (Brown et al., 2017; Virokannas et al., 2020). *Experiential vulnerability* highlights individual processes of adaptation, agency, and the unique interpretation of vulnerable experiences (Gilodi, Albert, & Nienaber, 2022). The term violence within this thesis refers to threatened or actual physical force or power which may result in injury, death, psychological harm or maldevelopment, but threatened as well (World Health Organisation, 2002).

3.1.2. Vulnerability Assessment

In the last decades, international humanitarian organizations and national governments have developed tools to distinguish "vulnerable" people, in particular in the context of refugees' reception, such as the Vulnerability Assessment Framework and the Vulnerability Screening Tool (Sözer, 2020). These tools have made vulnerability a bureaucratic category used to assess who is "vulnerable enough" to receive refugee status and the privileges that might come with it (UNHCR, n.d.). Their reason for leaving is a defining determinant in the assessment of their vulnerability; those who were forced to leave can undergo the asylum procedure and receive refugee status, thereby enjoying protections and rights, including not being sent back to their country of origin under the 'principle of non-refoulement' (La Spina, 2021; Sözer, 2020). Those who are perceived as voluntary migrants have "weak" reasons for leaving, their protection is not a legal obligation for states, and they are considered not "vulnerable enough" for refugee status. But vulnerability is a fluid, interactive, and complex phenomenon. Law, policy, and judicial practice are based on a predetermined dichotomous categorization of the migrant population; refugees/ and migrants (Collyer & de Haas, 2012). This dichotomy results in protection logic being applied for asylum seekers and refugees and management logic for undocumented and irregular migrants (La Spina, 2021). The very act of deeming them 'not vulnerable enough' may expose them to enhanced situational and structural vulnerabilities within the host country.

The use of the term 'vulnerability' within policy documents, discourse, and academic works has been criticized by scholars, not only for its tendencies to limit the definition to innate qualities, but for the detrimental (un)intended consequences these understandings of

vulnerability may bring. Labeling a group of people or an individual as vulnerable can create stigma, disempower them, be exclusionary, generalize, and can be used as a tool for social control (Sözer, 2020; Brown, 2017). Narratives of care, protection, and hospitality as a reaction to the dependent, incapable vulnerable group, implies that humanitarian aid is the only reasonable response, which creates a dependency and social control (Grove & Zwi, 2006).

3.2. Precarity

The term precarity started to gain traction in academia in the beginning of the twenty-first century, as a response to a growing uncertainty, unemployment rate and flexible exploitation in Europe (Kasmir, 2018). It describes the shift from previously guaranteed permanent employment conditions into overall worse paid, uncertain work because of neoliberalism (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). Within the realm of neoliberal criticism, Standing (2011) introduces precarity through a place called the 'precariat'; a place in which people reside who are straddled by uncertainty, insecurity, humiliation, and social control. He characterizes the precariat through three distinct factors: (1) they are placed in a live marked by unstable labour and living; (2) they are dependent on money wages and do not have access to other benefits and are in essence one disease away from crippling debt (paid medical leave, retirement, etc.); (3) they are systematically stripped from political, social, civil, and cultural rights. International migrants are denizens, as opposed to citizens, consisting of different groups having different rights than others. Undocumented migrants have (limited civil rights but) no economic or political rights. Precarity is a politically and structurally imposed condition that invokes insecurity, increases vulnerability and exposure to violence, and limits access to social and economic networks of support (During, 2015). "It is a life without the promise of stability" (Tsing, 2015: 2).

Legal precarity is constructed by state policies, practices, and regulations (Bloch et al., 2014; Goldring et al, 2009). For migrants, living in legal precarity means being vulnerable to deportation, state violence, discrimination, isolation and the exclusion from public services and basic protections (Ellerman, 2020). One key aspect of legal precarity and irregular migration encompasses the types of situational and existential waiting, including everyday instances of "chronic waiting" for public services and uncertain periods of waiting for regularization, justice, and uncertain futures (Dwyer, 2009; Jacobsen, et al., 2021). The escalation and accumulation of precarity can lead to the proliferation of existential stuckness (Hage, 2009). Legal precarity places constraints on job opportunities, mobility, support, housing, food, social networks, access to health care, and social welfare (Bloch et al., 2014). Regarding work, irregular migrants face numerous challenges in securing safe and stable employment. The work they do find usually involves low wages, a lack of benefits and limited workplace protections (Wyss, 2019). Social relationships are difficult to establish due to the fear of negative consequences. This isolation leaves them with limited support systems and fewer social, cultural, and financial opportunities (Bloch, et al., 2014). The support groups that are available usually prioritize refugees and asylum seekers, leaving irregular migrants with fewer resources (Bloch et al., 2014). Although healthcare is considered a human right, irregular migrants often face significant barriers in obtaining healthcare for their physical and mental wellbeing (Campbell et al., 2012). Additionally, the securitization and criminalization of migrants have

intensified restrictive and carceral border regimes, increasing precarity for migrants (Henry, 2018). These regimes, as discussed in chapter 2, prevent the security of residence not migration, enabling the threat of deportation and detention, and causing psychological harm through re-traumatization effects (Henry, 2018). The systems of power and oppression create various forms of precarity for some people more than others. Irregular migrants are exposed to multiple forms of precarity simultaneously, in this case some scholars speak of hyper-precarity (Lewis et al., 2015).

3.3. Illegality

This thesis primarily focusses on the situational and structural vulnerabilities experienced by migrants. An expansion on the understandings of situational & structural vulnerability is the notion of "illegality" coined by Susan Bibler Coutin (2000). The illegalization of certain migratory movements, is influenced by the State's inability to control, tolerance, or active production of irregular migration (Chapter 2). Despite the intentions of the State, citizenship and legal personhood, bestowed or denied by the State, has tangible consequences. This denial of legal rights, social services, and full personhood, coupled with the constant risk of deportation and detainment, situates them in a social realm of illegality characterized by invisibility, exclusion, subjugation, and repression (Coutin, 2000; Sassen, 1988). This status exposes them to various hardships such as hunger, exploitation, unemployment, homelessness, violence, and even death (Coutin, 2000; De Genova, 2002). Illegalization is a part of vulnerabilization specific to the irregular migrant's experience.

According to Coutin (2000), comparisons can be drawn between systems addressing criminality and irregular migration. Both penal practices and migration management prioritize risk management, seclusion, and punishment over rehabilitation and reform. Criminality and illegality are treated as inherent conditions of individuals rather than specific acts, becoming integral facets of their identity (Schinkel, 2002). Similar to prisoners, irregular immigrants are denied access to social rights and benefits and are often secluded in detention centers or prisons (Malkki, 1992). The criminalization of irregular migration places them outside of society, within a domain of illegality (Coutin, 2000). Law enforcement strategies and the pervasive requirement for identity documentation across all aspects of life contribute to the marginalization of "undocumented" migrants, pushing them into the shadows or the underground economy where labor laws are frequently violated (Sassen, 1989; Harwood, 1986).The mere existence of legal prohibition of anything creates around it a field of illegal practices, such as purchasing fake ID cards, or not being able to pay taxes because their income is not reported, driving without a license, smuggling relatives in because they cannot petition for them, and performing unauthorized work (Foucault, 1979; Coutin, 2000). This implies there might be some truth to the resemblance of criminals and irregular migrants, as the illegalization of their existence alone makes it impossible to act within the realm of legality. Living in this liminal space, irregular migrants must put themselves at risk to protect themselves. They settle for jobs and housing that violate health codes and labor laws while lacking access to social support and medical insurance (Coutin, 2000). Illegality is not just a status, but a process and experience shaped by political decisions made by those in power (Ngai, 2004). Receiving

States desire immigrant workers but often resist integrating them into society, leading to simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion that contribute to their liminal status (Chavez, 2007). Central to illegality is the possibility of deportation, making legality spatialized and socialized (De Genova, 2002). Irregular migrants physically exist within the territory but are socially excluded, stripped of their rights, restricted in mobility, and erased in terms of personhood (Coutin, 2000).

It is crucial to understand "illegality" as a process imposed upon irregular migrants rather than a defining characteristic of a specific group (Coutin, 2000). Dimensions of migrant "illegality" include : (1) “the delimitation of reality to what can be officially documented”: Migrants' existence and reality are limited to what can be officially documented. Without proper papers, they become invisible or are deemed nonexistent (De Genova, 2002). (2) “The temporalization of presence”: Immigration laws often require proof of a specific period of presence in the country to qualify for legal status. However, undocumented migrants, who often lack official pathways and documents, find it challenging to accumulate the necessary documentation and evidence. (3) “The nullification of legal kinship ties”: Immigration policies often disregard the legal legitimacy of family ties (Heyman, 1991). (4) “Enforced clandestinity”: mundane activities such as work, transportation, healthcare, or even schooling for their children become illicit or illegal acts for undocumented migrants (Chavez, 1992). (5) Restricted physical and social mobility: paradoxically, the initial mobility of undocumented migration leads to restricted freedom of movement (Coutin, 2000). (6) “The revocability of future promises”: due to the continuous fear of deportation, they are prevented from making long-term plans (De Genova, 2002).

Illegality confines irregular migrants to a space of forced invisibility, subjugation, exclusion, and repression, where migratory control is performed through arrests, detentions, and deportations (Coutin, 2000; Garces-Mascareñas, 2010). This performance extends into all aspects of their lives, facilitating social control and exploitation by employers who benefit from their vulnerability and lack of rights. Other actors, such as employers, benefit from the instilled fear, as their vulnerability makes them exploitable and docile. ‘Illegal’ workers can be made to “work hard and scared” (Jenkins, 1978).

Factors exacerbating vulnerability & precarity

As discussed in Chapter 2, internal and external pressures can influence the ability for a State to control irregular migration. Similarly, internal and external phenomena can amplify the vulnerabilities of the irregular migrant. The degree of vulnerability is always associated with the context in which the irregular migrant finds themselves. A country’s history of racism or xenophobia will be embedded in their social structures and impact the lives of specific groups of migrants. Both universal and country-specific histories shape our approach to migration, but contemporary events also play a significant role. Phenomena such as economic recessions, terrorist attacks, wars, and global pandemics influence how states address immigration and have consequences for irregular migrants. While these events can create situational vulnerabilities affecting people at large, the disproportionate impact on minorities, particularly irregular migrants and asylum seekers, arises from structural vulnerabilities.

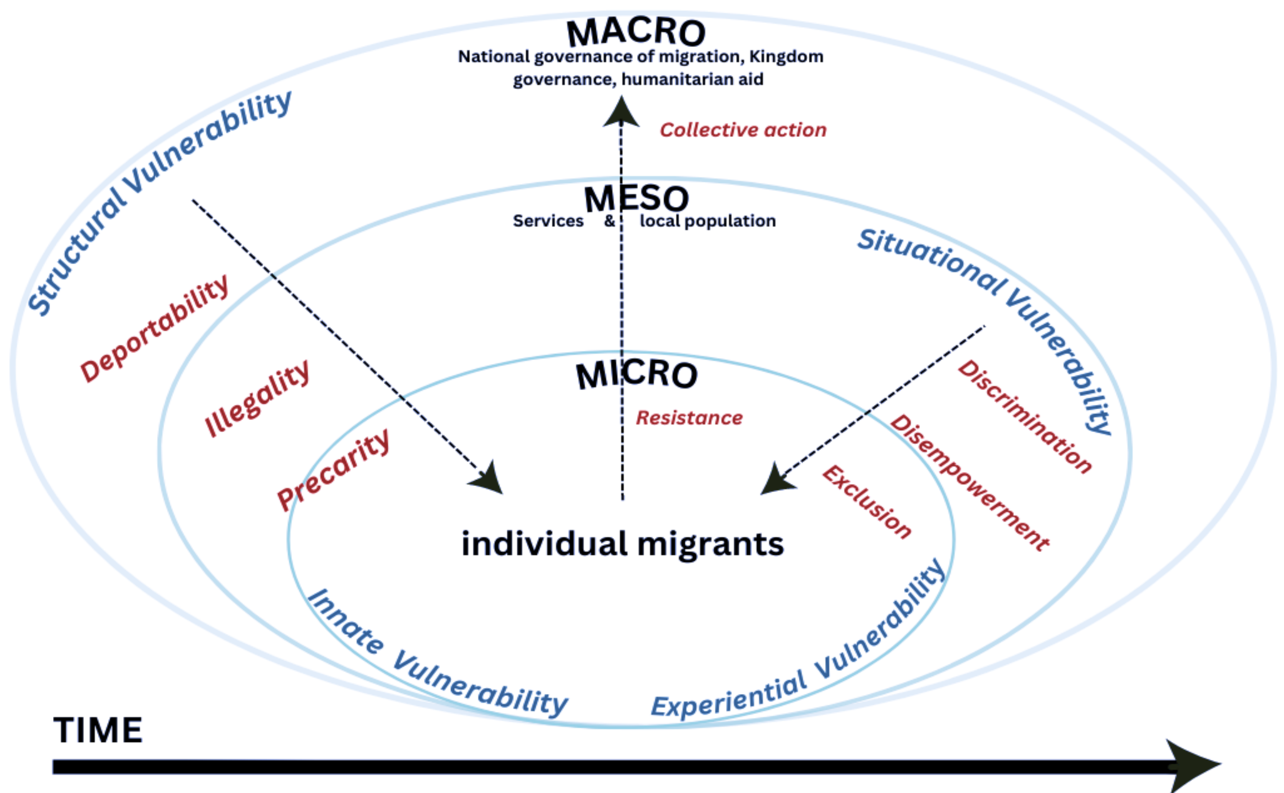
The COVID-19 pandemic provides a striking example of a phenomenon with far-reaching impacts. Since the global spread of the virus in early 2020, it has affected individuals worldwide. With over 600 million reported infections and nearly 7 million deaths at the time of writing (WHO, 2023), the pandemic disrupted every aspect of life, with overwhelmed hospitals, slowed or halted manufacturing, closed borders, implemented lockdowns, job losses, and transitions to remote work. However, much like other events, the pandemic has disproportionately affected the already vulnerable groups, particularly irregular migrants (Abid et al., 2020). Emerging evidence suggests that the pandemic has exacerbated preexisting health, social, and economic inequalities between refugees, asylum-seekers, irregular migrants, and the general population (Mengesha, et al., 2020). Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees faced serious economic hardship due to disproportionate job loss, lack of support and limited access to relief (Mengesha, et al., 2020). Additionally, linguistically appropriate pandemic information and effective communication have been limited for migrants, hindering successful public health control efforts (Mengesha et al., 2020). Volunteer and public services have also been reduced during the pandemic due to government restrictions (Mengesha et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated that those without legal status and asylum seekers experience greater health and social inequalities compared to officially resettled refugees (Mengesha et al., 2020). Public policies implemented in response to the pandemic often overlooked the needs of community-based asylum seekers and irregular migrants, leading to their invisibility in health policies and hindering access to vaccines (Mengesha et al., 2020). Katikireddi and colleagues developed a framework encompassing the inequalities witnessed during the pandemic (Katikireddi et al., 2021). This framework addresses differential vulnerability to infection, increased exposure, differentiated disease consequences, higher social consequences, effectiveness of control measures, and adverse consequences of control measures (Katikireddi et al., 2021).To summarize, the events itself, the reactionary adapted measures, and structural neglect and discrimination, tend to worsen the already precarious conditions of the irregular migrant. The events themselves and the reactionary measures highlight pre-existing inequalities and exacerbate them. It can be deduced that irregular migration in itself may not be created, but the precarity, vulnerabilities, and illegality that irregular migrants face and or inadequately protected from, are structurally imposed.

3.4. Conceptualization

In this thesis, the focus lies on how precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants are manifested on Curaçao and influenced by the actions and policies of organisations, civil society, and the government.The conceptual model of this thesis utilizes Gilodi, Albert, & Nienaber's model of vulnerability in the context of migration (2022) and is adapted to incorporate concepts such as illegality and precarity. This model is based on the notion that vulnerability illegality, precarity are multi-layered and dynamic concepts. The proposed model highlights three interconnected levels: macro, meso, and individual. At the macro level, international and national migration governance, humanitarian organizations, and national systems can create legal precarity and structural vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect migrants through illegalization (Quesada et al., 2011). These structural inequalities are perpetuated at the meso level through local institutions and interpersonal relationships,

resulting in situational vulnerabilities. “Vulnerabilzation” occurs across the levels, as legal systems are implemented in local institutions such as health services, police stations, and employment agencies, which directly affect migrant’s lives (Heidbrink, 2020; Gilodi, et al., 2020). At the meso level bureaucratic vulnerabilization occurs through discriminating, disempowering, and excluding those in need of support. At the micro level, personal characteristics, experiences, and aspirations shape how vulnerability is experienced and processed (Gamsakhurdia, 2019). Accounting for temporality permits the inclusion of the different definitions of vulnerability and expands the interpretation of vulnerability to the increased risk of negative experiences in the future. Overall, everyone has experienced vulnerability and precarity at one point in their life, during which they became less autonomous and more dependent on others. Each individual experience of vulnerability and precarity is always placed in a specific time, context, and life phase, and it is the product of interconnected structural, situational, social, personal, and psychological characteristics (Gilodi, Albert & Nienaber, 2020).

Model 2: Conceptual Model of vulnerability, precarity, & illegality



Adapted from the conceptual model of vulnerability in the context of migration from Gilodi et al., 2020

4. Methodology

The qualitative research has been conducted in Curaçao over the course of a year, from May 2021 until April 2022. Following this time period, the analysis of reports, policy documents and other developments have been incorporated within the research. In this chapter the operationalization of the concepts and the research design, methodologies, limitations and reflectionswill be discussed.

4.1. Operationalization of the concepts

The concepts which have been used in this research are operationalized based on definitions and explanations from the literature (in Chapter 2 & 3) in addition to the use within the context.

Table 3: terminology, definitions & operationalization

Term	definition	Operationalization
Irregular migrant	Most neutral term. Referring to the fact that the pathway towards the destination or the period & manner of stay are irregular/ unauthorized (Pace & Severance, 2016).	arriving by boat instead of plane & arriving through regular pathway but overstaying visa.
Vulnerability	*Higher susceptibility* to discriminatory practices, violence, social disadvantage, economic hardship. *Limited capacity* to respond to, recover from, or withstand external stressors. *Reduced autonomy* & increased dependency (Gilodi, et al., 2020).	Identifying 4 types: inherent, situational, structural, and experiential. Focus within this research is on situational & structural looking at: their journey, dangers back home, the treatment they faced, their living conditions & psychological impact of these experiences.
Precarity	A politically & structurally imposed condition that invokes insecurity, increases vulnerability & exposure to violence & limits access to social & economic networks of support (During, 2015). Caused by lack of legal status in conjunction with policies & attitudes towards their presence.	Specifically looking at precarity in relation to legal status.
Illegality	The denial of legal rights, social services and full personhood coupled with the constant risk of deportation & detainment situates them in illegality characterized by invisibility, exclusion, subjugation & repression (Coutin, 2000; de Genova, 2002)	By looking at the ways in which the government illegalizes their presence & existence, by inhibiting the option to legalize, and the consequences of it.
Living conditions	All aspects of life that are precarious due to their legal status/ illegality (de Bruijn, 2009)	Access to adequate: Employment, Safety, Housing, public social services (Health &

	Obstacles regarding accessibility to social services, economic networks of support & basic necessities renders them vulnerable.	Education) Food & other necessities

Their living conditions include several dimensions which are: housing, financial constraints, healthcare, education, and safety. Using the capability approach this research also considers the resilience, freedom of choice, and coping strategies of the irregular migrants, as well as the role that NGO's and civil society has played countering the anti-migration rhetoric and practices, as well as the evolution of the migration management of Curaçao over the last couple of years and the effects that COVID-19 has had.

4.2. Research design and methodology

The study is based on a broad qualitative research approach, incorporating a variety of empirical materials such as case studies, personal experiences, interviews, reports, policies, historical, interactional, and visual texts, that outline moments and meanings in people's lives (Patton, 2002; Trumbull, 2005). A broad qualitative research approach focus is bottom-up, aspiring to illustrate multiple realities intersecting in order to comprehend human perspectives and every day life (Trumbull, 2005). The research has been conducted over a long period, including many overlapping phases. The phases are categorized by numbers but should not imply a chronological order relating to time. The first phase primarily entailed collecting as much information as possible as well as finding the target groups. The following phase entailed the attempts to make contact with the relevant institutions. The third phase was focused on interviews; the first interview conducted was in May of 2021 with a midwife and the founder of SANA (an organization concerned with helping the poor get access to food, clothes, furniture, etc. This was during a time in the Pandemic that the social impact could be experienced widely. The last interview was conducted almost a year later with an irregular migrant, when things started opening up again and people were starting to feel "back to normal again.". The fourth phase entailed collecting information from the monitoring reports made by international and local institutions, developments in policies and practices, a documentary, and the analysis of news articles over the past couple of years.

4.2.1. Phase 1: exploratory research

The first few weeks of field research consisted of discovering the infrastructure; institutions and people, involved with Venezuelan irregular migrants. During the lockdown my movement was restricted thus I had to start by sending emails to NGO's mentioned in news articles and talking to people my family from Curaçao might know. Through word of mouth, I managed to find people who had founded NGO's who then later referred me to people who specifically helped Venezuelan migrants during the pandemic, who in turn led me to Melinda Lourens from the IOM. Through Melinda, I could finally start talking to undocumented migrants who had sought help from the IOM at some point in time.

4.2.2. Phase 2: Governmental and non-governmental institutions

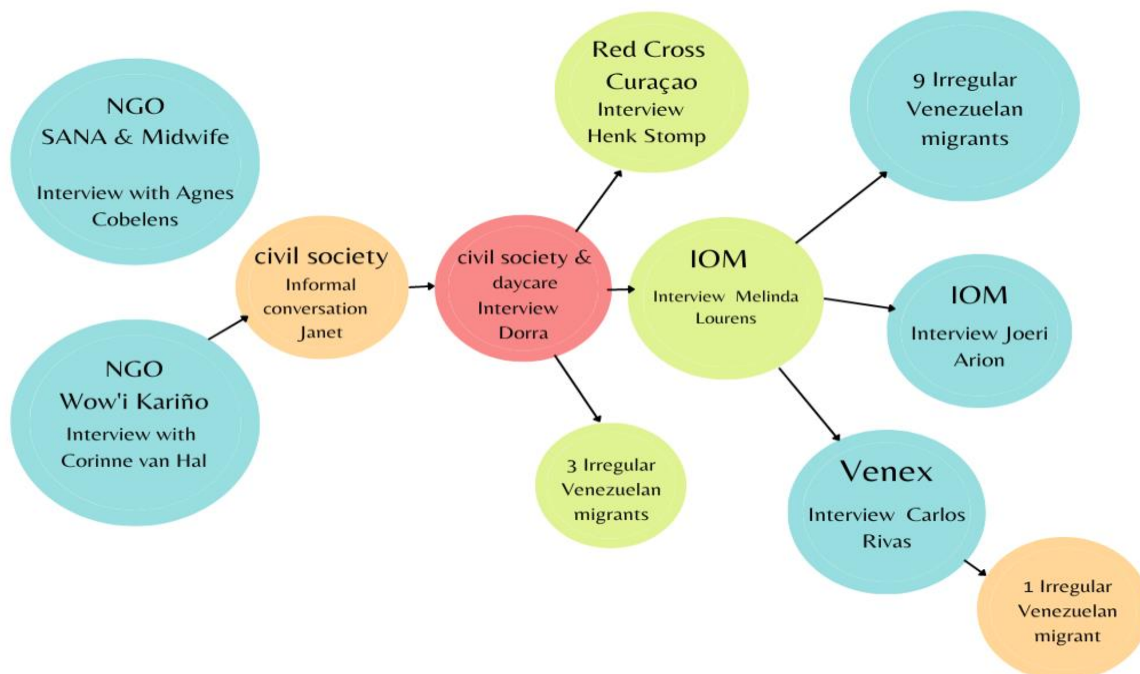
The second phase consisted of the collection of primary and secondary data from governmental and non-governmental institutions involved with the Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao. The

goal of this phase was to attain the thematic & geographic data relevant to the analysis of the context. During the exploratory phase I comprised a list of relevant institutions. Several attempts were made to talk to institutions such as amnesty international, human rights defense Caribbean, and ministers as well as police officers on Curaçao, but they did not always lead to a response. Below I have created an overview of all the institutions approached and the results of the meetings.

4.2.2.1. Primary data collection and analysis

The goal of this research phase was to collect primary data through interviews with as many experts on the research topic as possible. However, this proved to be much more difficult than expected. Many institutions or representatives of institutions were unresponsive, and the COVID-19 pandemic constrained accessibility. No interviews were conducted with governmental representatives, but several were with members of non-governmental institutions as well as other informants associated with irregular Venezuelan migrants. Contacting the relevant people occurred as a snowball-effect, starting with acquaintances who are founders of NGO's dedicated to helping vulnerable people, who referred me to people more directly involved with Venezuelan migrants and so on. The graph below stipulates the path of connections and interviews.

Model 3: visualization of connections & interviews



4.2.2.2. Secondary data collection and analysis

Gathering the secondary data was less strenuous than getting interviews, however much of the data concerning Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao is not accessible, specifically referring to numbers and statistics. Nonetheless, a wide array of secondary data was collected such as: research reports, monitoring reports, policy and legal documents, and constitutions. Most of these were accessed from the internet, a few were sent over upon request. Additionally,

newspaper articles as well as the documentary “RAUW Curaçao” based on the pandemic on Curaçao were used to understand the developments on the island and contextualize the research topic, the analysis of the documentary can be found in the appendix (Francisco & Schaap, 2020).

The primary and secondary data collected in phase 2 were used for the geographic & thematic context of the research. They helped distinguish the centralized themes and were analyzed and incorporated in chapter 5, 6, and 7. The contextual chapter is founded on news articles, academic literature, and the data collected from phase 2.

4.2.3. Phase 3: Data collection among undocumented Venezuelan migrants

4.2.3.1. Identification of the target group

This phase focused on identifying the target group and conducting interviews with the irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao. The target group was identified based on the exploratory phase & connections made during the second phase. As was displayed in model 5, I was able to connect with most of the Venezuelan migrants through Dorra from the daycare *Guarderia Gael* & Melinda Lourens from the IOM. At the Daycare, Dorra arranged for three of the mothers of the children at the daycare to talk with me and her husband Mr. Stomp helped translate. Melinda helped arrange interviews with 9 Venezuelan migrants and Through Carlos from Venex I met up with 1 other Venezuelan migrant. Due to the precarious and vulnerable condition of irregular Venezuelan migrants on the island it was not easy to find people who would be willing to talk. A selection was thus not made based on specific criteria, but through the snowball effect, as it is an effective tool when you need to access the more hidden populations (Noy, 2008) Through discussions with the connections made in phase 2, certain selections were made: people who encountered many obstacles but also found help in many places. Three of the interviews took place at Dorra & her husbands’ home, attached to the daycare. Nine of the interviews took place at the clothes donation shop of the IOM with Melinda present. One of the interviews took place at a café. The choice of location was based on accessibility and providing a sense of familiarity and safety to the respondents, on two occasions I visited their house accompanied by Melinda Lourens and a translator. The age of the respondents ranges between 26 and 43, 11 out of the 13 respondents were female, all but one of the respondents had children, some of which were spoken to informally as well. The names of the respondents are replaced by fictive ones in the table below, as well as in the following chapters, in order to protect their privacy and safety.

Table 4: Overview of Irregular Migrants from Venezuela and their characteristics

Name	Sex	Length of Stay	Age	Children	Marital Status	Legal Status
Joanna	Female	4 years	42	2	Married	Irregular
Diana	Female	6 years	32	3	Divorced	Irregular
Roberto	Male	4 years	41	2	Married	Irregular
Carolina	Female	6 years	33	4	Separated	Irregular
Kiara	Female	3 years	29	4	Separated	Irregular
Jenna	Female	3 years	38	3	Married	Irregular
Silvia	Female	6 years	36	8	Married	Irregular
Anna	Female	7 years	43	2	Married	Refugee
Andres	Male	6 years	42	1	Married	Irregular
Rosaura	Female	5 years	35	1	Widow	Irregular
Malvares	Female	2 years	28	2	Married	Irregular
Aria	Female	5 years	26	0	Unmarried	Irregular
Maria	Female	5 years	31	2	Married	Irregular

4.2.3.2.Sampling methods

To select the respondents, snowballing sampling was utilized as a sampling method (Patton, 1990). Given the anxiety and distrust of migrants towards a stranger as well as language barriers, the respondents were approached by Dorra & Melinda; people they could trust. This stimulated their willingness to participate. The locations also stimulated finding other respondents as both were a hub to which many Venezuelan migrants flocked. Here several people approached us while conducting the interview and asked if they could tell their story.

4.2.3.3.Semi-structured interviews

In total 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 irregular Venezuelan migrants, 6 informants. Before the start of the interviews an interview guide was created with questions related to the topics discussed in the theoretical framework (see appendix 1). Throughout the interview phase, questions were adapted based on feedback and reflections experienced with former respondents (Berg, 2007; Wengraf, 2001). All interviews started by informing the respondents about the research topic, the aim of the study, the confidentiality of the answers and identities, and a request for their consent to record the conversation. The interviews were semi-structured as the experiences of each participant differed, and the focus shifted depending on them. Despite this, there were several key themes that were covered in each interview.

The objective of the interviews with the migrants was to gain a comprehensive idea of their experiences and perspectives relating to the research topics. This is why the interview guide was primarily used as a guiding mechanism to help direct the conversation when necessary, but the conversations were allowed to flow differently, and questions were asked in a different order. The interviews gave respondents space to express their own feelings and raise their own

issues. Each interview has been given a different dominant theme in the title, as each individual had unique experiences surrounding the themes. They shed light on different dimensions of irregularity and vulnerability on Curaçao as well as coping mechanisms and where they found help. During the interview terms like undocumented and irregular were used interchangeably, the term 'illegal migrant' was only brought up by the respondents themselves. All but one of the conversations took place in Spanish, one of them was conducted in Papiamentu, none of the respondents spoke English or Dutch. Third-party translators assisted in translating on-site throughout the interviews, as well as subsequently during transcription. The length of the interviews varied between 45 minutes and 120 minutes. They were recorded by phone with informed consent and notes were made throughout the interviews. The interviews were transcribed manually by listening to phone recordings. Transcription was done throughout the interview period as it sometimes took a long time to organize a succeeding interview. The analysis of the interview started after all the interviews were transcribed.

4.2.3.4.Data management and analysis:

Nvivo was used for the coding process as well as the analysis of the data. The program provides tools to find relationships and patterns intersecting in the data. Codes were made prior to the interviews based on the theoretical framework (inductive) in a word document, as well as during the analytical process (deductive).The analysis & coding was done using NVIVO. Below are the codes created to refer to in the interview and used in the analysis of the interviews with both the representatives of institutions and Venezuelan migrants. Codes were adapted several times before deciding on several overarching codes: Vulnerability, Precarity, Illegality, Covid-19, and help (Glaser & Straus, 1967). These overarching codes were then divided into smaller categories of data with new codes such as 'Vulnerability': situational, structural, experiential, individual, and those codes were divided into smaller groups, etc. With the use of Nvivo I was able to identify relationships and patterns between the data and incorporate it in the analytical chapters of the thesis.

Table 5: Codebook

Code family	Strategy used	Codes
Situational vulnerability	deductive	Journey: Boat/ Plane & Country of Origin
Structural vulnerability	deductive	Deportation, Detainment, Discrimination, Exclusion, Oppression, Social Control
Experiential vulnerability	deductive	
Individual vulnerability	deductive	Gender, sexuality, chronic medical conditions, literacy/ language,
Illegality	deductive	Inability to plan for future, Restricted social mobility, Restricted physical mobility, Kinship ties are nullified,

		Temporalization of presence, Reality limited to that which can be documented, Enforced clandestinity
Precarity	deductive	Legal status, uncertainty, threat of deportation & detention (instills fear)
Vulnerability	deductive	Abuse, Exploitation, Violence
Covid-19 Vulnerabilities	deductive	Access to information, Hesitant to seek healthcare, Increased exposure, Social consequences of COVID-19, Social consequences of containment measures
Help	deductive	Margin of discretion, NGO, Community, Covid related help
Immigration measures	inductive	Raids, restrictive management, attitudes, fines employers
Day to day needs	inductive	Living conditions, Work, Food/ necessities
Moment of arrival	inductive	Treatment, Struggles
Characteristics	inductive	Name, Age, period of stay, Sex
Ideas for improvement	inductive	Hopes for the future
Role of the State	inductive	Curaçao, Netherlands, Kingdom
Legalization	inductive	Refugee process, Permits, Obstacles, exploitation (false documents)
Reasons for leaving	inductive	Fear for their lives, find work to support family

4.3. Research limitations

This section highlights the main limitations of the research. The COVID-19 pandemic and migrants' mistrust and anxiety resulted in a smaller sample size than intended. The process of organizing interviews was challenging, with last-minute cancellations and unresponsiveness from governmental actors. The sampling method primarily relied on connections related to humanitarian help, limiting representation and diversity within the sample. The unequal representation of men and women raises questions about gendered patterns of exploitation and likelihood of asking for help, but no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the small sample of 13 irregular migrants. The use of translators was essential, but there is a possibility of

information being lost or compromised during translation due to limitations and cultural differences. Some respondents were hesitant to expand upon their answers, making it challenging to fully explore their experiences. The familiarity between respondents and translators (Melinda's presence) may have influenced their openness during the interviews.

Furthermore, it is important to consider my positionality as a researcher in this context (Foote & Bartell, 2011). I was born and raised on Curaçao and migrated to the Netherlands to study when I was 18. I have the Dutch nationality and speak the Dutch language and most importantly I look Dutch, thus the migration did not entail many obstacles other than adapting to specific cultural, environmental, and bureaucratic differences. Despite not experiencing as much difficulty in the legal aspect of migration, I do understand being far away from home and family, feeling isolated, and not completely fitting in. I am extremely privileged in my ability to migrate easily, the way I look (as a white person), and the access to education and work. This limits my ability to fully comprehend the experiences of the subjects within this research as my perspective is that of an outsider (Manohoe, et al., 2017). Through self-assessment and reflections throughout the research process I have discovered how my values and ethics may have influenced the research process (Greenbank, 2003). It has become apparent that I may have ideological beliefs surrounding the topic of migration and borders, inciting passion and emotions and a drive for action to change the ways of the world. As someone born and raised on Curaçao, I had several advantages during my research process; such as a comprehensive understanding of the way things worked, I had connections that helped me find the right people, and I understood the language Papiamentu. On the other hand, I may have been blinded through my upbringing there, lacking a fresh perspective to the context.

Lastly, when conducting research on irregular migrants, ethical questions are raised. Focusing on irregular migrants as a group can further exclude and vulnerabilize them. According to De Genova (2002: 423), I must refrain from using irregular migrants as the "object of study," as this makes researchers an accomplice in the everyday production of migrants' illegalization. Instead, De Genova points to Coutin's approach to studying illegality as a socio-political condition, which I have attempted by focusing on the legal processes, lived experiences and consequences, cautiously trying to avoid further stigmatization, categorization, and generalization of a particular group (Coutin, 2000: 23).

5. Setting the context

During the writing of this thesis, it became clear through the review of the related literature, news articles, and a documentary, as well as conversations with NGOs, and interviews with irregular Venezuelan migrants, that the island's migration management is in need of drastic changes. In the upcoming chapters I will go over the research questions step by step. Within this chapter the context of Curaçao is detailed, as the history as well as economic, cultural, and political factors specific to Curaçao shape the response to migration and consequently the experiences of the irregular Venezuelan migrants. In chapter two and three the stage is set for the relevant literature surrounding irregular migration, irregular migration management, and the consequences and motivations for a restrictive management approach. The literature review offers a lens through which the analysis of the experiences of the irregular Venezuelan migrants within the context of Curaçao can be conducted.

5.1. Curaçao

Curaçao is a lesser Antilles Island located in the southern Caribbean Sea, about 65 kilometers north of the Venezuelan coast. It is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Together with Bonaire and Aruba, it forms the ABC islands. Curaçao is the largest of the ABC islands in terms of territory and population. From 1815 to 1954, Curaçao was part of the Curaçao and Dependencies colony, from 1954 to 2010 it was a part of the Netherlands Antilles, as Island Territory of Curaçao, and is currently called the Country of Curaçao, since its independence in 2010. The country of Curacao includes the main island of Curaçao, with an area of 444 km^2, as well as the much smaller, uninhabited island of Klein Curaçao. Curaçao is one of the most densely populated countries in the world (World Bank, 2020). As of January first 2023, the island consists of a population of 148.925 documented citizens (CBS Curacao, 2023). The population consists, in larger part, of people that at one time in history migrated to the island. A census conducted in 2011 by the Central Bureau of Statistics revealed that 25 percent of the foreign-born population is born in the Netherlands, 15 percent are born in the Dominican Republic, the rest are from the BES islands, Colombian, Haitian, Jamaican, Aruban, and Venezuelan born immigrants. Around 90 percent of Curaçao's population has the Dutch nationality (CBS Curaçao, 2014). The official languages are Dutch, Papiamentu, and English. All official legal and administration matters utilize Dutch as the sole language. Most of the population on Curaçao can converse in at least two of the languages of Papiamentu, Dutch, English, and Spanish. The most widely spoken language is Papiamentu, a Portuguese creole with African, Dutch and Spanish influences. 94 per cent of Curaçaoans are religious; 90 per cent is Christian, 2 per cent is Hindu, 0.5 per cent is Muslim and 0.2 per cent is Jewish.

Curaçao is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The King of the Netherlands is the head of state, represented locally by a governor, with the prime Minister of Curaçao serving as head of government. Curaçao has autonomy over most matters, with the exceptions outlined in the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands under the title "Kingdom affairs", thus Curaçao is semi-autonomous. The most important sectors in Curaçao's open

economy are tourism, international trade, shipping services, international financial services, and before 2018 one of the biggest sectors included oil refining, oil storage and bunkering. Curaçao is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), has a Subnational Island Jurisdiction (SNIJ), and a Small Island Tourism Economy (SITES) (Jones, 2020). Curaçao, as well as other SIDS, face challenges policing Maritime borders, due to the lack of human, financial, and technical resources, as well as geographically permeable borders (Loyd & Mountz, 2014).

5.2. History – Dutch Colonial Rule

The first recorded inhabitants of Curaçao were the Arawak and Caquetio Amerindians, who had migrated from the mainland of South America hundreds of years before the Europeans arrived (Loen, 2021). Members of the Spanish Expedition, under the guidance of Alonso de Ojeda, arrived in 1499 and enslaved most of the Natives, transporting them to Hispaniola (Goslinga, 1979; Oostindie, 2011). In 1634, During the Eighty Year's war, the Dutch West India Company invaded the island, deporting Spaniards and indigenous people to Venezuela. Curaçao became a center of the Atlantic slave trade, as the Dutch West India Company (WIC) used Curaçao as a stop between West Africa and the Spanish Mainland. Commerce, shipping, piracy, and salt mining became important economic activities (Goede, 2015). The island faced invasions from France and attacks by the British in the 18th and 19th centuries. Dutch rule returned in 1815, joint administration of the Dutch dependencies began in 1845 and in 1863 slavery was abolished, transitioning to wage labor (Jones, 2020). Former slaves often remained working under the tenant farmer system, as compensation for the abolition was limited to former slave owners and they had not alternative means of income. Slavery and its aftermath created a segregated society based on ethnicity and culture, impacting current social and economic challenges (Goede, 2008). The discovery of oil in Mene Grande, Venezuela in 1914, had a significant impact on Curaçao's economy. Royal Dutch Shell held drilling concessions in Venezuela, ensuring a continuous supply of oil to the refinery in Curaçao, which was established in 1918. Shell and Exxon dominated the industry, controlling the entire process from pumping to sales. This resulted in economic growth and the introduction of a western management system on the island (de Goede, 2008; Curiel, 2005).

5.2.2. The Netherlands Antilles

In 1954, as part of the global process of decolonization, the Dutch Caribbean colonies were merged to form the Netherlands Antilles, granting them internal self-government (Goede, 2015). In 1969, riots erupted due to racial discrimination, increased unemployment, and frustrations surrounding the subordinate relationship with the Netherlands. This led to governance reforms, empowering Afro-Curaçaoans and promoting the local language (Goede, 2015). The 1980s saw an economic downturn as Shell ended its activities on Curaçao, Venezuelan tourism decreased due to the devaluation of the Bolivar, the financial service industry suffered due to new U.S. tax laws, and the transportation sector slowed down (Goede, 2005; Tromp, 2005). As a response, structural adjustment programs were implemented, resulting in privatization and market liberalization. These programs caused emigration,

poverty, and other social issues on the island, as there were no resources dedicated to softening the blow (Goede, 2005). To mitigate the consequences of the crisis, tourism was pushed to the forefront again in the mid-1980’s. In 2010, the Netherlands Antilles disintegrated and Curaçao became an independent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom would take responsibility for defense and foreign policy, in addition to overseeing the island’s finances under a debt relief arrangement. Although Curaçao is autonomous, the Netherlands has intervened in many affairs. The vast majority of Curaçao nationals, are Dutch nationals and consequently citizens of the European Union. One of the main inhibitors for complete independence is the accessibility to Europe, which allows for social mobility through migration for work and education (Oostindie, 2009; Jones, 2020). Because of this, Curaçao can be seen as a European frontier, despite its Caribbean location.

5.3. Economy

Curaçao has an open economy heavily reliant on services such as tourism, petroleum refining, offshore finance, communications and transportation (Goede, 2008). The island is considered a small island tourism economy (SITES), because of the significant contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP (Jones, 2020). Limited natural resources, inadequate water supplies, and poor soil necessitate reliance on imports.

Since gaining its (semi)autonomy in 2010, Curaçao has suffered several economic shocks, including the situation in Venezuela and the pandemic, leading to a 28% shrinkage in the economy over the past decade (IMF, 2022). The closure of the oil refinery in 2019 and sanctions against Venezuela worsened unemployment, which reached 19.1% in 2019 and 42% for youth in 2020 (CBS Curaçao, 2020; IMF, 2022). These sanctions also brought the food trade between Coro and Willemstad to a halt. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the unemployment rate and impaired the tourism sector on Curaçao. The employment rate was estimated by the Ministry of Economic Development at 30 per cent, at the beginning of 2021 (IMF, 2022). Inflation from the war in Ukraine and government debt accumulation further hampered recovery. The multiple shocks in the past years have led to a significant accumulation of government debt. Curaçao received significant Covid-19 related liquidity support loans from the Netherlands, but these will mature in October 2023 (IMF, 2022). The debt ratio increased from 58% of the GDP in 2019 to 89% of the GDP in 2021 (IMF, 2022).

Despite the economic shocks and hardships of the past decade, Curaçao enjoys a high per capita income and a well-developed infrastructure compared to other countries in the region. Even though the island was affected much harder by the COVID-19 crisis than most other Caribbean islands (Mulder, 2020).

5.4. Migration in the Caribbean

Caribbean countries have a rich history of migration, dating back before European colonization and playing a significant role in culture, economy, and development (Byron, 1999; Vezzoli,

2015). Forced migration and refuge were not uncommon, with the Caribbean serving as a safe haven during times of conflict, slave rebellions, and natural disasters. Migrants represent a substantial portion of the population in all Caribbean countries, with approximately 40% of Curaçao's population being descendants of migrants from the past century (de Bruijn & Groot, 2014). The expansion of the oil refinery in Curaçao attracted immigrants from various regions, leading to a population growth of approximately 320% between 1920 and 1960 (de Bruijn & Groot, 2014). While economic opportunities declined after World War II, many migrants remained on the island. The two principal migration patterns in the Caribbean are emigration to Europe and North America and intraregional migration, primarily from Haiti and the Dominican Republic (IOM, 2018). Curaçao has relied on Venezuela for agricultural produce, which facilitated circular migration between the two regions (Jones, 2020). The floating market with food from Venezuela was a signature part of the city's landscape for over a century until its closure due to border measures imposed by Venezuela in 2019 (Reuters, 2019). Venezuelans play a crucial role in the labor market in the Dutch Caribbean, particularly in informal sectors such as domestic cleaning, gardening, and construction (Jones, 2020). Venezuelans also contribute to industries such as health, information technology, and creative sectors.

More recently, the arrival of Venezuelan migrants and refugees has affected the complex migration dynamics in the region, especially in the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Aruba, and Curaçao. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted mobility, migration and tourism patterns in the region, due to border closures and travel restrictions.

5.5. The Venezuelan crisis & migration

Venezuelans make up the largest group of non-conflict driven forcibly displaced people in the world. The country's history is marked by authoritarian, successive leaders, whose actions have led to economic instability, scarcity of essential resources, and a surge in violence (Yayboke & Zuñiga, 2023). Particularly, the regimes of Chávez & Maduro have impoverished the citizens of what was once the wealthiest country in Latin America (Bull & Rosales, 2020). This outcome is the result of corruption, poorly implemented price controls, rampant inflation, and the weakening of public institutions (Bull & Rosales, 2020). Currently Venezuela is considered one of the most repressive countries in the world due to its sham elections, weak rule of law, mismanagement of funds, as well as heavy censorship of the press (Jiménez, 2023). In 2022, 94.5 percent of Venezuelans lived under the poverty line, resulting in homelessness, begging, engaging in involuntary sex work and making them vulnerable to criminal recruitment (Mohan, 2020). Unlike the Chávez era, emigration from Venezuela is not only marked by political opposition and class issues, but it is a fundamental matter of survival. The dire conditions in Venezuela have led to a large-scale migration crisis, with Venezuelans seeking refuge for survival. Curaçao, due to its historical, cultural ties with Venezuela, has been a natural destination for Venezuelan migrants. Prior to 2019, travel between the two countries was relatively easy, and Venezuelans made up a significant portion of tourism arrivals on the island (Jones, 2020).

There are generally speaking two motives for leaving a country. The first is related to economic factors, the second is related to political factors. All people who leave a country tend to balance the cost of staying to the cost of migrating (Moore & Shellman, 2004). But the situation of Venezuela is complicated as the economic situation is intricately tied to the political situation; they are not mutually exclusive. The migration outflow from Venezuela is driven by both economic and political factors, as the economic collapse has turned into a humanitarian crisis with food and medicine scarcity. The group of individuals leaving Venezuela is denoted as a "mixed flow" of migrants and asylum-seekers. In accordance with the refugee convention, a refugee is defined as as someone with a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership of a social group. Although some of those leaving Venezuela align with this classification, it does not encompass the majority of the emigrants. Conversely, the traditional interpretation of a migrant — an individual who willingly departs from their native land in search of improved prospects and is unimpeded in returning — also fails to fully encapsulate this group. The discourse and categorization of migration influences the political response and consequently has implications on their rights (Thomaz, 2018). Thus, the reasons for leaving Venezuela are manifold, and can be different for everyone. They range from seeking access to health care and education, because those systems collapsed in many regions of Venezuela, to searching for employment to sustain their families, to fearing for their lives and safety, as political unrest and corruption have led to many acts of violence (Posso, et al., 2023; Garcia Zea, 2020).

The availability of medical care within the country became severely limited, rendering individuals in urgent need of healthcare unable to obtain the necessary help they required (Bittleston, 2020). Joana's story exemplifies the consequences of this predicament:

> *"My daughter has medical issues, she doesn't have cranial nerves, they had to take it out due to issues. That's why I came here. All the specialists that were working in Venezuela decided to leave, even all the professors decided to leave. Because they couldn't even pay for their own food anymore. They looked for a place where its better. They already started telling me upfront that I needed to start looking for other doctors or specialists, because they were accepted the other offers in other countries, so I didn't have much time."* (Joana, 42)

Most irregular migrants leave their country to find better opportunities to survive and sustain their families, in search for employment. The economic situation in Venezuela had rendered the income earned within the country insufficient to meet even the most basic needs, such as providing nourishment for their families or affording essential items like diapers and medicine.

> *"When the situation got worse in Venezuela, my children that were studying, they didn't even have money for the bus or transportation, there was just no money for food or anything else. My family was starving. My daughter is studying to be a dentist (ontology). And I need to pay for her study and sustain her. My parents also need medical help, so I need work."* (Diana, 32)

Others had to leave because their safety was compromised due to the increased political unrest pervasive corruption, skyrocketing inflation, and economic turmoil. Andres worked as a police-

officer in Venezuela and became disillusioned by the corruption and wanted to leave. Leaving meant that he would be in danger if he would return.

> *"I used to be police officer in Venezuela. But the government was like of a dictatorship. There is a lot of corruption and manipulation. If you are against the government, we will be sent to arrest those people. If I don't follow the orders I am in trouble. It's definitely not easy being a police officer either, you have to set your morals aside for the job for your survival, it's dangerous. They took away my gun at some point, we had to stand watch without a gun, which was very dangerous, especially because Venezuela has gotten so much more dangerous over the years, everyone has guns. One morning I finished my nightshift at 8 in the morning and at 9, I was on a flight to curacao. But I got immediately deported. When I got back to Venezuela, I couldn't go back to the place I came from, because they would arrest me there, so I went to Coro, and with the help of a friend I managed to get on a boat to curacao again"* (Andres, 42)

The Venezuelan crisis has demonstrated that poverty, food and medicine insecurity, crime, censorship, and a weak rule of law pose substantial threats to people's safety. The crisis transformed the nature of migration in Venezuela, from one that primarily consisted of immigration to one of emigration (Vargas, 2018). The characteristics of those emigrating has also changed, as previously emigrants comprised of primarily highly skilled workers but now includes marginalized groups (Winsor, 2017). At the global and regional level, communities have taken actions to address the needs of vulnerable migrants. The regional refugee and migrant response plan was established with a special fundraising platform; Response for Venezuela (R4V) by the UNHCR and IOM in 2018. Despite efforts to address the situation and establish special statuses and protections for displaced Venezuelans abroad, such as the Quito Process and Temporary Protected Status in the United States, Ecuador, and Colombia, the Venezuelan crisis has exposed the limitations of international refugee law in safeguarding the rights of certain individuals while leaving others vulnerable. These limitations are particularly evident on Curaçao. Venezuelans arriving on Curaçao face challenges as they are classified as economic migrants, limiting their access to asylum and subjecting them to detention, deportation, inhumane treatment, and precarity which renders them vulnerable.

6. Migration Crisis on Curaçao

This chapter outlines the response to the migration 'crisis' on Curaçao with regards to its policies, implementation, local attitudes, and discourse. It will include the experiences of the irregular Venezuelan migrants associated with the restrictions they faced, including the increase in use of irregular pathways, the treatment upon arrival, and detainment and deportation practices. This chapter also incorporates the interviews conducted with the migrants, informants, and non-state actors, as well as the monitoring reports and other media sources concerning the treatment of irregular migrants. Chapter 5 has illustrated the context of the migration crisis by sketching the historical, economic, cultural, and geopolitical backdrop in which it takes place. This chapter aims to expand on the contemporary circumstances. In conjunction with chapter five this chapter aspires to answer the first sub-question: *How did the political, historical, and economic context of Curacao shape their migration policies & how did this produce, modify, and amplify the precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao?*

6.1. Migration crisis: Curaçao's response

Curaçao's immigration policies are influenced by and rest on their colonial past, their semi-autonomy and the revision of the Kingdom Charter. The Kingdom Charter outlines the collaboration and responsibilities between the constituent countries, with the Netherlands still dominating in foreign policy and defense matters, as the positions of leadership within the parliament are predominantly held by the Netherlands (Jones, 2020). The Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands charges the individual countries with the responsibility to promote the realization of human rights. Safeguarding these rights is a matter of the kingdom (Amnesty International, 2018). The treaties that the Netherlands had ratified automatically applied to Curaçao prior to the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010. However, Curaçao's semi-autonomy meant that Curaçao needed to separately ratify these agreements. The unique political position of Curaçao within the kingdom results in parallel processes of migration management, with citizenship falling under the kingdom's responsibility while local departments and agencies handle day-to-day entry, exit, and administrative processing (Kingdom of the Netherlands Charter, 2010). The dependence on tourism contributes to a fluid border, operating in both open and restrictive manners depending on the nationality of those seeking entry and the contemporary attitudes towards those nationalities (Jones, 2020).

Anxieties about their smallness in size, porous maritime borders, limited resources and capacity, as well as a pre-existing economic crisis led Curaçao to incorporate a crisis management approach based on containment- including restrictive entry policies, detainment, and deportation (UN, 2018). In conjunction with the restrictive practices, officials employed fear-based rhetoric, associating the increase of migrants with robberies, human trafficking, and sex-work, thereby insinuating their criminality, which in turn heightened xenophobia among the local population, leading to toleration and even encouragement of the restrictive migration practices (Jones, 2020). This cycle demonstrates the cross-level interaction and production of

vulnerability for migrants that takes place (Chapter 3). The Governor of Curaçao stated in a parliamentary address that "almost all the arriving people are exclusively small-time criminals, illegal job-seekers, and prostitutes" (Baiz, 2017). This framing of Venezuelan migrants compounded by the deficient migration infrastructure led to practices and local attitudes geared towards dismissing, restricting and regulating migrant bodies.

6.1.2. Irregular pathway

Prior to the crisis, the Caribbean islands would compete for Venezuelan tourists, as they were the backbone of the economy. Currently Venezuelans must resort to sneaking through the airports or cramming on small boats at night (Gedan, 2017). While most Venezuelan migrants arrived in Curaçao through a formal visa or initial permit, many overstayed and have consequently become irregular in the country. Many are interrogated upon arrival and deported immediately. Others relied on small fishing boats called 'lanchas' operated by smugglers, to reach to island. These boats often exceed their safe capacity limits, which have led to many deaths and accidents at sea (Yayboke & Zuñiga, 2023). Due to the high cost, as well as precarity of travel, many migrants were separated from their families. This diminished the network of support that helps migrants integrate and cope. Prior to the crisis, family migration is what characterized long-term Venezuelan migration to the Dutch Caribbean (Jones, 2020). This breakdown in their immediate family structure drew migrants on other networks, making them reliant on communication through third parties (Jones, 2020).

Some people managed to arrive by plane and overstay their visa. **Silvia,** who has a husband from Curaçao, arrived by plane, but she was interrogated by customs until her husband showed up. She managed to get through and ended up overstaying her visa to provide her daughter with the medical care she needed. Others who arrived by plane were either deported immediately or several months later and had to make the journey overseas during their second attempt. One of those people is **Diana** who just barely managed to escape the police upon arrival.

> *"I entered by plane, but after 9 months I got deported. The second time, after I was deported I entered by boat. This was a very difficult experience, it was 20 hours long on the ocean. It was a really large group, 32 people. Then when we arrived here, 16 of us got captured by the police as soon as we got here. But me and two others managed to escape. I fell into a large pit and I couldn't get out for two days. No water, no food. Eventually two boys saw me and helped me out" (Diana, 32)*

The journey is enveloped in precarity, as they are uncertain if they will make it across, if the police will detect them upon arrival, if the people on board are safe, what their next steps should be, and what their lives are going to look like.

> "*There were a lot of people on board, 29 people, it was a really long journey. We arrived at around 3 in the morning. I had nothing on me, not even a cellphone to call anyone to see what time it was. I was afraid. And I felt powerless, because I also left behind a child in Venezuela. I made a friend here during my first time that I came here, so I had to walk to her house all the way on the other side of the island. So I started walking at night but arrived at her house during the day. I was terrified the whole way. I kept hiding when cars drove by." (Rosaura, 35)*

The restrictive entry policies have forced many Venezuelans to take a less surveilled route; the sea, despite the dangers that come with it. However, the migration policies enforced by Curaçao were not the only force inhibiting Venezuelans from taking regular pathway by plane. President Maduro closed the borders between Venezuela and Curaçao, in 2019. This was a response to a collaboration between Curaçao and the United States attempting to provide humanitarian aid to Venezuela, by using Curaçao as a storage facility. This border closure had detrimental consequences for the economy of Curaçao and suspended diplomatic relations between the Kingdom Government and Venezuela until its borders reopened again in April 2023 (Reuters, 2019; Casey, 2019). But it also disrupted legitimate travel channels, hindering what was essentially circular migration between the Dutch Caribbean islands and their South American neighbor. Moreover, the border closure resulted in a situation where migrants on Curaçao, whose documentation had expired, were unable to travel to Venezuela to obtain the necessary documentation to support their new applications for residency and work permits, forcibly transitioning them to irregularity (Jones, 2020). COVID-19 prolonged the border closures as well as resettlement efforts, as the island was under lockdown.

6.2. Treatment upon Arrival

In 2016, a joint task force was established with Aruba and the Kingdom to address the increase in arrivals (Curacao Chronicle, 2016; Jones, 2020). Unlike Aruba, Curaçao has not ratified international agreements related to refugees and lacks a formal asylum procedure and refugee framework (UNHR, 2016). Curaçao is bound by the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. These obligations prohibit Curaçao from deporting people to a place where they might be at risk of serious human rights violations; *the principle of non-refoulement* (Amnesty International, 2018). In practice, however, Curaçao does not follow these obligations. Curaçao enforces restrictive entry policies, and containment measures through immediate detainment or deportation without an assessment of their vulnerabilities (Amnesty International, 2018). The last report made on deportation and rejected Venezuelan migrants was in 2018 by the law enforcement council (Raad voor de Rechtshandhaving), informed by the Curaçao police Force (KPC). The report: '*An approach to illegal migration of Venezuelans'*, includes two tables on refusals at the border as well as deportations from Curaçao:

Table 6: overview of Venezuelans refused entry by the Curaçao Police Force, 2018

Year	Men	Women	Total
2015	399	517	916
2016	663	1270	1933
2017 (March - April)	71	107	178

Source: Law enforcement council Curaçao, 2018

Table 7: overview of removals by the Curaçao Police Force, 2018

Nationalities	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Colombian	82	83	75	114	50
Dominican	115	112	76	46	52
Haitian	94	47	40	16	14
Jamaican	284	250	201	147	71
Venezuelan	61	124	246	539	1203

Source: Law Enforcement Council Curaçao, 2018

A big proportion of the Venezuelan migrants don't manage to circumvent the police upon arrival. Venezuelan migrants who arrive irregularly are continuously automatically arrested to the police station of Rio Canario (Amnesty International, 2023). Here migration officials conduct the protection assessment interviews with Venezuelans to document the decision to leave and assess whether they can be deported back. However there is often no independent interpreter present during the interviews. Additionally, these interviews are translated in Dutch, meaning that the Venezuelan migrants would need a legal representative to approve the translation of the transcript (Amnesty International, 2023). They often cannot afford a lawyer, making them vulnerable to wrongful deportation. Frequently, they are coerced to sign a deportation order as proof of receipt, even if they seek protection (Amnesty International, 2023). The authorities do not inform them of their rights to seek protection nor of their rights to refuse or challenge the deportation order. Many are sent to the barracks prison in the meantime until they can be deported.

> "*We arrived by caracasbaai on wednesday, but we all got caught. They detained me and let me go on Saturday. Because, at that moment the barracks[1] were full and packed, so they couldn't take us in. they ended up just noting our personal info down and taking all our documents and they let us go, under the condition that we come by Rio Canario[2] every week to sign a form and show that we are following the rules. But at some point the police officer told us we had to come by with 650 guilders to pay for a flight back to Venezuela. Which was strange. I don't even have 100 guilders to my name, I'm not allowed to work, yet they expect us to be able to pay 650 guilders? So, I decided never to come back to the police station. They're holding our documents hostage though. So, we can't go anywhere or request any permit, nothing." (Kiara, 29).*

Even after arrival, the threat of deportation and detainment was ever-present on Curaçao as immigration raids were frequently conducted by the police, specifically profiling for people who 'looked Venezuelan' (Nijkrake, 2019).

> *"I have two cousins that are like brothers, but they have been deported, they used to work in construction. There was a period that the police-officers were going by all the construction sites to check if there were any undocumented people working there. My cousins worked there and they were detained and deported and didn't come back." (Diana, 32)*

[1] Foreigners barracks: detention facility that holds migrants
[2] Police station of Curaçao

The act of the arrest can be traumatizing for the Venezuelan migrants who came to escape the chaos and violence of their home. There have been many reports on the manner in which police officials have treated migrants during arrest, detainment and deportation. Malvares (28) was called by police officials and told that she had to buy tickets to go back to Venezuela for her and her son, otherwise she would be detained.

> *The whole journey back was traumatic, because they didn't treat me like I was a person. The man at the airport told me 'if you thought you could just come here and have your kid here, and then become legal, you thought wrong.' And I was like I gave birth to my kid and then was waiting for my permit, I didn't want to trick anyone. They were so aggressive, so much hate, saying go back to your country (Malvares, 28).*

6.3. Detainment

Curaçao operates a detention center with a capacity for 70 migrants who are on Curaçao without legal status, with a significant number being Venezuelan nationals. These individuals can be held in the center for a maximum of six months while their cases are being reviewed. Many have been held far longer (Drayer, 2021). Because Curaçao has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees the option of seeking asylum and finding alternative legal pathways are limited (CSIS, 2023). The restrictive migration management approach has led to human rights violations, such as automatic confinement in cramped and leaky cells with too few beds, reportedly full of flea eggs, too little food, instances of abuse, deliberate separation of parents and children, and coerced into signing deportation forms (Amnesty International, 2018). Depriving people of their freedom, solely based on their migration status is a violation of Article 5 of the ECHR: "the right to liberty and security."

The conditions within the detention center known as the "Foreigners Barracks" in the Sentro di Detenshon i Korekshon Korsou (SDKK) prison are inhumane. Detainees endure discriminatory treatment, sensory deprivation, severe overcrowding, confinement alongside convicted prisoners, and a complete lack of privacy (Amnesty International, 2018). I am going to delve into the experiences of two of the respondents that were held in the detainment camps on Curaçao. Diana got detained in 2021 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and Roberto got detained in 2017, during a time when there was no media attention on the treatment of irregular migrants in the detention facilities, and abuse and torture still went unchecked. They both got transferred to the prison that held criminals because the barracks reached maximum capacity.

Diana

I am going to delve into the details of her experiences in this section to showcase how one person can continuously face hardships on numerous fronts when they are situated in legal precarity, thereby rendering them vulnerable to a cycle of abuse. Diana came to Curaçao because, like so many others in Venezuela, she could not afford to sustain her family anymore. So, she got in contact with a girl on Curaçao who offered her a job in a restaurant, who stated that they were understaffed and desperately looking for new workers. However, when she

arrived here in 2016 with no money, the restaurant did not exist. The girl led her to a Snèk, where she was told to work as a sex worker. Having spent all her money to get here, she had no choice but to take the job she initially had no intention of doing. She felt deceived and witnessed how many other girls were lured to this type of work. The term used in the media to refer to these women is “trago girl” (Mengerink, 2019). Soon after her arrival Diana got sick from Covid-19, which escalated to thrombosis. She needed to stay in the hospital and continued to have medical issues long afterwards.

The police arrested **Diana** at her place of residence. Her experience demonstrates how many many Venezuelan irregular migrants were treated by officials.

> *“When they came to my residence the day they were going to take me to the prison. They told me, grab your things, you have five minutes were going. The police officer stood there grinning at me and said “you have no idea how much I enjoy sending you guys back. They put me in handcuffs, I was a criminal, being sent to prison. They treat us like were criminals. The police officers at the interrogation treat you so horribly. They say things like “What are you doing here!? Go back to where you came from! We don’t want you here!” in an aggressive manner. They called me a whore, a bitch who does prostitution, all you women come here to be prostitutes. “Who helps you, who gives you money, how do you get money to your family then? Where do you get the money from!?” Very scary.” (Diana, 32)*

In 2021, Diana got detained in the SDKK barracks prison and was held there for 5,5 months. Amnesty International has received numerous reports of ill treatment within the barracks over the course of several years as they were subjected to degrading treatment and lacked access to basic needs, unless and until they bought a plane ticket back to Venezuela. Some were coerced into sexual acts in exchange for sanitary towels or soap (Amnesty International, 2018, 2021, 2023).

> *“The situation in the barracks was so bad. We hardly got any food and the food we got was not food we are used to as a culture, and often it was rotten. We are put in jail together with criminals, like women who have killed and done horrible things. They are very intimidating, the sphere is constantly scary and unsafe. The security guards are also sadistic, it’s like they want us to be upset and scared.”*

Diana was detained during the COVID-19 pandemic at a time where many people were getting infected and had not had their vaccinations yet. She suffered from long-term medical conditions from her first COVID infection, and her immune system was weakened. Diana required frequent check-ups, medication, and social distancing was essential to her health.

> *“There’s basically no medical treatment there as well. I got so demotivated because I gave them my letter from the doctor to show them my medical issues and they just didn’t do anything with it. And it doesn’t seem to be like that with the people from Curacao, they treat them better. When were in massive pain, we can go, but we tend not to, cause they don’t take us seriously, they just give us a paracetamol. No actual treatment. And there is absolutely no psychological treatment or help. I also got covid in the barracks again. Im not vaccinated. My immunesystem*

was really low, when I entered the barracks I was already not healthy, so I was extra sensitive to getting covid again."

In order to get out of prison there were several options. One was that someone could vouch for them and take responsibility for them upon release, as they are not allowed to work. However, this route has led to a trend of men wanting to take advantage of women in a desperate situation.

"What happens is, there are men that show up and say they are willing to sign it for us and be responsible for us, but that we then have to live with them, or marry them. They do it so they have a woman in the house that can work for them, do everything in the house, clean and cook, etc. they can just do with you what they want because you're vulnerable and desparate to leave, and knowing you're not allowed to work, makes you dependent on them. There are some that are willing to sign but they then make you pay more afterwards. But people are staying in prison up to a year, a year and a half if they cant find anybody who can sign for them." (Diana, 32).

Another option to be released from prison was to sign the deportation form, agreeing to the expulsion from Curaçao. This document was in Dutch and without the proper legal counsel, many people have been coerced into signing this document without informed consent. She fortunately received legal advice from Ieteke Witteveen, the director of the NGO Human Rights Defence. Under article 3 of the international human rights convention (a document that Curaçao has signed) Ieteke managed to challenge the detainment of Venezuelan irregular migrants and could get several released from prison. Because of Witteveen's help she did not choose either of the two options provided for release but found an alternative loophole.

"Inchi[3] says don't sign it! And they keep pressuring you to do it, even though they don't say what it says on the paper, its all in dutch, so theyre pressuring people to sign a piece of paper they don't understand. These people are incredibly vulnerable, and they are forced to sign it. They took my passport and everything, and now I have this piece of paper where it says my name, birthplace and date, current address and phonenumber. It says when and where i have to announce myself every week, that im not allowed to change my adress, phonenumber, or get a job. It also states that the moment I break any of these rules my request to be protected under article 3 ECHR will be rejected and I will be deported." (Diana, 32)

She is still waiting on the approval of her claim to protection. There is no clarity on whether she will receive a permit and will be allowed to stay and work. The document she now uses as an identity paper is called "UNIT Vreemdeling Afd. Toezicht & opsporing" – Meldplicht: Invrijheidstelling van in bewaarde gestelde personen.

"now I have an open case, so I have a chance if I stay and follow the rules, to become legal at some point. But no clue how long this will take. I heard from many people that their permits are denied/ rejected and the process is stopped anyway and they were deported, with no explanation."

[3] Ieteke Witteveen (nickname)

The cycle of traumas that Diana has endured has negatively impacted her mental health, leaving her to struggle to get out of bed and have hope for the future.

Roberto

> *"I came here by boat, but I was deported the first time, I think this was 4 years ago. I came again with a boat after that. I was taken to Rio canario (police station), where they interrogated me. They did not tell me my rights. They took me to the prison, the Barracks."*

Roberto was sent to the men's foreigners barracks prison when he was arrested in 2017. During this time there was no widespread awareness of the human rights violations occurring within the walls. Roberto was part of a group that protested, which eventually got the attention of human rights institutions. After several prisoners escaped, the authorities decided to place the migrants in the same prison as the criminals. This is when Roberto and others started to protest. The group of Venezuelans residing in the Foreigners Barracks were then targeted by the guards who fired rubber bullets at them.

> *"we were shot in our back, in the head, in the eye, in the legs. We had big bumps and one guy could only see out of one eye. I had bruises everywhere. We would get food with maggots in it, torturing us with rotten food, got nothing else. All the guards were making our life a living hell. They would some nights hit the cell rails with hammers, rip our clothes off, and spray us with water hoses. This was before amnesty international stepped in. So, the torture and maltreatment was still unchecked. they put us with the criminals. They wanted us to be scared with them. They put 44 people, squished together in one cell, amongst the rats and piss. They didn't have the capacity to hold us all. After all these protests and awareness spread outside of the walls of prison that's when amnesty was able to make moves and spread awareness in the media and get the attention of bigger international organization. All eyes were on the barracks" (Roberto, 41)*

Because of the intense publicity they received from the protests and the spread of awareness by Amnesty International they received conditional release before the 6 months were over, under the protection of article 3. Like Diana, this meant that they cannot be seen working and cannot receive their documents back. They must await the process until further notice. With the help of Ieteke Witteveen from the Human Rights Defence Caribbean organization, they managed to get their case to the European Court of Human Rights as their case got rejected on Curaçao, he is currently still waiting, and in the meantime, he has to follow the strict rules imposed by the government.

> *"So they could say we technically got released and are free again, but this isn't real freedom either."*

The cases of Diana and Roberto in Curaçao provide valuable insights into the experiences of irregular migrants and the dire conditions they face with regards to detainment. Diana's story exposes the vulnerability and exploitation that many migrants endure, as she was deceived into sex work after arriving in Curaçao with no money. Her arrest was accompanied by verbal abuse and mistreatment by the authorities, reflecting the dehumanizing treatment of irregular migrants. Roberto's experience, on the other hand, highlights the initial lack of awareness and

scrutiny surrounding human rights violations within the detention center. The protests led by Roberto and others brought attention to the inhumane treatment, including physical abuse and confinement with convicted criminals. Despite the spread of awareness, the inhumane treatment of migrants in detainment has persisted. Their cases highlight the domino-effect of vulnerabilities & precarity due to their irregular status. These cases underscore the critical role of international organizations like Amnesty International and local advocates like Ieteke Witteveen in raising awareness and advocating for the rights of irregular migrants. They also highlight the urgent need for improved living conditions, access to legal counsel, and recognition of the rights and vulnerability of migrants.

In June of 2022, a new precedent was set which strengthened the legal position for imprisoned irregular migrants. The court ruled that the detention of a female migrant, placed amongst convicted criminals, was unlawful (Curaçao, 2022; Dick Drayer, 2022). The court ruling opened the door to release other Venezuelans who were imprisoned, so long as they have the resources to go to court (Amnesty International, 2023).

6.4. Responsibilities, Asylum & obstacles to Regularization

In this section the several ways in which irregular migrants are hindered from regularization & refugee protection are outlined. One of which is the ambiguity surrounding who is responsible for the migration management in the Kingdom, another is the lack of a proper refugee protection framework in the absence of the UNHCR.

Responsibilities
The Dutch parliament refutes responsibility for the situation and claims that the admission of migrants is solely the responsibility of Curaçao, despite the Kingdom Charter stating that it is a joint responsibility (ACVZ, 2019; the Daily Herald, 2019). During the Interparliamentary Kingdom Consultation in 2019, an agreement on matters of responsibilities could not be reached and the Dutch parliamentarians insisted that migration policy remains the responsibility of the individual countries. Curaçao has requested financial aid and assistance from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to manage the crisis, in line with the Kingdom Charter, initially to no avail despite Article 36 of the Charter demonstrating that the constituent countries have an obligation to help should a need arise (Charter, 2010; Amnesty International, 2018). Eventually the Kingdom government offered financial aid specifying that it should be directed towards border and crisis management, prioritizing the preservation of the European Border and containing the crisis to the Caribbean (Drayer, 2018; Jones, 2020). This is a matter of concern for the Netherlands, as article 3 of the Kingdom Charter, stipulates that citizens of Curaçao are considered Dutch nationals and can therefore enjoy the benefits of European Citizenship.

Asylum
Upon arrival, Venezuelans can attempt to seek protection under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 3, which addresses the prohibition of torture, stipulates that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

However, many are not informed about their right to be protected under this article. Additionally, the majority of these requests, if not all, are denied due to Curaçaoan legislation, which states that Venezuelans affected by the crisis do not meet the legally required criteria for protection. Those who have suffered under the Maduro regime would strongly disagree. Applicants have the option to appeal the decision twice, but this process is time-consuming and they have limited access to legal assistance. Strict criteria demand Venezuelan individuals to provide difficult-to-obtain documents, such as passports, or demonstrate the need for formal sector employment.

Moreover, the institutions responsible for managing these processes, such as the ministries of justice, education, and foreign relations, suffer from severe resource shortages (De Bruijn & Groot, 2015; UN, 2018). In 2017, the state of Curacao discontinued their collaboration with the UNHCR with regards to asylum procedures, taking over responsibility of the process. In the absence of the UNHCR, Venezuelans seeking asylum can't access the requisite certificate which could authorize their stay, placing them in a liminal space. Even those that did acquire the certification prior to 2017 did not obtain sufficient protection and freedom, as they were not allowed to work, perpetuating their dependence on humanitarian help. Anna is one of the people who was granted refugee status by the UNHCR but does not receive any protection or benefits. She came to Curaçao with her husband and two children in 2015. Her husband worked in the police corps but they fled because of all the corruption he witnessed. When they moved from Caracas to the Andes mountains, they were being persecuted by people from the government. They moved from town to town to flee but they kept being followed.

> *"The real reason to leave, was because the government has their people everywhere and we didn't know who we could trust anymore. They don't go after just one person either, they go after the whole family. So we really needed to get out of there, our lives were at risk. We were getting followed, we were like a trampoline from state to state as quickly as possible and getting as little attention on us as possible" (Anna, 43)*

Here they immediately applied for refugee status, and after a long tedious process they received it. In the mean time they were not allowed to work, and did not enjoy any protections. But they were promised to be resettled in Australia, as there they would receive the protections associated with their refugee status. But then COVID-19 hit, everything closed, and they were stuck.

> *"Australia was the only country that accepted our application. We were all set, packed, everything sold, and then covid hit, everything closed and we were stuck again. We cant get a paper of good conduct because we are not registered anywhere. Were basically invisible. Were still in the process of going to Australia but its all taking so long." (Anna, 43)*

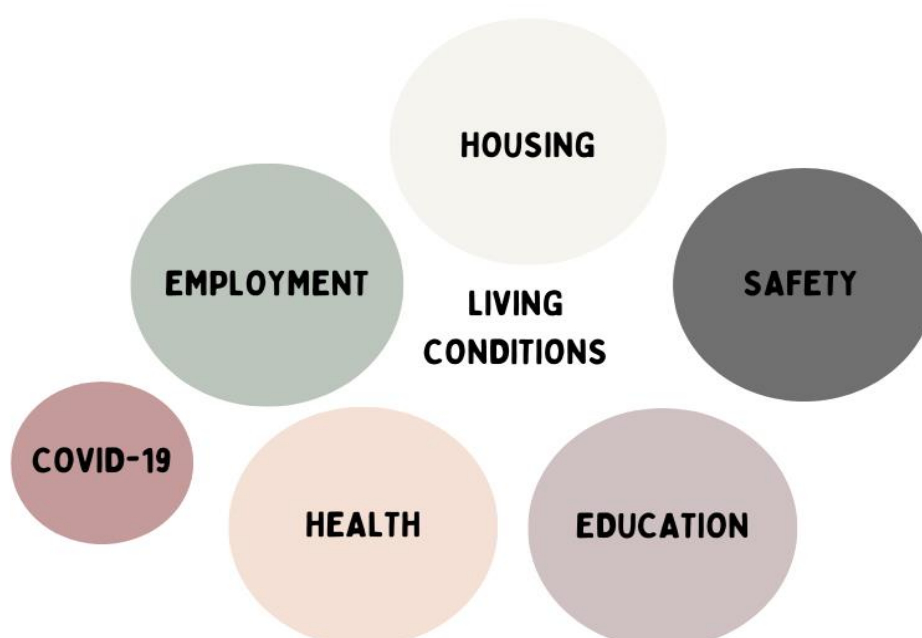
In the meantime, their refugee status is meaningless on Curaçao.

> *"we get nothing, no food, no money, no home, no right to work, nothing. Because Curaçao does not have the refugee convention signed, so here we are nothing, we don't exist, we are recognized by UNHCR, we were gonna go to Australia where they see us as refugees and will help, but here, we don't exist, refugees don't exist, so the benefits don't exist" (Anna, 43)*

The chapter has revealed the diversity of experiences among Venezuelan migrants, showcasing the unique and varied nature of their journeys, encounters with law enforcement, and the degree of inhumane treatment. The anti-immigration stance towards Venezuelan migrants has forced them to take irregular and dangerous routes, exposed them to unlawful detainment, inhumane treatment, and deportation without due process. One of the key principles of the Charter is outlined in Article 43, which states that the safeguarding of human rights is the responsibility of the Kingdom. However, the dispute regarding who is responsible has derailed any potential for improvements. It remains disputable whether the Kingdom government has truly complied with this principle as they indicated that the management of the crisis is a local affair (The daily Herald, 2019). This in part has contributed to the negligence of proper treatment of irregular migrants on Curaçao. The negligence regarding the safeguarding of human rights as well as restrictive approach to migrant's entry has led to cycles of vulnerabilities compounding one another. Not only are they exposed to violence in relation to police officials, detainment, and deportation, but their everyday lives are embedded in it.

7. Irregular Venezuelan migrants
Living on Curaçao

As mentioned before, their legal status in conjunction with the anti-immigration policies and attitudes towards irregular Venezuelan migrants renders them vulnerable to exploitation & violence, as their liminal position limits their access to social and medical services, job opportunities, adequate living conditions, and safe mobility (Bloch et al., 2014). The denial of full personhood coupled with the constant risk of deportation and detainment situates them in the social realm of illegality and precarity (Coutin, 2000). Vulnerability, Precarity, and illegality is produced and manifested in several aspects of the lives of irregular migrants on Curaçao. The position they inhabit renders them vulnerable to exploitation, extortion, exactions, violence, trafficking, sexual abuse, recruitment, discrimination, and xenophobia (UNHCR, 2018). The amalgamated effects of the fall of the petroleum industry, the decline of tourism due to the crisis in Venezuela and COVID-19, rising cost of living and inflation, have had a negative impact on the island's economy. These shocks to the economy have undoubtedly affected the already precarious lives of irregular Venezuelan migrants. This chapter aims to demonstrate the different aspects of the lives of irregular Venezuelan migrants in which they experience enhanced vulnerability, precarity, and are made illegal. The aim is to answer sub-question 2: *In what ways do the precarity, vulnerability, and illegality of irregular Venezuelan migrants take shape on Curaçao & what impact did COVID-19 have on them?* We will look at 5 key dimensions of the living conditions which are impacted by their irregular status: Housing, employment, health, and education, and safety. One additional dimension is incorporated within this chapter dedicated to the impact of COVID-19.



7.1. Housing

Irregular migrants may face difficulties in finding suitable and affordable housing. They may be forced to live in overcrowded and substandard accommodations, including informal settlements, shared spaces, or temporary shelters. In some cases, they may also be homeless, living on the streets or in improvised structures. The lack of access to adequate housing not only compromises their physical safety and well-being but also hinders their ability to establish stable lives and integrate into the local community.

> *"Right now all we can afford is this house with a half-broken kitchen outside, and one small room in which all 7 of us, me, my husband, and five children, sleep together (Silvia, 36)"*

Many people rely on connections for their living accommodations, but these can come with complications. Jenna was offered to live with an acquaintance after she could not afford the bills of her rental anymore. Together with her son she moved in with this lady and her husband. However, when she was at work the husband started abusing her son. Which led her to move out and live on the street.

> *"I realized the husband of the lady started to abuse my son. One day my son threw his teddy bear on top of the man in the house, and the man got so angry he grabbed the bear and he burned it. That traumatized my son, he kept screaming my teddy bear my bear! So we left the house and we had no place to go, so we stayed at marie pompoen on the public beach, thats where we slept." (Jenna, 38)*

After the global oil price fall of 2014, low-income households have struggled to find and afford suitable housing. The housing deficit has remained high while unemployment and poverty rates as well as cost of living increased (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023). This means that many people live in dire conditions. Because of their vulnerable legal position, they cannot afford better housing conditions, but they also do not feel safe to complain to the landlord about the health hazards the houses can pose. In some cases, the location as well as lack of security can lead to dangerous experiences in their own home.

> "*The house I was living in was uninhabitable, it was deteriorating, I basically didn't have a door, there was mold, it was hardly a house. A guy from curacao, a neighbour tried to rape me, and I didn't have a door, so I wasn't safe. I still have my nerves and depression, im so down all the time." (Diana, 31)*

The pandemic has severely hit those who live in poor quality housing or unsafe conditions (including overcrowding, deficient access to water, or homelessness) (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023). The pandemic and lockdown measures led to an increase of unemployment on the island. Especially migrants were hit, as they predominantly relied on work without a contract. Many struggled to cover their monthly rents and utility payments.

On Friday we needed to pay for rent and Saturday morning he was at the door threatening to call the police, without a warning, we were just a couple hours late. During the pandemic we just couldn't pay it on time because my husband couldn't work because of the lockdown." (Maria, 31)

Irregular migrants do not have difficulty finding housing if they can pay up front. If they are too late with their payment, they not only run the risk of eviction, but immediately run the risk for deportation and detainment. This is the essence of the precariat, they are positioned in a life of unstable living, and are essentially a 'broken fridge away' from crippling debt (Standing, 2011). Or in this case, they are one pandemic away from homelessness and deportation.

7.2. Employment

Irregular migrants often face financial challenges due to limited or lack of access to formal employment opportunities. This can lead to poverty, limited access to basic necessities, and dependence on informal and exploitative work.

7.2.1. Obstacles

In contrast to housing, to get a job, documentation is required. Most places of employment require a permit, as the employer could face a high fine for employing undocumented migrants (De Bruijn, et al., 2014). But for many the costs and risks of the entire process, including getting your documents arranged and stamped, paying a lawyer, and the court case, discourage them to regularize their stay. It was briefly covered in Chapter 2 that autocratic states may create excessive administrative obstacles to prevent emigration, limiting their options to regularize in another country, according to the interviews, this also takes place in Venezuela.

"It's also very expensive to get all your paperwork done. The costs depends on what paperwork you need but it can range from 2000 to 5000. Its not just money either, it just takes ages, especially if you need to get any paperwork from Venezuela. It took me over a year to get the passport from my son over to curacao. His passport cost around 200 dollars. So, if all your documentation is in order it doesn't cost that much, but if not it can cost around 5000 dollars and it will take ages." (Joanna, 42)

Additionally, while they wait during the process they are prohibited from working. Should they violate this rule, then the process is terminated, and they run the risk of deportation or detainment (Jones, 2020). Their inability to work further stimulates their dependence on humanitarian help, perpetuates their vulnerability, and forces them into illegality (if they want to sustain themselves). Some, in their attempts to regularize their stay, inadvertently fall victim to corrupt individuals who provide them with fake documents (Jones, 2020). Others, searching for legal aid during their process get scammed by lawyers, who withhold documents and information in exchange for more money.

"We all had so much experience with people who ripped us off, because we believed them so easily because we didn't know any better. I know someone who had a lawyer that ripped her off incredibly. You start a process with someone, you pay, and then they deny halfway so you must pay more and more, and now you've already paid so much you want to finish it, but it

doesn't stop. I don't know who to trust now, at every corner we seem to be exploited or a new obstacle appears, and we need help, but don't know where to begin." (Diana, 32)

7.2.2. Work & exploitation

Those who did find work, were frequently underemployed and underpaid, and predominantly worked in the informal sector (Jones, 2020). Many earned money by selling food. Others found work in construction, as a cleaner, or on a farm. These are all types of work that could slip under the radar with regards to paperwork. Anna (43) and her husband worked at the grocery store "Bon bini" but they witnessed how colleagues were harassed by the police, even when they had their papers in order. Given that they did not have their papers, they decided to find alternative means of work such as selling batteries and food.

Their legal position makes them vulnerable to forms of exploitation, extortion, and abuses (Jones, 2020). Additionally, if accidents were to occur at work they would not have any insurance. Exploitation due to legal precarity manifests in various aspects of their lives, including the workplace, accommodation, dealing with money lenders, and even sexual exploitation. The narratives of these individuals frequently highlight their vulnerability, resulting from their lack of legal recognition, which hinders their ability to seek justice for the exploitation they endure. Due to their legal status, they feel powerless against these injustices as getting the authorities involved puts them at risk. Dorra, has a daycare on Curaçao with primarily Venezuelan undocumented children and has employed Venezuelan women over the years. She has witnessed how so many of them experienced exploitation.

> *"I hear so many stories of girls being lured to come work in an office here, and they get paid like 5 dollars a month. Or girls get lured and get forced into prostitution. These girls come, they take their passport, and they have to work for these people. A lot of people are benefitting from their vulnerability. Exploiting them. They are seduced to the idea that they can finally work, and they have no protection, no money, no passport, it is just human trafficking in a way." (Dorra, Guarderia Gael)*

The workplace represents one of the most prevalent arenas for exploitation. This can happen in numerous ways, such as receiving low wages, earning less than documented migrants or locals in similar positions, being unjustly dismissed without any remuneration, or being coerced into working long hours for minimal compensation. Refusing the employer risks the threat of being reported. This is unlikely, since employers would also be exposed to severe fines, however the vulnerable migrant may not be aware of this (Government of Curaçao, 2001; IOM, 2021). Consequently, once trapped in employment and reliant on their employers, these individuals often find themselves coerced into obtaining false documents at exorbitant costs or being deceived by misleading information.

> *"My husband started working in construction and as a mechanic. But he was being exploited. He would not be paid for his services and work. And because of our position we couldn't do anything about it. The company where he worked said they would sign for him. to make sure he can get a permit here. It would cost 4000 guilders to get the permit. They lied, took our money, and did not get it" (Maria, 31)*

Most of the migrants reported being out of work as soon as the pandemic hit, and especially when the lockdown measures were implemented. Due to their precarious position they had no protections in place; most of them had no contract, and they weren't eligible for government aid. Nearly all the respondents reported that they either lost work completely, or work called in significantly less (to work at a farm/ garden, or cleaning houses or stores). Kiara (29), worked 6 times a week on a Finca farm, but when the pandemic hit she was lucky if she got called in once a week. Many of the migrants living on Curaçao are educated engineers, dentists, and experts in their field, but they had to resort to undocumented, informal work due to their legal status.

7.3. Education

Most of the respondents have children on Curaçao. Irregular migrants often encounter obstacles in accessing education. They may face language barriers, discrimination, and lack of documentation required for enrollment in formal education systems. Additionally, there are many associated costs of registration such as insurance, uniforms, and transportation to and from school (R4V, 2023). As a result, many migrant children may be denied the right to education or have limited access to educational opportunities. Even if they do get education, many children feel demotivated to go to school as their lack of legal status exempts them from receiving any diploma.

> *"My kids are saying, why am I going to school, if at the end of the day I can't even get a diploma out of it. They lost all motivation to study. It's a very difficult situation. No one can help until the government makes the decision that we get rights." (Anna, 43)*

While access to education is a right to irregular migrants in theory, the fear of deportation hinders many from sending their children to school. This fear was not unfounded as there have been several immigration raids at schools (HRW, 2018). Silvia, has 5 young children with her on Curacao, and two older children who stayed behind in Venezuela. When she first arrived here she did not know the laws and rights and postponed taking them to school.

> *"They missed six months of school, because we didn't know how or where to do it, we didn't know if we would get in trouble with the police or anything and we didn't have any transport to get them there. But an acquaintance of ours helped us out, she picked us up and helped us sign our kids in to school. But the kids are all struggling with Dutch" (Silvia, 36).*

Additionally, Silvia has a daughter who is autistic and has chronic health problems. She is currently attending a primary school, but she is nonverbal and might be advised to go to a more expensive school dedicated to special needs children. She is worried she wont be able to afford her child the education and care that she needs.

> *"I'm worried they will say she has to go to a special needs school eventually, but that is a lot more expensive. She is already going to therapy, but they might make her go everyday, and it tires her out so much." (Silvia, 36)*

7.4. Healthcare

Access to healthcare services for irregular migrants can be limited or restricted. They may face barriers in accessing essential healthcare, including preventive care, emergency services, and specialized treatments. In some cases, they may rely on humanitarian organizations or community clinics for basic medical assistance. In 2013, basic health care insurance was introduced for the residents of Curaçao. However, people who do not have a residency permit did not qualify for the insurance, which made healthcare extremely costly (IOM, 2021). Without a work permit or regular status they are shut out from the health-care system, which, during a public-health crisis like Covid-19, is a community risk (Chaves-González et al., 2021).

Research conducted by the IOM on migration governance revealed that health providers did not receive training in providing services responsive to the needs of migrants or on migration health issues (IOM, 2021). Additionally, a significant vulnerability arises for migrants who are unable to comprehend the Papiamentu, Dutch, and English languages, as most health centers in Curaçao do not offer qualified interpretation services (IOM, 2021). Various government institutions and NGOs play a vital role in addressing the diverse healthcare needs of migrants in Curaçao. These include: The Youth Health Care Department (Departamentu di Salú Hubenil or DSH) which concentrates on providing healthcare services specifically tailored to migrant children and youth. The Fundashon Famia Plania which focuses on reproductive planning and the well-being of sex workers in Curaçao, recognizing migrant women as an important target group within their initiatives. The NGO Fundashon Salú Pa Tur, which was established in 2019 in response to the absence of health policies dedicated to migrants with irregular status. This organization strives to bridge the gap by addressing the healthcare needs of this vulnerable population. These institutions have attempted to fill the gap in providing migrants with health-care but their help is limited to primary care. If they need specialized care they have to pay out of pocket. This was the case for Malvares as well as Silvia:

> *"I have to pay out of pocket. Because I don't get access to the svb (health insurance), because I don't have residency either. its super expensive. I had to pay for all my own treatments, but for my pregnancy I got help from salu pa tur. They help with some things like exams, checkups with my pregnancy, but not specialized. I have this skin disease, so I have to go to the dermatologist, and they prescribed me a pill that I needed to use for 8 months and it was 185 guilders per month. Especially because I don't have a job or anything it's too much money." (Malvares, 28)*

> ***I** had some bad experiences with my health, especially during pregnancy. I was pregnant long over my due date, 43 weeks. Im in debt with the hospital, but we set up a payment agreements with increments. Salu pa tur sent me straight to the hospital. (Silvia, 36)*

Because NGOs can only provide primary care, this prevents many migrants from seeking necessary medical attention because the financial costs are too high. Diana got so sick from Covid that she ended up getting thrombosis. The volunteers at Salú pa Tur said she needed to go to the hospital as fast as possible and called an ambulance. She was terrified of the costs of this process, that it took the forefront instead of her health.

"I had to go to the hospital but I begged them to let me out because I couldn't afford the bills. The costs were already above 10.000 because of the ambulance." (Diana, 32)

There are no specific protocols regarding mental health services for migrants. There are several non-governmental institutions which provide mental health support to migrants: skuchami, Unidat di Bario, and Salu pa tur (IOM, 2021).

7.5. Safety

Irregular migrants are often in a precarious legal situation, lacking legal documentation or residency status. This vulnerability can expose them to exploitation, abuse, and human rights violations. They may live in constant fear of arrest, detention, deportation, or being victims of human trafficking or forced labor. The government's restrictive migration policies created an environment in which irregular migrants had to live in the shadows for fear of detection by the authorities (Jones, 2020).

"The people here have some ideas about Venezuelan people. They think Venezuelans are bad fort he country. They associate us with drugsmuggling, prostitution, robberies, all of these issues. Even when I came to visit my husband, the people at the airport always asked me if I came here to be a prostitute." (Malvares, 28)

The fear of detainment and deportation from the police create a sense of paranoia among undocumented migrants, inhibiting their mobility, making cautious use of public transport, and often staying in their homes.

"We are constantly living in fear when we walk on the street. Where are the police doing controls? We need to know everything before we can leave, afraid of being caught just existing on the island. "(Silvia, 36)

"We feel like little animals here. You may be in a home, but it feels like a cage. I feel like a little mouse that has to run back into the walls when someone comes to try to hit you with their shoe." (Anna, 43)

Additionally, irregular migrants may experience social exclusion and stigmatization, leading to marginalization and limited integration into the local community. They may face xenophobia, discrimination, and limited social support networks, which further isolate them from accessing essential services and resources.

"When I was giving birth I was bleeding out, I had some blood issues which is why I had to stay longer, and the nurse was kind of rude to me. She said "I hope for you no cop comes by here right now, cause you have been here illegal for very long" while I was lying there, bleeding out." (Silvia, 36)

"In the supermarket people look at me angrily, looking me up and down, like theyre mad at me. They don't greet me when I greet them. Its also the case with work. Most people don't want

Venezuelans working for them, especially not in their house. They prefer Dominicans." (Silvia, 36)

Normal situations have to be threaded with caution. In the going out scene, with alcohol involved, there are bound to be moments where things can get out of hand. But for those without documentation, these situations can be especially dangerous.

> *"I went out with my friend, and this man just started screaming at us to go back to our country and was aggressive and saying that all Venezuelans were bad and ruining our country. I wanted to talk to him, make him see that I am a human being. But, if that would've gone south, people would always believe him, It was too much of a risk for me." (Malvares, 28)*

Kiara: Intimate Partner Violence

The legal status of irregular migrants not only makes them vulnerable to discrimination by the general public, or risks inhumane treatment by police officials, it also enhances the likelihood and severity of domestic abuse; intimate partner violence (IPV) (Hass, et al., 2006). IPV disproportionately affects women, but migration and especially irregular migration significantly increases women's risk for IPV (Mose & Gillum, 2016). This is because when women migrate, they frequently have to leave behind their support network, which increases the dependency on intimate partners (Gezinki & Gonzalez-Pons, 2021). Aspects of irregular migration such as financial insecurity, awareness of legal rights, and language barriers influence their vulnerability to this kind of violence. Their immigration status can be used by abusers to exert power by threatening deportation and creating fear (Kim, 2019). When Kiara came to Curacao, she left behind her children to find work. Here she fell in love with Richie. He was sweet and caring in the beginning, but as soon as they started living together things took a turn.

> *"That's when it all started going downhill. It was mostly physical. He was a really jealous person, I wasn't allowed to talk to any men, even my brother, or the father of my children. He would start pulling my hair, and slap me, and throw me around the house. I was thinking about leaving him. But where could I go? I was hardly working with covid, I didn't have enough income to get my own place. I hoped he would change. At some point he dislocated my wrist, so I couldn't go to work anymore He wouldn't let me go to the hospital, because they would start asking questions. So I was completely dependent on him at home, and I was stuck. The only support I had was my brother, but he was deported back to Venezuela. He tried coming back for me, but he immediately was arrested and held in prison for 7 months." (Kiara, 29)*

Richie also had connections with people inside the prison and threatened her that if she ever tried to leave him, he would make sure bad things would happen to her brother in prison. After 7 months, her brother got deported and she could finally leave Richie. But he would find her on the street or at her place of work and assault her in public. He was arrested after this incident, but when he got released from prison he immediately looked her up and assaulted her again. Kiara showed a video of her being pulled by the hair, thrown on the ground and kicked while she was down. She was pregnant at the time. The police received this video, and not long after it went viral online.

“the only people who could’ve shared it were the police. They even edited it with funny sounds and music over it, everyone is laughing at me. They made a joke out of me.” (Kiara, 29)

After the physical abuses she got help at Salu pa Tur. The report reads: *patient has been to salu pa tur multiple times as a result of physical abuse by partner. 3 october 2021, she has multiple bruises, pain in neck and head, she has scratches on back and nose, patient is pregnant.* She sought refuge at the domestic abuse shelter Aliansa, but they limit your stay to three days, after that they have to leave, and they get no further means of protection. Throughout the interview Kiara is holding a 2 month old baby, Ibrahim, Richie’s son.

7.6. COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic placed a huge strain on the already vulnerable economy, the living standards, healthcare systems, social structures, and other development programs. The measurements taken to handle the pandemic included containment measures (traveling restrictions), tax measures, employment-related measures, loans from the Netherlands, austerity packages, and measures to stimulate the economy (ECLAC, 2022). The containment measures such as border closures, lockdowns, curfews, the closing of establishments, increase in unemployment, risk of national health, vaccinations, had detrimental effects on the lives of irregular Venezuelan migrants (IMF, 2020; Ratha, 2022).). This crisis affected more than people’s health, as it had socio-economic consequences, the degrees of which varied depending on the persons’ preexisting vulnerabilities and living conditions. Non-residents living on are excluded from any governmental aid during this crisis (Hendriksen, 2020).

The Government of Curaçao implemented health campaigns with a focus on migrant populations in the English, Chinese, Haitian Creole and Chinese languages (IOM, 2021). The government campaigned for the right to vaccinate and get tested regardless of status without risk of deportation or being registered. However, many migrants were not informed about this protocol, or did not trust it regardless, and still avoided getting vaccinated out of fear for deportation (IOM, 2021). In an interview with Aria accompanied by Carlos, the director of VENEX, it became prevalent that the experiences of some migrants were not aligning with the protocols set forth by the government.

“With the vaccines, it is scary because they ask for your personal information. My friends went to get vaccinated and left before getting it because they got asked for their passport and address and other info, so now a lot of people are hesitant to go.” (Aria, 26)

According to the Migration Data Portal, migrants, especially those in lower paid jobs and irregular situations, were more affected by COVID-19 (2021). Migrants were at higher risk of infection (and covid related death) due to their living and working conditions as well as limited access to healthcare (Hintermeier, et al., 2020). COVID-19 has had a massive impact on migrants with regards to job loss, financial constraints, but many also faced long term medical issues from the disease itself. Consequently leading to more job loss and financial pressures, an precarious legal conditions. Carolina has had a long battle with COVID-19. She was

administered to the hospital as her lungs were only operating at 15%. She went into an induced coma, was attached to the ECMO machine for the duration of her hospital stay of three months.

> *"I was still on the machine after I got out of the hospital, I could not work, I couldn't even walk. My legs stopped working, I needed to reteach my muscles how to use themselves basically. And I didn't have to money for physical therapy or rehabilitation or anything, so I had to try to do it myself. The bill of the hospital was also really high. 375.000 dollars is still the debt I owe the hospital. I get tired really quickly, I have trouble with my legs, im still using extra oxygen with a machine. My blood and oxygen saturation is still too low. Im out of breath after a few steps the first months after the hospital I also had to use diapers." (Carolina, 33)*

Prior to getting COVID-19, Carolina was working as a caretaker for Editta, an elderly lady. Editta had applied for a workpermit for Carolina. But by the time she could pick up her permit, she was severely ill. She could not work for Editta anymore and her work permit would expire soon.

In an interesting turn of events, most of the respondents reported that immigration raids subdued during the pandemic, and the treatment by the police shifted. Additionally, several landlords became more lenient with payments, cutting the costs or extending the payment deadline. Remarkably, in cases where landlords threatened eviction because of late payments, police have sided with the irregular migrants, showing solidarity during the pandemic (Maria, 31). The focus shifted from the Venezuela crisis: Curaçao against Venezuelan irregular migrants, to the COVID-19 crisis: the world against the virus. Steps were undertaken to guarantee safety and anonymity for Venezuelan migrants during the vaccination process. However, despite these guarantees, many were still hesitant to seek healthcare or acquire a vaccine out of fear for apprehension (Aria, 26). It became clear how important it was to have a clear overview of people residing on Curaçao as it was a matter of necessity in order to contain the virus. But the approach of containment of irregular migrants inhibited the ability to contain the virus, as irregular migrants were hesitant to come forward after years of raids, arrests, deportation, and general disdain for their presence.

In line with the theories, impactful phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbate the pre-existing health, social, and economic inequalities between migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees & the general population (Mengesha et al., 2020). Due to the fact that irregular migrants predominantly worked informally, they were the first to lose their jobs when lockdowns were implanted, businesses closed, and the informal service industry collapsed. Those who were detained were at increased risk of infection living in overcrowded prison cells with no regards for social distancing or safety (Diana, 32). Serious and long-term effects of COVID-19 could be detrimental for irregular migrants without a safety net to fall back on, as was illustrated by Joana's story, who lost her job and work permit as a consequence. Additionally, COVID-19 has impacted resettlement activities due to the movement restrictions, border closures, and suspension of resettlement selection missions (Anna, 43). The story of Carolina exemplifies the struggles faced by migrants, as she experienced severe illness,

extended hospitalization, and financial debt due to medical expenses. Furthermore, her work permit expired during her illness, leaving her without employment prospects.

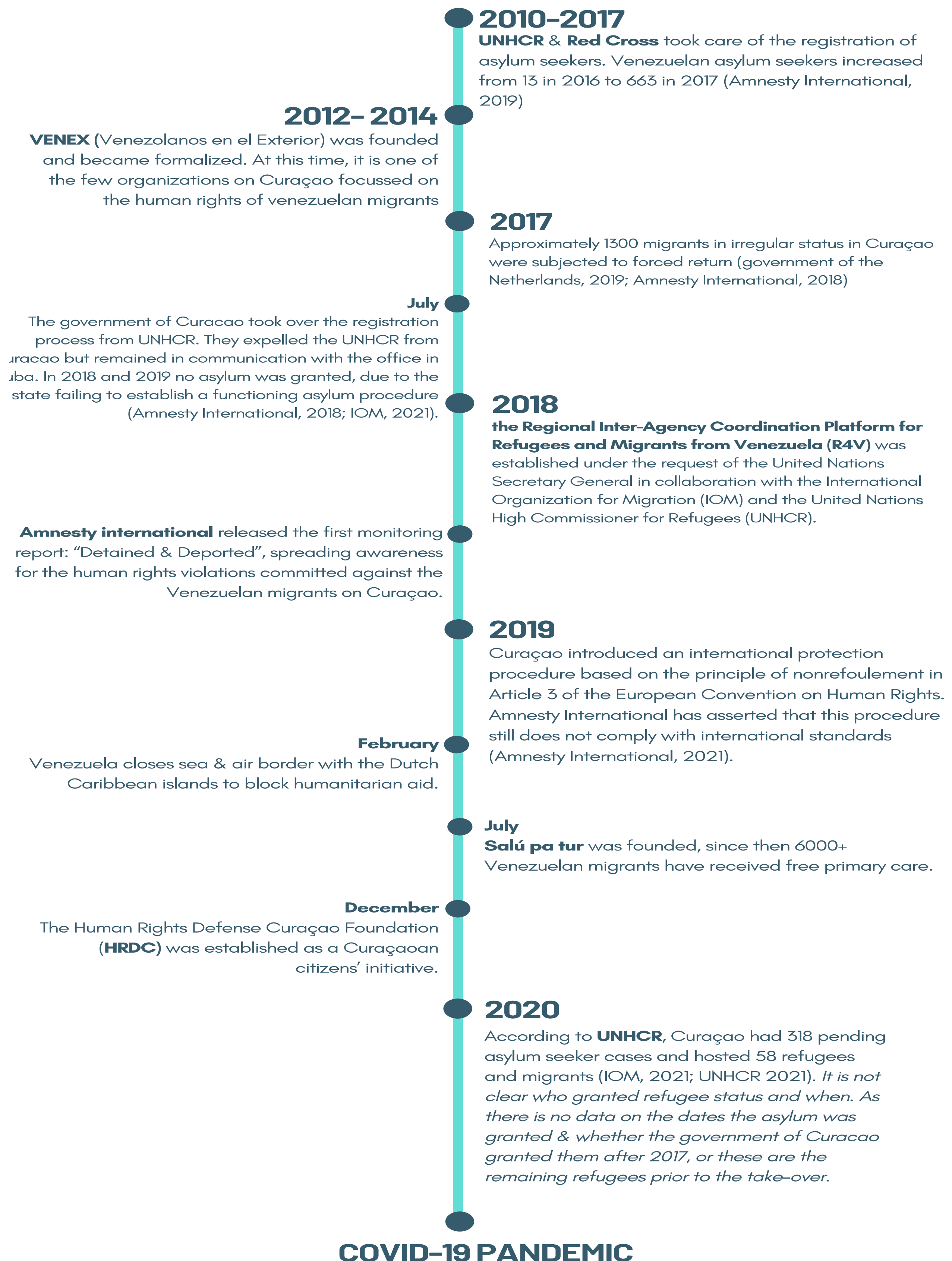
This chapter has shed light on the precarious situation of irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The legal status of these migrants, coupled with anti-immigration policies and societal attitudes, exposes them to various forms of exploitation, violence, and discrimination. Their liminal position restricts their access to essential services, job opportunities, adequate housing, and healthcare. Moreover, the fear of detention, deportation, and social exclusion creates a constant sense of insecurity and vulnerability for these migrants. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their challenges, experiencing job loss, financial constraints, and limited access to healthcare and other services. Migrants were hesitant to get a vaccination due to fears of deportation and lack of information. The pandemic highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive support, protection, and inclusion of irregular migrants in healthcare systems and social support networks.

8. Local & International Aid

The analysis of reports from international organizations and interviews with representatives from local organizations, and the migrants themselves, provided insights into the support provided to Venezuelan irregular migrants on Curaçao. NGO's such as the Red Cross, the IOM and Salú pa tur, have provided humanitarian aid, including access to food, shelter, and healthcare, helping to alleviate immediate hardships, using methods such as e-vouchers during COVID-19. Additionally, organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, and Human Rights Defense Caribbean have played a vital role in advocating for the rights of irregular migrants, raising awareness about their plight, and urging for more inclusive policies and support systems. Through their outreach programs, organizations such as Venex and HRDC, have offered legal assistance, information, and guidance to migrants, empowering them with knowledge about their rights. However, the limited resources and capacity of these organizations often hindered their ability to address the complex and growing needs of the migrant population effectively. As long as Venezuelan migrants are not legally allowed to work, they remain dependent on these organizations for their survival, which is not a sustainable practice.

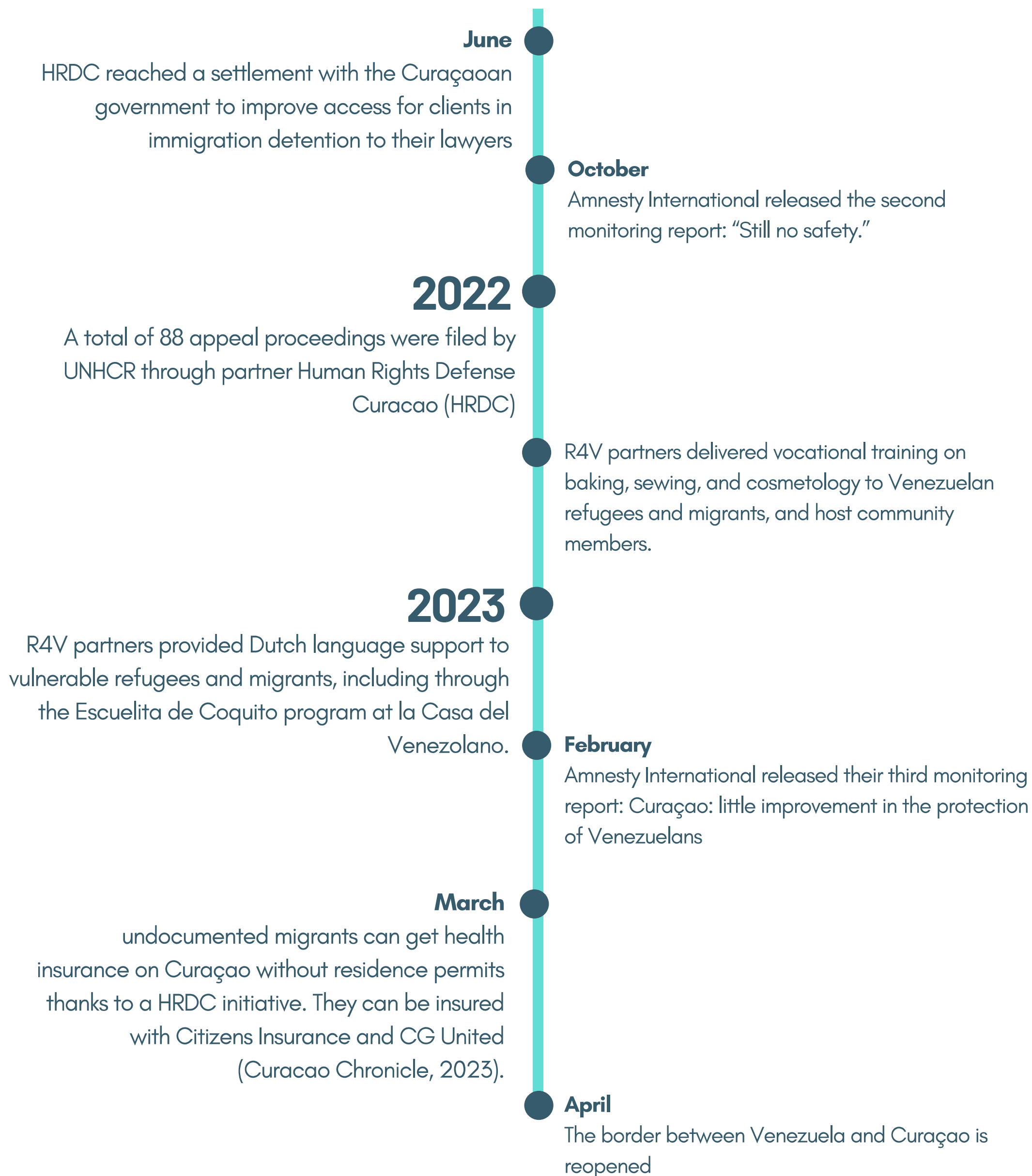
Model 4: Overview of NGOs that help Irregular Venezuelan migrants & their services

Model 5: Timeline of developments & NGOs related to irregular Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao



NGOs played a crucial role in providing support to Venezuelan irregular migrants on Curaçao during the COVID-19 pandemic. They adapted their services to meet the evolving needs of migrants, including providing emergency relief, healthcare assistance, and access to accurate information about the virus and preventative measures. NGOs also collaborated with local health authorities to facilitate COVID-19 testing and vaccination for migrants, addressing some of the barriers they faced in accessing healthcare services.

Model 6: Timeline of developments & NGOs from the COVID-19 pandemic onwards



Over the course of the last couple of years, Curaçao has been under scrutiny for their treatment of irregular migrants. Local and International institutions have countlessly pleaded with the government to change their policies and practices regarding the Venezuelan migrants. Amnesty International (2018; 2021; 2023), the IOM (2021), Human rights watch (2018), and local organizations such as the Human rights defense Curaçao (2019) have been monitoring the situation and spread awareness to inspire change in the practices of the government. After several publications were made in 2018 concerning the rights of Venezuelan migrants, the government seemed to reduce their restrictive migration practices such as raids, detention, and deportation, however in 2019 the efforts were intensified again (Dick Drayer, 2019). The government of Curaçao has responded to the reports by denying their violation of human rights and asking to acknowledge the struggles that Curaçao faces due to the increase in migration (ACVZ, 2019).

The organizations mentioned above have all put forth similar recommendations, which include: 1. Guaranteeing access to proper asylum procedures; 2. Launching campaigns to combat xenophobia; 3. Preventing arbitrary arrests or prolonged detention of asylum seekers; 4. Involving the Netherlands in providing support and assuming responsibility; 5. Granting detainees access to legal assistance; and 6. Ensuring that detention decisions are regularly reviewed by a court (Amnesty International, 2018).

8.1. Civil Society

It is not just organizations that have stepped up to provide help to irregular migrants. Individual members of civil society have taken action to help wherever they can. Dorra is one of those people who went out of her way to help wherever she could.

> *"I have a lot of friends, a community, that raised money to get groceries for the people from Venezuela and other vulnerable people. They needed a lot of things, clothes, food, money, medicine. So we made a whatsapp group with those who can help and those who need help, and then we have a communication platform where we can offer and ask for things if it is needed. This isn't any organization officially, but we organized this in our free time as a community." (Dorra, Guarderia Gael)*

Additionally, there are many people who extend help within their fields, beyond the obligations, disregarding the regulations surrounding the irregularity of the migrants. Agnes Cobelens who has a practice as an obstetrician has often offered her services for free because it would be too expensive without health insurance. Sometimes she would have to send them to the hospital due to complications and she'd pay a part of their hospital bills for them. Additionally, she did not allow public official to come into her practice searching for undocumented migrants.

> *"I remember that public officials who worked for the civil registry ('Kranshi') used to show up at the maternity clinic. But I got so angry at them, that is absolutely not allowed. There was a situation once, this local man had a relationship with this Venezuelan woman, and his brother worked for the civil registry, so when they broke up, his brother made sure the police was sent to the maternity clinic. But I stood my ground, they were not allowed in, absolutely not." (Agnes Cobelens, Midwife)*

Carolina (33) who got severe complications from COVID-19 and had to use the ECMO machine long after her hospital release, calls one of the doctors at the hospital her "guardian angel" as she could not afford the machine herself, Doctor Koeijers bought it for her. She was also helped by the Church she went to frequently; "Cielo Abiertos" provided her with food, medicine, diapers, and a diffuser for air quality. Anna (43) also received help from a church "Caricas" through foodpackages, during Covid.

Despite the numerous challenges they face, undocumented Venezuelans on Curaçao have received support from compassionate individuals and NGOs. Their stories highlight the role played by these organizations in providing vital assistance, such as access to legal aid, healthcare services, and other humanitarian aid. The support received from these sources acts

as a lifeline for many individuals, enabling them to navigate their difficult circumstances with increased resilience. Although larger international organizations have the power to stir the international community and instill action and outrage, as was the case with Roberto, smaller organizations and members of civil society have had a more direct and targeted impact on the irregular Venezuelan migrants, as they actively attempting to improve their day to day lives and reduce various aspects of precarity and vulnerability.

9. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings of this research. The aim of this thesis was to look at the ways precarity, vulnerability and illegality experienced by irregular Venezuelan migrants are produced, influenced and enhanced. The first part of this thesis, and first sub question was dedicated to understanding the root of the response to the migrant crisis on Curaçao. The analysis of the policies, news articles as well as academic literature have demonstrated that there are numerous factors that contribute to the type of approach that Curaçao has taken. Anxieties about their smallness in size, porous maritime borders, limited resources and capacity, as well as a pre-existing economic crisis led Curaçao to incorporate a crisis management approach based on containment- restrictive entry policies, detainment, and deportation (OHCHR, 2018). In conjunction with the restrictive practices, officials employed fear-based rhetoric, associating the increase of migrants with robberies, human trafficking, and sex-work, thereby insinuating their criminality, which in turn heightened xenophobia among the local population, leading to toleration and even encouragement of the restrictive migration practices (Jones, 2020). The discourse often relied on the 'small size' of the island, comparing the migrants to the local population size in order to invoke fear, yet the government has not disclosed the actual data regarding the number of migrants residing on Curaçao. This suggests that the presence of irregular migrants are the result of the intrinsic limitations of the State, despite acts of expulsion and restriction (Chapter 2).

Additionally, the particular political composition of the island of Curaçao within the kingdom of the Netherlands may have influenced the approach to migration. Due to their semi-autonomous status & their constitutional relationship with the Kingdom of the Netherlands tension has risen regarding the responsibility for the management of the crisis. Curaçao has requested financial aid and assistance from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to manage the crisis, in line with the Kingdom Charter. Article 36 of the Charter states that the constituent countries have an obligation to help should a need arise (Charter, 2010; Amnesty International, 2018). Despite this, the Kingdom Government initially refused to intervene, apart from offering financial aid (Curaçao Chronicle, 2019). The type of assistance the Netherlands provided focused primarily on border and crisis management, prioritizing the preservation of the European Border and containing the crisis to the Caribbean (Drayer, 2018; Jones, 2020). This is because, in line with article 3 of the Kingdom Charter, Citizens of Curaçao are considered Dutch nationals and can therefore enjoy the benefits of European Citizenship (Kingdom Charter, 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). One of the key principles of the Charter is outlined in Article 43, which states that the safeguarding of human rights is the responsibility of the Kingdom. It remains disputable whether the Kingdom government has truly complied with this principle (The daily Herald, 2019; Curaçao Chronicle, 2018).

Their continued relationship with the Netherlands as well as the significant influence of other hemispheric powers such as Venezuela and the United States, reveal that Curaçao exists within a 'dependency periphery' (Corbin, 2016; Jones, 2020). Curaçao's refusal to grant asylum, might be a necessity to protect its own interests, as diplomatic relations with Venezuelan

authorities are fragile. Granting asylum is not just a literal act, but a symbolic message agreeing to the notion that a humanitarian crisis is taking place in Venezuela, which the president of Venezuela denies (Al Jazeera, 2018). Refusal to grant asylum and sustaining the notion that migrants from Venezuela are economic migrants might be a strategic decision. Conversely, the media awareness and criticism of deportation and detainment practices has limited the capacity of Curaçao to 'dispose of' irregular migration. Thereby keeping the Venezuelan migrants in a state of liminality; not citizens, not refugees, not removed, but not included either.

The second sub question considers how precarity, vulnerability, and illegality are produced and experienced on Curaçao. The categorization of Venezuelan migrants as economic migrants, the deficient asylum infrastructure, the rhetoric of fear and small-size, and the influence of hemispheric powers, not only formed the basis for the restrictive approach to the crisis but had dire consequences for the Venezuelan migrants living on Curaçao. Without authorized certification granted by the UNHCR, migrants were forced into liminality (Tsoni. 2016). For most of the irregular migrants on Curaçao nearly every aspect of their daily lives was influenced by their status on a continuous basis. Their status in conjunction with the attitude of the locals towards their presence made them vulnerable on numerous fronts, often leading to a vicious cycle of vulnerabilities.

The stories of the irregular migrants illustrate the various ways in which they are made vulnerable on Curaçao. They were vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace, being underpaid and overworked (Maria, 31). They would avoid seeking healthcare even in fatal circumstances, because they did not have access to health insurance and could not afford the costs, although a new initiative in March of 2023 has provided irregular migrants the possibility of accessing health-insurance (Diana, 32; Caroline, 33). Their situation also made them vulnerable to deception, as they lacked the support network that could help them. Some were lured to Curaçao with the promise of employment in a restaurant, but upon arrival realized it was a lie to trap them into sex work (Diana, 32). Others were deceived by scrupulous individuals who claimed to be lawyers, but instead were provided with fraudulent documents or scammed (Joanna, 42; Diana, 32). They were more vulnerable to unjust and inhumane treatment by police and prison guards as they were stipulated as unlawful to begin with, and invisible behind prison walls (Roberto, 41; Diana, 32). Due to their isolation from family and friends, and fear of the police, they were more vulnerable to assault and domestic violence. Kiara's story shed light on this, showcasing how her irregular status made her vulnerable to abuse and kept her trapped in an abusive relationship. Even when she reached out to the police, she felt unsafe and not taken seriously.

Their dependency on individuals as well as humanitarian aid further inflated their vulnerability. Reliance on those who lend a hand can be detrimental when it is retracted. There is a power imbalance when dependency is inevitable for irregular migrants and some abuse it. This was prevalent in several circumstances: one of the conditions for release from prison entailed that someone had to sign for you and take care of you when you got out. Due to their lack of a support network, several women had to rely on strange men signing for them, who they had to go home with. Another example of this is Jenna and her child, who were offered a place to stay

with an acquaintance, but her husband turned out to abuse Jenna's child, giving her no choice but to live on the street. Depending on humanitarian aid, especially during the pandemic was not sustainable either, as there were limited resources. The interviews with the IOM & the Red Cross revealed that this led many NGOs to rely on a selection criterion based on who needed it most. Thus, if you were not vulnerable enough based on your inability to work or other factors, to be helped with food, housing, or healthcare, you would not make the selection. Even those who are undergoing the asylum process based on Article 3 of the ECHR do not enjoy any protections or benefits. They are placed in a position of hyper-dependency and thus vulnerability as they are registered, monitored, and prohibited from working. If they are caught working despite this condition, their asylum process is terminated and they will be deported. This means that, in the meantime, they rely on others, including humanitarian aid, to access their basic needs. Several of the respondents have stated that there is no set time for how long this process takes, and they have not heard anyone receive refugee status in the last couple of years, so they currently wait in uncertainty without permission to work (Diana, 31; Roberto, 41; Amnesty International (2023). According to Amnesty International, not a single person has been granted protection since the new Protection Procedure was introduced in 2019 (2023).

The outcome of this research confirms the notion that vulnerabilities are created and enforced upon the irregular migrants by withholding the ability to move, work, and live freely. Through their restrictive approach to irregular migration, the State forces migrants to reside in the shadows, where they are at higher risk of being subjected to violence, discrimination, economic hardship, isolation, and other social disadvantages. It also showcases how their irregular status, the inability to regularize, and general attitudes towards their presence can catalyze the accumulation of vulnerability and dependency and in turn create more fear and anxiety about their presence. It showcases how the dimension of irregularity or legal precarity can create a compounding spiral of vulnerabilities. Despite the dire consequences of the approach to migration, this thesis attempts to shed light on the nuances and complexities of the context of Curaçao. Through the comprehensive provision of the political, economic, and historical background of Curaçao this thesis aims not to villainize the State, but instead showcase the gray areas of such complicated issues. Curaçao itself could be considered vulnerable as a small island developing state, a post-colonial semi-autonomous state, vulnerable to external shocks and hemispheric powers with limited resources to take on big changes. Therefore, this thesis dedicated a large part to contextualization and the perspective of the State in regard to irregular migration, as these themes are never black and white. This may have been the result of my biases, as someone born and raised on Curaçao, I wanted to provide a defense or perhaps even sympathy for my country's actions.

10. Policy recommendations & NGOs

Before concluding I will propose several recommendations which could improve the circumstances for the irregular Venezuelan migrants and could be used in shaping future responses to this crisis and other similar ones.

Firstly, with regards to the Refugee convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967, ratification would be useful as it sends a good message and paves the way for international organizations to provide financial aid and assist in the asylum procedure. However, ratification alone does not equate good practice; Trinidad & Tobago have ratified both agreements, yet they still enact deportation & detention practices as a response to the migration crisis (UNHCR, 2018). In contrast, Guyana has not ratified the treaties and does not have an official refugee policy, but despite this, they have implemented initiatives to address the needs of Venezuelan migrants (Guyana times, 2018). It would be more productive to develop a refugee protection framework and policies which are founded on a rights-based approach, instead of the current restrictive approach. A rights-based refugee protection framework emphasizes the fundamental human rights of refugees, ensuring their dignity, safety, and well-being are upheld. This approach centers on the principle of non-discrimination, ensuring that all refugees are treated with fairness and equality, regardless of their nationality, race, or religion. Additionally, the framework ensures access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, and employment, enabling refugees to lead fulfilling lives while in exile.

Secondly, this thesis illuminates the danger and consequences of the rhetoric and categorization of a group of migrants and urges to move towards a more nuanced understanding of irregular Venezuelan migrants coming to Curaçao. The change of discourse surrounding irregular Venezuelan migrants, could instigate the change of policies, practices, and general treatment and in turn positively affect their wellbeing. The current "Protection procedure" is still founded on the generalization of all Venezuelans as economic migrants, or even criminals. This attitude and rhetoric form the basis of most asylum rejections and the disregard to asylum claims. Improving the access and transparency of the asylum procedure, offering a fair and effective procedure, and granting access to legal aid would are steps that should be undertaken to safeguard human rights. A differentiated response would consider the varying degrees of vulnerabilities faced by migrants and thus lead to more just practices (and less upheaval from the international community). Although the UNHCR has requested that States receiving Venezuelans should implement group-based protection arrangements, this would be counterproductive for countries with limited resources and small size (UNHCR, 2019). But the understanding of the nuance of the situation in Venezuela, as more than an economic crisis is a vital first step to change in the governance response.

Curaçao should consider humane alternatives to detention and deportation, regardless of the level of vulnerability. Strengthening the cooperation with the Dutch government as well as the international organizations like UNHCR & the IOM could provide a path to resettlement initiatives. Thereby, safeguarding the human rights of those who need protection, but not

burdening the island's already limited space and resources. The UNHCR has continuously offered its technical and material support to develop asylum procedures, implement projects to improve the conditions for Venezuelans and local communities and help resettle the most vulnerable Venezuelan refugees to other countries (UNHCR, 2019). It would greatly benefit the island to accept such aid.

Conclusion

This chapter serves as the conclusion of the study, presenting a comprehensive summary of the key research findings in alignment with the research aims and questions. It delves into the significance and contribution of these findings. Additionally, the chapter critically examines the study's limitations while offering potential avenues for future research exploration. The aim of this research was to explore how precarity, vulnerability, and illegality experienced by irregular Venezuelan migrants, were produced, influenced, and amplified by State institutions and non-state actors. The findings within this thesis revealed that vulnerability, precarity, and illegality are predominantly structurally imposed by the Government of Curaçao through the denial of legal rights, social services, and full personhood, coupled with the constant risk of deportation and detainment (Coutin, 2000; Sassen, 1988). These dimensions were illustrated through the macro, meso, and micro levels, showcasing how the restrictive approach to migration produced and perpetuated precarity, vulnerability, and illegality in their daily lives. The creation of conditions of vulnerability, precarity, and illegality occur at cross-level processes. At the macro level, through the national legal framework and migration governance structural vulnerability is created; creating an unequal distribution of power and resources embedded in the political and economic institutions, covered in chapter 5 and 6. At the meso level, these structural inequalities are reproduced within local services and interpersonal relationships through processes of discrimination, creating situational vulnerabilities as demonstrated in chapter 7. At the micro level, it is shown that the extent to which an individual experiences vulnerability is linked to their inherent vulnerabilities but above all, it is deeply personal. Chapter 8 considered the influence and power of the individual and non-state actors to reduce the conditions of vulnerabilities and precarity in the lives of irregular Venezuelan migrants. Overall, this research showcased the harmful consequences of the approach to irregular migration on Curaçao, and advocates for alternative approaches that could reduce harm and emphasize safeguarding human rights.

This research contributes to the growing body of research on the ramifications of the Venezuelan migration crisis on small island developing states in the southern Caribbean. It offers empirical data concerning the experiences of Venezuelan migrants on Curaçao, shedding light on the struggles and hardships they face due to their irregular status within a crisis context, where existing refugee protection frameworks are insufficient. Building on the theoretical debate on vulnerability, (legal) precarity, and illegality this research analysed how these conditions were produced, experienced, and influenced on Curaçao. The Covid-19 pandemic enhanced the pre-existing vulnerabilities and precariousness of the lives of irregular Venezuelan migrants. This thesis prioritized an in-depth account of the lived experiences and voices of the irregular Venezuelan migrants.

Through engaging with ongoing theoretical discussions on irregular migration from the State's perspective this research has offered insights into the factors influencing the responses of the government on Curaçao. Inhibited by their small size, and geopolitical and constitutional influences, Curaçao encountered numerous challenges to devising an effective response. As a

small island developing state situated in a geographical region dominated by nearby and distant powers, Curaçao's decisions regarding migration policies were not only influenced by external forces but also had wider implications on their relationships with other states. This research established a connection between post-colonial studies and migration studies, demonstrating that the colonial legacy in the Dutch Caribbean has resulted in a grey area concerning refugee protection. Solving this issue requires collaborative efforts to ensure that the needs of vulnerable migrants can be met. The analysis contributes to understanding the complexities faced by Curaçao in navigating migration challenges while shedding light on the importance of addressing historical legacies, and other contextual factors, to create more effective and compassionate responses to migration crises.

Moreover, there is a pressing need for research concerning the effects of the migration crisis on irregular children, particularly unaccompanied minors from Venezuela residing in Curaçao, although this thesis did not cover this, several interviews alluded to its significance. Another recommendation for future research would be to conduct a comparative analysis with other small island developing states who have undertaken alternative approaches to irregular migration, in order to explore the differences.

In conclusion, this chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the key research findings, their significance, and their contribution to the understanding of the Venezuelan migration crisis in Curaçao. The research reveals that vulnerability, precarity, and illegality experienced by irregular Venezuelan migrants are largely the result of structural impositions by the Government of Curaçao, characterized by the denial of legal rights and social services, along with the constant risk of deportation and detainment. Despite this study's valuable insights, there is a clear call for further research, particularly on the effects of the migration crisis on irregular children, as well as the comparison of alternative approaches adopted by other small island developing states. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to more effective and compassionate responses to migration crises in the region.

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Appendix 1: Interview consent forms & interview guides

Interview consent form

This is an interview regarding the experiences of Venezuelan undocumented people, as well as the related support services, during an economic crisis and global pandemic on Curacao.

All questions are put together with the utmost care but please read the text below to know how and why answers will be used. If after the interview you have any questions or complaints, you can contact us by email at:

Aniquegreijmans@live.com

If one has any complaint regarding the interviewer or wants to contact a supervisor this can be done by email at: a.bailey@uu.nl

Please read the following statement carefully as this gives information regarding ethics and confidentiality.
The answers during this interview will **only** be used as information in scientific research. Answers given during this interview will not be traceable to your name specifically. Audio recordings will be stored on a secure server provided by the university. Your face can never be linked to the answers given as only audio is recorded. Only the five researchers and one supervisor will have insight in who gave which answers. If you wish to stop the interview you are allowed so at **any** time. If you want to retract your answers after the interview, you are allowed to. If you have any questions regarding the use, storage or confidentiality please ask the interviewer or send an email to one of the above-mentioned emails.

- I have read the above statements with the utmost care and understand it.
- I give my consent to using my answers for scientific purposes only.
- I give my consent to audio-record my voice during this interview.
- I understand what I gave consent to.

Formulario de consentimiento de la entrevista

Esta es una entrevista sobre las experiencias de las personas indocumentadas venezolanas, así como los servicios de apoyo relacionados, durante una crisis económica y una pandemia mundial en Curazao.

Todas las preguntas se formulan con sumo cuidado, pero lea el texto a continuación para saber cómo y por qué se utilizarán las respuestas. Si después de la entrevista tiene alguna pregunta o queja, puede contactarnos por correo electrónico a:
Aniquegreijmans@live.com

Si tiene alguna queja sobre el entrevistador o desea comunicarse con un supervisor, puede hacerlo por correo electrónico a: a.bailey@uu.nl

Lea atentamente la siguiente declaración, ya que brinda información sobre ética y confidencialidad.

Las respuestas durante esta entrevista solo se utilizarán como información en la investigación científica.Las respuestas dadas durante esta entrevista no serán rastreables a su nombre específicamente.Las grabaciones de audio se almacenarán en un servidor seguro proporcionado por la universidad. Su cara nunca puede vincularse a las respuestas dadas, ya que solo se graba el audio. Solo los cinco investigadores y un supervisor sabrán quién dio qué respuestas.

Si desea detener la entrevista, puede hacerlo en cualquier momento. Si desea retractarse de sus respuestas después de la entrevista, puede hacerlo. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el uso, el almacenamiento o la confidencialidad, pregúntele al entrevistador o envíe un correo electrónico a uno de los correos electrónicos mencionados anteriormente.

• He leído las declaraciones anteriores con sumo cuidado y las comprendo.
• Doy mi consentimiento para usar mis respuestas solo con fines científicos.
• Doy mi consentimiento para grabar en audio mi voz durante esta entrevista.
• Entiendo a qué di mi consentimiento.

Interview guide 1:
The irregular Venezuelan migrants

Opening questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (including age, gender, family)
2. What was your life like back in Venezuela before the crisis erupted?
    a. PROBE: and during
3. What do you think about Curacao?
    a. What did you know about it before coming here?
    b. Expectations & disappointments
4. Can you tell me about your decision to come here?
5. Can you tell me about the process/ journey?

Key questions:

The situation on Curacao

6. What is your life like now?
    a. Day to day what does it look like?
    b. When did you come here?
    c. What are the hardest things about living here right now?
7. What was your first experience when you came here?
    a. Your first day.
    b. What did the state officials do
    c. Where did you stay
    d. How did you manage
    e. What were your expectations

Human rights

8. How do you have access to your basic needs?
    a. (healthcare, food, security, shelter)
    b. What are the main barriers to your access to these needs?

Support infrastructure/ networks

9. Where have you found support and help?
    a. Organizations
    b. Individual people
    c. What kind of help?
        i. Shelter, food, legal advice, health services, work?

Corona

10. How has your life changed since the corona pandemic started?
    a. Access to human rights (health care, food, shelter, regulations, border control)
11. What do you think about corona?
    a. How do you stay updated/ get your information
    b. When you first heard about it
    c. From who?
    d. What do people around you think about it?
    e. And what about Venezuela?
12. What did you expect would happen when the COVID-19 pandemic started?
13. How do you think the government has handled the pandemic?
14. Covid 19 had multiple lockdowns, how did you experience these lockdowns?
    a. Where did you stay?
    b. How did you stay busy
15. What changes have eased your stay on the island?

a. Improved access

Hope/ ideas

16. How would you like things to be different?
    a. (what do u expect/ wish of organizations, the government, the community, yourself?)
17. How do people from Curacao see you?
    a. what do you think about what the government thinks about you?
    b. do you see yourself in the same manner?

Closing statements

18. Is there anything you feel I have missed that you would like to add?
19. Do you have any questions for me?

Interview guide 2:
Non-governmental actors

Opening questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
2. Could you tell me about the organization you work for?
    a. And your role within the organization?
    b. Could you tell me about the demographic/ kind of people you help?
3. In what ways does your organization get involved in the human rights of the undocumented Venezuelan people?

Key questions

Human rights

4. Which groups were difficult to reach?
5. Who were reluctant to accept help?
6. How do undocumented people get access to these basic human needs and rights? (food, shelter, healthcare)
7. What are some obstacles to attaining their basic human rights?
8. In what ways do you see a difference in treatment between the community and undocumented people?
9. How did the community react to your efforts for undocumented people?
10. What are some of the biggest struggles undocumented people face that you have noticed?
11. What do you believe should be done differently? How?/ by who?
    a. What services/ resources would help your organization and the undocumented people improve?

State/ responsibilities

12. What do you think of the government of curacao? (in relation to this)
13. What do you think of the role of the Netherlands in this area?
14. What do you think is going to change for undocumented people?
15. In what ways do you notice the colonial past still influencing current patterns/ institutions/ decisions?

Covid-19

16. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work within organization carries out?
    a. Last year may 2020
    b. Now march/ april 2021
    c. How has the pandemic changed ur work in relation to undocumented people
17. What was the situation like before the pandemic? (access to basic human rights etc.)

Closing statements

18. Is there anything you feel I have missed that you would like to add?
19. Do you have any questions for me?

Interview guide 3:
State officials

Opening questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
2. Can you tell me a bit about the institution you work for?
3. & your role?
4. How has your work changed since the Venezuelan crisis?
5. How has it changed during the covid-19 pandemic?

Key questions

6. What do you think about the relationship between the Netherlands and curacao?
    a. What do you think of the other? (if dutch institute, then curacao, if curacao institute then dutch)
    b. Do you think they should be doing things differently?
        i. How?
7. What is your stance on refugees and protection?
    a. What do you think is the responsibility of curacao?
    b. And the Netherlands (the kingdom)
8. How do you view the Venezuelan people coming in?
    a. How is that different that before the crisis?
    b. Do you see them as refugees/ migrants?
9. Do you believe that undocumented people have acces to their basic needs?
    a. What are the main barriers?
    b. In what ways is your institution working on this?
    c. Do you believe they should?

Covid 19

10. How has your work changed since the covid-19 pandemic started?
    a. Last year
    b. Now
11. What are the goals, aims, and wishes of Curacao with regards to COVID-19 measures & the undocumented people?
12. There have been other epidemics in the past on Curacao. In your opinion how is this pandemic different? & How has the reaction been different?

Netherlands & Curacao

13. We share this colonial past with the Netherlands. How does that play out in the covid situation & migration management?
    a. What new collaborations can be established, based on this past?
    b. Do you have enough say in the negotiations? How is that managed?
    c. What do you think of the doctors and medical help sent from the Netherlands during the second lockdown in 2021?
        i. How was this decision made?
    d. What do you think of the COVID-19 loan and the conditions?
    e. Why do you think those conditions are put in place?

14. In your opinion what would the optimal situation be?
    a. Do you believe your institution should be doing things differently?
    b. Do you think the Netherlands or curacao should be doing things differently?

Venezuela relations

15. Curacao has had a long history with Venezuela. In what ways has that changed since the crisis in Venezuela started?
    a. In particular; how has our view on Venezuelan people on Curacao changed?
    b. In what ways has the relationship (economically, politically, socially) changed with Venezuela?

Closing Statements

16. Is there anything you feel I have missed that you would like to add?
17. Do you have any questions for me?