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Colombia – a Migration Nation: exploring the experiences of young Colombian migrants

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of young Colombians who have migrated from Colombia to Argentina between 2010 and 2020.

The life history method of qualitative research was utilized to explore the personal experiences, challenges and triumphs, of migrants.

Through inductive analysis two dominant themes were revealed: opportunity and security. Within both these themes several subthemes were also identified: violence, education, work, community, health, identity.

Conclusion from this study are that structural violence and uncertainty played a role in

This thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations for the migration of young Colombians, as well as insights on historical and political aspects of contemporary South – South Migration.

Keywords: Migration, South America, Colombia, Life Stories, violence, opportunity, identity

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When I was 19 years old, I moved from Tromsø to Buenos Aires, to learn Spanish. During my years as an immigrant in Argentina, the high number of immigrants from the other countries of the region surprised me. My university had a high number of immigrant students, and the biggest groups were Chileans and Colombians. I observed how big groups of young people coming from the same place and community had decided to migrate from Colombia to Argentina as a group, in search for better opportunities, both work and education. They created communities in Argentina, which kept in close contact, arranging events and activities aimed toward their group. Witnessing this phenomenon inspired and motivated me to explore further the motivations behind the decision to migrate to Argentina.

Migration patterns are a concern for research on peace and conflict. Economic migration – migration for better opportunities – is linked to development. Migration is also often a consequence of conflict, as well as a highly politicized subject which shapes politics worldwide. Perinet et al. (2018) point out that even though some scholars have theorized on migration and development, the link between migration and peace, has often been overlooked. As an example of its relevance, they discuss how migration policy is frequently *securitized*, which will eventually lead to a smaller space for the movement of people, and thus impede potential development.

Furthermore, I believe that the way we talk about migration creates powerful narratives: how we choose to categorize and classify different types of migration, which will be discussed in the theoretical framework, will have effects on how we construct our discourse on migration, which does shape migration policy and migration patterns as a consequence. I consider that conflict and development are highly intertwined, and thus proves a link between both economic migration and displacement of people due to armed conflict. Therefore, I believe this compels us to recognize that our conception and perception of what is a conflict, and what its consequences are, are also in need of a transformation.

Migration occurring within the Global South form about 36 % of the total stock of migrants, and is considered an increasingly important factor of social and economic development (OECD). The Global South suffers significantly more conflict, and has many more underdeveloped countries than the Global North. These things considered, it is implied that

much study on migration on this region happens within the frame of either, migration due to conflict, or economic migration from the Global South to the Global North. Thus, within the field of migration studies, there is limited research migration occurring between countries of the Global South, denominated as *South-South migration*, particularly economic migration.

Latin America is a highly diverse region with a complex network of migration flows, within the region, as well as migration flows moving to other regions. The motivations for migration in this region are just as diverse, ranging from labour migration to forcibly displaced persons due to conflict and violence. Much of the research on Latin American migration has been focused on the Mexico–U.S. migration, as it is the largest sustained migratory flow between two nations worldwide (Donato et al, 2010). However, contemporary Latin American migration is characterized not only by migration to the Global North, but to migration between the countries within the region. The migration patterns are reinforced within South America due to InterAmerican cooperation politics. Acosta (2017) and Ceriani (2013) amongst others highlight the importance of the strong sense of community the region has, which is reflected in the steps taken towards a regional integration, which allows for free flows, with the MERCOSUR statute for a regional citizenship, as well as the several right given to migrants. The region is characterized by an internal openness.

Considering this, I believe that a good case to explore this type of migration in this region is the one of Colombian migration to Argentina. Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to armed conflict in the world, with 7.3 million individuals registered as of 2016—more than 15 percent of the national population (Carvajal, 2017). According to a report from IOM from 2012, Colombia is also the country in South America with the highest number of people who have migrated out of the country. A 2005 census from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia estimated 3.378.345 persons living abroad. In 2012 the number had increased to 4.700.000.

Colombia`s complex history has also led to a decades long trend of emigration, to mostly neighbouring countries, such as Ecuador, Venezuela, and Panama. This has created a clear narrative of a diaspora. Ciurlo (2015) criticizes Colombian migration policy, claiming many incoherencies between what is practiced for immigration and emigration, and argues that Colombian policy is very much focused on how emigrants can contribute remittances to the

country. Guarnizo (2006) points out how this same attitude is reflected in the country`s expansion of citizen rights for the diaspora, such as the remote vote in elections, as well as the establishment of programs aimed at maintaining connections with the diaspora, creating a "culture for migration". Even though Colombian migrant`s primary destinations have been the US, Venezuela, and Ecuador, the migration to Argentina has increased significantly: from 2001 – 2010, it increased with 335%, while the population of immigrants from other countries region had an average of 40% increase (OIM, 2012, pp. 12). Argentina is a country with a long tradition of immigration, and has a diverse population. Argentina typically attracts economic migration with developmental aims, and the neighbouring countries, Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay are the highest contributors. Argentina has suffered several political and economic crises, however, there are some basic principles that have been maintained throughout and in spite of the crises: all education, including university education, is free and open to all residents, with no requirement for admission exams. Argentina has a public health care system that also is open to anyone, including legal and illegal residents. This makes Argentina an attractive destination for migrants.

Deepening our knowledge and understanding of migration patterns in South America can offer important lessons on the topic of South – South migration. Looking closer at a place marked by political- and developmental struggles, where migration is a product of both armed conflict and lack of opportunities, will create a more nuanced overview of a complex issue.

I consider that a qualitative study of a specific tendency of migration will contribute useful information to research on migration, particularly on the phenomenon of South – South migration. The research objective of this Master`s Thesis is therefore to explore some of the experiences of Colombians who migrate to Argentina, which can shed light on the process of leaving a life behind, and the lived experience in a new country.

By listening to migrants' stories, we can go beyond the basic motivational factors for migration, such as better opportunities, and an open immigration policy, and we can gain a deeper understanding of the life of a migrant, which I believe can offer important teachings of a phenomenon that is relevant to the current state of the world where numbers of migration are ever growing.

This project starts by exploring the state of migration in South America before and today, and touches upon the systems of cooperation between South American countries, as well as the migration patterns and history of Argentina as a receiving country, and Colombia as a country of emigration, trying to map out the course that has taken thecountry in this direction. Secondly the project focuses on Migration Theory and Theory on Violence. Thirdly, the project investigates migrant own narratives, explaining the reasons behind their migration, to supplement the findings in the first sections, which can further inform on the phenomenon.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In order to break down this research, I have utilized two frameworks in combination to with each other, to best understand the topic in mind: Migrations theory and Violence. In this chapter I present the concepts utilized to describe the topic, such as terms and understandings within migration, as well as within the topic of violence, and present the authors of these.

3.1 **Migration**

3.1.1 Defining Migration: concepts

Migration is a complex issue that takes many different forms and implies a multitude of social, economic, and political factors that are in constant transformation. Similarly, the terms utilized to categorize different migration patterns also highly differ between countries, international organizations, and international law and conventions, and there is no universal consensus on how to classify and name different phenomenon, which also implies that the measuring of migration stock, and identifying different migration trends is a complex issue. Thus, for clarity, I will define some of the elements in this project according to the International Organization of Migration, which defines the most frequently used terms, and includes notes on who applies them and how: *Migrant* is defined *"The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State." (OIM) Emigration* is from the perspective of the sending country, an *emigrant* has left their country, while *immigration* is from the perspective of the receiving country, an *immigrant* has entered a country (Glossary on Migration, OIM). I will use all three terms to refer to Colombians who have left Colombia, in line with the perspective I will be discussing.

In order to understand the different types of migration discussed in this research, it is useful to organize them according to the reason that impulse this particular kind of migration. To investigate migration, it is common to look at *push and pull factors*, first coined by Ravenstein (1885), where push refers to the factors that trigger emigration, and pull factors are the factors that attract migrants to a specific destination. There are a number of different categorizations of migration based on these push and pull – factors, though most concentrate on the push – factors.

Economic migration is also a term used to describe people who migrate in search of better economic opportunity but is not commonly used in international law. Labor migration is

"Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment."(Glossary on Migration, OIM)

The term *displacement*, refers to *"The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters"* (Glossary on Migration, OIM)

Displacement often comes with the prefix *forced* displacement, placing the focus the element of *"force, compulsion or coercion"*. (Glossary on Migration, OIM), and often includes asylum seekers and refugees, while the first two categories, in contrast, are considered *voluntary*, which creates a dichotomy of "forced and voluntary" displacement (Wickramasinghe & Wijitapure Wimalaratana, 2016)

With these three commonly used categorizations in mind, I want to stress that they are tools that attempt to measure and identify very complex, social phenomena, which means they do not encompass all the complex issues they entail, and that there are blurred lines between classifications. This is important to consider because certain classifications are dominating in International Law, which often influences different countries´ immigration laws.

Batram (2015) criticizes the dichotomy of forced and voluntary migration, calling it instead a *continuum*, emphasizing that persons possess *agency*, and voluntarily *choose* to leave and seek refuge in other places because they have rejected all other local alternatives. The condition of their home country may not meet the criteria of basic human rights, such as human dignity and wellbeing, posing the important question, "How much should a person endure at home?". Van Hear in Allen et al. (2017) discusses a similar issue and argues that it is equally important to give thought to those who choose to stay, or on the other hand are not able to leave.

When looking the issue of immigration, it is crucial to look at the reasons behind the categorization of general mobility in different ways, and the consequences these distinctions come to have. Allen et al. (2018) problematize the process of classification of different types of migration, and that it creates and reproduces certain social relations, as different categories of migration will have different connotations.

This categorization of migration is also highly political process, as it also translates into laws and policies that also reproduce these social relations, however with concrete consequences for the migrant. Batram (2015) warns us against narrow definitions, stressing that the application of certain labels, you affect admission decisions of the refugees. Depending on which category of immigrant a person belongs to, a receiving country can label them as wanted or not wanted.

3.1.2 Theories of Migration

This question opens up a number of new reflections within the research on migration and triggers fierce debates between politicians and world leaders on whether or not migration contributes to or impede *development* in sending and receiving countries. These issues are addressed and discussed within the *Development – migration nexus*, which looks at the link between development and migration.

According to Skeldon (1997, pp. 22) migration motivated by socioeconomic betterment, tended to be discussed within a labour market context, and consequently explained by economic theories. The push and pull factors for economically motivated migration, were identified by these theories in the early stages of exploring this topic. They focused on internal migration, from rural areas to the urban centres, but would later expand to focus more on migration between countries, particularly from the Global South to the Global North.

Within the development-migration nexus, a number of conceptualizations are associated, which I will also touch upon in my project. *Diaspora and remittances* are two important issues of economic migration. The diaspora is defined by the IOM as *"Migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country."* In other words, it refers to people that have migrated (or children of these) who still maintain a link to their country of origin.

Remittances refers *to "International remittances are financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin"* (World Migration Report, 2022), commonly referring to monetary transfers from the migration diaspora living abroad that is sent back to their countries of origin to family or friends. In many cases they are

very large, and in some instances even twice as big as official development assistance and foreign direct investment, making many developing countries dependent on the presence of workers that migrate (Van Hear et al, 2003). In this sense, we can consider migrants as agents of development. *Skilled and unskilled* migrants are also important concepts to consider when looking at this type of migration, where skilled refers to "A migrant worker who has the appropriate skill level and specialization to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job" Skilled workers are often treated preferentially over unskilled ones regarding admission to a country, meaning they often have more rights and benefits. [1] Related to the question of skilled- unskilled migrants, an undeniable issue that emerges, is the one of *brain drain*. This concept raises the questions of whether or not the exodus of young, skilled migrants deprives their home countries of a useful resource. On the other side of things, whether the immigration of skilled labour, *brain gain*, leads to development in the receiving countries. Mavroudi and Nagel (2016) stress the connection between the development-migration nexus and the mobility and socioeconomic changes in the Global South. They claim that both receiving countries as well as international institutions perceive migration as a means of achieving economic development.

[1] IOM glossary

3.2 **Violence**

Colombia is an example of how many years of political conflict has led to an unstable country with a culture for migration. The situation in Colombia, characterized by armed conflict between the government and armed groups, as well as a political apparatus accused of corruption and criticized for providing insufficient infrastructure, has created a country with great challenges when it comes to development, violence, and migration. Galtung's discussions on violence is useful for this project as it frames the combination of push factors that motive Colombians to emigrate.

3.2.1 Structural Violence

Galtung (1969) argues for a broadening of the conceptualization of violence and how it operates. Firstly, he argues that violence goes beyond physical violence, inflicted intentionally by an object upon a subject, but rather defines violence as *"avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs"*, the main argument being that violence is when a person´s potential for realization is impaired. He argues that this can happen through both physical and psychological violence, and that it is not necessarily direct, but that the threat of violence also can have significant impact on mental and physical health and capacity.

Secondly, the source of violence is not necessarily a person, but can also be *structural*. Institutions and the overarching structures of a society have built - in violence, which *"shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances."* (p.171/5) This can be repressive structures expressed through unequal distribution of power over resources, as well as unequal levels of income, health, education. This type of violence is often invisible, and can be perceived as natural, especially in a static society, where changes in structures are rare. He adds that a violent structure is likely to reproduce more structural violence, as they are "upheld by the summated and concerted action of human beings" (p. 178/12). Informal system violence, such as built-in oppression by hindering the access to stuff.

Farmer, P. (2009) looks at violence form the individual experience, individual stories, and how it illustrates the forces behind suffering, such as structural violence. He mentions that Liberation Theology has also been a frequently used lens to explain the suffering, and has often applied socio-economic analyses to explain suffering, particularly in Latin America. He argues that to

understand the structures of suffering we need to consider various social axes, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class to discern the relationship between structural violence and suffering. It needs also to be geographically broad, and historically considerate.

3.2.2 **Cultural and symbolic violence**

Galtung (1990) discusses this further by describing what he calls *cultural violence*. It reasons that aspects of culture, religion, or ideology, are used to justify, and legitimize violence, and is built into the society´s structure and expressed through art and language. It implies that the victims of the violence are also complicit in their own suffering because they participate in the perpetuation of the violent system. Makes violence seem natural and normal. Patterns of thinking and world views. Racism, sexism, that justify the reproduction of structural or direct violence. Here it is natural to look at the connection with Bourdieu´s concept of *symbolic violence*. He argues that a dominant social group may impose their ideology and norms onto a subordinated group so that is legitimizes and naturalizes the status quo. It is often unconsciously agreed upon by both parties.

Foucault, M. (1974) discusses power relations. He argues that power is a relation that directs and determines another`s behaviour, it means to govern someone, not only through violence, but also acts of kindness. Foucault conceptualizes two kinds of power, repressive power and normalizing power. In todays society it is not so overt, but rather works hidden. Threat of repressive violence if often not necessary, as repressive power forces us to do what we don't want to do. Normalizing power makes us want to do what we have to do; it changes our will. This power installs certain values in you that serve the society, the power. It determines what we see as normal, our beliefs. It is everywhere, family, hospital, TV, school. Everybody is subject to power, it's not one individual over another. Social structures continuously excerpt the power.

From these ideas we can interpret the phenomenon of emigrating Colombians as an outcome of structural violence and lack of development, by looking at how the State, by not meeting the populations needs, generates, and reproduces structures of violence in Colombian, and how the Colombian society naturalizes and legitimize them.

3.3 Situating Migration in Peace Studies

It is not difficult to understand that there is a link between migration and peace and conflict studies focus on conflict, and migration is often a product of

Building on these conceptualizations of violence, particularly Galtung´s definition of violence as impairment of needs, we can relate this to the concept of *Human Security*. In 1994 the United Nations published the Human Development Report, which critiqued the narrow traditional security concept, and proposed to move away from "the exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's security" and look move from "security through armaments to security through sustainable human development." (UNDP, 1994: 24) The report identifies human security`s main components as "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want", referring to a speech made by the US secretary of state in 1945, becoming a popular reference in academic circles. The report goes on to describe seven new concepts to be of relevance within the human security concept, including the issues of economy, food, health, environment, personal security, community security, and political security. In this sense, we can interpret structural violence within a developmental conceptualization, which leads us to reflect on how violence, development and migration are linked.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Nature of the research

This master's thesis aims to gain deeper understanding of the life - experience of a Colombian immigrant in Argentina. This project focuses on the stories of young Colombians: the experience of feeling the need to leave one's home country – what lead to make the decision, how they experienced leaving behind family, friends, and a culture, as well as the experience of experiencing life in a new country, and everything it entails.

I wished to work with an Emic perspective, to listen to individuals accounts of their subjective experience of a big social phenomenon, as I believe that how individual interpret their social reality and construct the narratives of their lived experiences is of value to understand a phenomenon. The nature of this case study is therefore of a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist ontology. The research is based in *qualitative* method with an *inductive* approach to possible theory.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection:

In order to best explore the experiences of Colombian immigrants in Argentina and gain knowledge and understanding of the life of a migrant, I consider a dynamic approach for data collection is best, consisting of both macro-level material, as well as individual´s accounts.

3.2.1 *context*

For my case study, I have considered Ryle´s (1949) Geertz´s (1973) development of the concept of *Thick Description* which argues for thorough descriptions of the culture and context to understand a phenomenon, with Geertz arguing that we must not only focus on interpretations of experiences, for it would render what actually happens, vacant. Thus, context is important, and by providing detailed background, it frames the experience of the individual stories and interpretations of events, creating a richer understanding of the phenomenon itself.

In order to provide context to this case study I have collected primary source documents, such as statistics on migration flux, demographics of the migrants, employments rates in the countries of departure and arrival, which will give a detailed understanding of this migration group. To best understand the phenomenon of migration, and give leverage to my research

questions, I look at the geographical, historical, and economic context that frames this phenomenon. I utilize previous research conducted on Colombian socioeconomic situation; Colombian migration; Argentinian socioeconomic situation; Argentinian migration policy; and Latin American migration situation and policy.

3.2.2 *individual experiences*

Some argue that qualitative research can be considered to be too subjective, and therefore that provide any useful knowledge in a phenomenon, as it is difficult to make generalizations and develop theory from it. However, I believe that by parting from an open research question – the desire to explore individuals' experiences – combined with the application of a qualitative method, that the findings from the collected data might offer useful information that provides deeper descriptions of a larger-scale phenomenon: migration, specifically South-South migration.

I find Mill´s concept of *Sociological Imagination* relevant. He argues that looking at the relationship between the individual and the society is key. The individual constructs a social milieu with a reference to a wider society – we should aim to understand personal experiences within in a larger social structure, and how this social structure - society and culture - is understood through the lens of the individual.

Therefore, in order to explore the individual, subjective experiences of people, in my case more specifically: *why they chose to leave Colombia*, and *how their experience in Argentina has been*, the main method of data collection for this research has been in – depth *qualitative interviews.* The interviews were *semi structured*, with a few open questions aimed at guiding the conversations in such a way that we covered the most important issues, but there was still room to include other important elements that presented themselves. As suggested by Bryman (2016) I asked open ended questions, with follow- up questions where I found it natural, in order to keep the flow going, and gain the level of detail I felt necessary.

In order to obtain these accounts, I used *Life History interviews* method, a method more frequently used in psychology and social anthropology. This method, in which individuals freely talks about their life, in a biographical manner, realized through long interviews in which

the interviewer might ask broad questions, request some reflection on issues such as family, cultural settings, social factors, among others. This allows for us to access "the inner experiences of the individual, how they interpret and define the world around them." (Faraday and Plummer, 1979, 776) It is often associated with accounts of the *totality* of an individual's life; however, I planned for the interviews to focus on a particular *event* in their life: the migration.

With this method, I aimed to gain direct insight into their personal experiences and opinions on the subject, as well as give in-depth understanding of their values and social reality, from an insider perspective – both on life in Colombia, as well as the life of a migrant. With the interviews I believe I can see the respondent's answers as what Silverman (2005) calls *cultural stories*, which can challenge stereotypical assumptions on a subject. I hope that detailed description of their lives can offer new perspectives on the life of immigrants in Latin America, and therefore provide deeper knowledge on the phenomenon of South-South migration.

3.3 Sample group

As pointed out by Bryman (2016) for qualitative interviews, a sample size can vary greatly. For the purpose of my research, and considering that I interview a specific group, not particularly heterogenic, I regarded that around five interviews would be sufficient to gain data saturation. The group of persons interviewed was composed through a purposive sampling, with a clear set of criteria for my selection of participants: Firstly, they are persons born in Colombia who migrated to Argentina. Secondly, I interviewed three women and three men, in order to obtain a diverse description of their experiences, as well as be open for possible patterns connected to the experience of different genders. Third, they were between the ages of 20-40 at the time of their migration. I set these criteria considering that the largest age group of Colombian migrants in Argentina according to the 2010 census is between the age of 15 - 64, (Gonzalez et al., 2016), and that I wished to explore the experiences of young adults, between the ages of 20 – 40. This age group was also more accessible to me.

Regarding the recruitment of participants, the persons interviewed for this research project were personal contacts I had made in Argentina between the years 2011 – 2017, and some whom I have considered friends, and close friends. In section 4.6 I will discuss the implication of my relations to the participants.

3.3.1 The participants

Table A

Participants Demographics

Participant	Code/ Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Time in Argentina	Birthplace
1	P1/ Valeria	34	F	10 years. Remains.	Col.
2	P2/ Vera	30	F	11 years. Remains.	Col.
3	P3/ Jorge	35	M	10 years. Remains.	Col.
4	P4/ Pilar	34	F	Back and forth, ca. 6 years total.	Col.
5	P5/ Enrique	31	M	7 years. Returned in 2019.	Col.
6	P6/ Alberto	33	M	14 years. Remains.	Col.

I interviewed six persons, three women and three men, during the months of February, march, and April of 2021. They have been given pseudonyms to keep their anonymity, while we can still feel and relate to their humanness by having a name to quote. The participants had arrived in Argentina between the years 2011 – 2012, except for one who arrived in 2014, and another in 2007. One participant returned to Colombia in 2019 after 7 years. Another had returned to Colombia for a time, but then decided they were going back to Argentina again. The other four remain there still. All participants were in their early to mid-20s during their arrival to Argentina and were all in their early thirties during the interviews. All of them wanted to pursue higher education, but not all of them ended up doing so. At the moment of the interviews two had dropped out of university, taking odd jobs here and there to sustain themselves; one is an anthropologist working in restaurants; one a graphic designer; one a maker of musical instruments; and finally a doctorate graduate in social sciences working in public university in Argentina.

3. 4 The interviews

The interviews were scheduled through WhatsApp, and we had a conversation on what I was researching, what we would generally be talking about and what would happen with the material. The interviews were conducted via zoom and recorded and stored directly into a password protected zip-file. They were then transcribed verbatim and stored in the same file as the recordings. The interviews were semi-structured conversations, with open-ended questions, and lasted around an hour in average. As we had discussed beforehand what the topic would be, I started the conversations by asking them to talk a little about themselves and their background, and then I asked them to talk about their migration. The participants in general started the conversation by discussing their life in Colombia prior to their emigration, and then proceeded to talk about the reasons they chose to leave their home country, discussing both push – and pull – factors that lead to their decision, as well as reflecting on the consequences of their migration. After completing and transcribing the interviews, I had around 70 pages of interview material to work with.

3.5 Considerations on realization of data collection

The interviews were originally planned to be done during field work in Argentina, but due to the Covid-19 situation, they were executed online, through ZOOM. With regards to communication and language, I must clarify that I am fluent in Spanish, with knowledge of the particular local accent of Spanish spoken by Colombians and in Argentina, including slang, and communication was not problematic. I recorded and transcribed the conversations, which were directly stored on an external hard drive, and later transferred to a password-protected file, to ensure that the information is kept in a safe place, as well as to guarantee the protection of the participants` privacy. Beforehand, I considered that participants on one hand may feel more sceptical of the use of Zoom, but on the other hand I believed that online interview will also make it easier for some people to be interviewed as it is quite flexible with regards to distance and time considerations. A person who might not feel comfortable, or safe to do the interview in person, might this way be more inclined as we eliminate the possibility for any physical issues. Another advantage regarding online interviews, states that an advantage is that follow ups can easily be carried out online, as Bryman (2016, pp. 490) highlights.

A possible issue with online interviews was the access to a computer with audio and camera. Internet connection can be limited or varying which can interrupt the flow. However, this is usually not a frequent issue in Argentina. In the case that technical issues would impede the realization of the interviews, I intended to send my questions via e-mail, so the participant could answer them in writing, though it would not have the same level of rich context as live interviews would. This was however not an issue.

3.6 Positionality and ethical considerations

This research has entailed a process which has led me to make ethical reflections on several issues, particularly the relationship between researcher and interviewee. As I strive to maintain a high reflexivity, this is an important factor to reflect upon, as it can colour the entire research project. Grimen (2005) reflects on this issue, and highlights how, as a researcher it is important to be aware of several issues, particularly differences in attitudes and values, differences in the utilisations of certain words, concept, and terms, as well as a possible difference opinion on the explanations of certain social phenomena (Grimen, 2005, pp. 300).

3.6.1 The Role of the Observer

For my particular case, two issues that require a deeper ethical reflection stand out to me: Firstly, due to my recruitment of the sample group, lies the issue of my role as researcher but also friend.There are several issues to contemplate in this regard: On the one hand, I consider that close relationships can give the participants a feeling of confidentiality and intimacy, which might trigger more openness, and less judgement, which can allow for a more profound sharing of details. On the other hand, the opposite can of course occur as well; that the relationship causes them to feel embarrassed or ashamed to share certain details or reflections on their life. I feel my personal relationships with some of these have affected the outcome of the interviews. Several interviewees gave deep interviews with lots of personal details, providing rich details about their life in Colombia before their emigration, as well as their thoughts on Colombia in general. However, in two of the interviews the person seemed to feel not inclined to include some details of their personal history when we talked. In one interview the person, when discussing the reasons behind their decision to leave Colombia, mentioned several motivational

factors for their emigration, and then, toward the end of the talk added: *"plus a number of personal issues*.", which they did not go into detail about, even though it seemed to have had a significant influence on their decision to migrate.

I believe that us having a personal connection, though perhaps not as deep as with some of the other interviewees, as well as having friends in common, they have felt that some details were too much to share, and perhaps they find it too personal and invading to disclose them to me, or they might fear judgement from me. I can speculate, that perhaps if the individuals I refer to did not know me personally, and saw me only as a neutral, judge-free researcher that would only share anonymous information to create neutral research, they might feel more inclined to share those personal details they did not reveal to me, as they might not care that some stranger knew their personal issues.

The second issue to consider is the fact I my self was an immigrant in Argentina during the same period as the interviewees, though with a completely different experience regarding the reason for my emigration, as well as experience during my stay. When doing the interviews, I considered the fact that I am an outsider, with a vastly different background than anyone involved in the topic I explore. I took into consideration that I may have preconceived notions about the participants and their experiences, but I aspired to be them aware as best I could, and thus minimize my personal, bias interpretations of their accounts. For the purpose of transparency, I was open about what my purpose for this project is when asking the persons to participate in the project.

These issues considered, I do however believe that my near decade – long experience with being an immigrant in Argentina myself, as well as having maintained many close relationships with Colombian immigrants in Argentina, I do have some knowledge of their situation, as well as culture. I believe this knowledge might trigger reflections and insight on the topic, that another researcher without this knowledge might not be aware. However, the same aspect might on the other hand give me a bias, as well as steer my interpretations in a certain direction. Therefor I have discussed the topic my research, as well as interview questions, with other individuals that do not share my background.

On the other hand, this research has been an extensive process of comparing my own experience to theirs, with all the similarities and the immense differences. I found that listening to these stories has made me reflect on my own experience as a migrant as well. When I listen to some of their stories and feelings about their experiences, they reminded me of some of my personal experiences, and stirred up feelings about them. This led me to ask some new questions and reflect upon issues I had not planned or anticipated to discuss in our interviews. On several issues we shared feelings. As an example, a few of the participants discussed how they felt bad for having left their country behind and their families. I similarly felt bad when I decided to leave Argentina to go back home to Norway to live an easier and better life, I felt I abandoned loved ones, leaving them behind to struggle alone.

3.6.2 Security

With regards to the security of myself and the participants in the process of data collection, I consider there was low risk for any physical insecurity for either party, as interviews were held online. The topic treated in this research does not signify any overt negative consequences for those who voice their story. However, I do understand that some experiences associated with this topic can be of sensitive matter, or feel traumatizing for the interviewees, and I have tried to be as considerate to this as possible.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

In order to break down the information from the conversations, I read the transcribed interviews several times, comparing the different interviews. As I based this research on a Life History method, with the focus being their migration, I utilized a *Thematic* analysis to further analyse the material, as this can offer important insight to my research question and identifying patterns of a certain theme from the individual`s experiences, might inform on the bigger picture.

As suggested by Ryan and Bernard in Bryman (2016), I looked out for repetitions, metaphors and analogies, as well as similarities and differences in the interviews. I coded the material, and further organized the emerging themes into different categories I identified throughout the process. In the next chapter I discuss in detail the different themes that emerged from the interviews. The study received ethical approval from SIKT, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data in April of 2024. All participants were informed of the study before giving their consent.

Chapter 4: Migration

To best approach a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, it is necessary to contextualize it. In this chapter I first look at the current situation of migration in the world, and then I discuss South-South Migration. Further, I will situate my case study within this framework, by exploring the dynamics of intra-regional migration in South America. Finally, I will examine the situation of Colombian migration, as well as Argentina role as a receiving country.

4.1 Current Migration

According to the International Organization for Migration there are an estimated 281 million international migrants in the world, and the number continues to increase. Around 70% of these have migrated in search of work with the majority residing in high-income countries such as North America, the Arab States, and West - European countries (68 %, WMR s.51). According to the UNHCR, there are around 26 million refugees globally, the largest groups being from Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Colombia. While 281 million international migrants might seem like a high number, it only represents around 3,6 percent of the world's population. The vast majority of migrants migrate within their country of birth, thus being significantly higher than cross-border migration, an estimated 763 million (UNDESA, 2013). An estimated 50.4 million of these are *internally displaced,* persons forced to move due to conflict and violence, according to the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre. This occurs mostly in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic had the highest number of people displaced (6.1 million, 30 % of its national population), followed by Colombia (5.8 million, 10% of the national population).

4.1 South-south migration

4.1.1 Defining the "South"

The world is often understood geographically, but also within a socio-economical scheme based on different criteria, dividing it in groups of countries, or regions, such as First, Second and Third World, Global North and South; developing and developed or industrialized countries; Center and Periphery, poor and rich (Eriksen, 2015). In a rapidly changing world, labels and categorization are continuously changing as well, becoming more or less fitting and relevant as the international system goes through changes, economies fluctuate and levels of development of countries shift, placing countries in new categories.

These terms are also utilized to understand and group migration flows, and the categorizations affect how migration is framed and studied. North and South are frequently utilized in migration research, though which countries belong to each category is not clear. Bakewell (2009) discusses the definitions of "south", explaining that it is often used as a synonym for developing countries, and rarely the geographical south. He points out the importance of questioning why we choose to group together certain countries, and how problematic and difficult the task of classifying the world is. By looking at organizations that work with, and produce data on development, such as UNDESA, UNDP, and the World Bank - we can gain insight on how the international system classifies the world. UNDESA and the World Bank both utilize income-level to define how "developed" a country is, while the UNDP relies on the Human Development Index, which appear as a similar measurement, but in praxis meant that Chile, Brazil, and Argentina would be placed in the "North", when in most migration research they are usually categorized as "south" (Bakewell, 2009, p3). While these diffractions can be confusing, they are a good way to show us how "north – south" and "developing – developed" are not clear-cut divisions, but rather highly nuanced with significant variations. It is also important to note that the designation of countries as "north" or "south", along with migration patterns, is a highly political matter, as countries base their migration policies on information from studies and statistics, that all utilize different determinations.

Economic migration that does not follow the imagined pattern of "from poor country to rich country" but rather flows between developing countries, is referred to as "south-south migration", or SSM, within migration research. Hujo and Piper (2007) claim that despite its

clear relevance, much of existing research has focused on migration from South to North, or SNM. When looking at the policies on migration management, Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) highlight that the research on migration has bias when considering different regions: Studies on migration management in the Global North have been dominated by focus on the impact of labour immigration on the receiving countries, whereas studies on migration trends in the Global South have been centred around forced displacement. When looking at these differences, the authors found a tendency towards a perceived lack of agency in Southern countries, as research on the South tends to attribute trends to the systemic issues and "global governance" (p.3). In this capacity, it seems that SSM has been studied through a Eurocentric lens which has not managed to create adequate depictions of what it really entails, nor provided decent comparisons of similar trends across regions.

Ratha and Shaw (2007) argue that one reason SSM has been an understudied subject, is because hard data is often incomplete and unreliable in developing countries. More recently, Guo, De Lombaerde, & Póvoa Net (2014) argue that the collection of data on South – South migration is becoming more accessible because of the new focus on the subject, as well as the development of new tools, such as the World Bank's efforts[2], implying that information that previously was not sufficient or adequate, is now revealed, giving us new insight on the topic, calling for continued research.

4.2.2 Migration Trends in the South

As the definitions of the south differ, measuring the stock of "south – south" migrant is also a difficult task, and is not a category usually found in OIMs´ reports, but rather ….

According to UNDESA in 2010, South – south migration forms about 34 % (and is likely understated due to undocumented crossing of borders) of the total stock of migrants and is considered an increasingly important factor of social and economic development in the world. SSM stands for about 47% of all migration from the South (World Bank). A study that considers both income level and HDI within the different definitions of South and North, executed by the

[2] the publication of global migration matrices by the World Bank, a further development of a bilateral migration matrix on migration stocks originally created by the University of Sussex for 162 countries.

Global Migrant Origin Database, calculated that SSM ranged between 33 % and 45 % of total stock of migrants, while north to south migration, SNM, ranged between 34% and 39 %, which clearly shows the significant presence of SSM (Campillo - Carrete, 2013).

Hujo and Piper (2007) map out and explain some of the characteristics of SSM: firstly, it is less costly to migrate shorter distances, explaining that both economic migrants and forcibly displaced due to conflicts or natural disasters, tend to relocate to neighbouring countries. Secondly, middle-income countries, some categorized within "south", tend to attract migrant from near low-income countries. Lastly, the element of network and community, based on ethnicity, or family ties which tend to be more homogeneous in close – lying countries, seem to play an important role as well.

Thus, migration flows in the South are mixed, and the flows are changing significantly, with increasing linkage between economic migration, and flows of refugees. (Campillo - Carrete, 2013, p. 20) Another factor that facilitates SSM is the increasingly stricter migration policies of countries of the North aimed at restricting immigration – particularly of unskilled labour migrants.[3] In contrast to SNM, where migrants often consider the potential for citizenship, SSM is characterized by being more temporary and short-term, and people are more likely to return to their birth country than NSM migrants, as many have unstable employment and temporary work contracts.[4] In conclusion, migrants from developing countries that are poorer and lower skilled, tend to migrate to other, near developing countries, as long-distance migration is costly, and they are subject to stricter migration policies by receiving countries.

As I have discussed, it is difficult to get a complete overview of the patterns of SSM as it is highly diverse, covers vast distances, and much previous research is based on arbitrary premises that do not consider all it entails. It is possible, however, to give some more nuance and depth to the concept, by looking through a smaller lens (?), investigating migration trends within a more limited scope, in a localized area, and leave behind previous bias as we explore the topic.

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[3] South-South Migration: Why it's bigger than we think, and why we should care | The Migrationist

[4] The article does not distinguish or elaborate on differences within the different regions of the South – which might be an interesting distinction to explore.

5. Migration in South America

Latin America is a highly diverse region with a complex network of migration flows, both intra-regional migrations, as well as extra –regional flows. Considering the difficulty of identifying what the "South" signifies, it is helpful to find that within Campillo-Carrete´s (2013) matrix, which combines the different definitions of "South", we can place most of Latin American countries within the "south" category, as they are usually considered both "less developed", and "non high income" countries, though a few countries, including Colombia and Argentina, have a higher HDI. The motivational factors for migration in this region are just as diverse, ranging from migrant's search for better economic opportunity, to persons forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and violence. Furthermore, as the migration patterns differ significantly geographically within the region, it is natural to distinguish the sub – regions within Latin America, divided into the region of South America, and the region of Central America with the Caribbean. These sub-regions face different challenges of poverty, conflict, climate change, as well as practicing, and being subjects to, differing migration policies, which in turn affects the direction of the migration flows. For example, compared to South America, the Central American and the Caribbean subregion experience more issues with smuggling, and the troubles it entails, as well as more displacement due to natural disasters. (World Migration Report, IOM,2020) According to the IOM, South America has a total migrant stock of 10,9 million as of mid-2020, and has doubled since 2010, from 1,3 % to 2,6 % of the total population. (Migration Data Portal)

Since the largest sustained migratory flow between two nations worldwide is between Mexico and the U.S., much of the research on Latin American migration has been focused on this particular flow (Donato et al, 2010). Thus, in terms of numbers, most Latin American migrants move north, toward the U.S., and toward Europe, 29 million and 5 million residents, respectively. Nevertheless, there are significant sub-regional differences: The populations of Central America and the Caribbean tend to migrate more north and west, out of the region. In contrast, contemporary South American migration is characterized firstly by a significant increase in migration, where some follow the traditional route to the North and West, though the increase in numbers is not as sharp as it has been. However, there has been a significant increase in migration between the countries within the region in the last ten years (Stefoni,

2018), and the large majority of international migrants are now intra-regional. This an increasing and dominant trend.

5.1 Drivers of migration in Latin America

Stefoni (2018, p. 13) mentions three important elements that strengthen the intra-regional migration in South America: economic advances creating attractive destinations within the region; hardening policies of the traditional receiving countries; and lastly the increasing regional integration. A fourth element to add to these, although perhaps obvious, is the tendency of migration to neighboring countries. Migration is higher between countries that share borders and language (Pinto and Silva, 2020, p. 477) For example, Colombian emigrants have traditionally resided in Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, while Argentina receives migrants from the whole region, but mostly from neighboring countries of Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

5.1.1 Lack of Opportunity

The main push-factor of the migration flows in this region is lack of work and financial stability, and people tend to migrate to countries that offer better opportunities in life. Therefore, the countries that most attract migrants are those with stable or growing economies, with the main destinations in the region currently being Argentina, Chile, and Brazil (Stefoni, 2018). This premise is reaffirmed by another current issue that contributes to this trend: extra-regional migrants are choosing to return to South America due to worsening economic conditions and decreasing work opportunities abroad, as well as the mentioned hardening of immigration policies in traditional receiving countries of the "Global North", typically in the US, as well as Europe following the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015. Notably, many of these migrants opt to not return to their country of birth, but rather find new destinations within the region. In fact, since 2010, more people have emigrated from the EU to Latin America and the Caribbean overall, than vice versa. They come primarily from Spain, Italy, and Portugal, totalling over 800,000 people. There is also an increasing number of Haitians, Cubans and Dominicans migrating to South America. (WMR, p. 103)

Regarding *skilled migration*, the situation in South America is very heterogeneous, though we can observe a few tendencies that stand out: the level of education of migrant populations reveals a certain selectivity. People with higher education more often migrate extra-regionally and tend to settle in the countries they arrive at, causing significant *brain-drain* for many communities in the region. Within the region there are also places that attract more skilled migrant than general: in Brazil and Ecuador, 50% of the migrant population have more than 10 years of education, while in other places it´s lower. (Stefoni, 2018, p. 43)

5.1.2 Conflict

With regards to forced migration in South America, there are several issues that are worth attention. The region has experienced many migration-inducing difficulties, including conflicts concerning country borders, access to the sea, political crises, and gruesome military dictatorships. Historically, Colombia has been the largest country of origin of refugees in the Latin America and Caribbean region in recent history, however, around 4 million Venezuelans have left their country by mid-2019 and was the largest source of asylum seekers in 2018 (over 340,000) (WMR, p.5), most looking for asylum in Colombia and Peru. Most *new* internal displacements in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of numbers have been a product of violence and conflict. In 1984 several countries of Central America adopted the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, a non – binding agreement that built on the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, further extending the definitions of what qualifies as a refugee by including those suffering from the indirect effects of "poverty, economic decline, inflation, violence, disease, food insecurity and malnourishment and displacement." [5] In 2014, 28 countries in Latin America, and three territories in the Caribbean, also known as the Cartagena 30+, adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, "a framework for "Cooperation and Regional Solidarity to Strengthen the International Protection of Refugees, Displaced and Stateless Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean" that celebrated the 30 years of the Cartagena Declaration, and aimed to address new displacement trends. The Declaration was for the first time put into use in 2019, by Brazil, to give asylum to 21 000 Venezuelans displaced by the economic and political crisis.

[5] UNHCR - Summary Conclusions on the interpretation of the extended refugee definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration

5.1.3 Regionalism

As the Cartagena declaration demonstrates, migration patterns within South America are reinforced by a powerful practice of regionalism. Acosta (2017) and Ceriani (2013) among others, highlight the importance of the strong sense of community the region has, reflected in the many bodies of regional cooperation and regional integration. The region is therefore characterized by an internal openness, which incentivises the flow of people across borders by facilitating intraregional work migration, as well as regulating general migration flows and reducing irregular migration.

In a study on Trade Agreements, Pinto and Silva (2020) find that there is a positive correlation between trade agreements and migration. They argue that trade agreements are an important contributing factor to increase in migration, particularly between developing countries, as trade agreements often include migration provisions. The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) is an economic and political agreement between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela which proposed the MERCOSUR Resident Agreement, which allows for the nationals of member states to reside and work in other member states for extended periods. However, the agreement is limited: while MERCOSUR has a large group of associate member states, several of these have not ratified the citizenship agreement.

The Andean Community (CAN), consisting of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Perú, is another regional organization, focusing on development and integration. The Union of South American Countries (UNASUR) established in 2008, is another initiative of regional cooperation aimed at the harmonization of policies, securing equal rights for all nations, particularly focused on human rights and migrants rights. They also work towards strengthening a common south American identity through the proposal of a South American citizenship (Ceriani, 2013, p. 6). A third important step towards streamlining cooperation and coordination of the circulation of people was the South American Migration Conference (CSM), a conference first held in 2000, and is held annually. It has stated that South America´s growing integration is owed to the regional openness and one of its that the free circulation and residence of people is a basic human right. [6] This attitude is reflected in the fact that several countries have modified their

[6] Declaration of the VIII South American Conference on Migration, Montevideo, September 19, 2008.

respective legislation, recognizing, and incorporating human rights for migrants. Many South American countries have also practiced regularisation of irregular immigrants. Rather than securitize and criminalize irregular immigrants have since the 2000s, they adopted a human rights-based approach (Bauer, 2019). Health care has also been a subject of cooperation in the region, through provision in existing trade agreements, such as those of CAN and MERCOSUR, as well as the Pan America Health Organization (OPS)

Though comparable with the European Union, the MERCOSUR member States have yet to eliminate border controls between the member States, and both MERCOSUR and UNASUR base their citizenship right on being a national of a member state, unlike the EU, which attaches migrants' rights to different permits, such as work permits and student – visas. Furthermore, Ceriani (2018) warns that despite the apparent efforts made toward a common citizenship by countries, as well as these associations mentioned, there is no common, agreed upon definition of what is a citizenship, nor the rights attached to the term. A report from the CIDH problematizes the frequent overlapping of legal norms on migration by countries and regional agencies, and claims there is still a long way to go to achieve regional coherence on the topic (Stefoni, 2018, p. 7)

Chapter 6: Colombia and Argentina

6.1 Colombia

6.1.2 International Colombian Migration

Colombia's history is marked by decades of violent conflict, corruption, and organized crime, resulting in Colombia being the largest country of origin of refugees in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the second highest number of internally displaced persons due to armed conflict in the world, with 5.7 million individuals[7]. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Colombia estimated that around 4,7 million Colombians were living abroad in 2012 (Carvajal, 2017), making Colombia the largest sending country of migrants in the region. This adds up to a total of 10 million Colombian migrants.

Historically, Colombians have mainly emigrated to neighboring countries. As Venezuela experienced steady economic prosperity due to the oil-industry, paired with a stable democracy, they attracted many Colombian workers from the 1950s until the late 80s. Another popular destination was, Ecuador, initially because they also discovered oil reserves, but later due to the favourable dollarized economy adopted in the 90s, (Mejía, 2012, p. 192) The escalating financial and political crisis in Venezuela has turned around Colombia´s net migration. has been the main destination for Venezuelan displaced, with around 1,7 million[8] of the 4 million displaced Venezuelans total. On the other hand, Colombians living in Venezuela are returning. In the 1980s, the whole region was shaken by an economic crisis, which led to the migration patterns to diversify further, and people started to migrate out of the region (Khoudour – Casteras, 2005). Currently around 1.57 million reside outside of South America, mainly in the US and Spain, which both have been popular destinations. Many of those who migrate to countries outside the region, usually to rich countries, are more often highly educated. Carvajal (2017) points out how nearly a third of those living in OECD countries were high-skilled

[7] World Migration Report, 2020

[8] Venezolanos en Colombia corte a 30 de Junio de 2020 - Migración Colombia (migracioncolombia.gov.co)

migrants, with college-degrees. Colombians who are highly qualified are more likely to emigrate in search of professional work, resulting a significant brain-drain from Colombia.

Interestingly, in a national census from 2009, 87% stated that the motivation for their emigration was related to economy and work. However, this census was realized in the centre of country, where the internal conflict and the fight against drug-trafficking is not as noticeable as in the border areas.

Following the general trend of the region, Colombia´s migration patterns have in recent years become more intra-regional due to restrictions in immigration policy and worsening economic conditions in the traditional receiving countries. Colombian migration to Argentina has increased significantly: from 2001 – 2010, it increased with 335%, while the population of immigrants from other countries in the region had an average of 40% increase (OIM, 2012, pp. 12). From 2005 – 2014 almost 90 000 Colombians asked for residency in Argentina, becoming the fourth largest foreign population in the country. [9]A 2014 census of Colombians residing in Argentina, 56,8 % stated that their motivation for emigration was education. 13,5% stated work. This shows that circumstances surrounding Colombian migration to Argentina differs from the overall motivations.

6.1.2 Drivers of Colombian migration

In order to understand the causes that have led to what Palma (2015) calls a "culture for emigration", it is necessary to take a closer look at Colombia's complicated history. The decades-long armed conflict is complex and has gone through several configurations over the years. The current state of things has its beginnings with the period between 1948 – 1960, referred to as "*La violencia",* when decades of political confrontation between the liberal left and the conservative right culminated in the deaths of hundreds of thousands in violent clashes between the two sides, with around 200 000 assassinations of activist by the conservative Colombian Government (Chomsky, 2000 in Franz, 2016). From this period there was an

[9] Sintesis Estadisticas Radicaciones a Diciembre 2014.pdf (migraciones.gov.ar)

emergence of leftist guerrilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, and the National Liberation Army, ELN, both with the aim of installing a leftist regime in the country, but with different approaches. As a response, paramilitary groups emerged, many with the support of the government in the name of counter-insurgence. (Franz, 2016)

The role of the drug-trade is another exacerbator the conflicts in Colombia. As the drug-trade started growing in 1980s, with the fall of the big cartels in Cali and Medellín in the late 1980s, early 1990s, both guerrilla groups and paramilitary groups became increasingly involved in it, using it to finance their activities. With this came an increase in violence, as clashes between the guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and the government forces became more frequent and violent. (Franz, 2016)

Egea & Soledad (2007) discuss the impact of the drug-trade on territory. They explain how the illicit production of cocaine has led to millions of forcibly displaced, not only through the physical occupation of territories, but also as a consequence of the insecurity, making moving the safest options, as the civil population in the areas of conflict become victims on the one hand by suffering from violence from the armed groups, through threats, landmines, and kidnappings, and on the other hand, suffer from the responses by the government, such as blocks of the entry of food, cutting off power, creating violations of human rights and destroying the social infrastructure

They also highlight how the displaced receive little help from the government to relocate, and further problematize the situation confronted by those who opt to return to their previous habitats, arguing the needs of these are rarely met, and that this can have new conflicts as a consequence. The conflict and the insufficient handling of it by the state perpetuates this.

Franz (2016) analyses violence committed by different actors in Colombia. He explains that Colombia became the number one producer of cocaine in the world, with the US as the primary consumer. This connection led to a significant involvement of the US in Colombia's internal affairs, and a diplomatic relationship between the two, especially in the aftermaths of the US´ initiative "the war on drugs", initiated during Nixon´s presidency (Franz, 2016). The securitization of drug - trade in Colombia resulted in several plans of action in the 2000s, such as Plan Colombia, co-created and financially supported by the US, aimed at eliminating cocaine production and debilitating the guerrillas. The guerrillas´ association with the drug-trade,

(unlike the paramilitaries groups, who were also heavily involved in it) resulted in the targeting of these groups, through policies such as Seguridad Democrática, initiated under Uribe´s government in 2003. Despite important efforts to eradicate the cultivation, production, and distribution of cocaine, it had adverse effects, also impacting on those who were cultivating other things, and the coca production has overall kept increasing. (Martínez Jiménez, p. 61)

The impact of the drug trade on Colombia's development is also contentious. Scholars disagree, some alleging that the income has economically benefited the country in short-term, while others maintain that the violence derived from it has had an overall negative effect on the country in the long-run, arguing that the drug-trade has caused both social and economic problems for Colombia (Franz, 2016).

The role of the State in the conflicts in Colombia is also an important factor to consider, not only in its dealing with the problems, but also its involvement in them. Cruz (2016) points out how state agents contribute to high levels of violence not only through inadequacy and corruption, but also by extending the legitimate use of violence to extra-legal actors, such as partnering with criminal bands, which end up being corrupt and increasing the violence, rather than reduce it. He adds that this pathology is built into the States´ structure from the beginning, through the standard of practice of privatizing public security, as well asserting authority through violence to its inhabitants. Another issue in this regard is the targeting of social leaders and activists. From 2016 – 2018, 257 of them were killed, mostly in regions where guerrillas are present, and that have low levels of infrastructure (Martínez Jiménez, p.9). With regards to issues of development discussed previously, Egea & Soledad (2007) argue that the State´s efforts to combat their "enemy" through extreme spending (of its own and of foreign aid) on military means, has had repercussions for economic investments as well as strengthening the structures that maintain the conflict, thus contributing to poverty, exclusion, and displacement. (p.187) Another factor is the impunity that surround the perpetrators. Either legally, or, as in most cases, de facto, in the sense that they happen in areas controlled by violent armed groups. Most cases go unsolved.

The role of the State can also be addressed by looking at Structural violence. According to Martínez Jiménez (2016) in Colombia. It is the institutional absence or inadequate performance by the state, loss of credibility, problems such as corruption and or lacking or insufficient policy

to deal with problems. Precarious levels of life, particularly in the rural areas, lacking access to basic human rights, such as water, electricity, education, or health care. The afro Colombian population suffer more than the rest of the population. She suggests (Martínez Jiménez, p.11) that much of the direct violence is committed in place where there is lack of presence of the state: institutional abandonment, in other words, the direct violence is allowed to grow because of structural violence. To end this cycle, it is necessary to improve the conditions of vulnerability to this.

As previous attempts to deal with (some of) the components of this complex conflict, such as *Plan Colombia* and *Seguridad Democrática*, Colombia has frequently taken a security – approach, usually targeting guerrillas, applying military means, and not addressing the issues of structural character that Martínez Jiménez points out as crucial variables in inhibiting positive peace in Colombia. In contrast, a goal of the 2016 Peace Agreement between Santo´s government and the FARC, was to address the structural causes of the conflict, such as the social exclusion of certain groups, as well as to diminish the economic inequality through a Rural Integral Reform focusing on the specific territories that are the most affected by the conflict and consequently suffer from lower levels of development. However, it seems that there has only been implemented military forces to deal with direct violence, and little effort to address the structural issues, and guaranteeing human rights.

Ferreira (2017) identifies the gap in peace research on Latin America, arguing that peace research is too state centric, and is inadequate to explain the phenomena that plague Latin America. Furthermore, he claims that by looking at L.A. through peace theory, we can begin to explain the root of the problems. Violence and organized crime are connected with structural and cultural violence. He criticizes the very notion that regions where there is interstate peace there is peace in the region, an argues that L.A. is not a peaceful region, as it has elevated violence.

He argues that South America is often overlooked within peace research, as there is belief that it is generally peace, and low interstate conflict, and a perception of low territorial conflict. However, there is a significant presence of everyday violence, and particularly a presence of organized crime and drug trafficking. There is a state centrism, also within security, with regards to policy formation and military doctrine. South America is also very “normative”

"legalism", oriented towards rule-based governance, rather than enforcement of them. These two combine make for countries incapable of handling transnational crime by non – state actors, such as terrorism and organized crime.

Also, high rates of inequality and social disintegration. Though the region has had an 20% increase in income, i.e., is becoming richer, the equality remains the same: low. That's why it is still one of the most violent regions of the world. (Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay have lower violence rates in the region) However, violence is increasing and the perception of everyday effects of it increase. There is culture of violence, according to data (like Waldman).

The lack of trust in institutions together with great social inequality opens for illegal flow of money, particularly in poor areas. Cocaine. In Colombia, as a result of the Cold War dictatorships, insurgent groups soldiers from this time, formed new groups, and got into drug trafficking.

How do people who experience violence, structural and direct, navigate their daily lives? The Global South is often considered as totally violent, and inherently violent, but this is not the case. They are not passive victims but have agency and make decisions. Citing Vigh (2009), they discuss how people actively navigate through violence. The violence, both direct and structural, as they tend to exacerbate each other, instils fear that people live with in their daily life. Violence is expected and called normal. Also, there is a sense of incapacity to change, that it is a part of your life. It is called normal, and to be expected, but, most importantly, they reject it as something normal, or ok. They don't accept it. They emphasise the importance of the agency of people, they are not passive, the violence affects them yes, but it also makes them act and make decisions to minimize the harm. They adapt to it, as life has to continue, despite the violence and fear.

In relation to this agency, Aguilar – Forrero and Munoz (2015) highlights how when you need to escape a bad situation, because of bad economy, or a violent daily life, migration is one of the best options: the option is either to migrate, or to join an "illegal army" for many. Additionally, young males from poor areas are also considered and painted as threats to tranquillity. Often painted as delinquents or criminals, as far as "hitmen". With this, there is also relate "limpeza social", where extrajudicial forces will do a social cleaning of those who are not desired in the society- by simply killing them. The era of Seguridad Democratica of

Uribe – Velez was characterized by incentives to kill “delinquents”, often a problem was false positives. The victims were most of the time young males from poor areas. So you are not protected by the State, you are persecuted by it.

Waldman (2007) argues, subcultures of violence are often found among young, poor individuals, who, because of lack of opportunity leads to resistance and rebel against the society, and as a reminder of their distance to it. When entertaining the idea that Colombia has a culture for violence, he argues that the share scale of it all, the frequency, the extremity, and the geographical extent of it is enough evidence to argue for it. He says that this tendency has been consistent throughout Colombia’s history, and therefore is evidence of it. (p.596-7) He highlights the presence of friend – foe dichotomy, and that honour is very important. Violence has become legitimate, normal, accepted, not discussed.

The sum of all these issues has led to millions of displaced, and within the country, we find the highest number of emigrants in the regions of Risaralda, Valle del Cauca, and Quindío, that make out the region where the conflict historically has been at its most intense (Khoudour - Casteras, 2005). The ramification of the conflict and the actions of its different actors, penetrates the whole society, which has created a long-standing trend of migration for Colombians.

Finally, it is important to highlight the impact of migration policy and how it influences movement. Cirulo (2015) criticizes Colombian migration policy, claiming many incoherencies between what is practiced for immigration and emigration, arguing that Colombian policy is very much focused on how emigrants can contribute remittances to the country. Colombia received about US $4.6 billion in remittances in 2015, making it the largest recipient in South America and the second fastest-growing recipient in the region (Carvajal, 2017). Guarnizo (2006) points out how this same attitude is reflected in the country`s expansion of citizen rights for the diaspora, such as dual citizenship and the establishment of programs aimed at maintaining connections with the diaspora. Additionally, the right to vote remotely in elections was established as early as 1961, making Colombia was the first country to allow the diaspora to vote from abroad (Stefoni, 2015, p. 33).

6.2 Argentina

Argentina is a country with a long tradition of immigration and has a diverse population. Around the turn of the 20th century large groups of migrants entered the country, mainly from Italy and Spain, as well as significant inflows from eastern European countries. After the Second World War, the European immigration diminished, while the intra-regional migration slowly and steadily increased. In the last 30 years there has been a significant increase of immigration from China, South-Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. (Migration Policy Institute, 2020)

In recent years, Argentina typically attracts economic migration with developmental aims, the neighboring countries: Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay are the highest contributors, with a few new migrants coming from Senegal, and Dominican Republic. Argentina has the highest surplus of migrants in the region, and by 2019 it was home to the largest foreign-born population in the region with more than 2 million migrants. (World Migration Report, 2020)

Argentina has suffered several political and economic crises, which has shaken its population to the core. However, there are some basic principles that have been maintained throughout and despite the crises: all education, including university education, is free and open to all residents, with no requirement for admission exams. Argentina also has a public health care system that also is free, and open to anyone, including legal and illegal residents. This makes Argentina an attractive destination for migrants. In terms of migration, Argentina has a very open policy. It was Argentina who proposed the Residency Agreement for members and associate states of MERCOSUR, which allowed immigrants to live and work anywhere within the MERCOSUR area, with the option of becoming a permanent resident after the two years (Bauer, p.4) Furthermore, Argentina has made great efforts to deal with irregular immigration. With the Patria Grande Program, launched in 2006, Argentina regularized 423.697 persons, and has continued this work in later years (Stefano, p. 37).

Deepening our knowledge and understanding of migration patterns in South America can offer important lessons on the topic of South – South migration. Looking closer at a place marked by political- and developmental struggles, where migration is a product of both armed conflict and lack of opportunities, will create a more nuanced overview of a complex issue. Considering this, I believe that a good case to explore this type of migration in this region is the one of Colombian migration to Argentina.

Chapter 7: Findings in the qualitative Interviews

The aim of this project was to explore the lived experiences of young, Colombian migrants in Argentina, examining the push – and pull – factors that led them to migrate. In this chapter I present the findings from the qualitative interviews that spoke to the objective of the research and explore the themes that emerged from the initial coding of the data.

After going through and coding approximately 70 pages of interview transcriptions, several themes of interest stood out. Some of these were expected based on previous observations in conversations with Colombian migrants prior to the research process, as well as influenced by research into the background information on the history and nature of Colombian migration, as described in chapter 2, with previous research such as by Gonzalez et al (2016) and Mejía (2012). These were therefore noted and coded as important themes early in the process. This was the case for work, higher education and the healthcare system, and were categorized as pull-factors for their decision to migrate.

On the other hand, other themes that emerged from the conversations were less expected. In general, when asked about their migration story, the majority initially mentioned better opportunities in education and work as their main goal, but as the conversations went on, and reflections on the decision to migrate became deeper, other issues emerged as more important to the participants stories. I found that they preferred to focus on the troubles of Colombia, rather than their experiences as migrants, which initially had been an important part of this project, driving this project toward a different direction. The participants generally spoke about their experience in Argentina by contrasting it with life in Colombia, focusing particularly on the prevalence of violence in the Colombian society, and how deeply it affects many aspects of their daily life and identified it as a defining push-factor. Among the things mentioned related to the topic of violence and its impact, the participants discussed corruption in the government, lack of trust in, and help from the State, normalization of violence, in addition to reflections on the consequences of the armed conflict and the drug trade on their everyday life. I find that this is a marker of how violence is unfortunately an integral part of their lives, indicating that violence is deeply embedded and inseparable from their daily existence.

In this chapter I will present a summary of the participants stories around the migration experience.

7.1 Stories of opportunities

Overall, when sharing the reasons behind their migration, Argentina was described as "*tranquilo*", as quiet and easy, in comparison to Colombia. A participant called those who don't migrate "*brave"* and said that she admired them for their courage to stay in Colombia, despite the violence and insecurity.

One participant talked of how different life was for those who had not left their home. He highlighted how they were "stuck" in the same place and had no achieved much, that they had little resources. He reflected on the great things achieved by him and his friends that had migrated, and then returned to Colombia, and explained that those experiences contributed to great change in the town they were from, bringing back knowledge from Argentina.

This shows how Argentina was narrated as a place of opportunity, and as opposite to Colombia. Following, I will share their stories that highlighted this perspective.

7.1.1 Stories of education

When asked about their emigration, all six participants early in the conversation mentioned that the objective of their move was education, to attend the university. Some of the participants went into great detail about their personal experiences with school and university in Colombia, while others talked more in general about their perception of the educational system in Colombia and reflected on the troubles of it.

The economic stratification, or "*estratos economicos*" of Colombia were mentioned by several of the participants as a defining category of way of life for the Colombian people. Particularly in relation to education this seemed like a way in which the Colombian society is segregated.

When discussing primary and secondary school, money was a defining issue. The difference between private and public school came up several times with different participants, explaining that private school was generally considered to be of higher status. One participant talked about his experience of moving from a public school to a private one, and claimed it had changed his life. He described public school in Cali as "heavy" because there are usually significantly more students and therefore it´s more difficult to maintain order, while private school was a lot stricter

with much fewer students. He spoke about how he had failed a year in secondary public school, because he started to consume drugs and play videogames, but then was taken out and put into private school by his mother. He says this event turned his life around 180 degrees, and he became a good student who surrounded himself with others who took school seriously and was closely followed up by teachers. Another participant spoke about how she had been very lucky to attend a private school only because her aunt, and primary caretaker, worked there, and got a discount. She talked about how she was surrounded by very rich and affluential people and would later on in the conversation talk about how many of the kids attending there, her friends, were children of people connected to drug trafficking.

With regards to university, all six asserted that it being expensive was the biggest issue. Many of them expressed that it is nearly impossible to combine studying with work due to high costs and low wages – and work was absolutely necessary to survive - and that this was the reason they had not gone to university or had ended up dropping out. Some had parents or relatives that paid for the university fees for some time, others not. Some had taken up expensive student loans with very high interests, that *"take forever"* to pay back. All interviewees mentioned that they had heard through friends that university was free in Argentina, and that it was possible to study and work at the same time there. Additionally, because university in Colombia is so expensive, you are obligated to finish your education as fast as possible. In contrast, in Argentina you could work part time and study part time, as you did not need to finish within a certain time limit. However, in the aftermath of their emigration, it is pertinent to note that many take very long, or even do not finish their degree. In this group half of them eventually finished their initial plan.

Furthermore, as a reason of motivation, they discussed how difficult it is to be accepted at a university in Colombia, due to very difficult admission tests to enter the public universities, which one participant called a "*brutal filter"*. They explained how difficult it was because there were always very few study spaces and hundreds of thousands of applicants. Two participants explained that this, next to being free, was a big motivational factor because in Argentina there is no admission exam to enter university.

Although public university is free in Argentina, there are many private universities with good reputations. They are not free, but the prices are in average much lower than in Colombia and

other countries in Latin America, and there are therefore usually high numbers of foreign students. One interviewee explained that it was cheaper for her to come and live and study her postgrad in Argentina in a private university than in Colombia.

Another issue a participant expressed grievances with, and a motivational factor for her move to Argentina, was the academic focus in Colombia. She spoke about how she was pressured to pursue certain topics in her postgrad program, (she was a Social Communications graduate, but was pushed in Political Science for her postgraduation programme) and that they always researched the same topics, particularly issues on ethnicity and forced displacement, and concluded that they are not interested in understanding or resolving the real issues that are problem for Colombia, and that this was exhausting.

Another participant expressed similar concerns about studying in Colombia, explaining that the academic orientation he was interested in was not offered in his part of the country, which was more rural, and thus focused more on agricultural studies. He therefor moved to Bogotá where he felt he would fit in more, and he found more likeminded people, that shared his interests, such as politics.

A participant that had both studied and been employed at a public university in Colombia expressed deep disappointment with the educational system. They explained that the professors at the public university they worked at were often from the same few powerful families that "run the city". She mentioned a great distance between the public university and the public administration and explained how a professor at a public university would never work in public administration, as is often the case in Argentina, and concluded that the professors were only concerned with money and protecting their job. This resonated with comments other participants had made about powerful families in Colombia, and how they "run the country".

For one participant Colombia has a big problem with education and argued that in reality it is being denied the population, to keep the population ignorant.

One participant reflected on how studying is perceived in Colombia and said that they would always be told that studying will give you a better life. He said he all his life had heard: *"those who don't study are stupid and stupid people are street sweepers. Not that it is bad to sweep the streets, but rather, it's about aspiring for a better life, better quality of life."(Enrique)*

On this topic, a participant discussed how lower and middle – class usually did not have the resources to pay for education and would therefor start a career in the army as an alternative route. [10]Colombia has since 1886 an obligatory military service, currently for 12 months, though registered students can opt out. Overall, the participants believe that education ensures you a job, which ensures you a better life. Several participants also discussed the big wage gaps in Colombia and stated that if you are lucky enough to have a title, a profession, you could earn a great wage.

7.1.2 Stories of *Work*

The difficulties of work life in Colombia frequently came up during the conversations. As mentioned earlier when discussing education, several participants claimed that studying and working at the same time just was not compatible, and that they heard that in Argentina it was, and were motivated to leave because of this. One person talked about how they had given up on the dream of going to the university because they had to start working at 16 years old to help out their family, and later, at 17, they had to move alone to the city of Cali because there were more work opportunities there.

Others also stated that the lack of work initially pushed them to migrate to bigger cities within the country, such as Santiago de Cali and Bogotá. However, life in the cities were not easy. One participant compared the work life in Bogotá and Buenos Aires, saying that the cities were very different, that the pay in Bogotá was barely enough to pay the room she stayed in. She said Buenos Aires is a city that invites you to stay there, there is always some work you can do, and she highlighted the transportation system as a great facilitator for work – life balance.

Another participant pointed out how he had never lacked work in Argentina, there was always some work available. He explained that he had been able to save money for the first time in his life, and with this he had enough to get a loan to buy a motorcycle, which he now almost had paid off. One participant said that she initially had got some money from her aunt, which was enough to live for two months in Argentina, but since then, for almost ten years, she had been able to sustain herself (and several dogs and cats) on her own.

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[10] ¿Quiénes están en obligación de prestar servicio militar en Colombia? (wradio.com.co)

As mentioned previously, several participants also highlighted the stark difference in wages between professionals and non-professionals in Colombia. According to statista.com, Colombia has the second worst income distribution in Latin America, while Argentina was in 11th place, out of 15 countries compared. The understanding was mostly that people that have a profession would have a good life, but they argued that access to education that gives you that profession is very limited, as discussed previously. Furthermore, the way work gives meaning and purpose to your life was brought up. One person mentions how many fall into drugs and depression because they have no hope to find a decent way of life, and thus no hope for the future. He said it is so easy to fall into hopelessness, and therefore laziness and lack of motivation.

One participant discussed how many of those who did not have many resources would often end up in the military, because they had little other opportunity.

"Poor people are so invisible to the state. Imagine, from birth. People are born, without education, without health care. Invisible. […] They will not have a future, you see. So, these criminal bands come and take advantage of these people. They get guns, y they are paid. They obviously feel like... Like 'hey, I have value here, and for the state and society I am invisible, but for these people I serve a purpose" (Valeria)

An issue I had not expected to be discussed so directly and be so deeply reflected upon, was the trouble of time. Several participants discussed how time was very important to them. They talked about how in Colombia the work life does not give you time for anything else. One person explained that even though she earned more money in Colombia as a professional than in Argentina, the demands of the job was not worth it, as she would regularly work overtime, and was expected to constantly abide to her superiors needs. In contrast, she talked about how Argentina had allowed her to fulfil her dream of studying theatre, on her free time, illustrating how there was more free time. Another person explained that to have a life even remotely dignified in Colombia, you need to spend all your time working. He went on to say that he does not want to work just to survive, and that he moved to Argentina because he heard that there he could work, but also pursue other interests.

One participant directly stated that she had learned to value time in a new way: *"[Argentina] gives you time. This is the thing, I mean, I always found in Buenos Aires: time! The value of time. Here [in Colombia] it is like time belongs to the system. Someone is always controlling*

your time. Like taking a bus that takes two hours… Your lunch break: if the boss allows you to have one or not. They always steal your time. So, I have started to value time a lot." (Pilar)

However, it is clear that although work-life balance seems harsher in Colombia, it is no picnic in Argentina either. One participant talked about how her desires and priorities had changed with her age, saying how she no longer idealized Argentina, and was tired of working in restaurants for long hours, and now had more immediate and material needs, wanting to be more economically stable, and planned to move to Ecuador later, as they are better economically. Another person also played with the idea of continuing to migrate to a new place.

The consequences of the pandemic also came up. One participant expressed a lot of frustration with Colombia and claimed that around 500 000 people had lost their jobs, arguing that the only ones who were saved were the banks, and that many smaller businesses went under. With this in mind, they claimed that informal work was increasing.

7.1.2.1 Informal work

In relation to work life and opportunities, the presence of what they usually called "the *mafia*" or "*narcos*" was also frequently brought up. One person talked about how extortion from mafias was very present in his hometown, explaining how criminal bands would control informal workers. As an example, he explained that if you want to put up a stand to sell cilantro, you need to ask permission to the cilantro cartel, and pay commissions to them, if not they will kill you. The same is happening with potatoes, he added.

The role of drug-trafficking in the Colombian labour- market is an extremely sensitive and complex issue. One participant talked about how their mother had worked in drug-financed businesses. This had given them a life of luxury, and the bosses would help them out financially any time they needed something, and also would throw lavish parties and give hundred-dollar bills as gifts to small children. However, when the drug-lords fell and the businesses with them were shut down, their family lost everything, including their home. Another participant lamented the setbacks the country has suffered with regards to drug-traffic, claiming that farmers in the countryside that were dedicated to cultivation of coffee and other vegetables were now being forced into coca-production again.

This has created a culture of making it on one's own, as there is no one to save you. Words like "*remarla*" (rowing, to keep afloat) and "*rebusque*" (figure out, found solution) were words that were repeated in the conversations about work, describing the struggle of not finding a job, and how they often would need to figure out a different way of making a living, coming up with some kind of solution, such as selling homemade empanadas, or coffee in the streets. One directly said that Colombians are experts at this.

7.1.3 Stories of *health*

The health care system in Colombia and how different it is from the Argentinian system was also a subject that would come up during the conversations.

One participant directly stated that the free health care system was a motivating factor for his migration, and that this would give him a better quality of life. Another expressed her joy of how the Argentinian system would help whoever, even immigrants. Another participant, that at the time of the conversations were back in Colombia, said she was postponing their medical visits they needed to do for when they would return to Argentina.

One participant expressed his frustration with how the health care system, like everything else in Colombia he said, only serves you if you have money. He stated that instead of assisting and including you, it's just a business. Another talked about how it's only the poor that die from COVID.

Other participants were upset about the inadequacy of it, which had become especially evident with COVID – 19. One participant discussed how her family suffered from various serious illnesses, and how she was worried for them in this time. She also said she was shocked because people close to her were dying and said that even young healthy people had died from it, because of lack of health care. Another participant expressed their frustration with the progress of the vaccination of the Colombian government, highlighting how the purchases of military equipment were prioritized instead.

"I also felt, like, once again [during Covid – 19] we are being governed by "narcos". And being governed again by "narcos" means total submission, and nothing will change. So, I said no, no more. I can't be here any longer... I had to go back [to Argentina]." (Pilar)

7.1.4 A short story on Community

Colombian migration has a long history and migration of Colombians to Argentina has for about a decade been significant. There is a large community in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires. Four of six participants mentioned already having contacts and friends residing in Argentina before going there, and said that they were influential in the decision to migrate there. One participant remarked on a comment her Colombian friend had made about not wanting to go back, saying that she basically lived there already, implying that the Colombian community in Buenos Aires is so big.

7.2 Stories of violence

Perhaps the issue that was mentioned the most frequently, also permeating the before mentioned themes under discussion, was the violence in Colombia. Experiences of violence and corruption were mentioned in both school and work life and was a factor that all six people reflected deeply on, and pointed out as a major factor in their description of what made life in Colombia so difficult. As this topic was so prevalent, I decided to divide it in subthemes.

7.2.1 Stories of *violence and identity*

All of the participants shared encounters of physical violence in their lives, either in their close relationships, such as friends and family. One participant expressed that she had never lacked bread or shelter, but still that violence was always a part of her life, illustrating the overarching presence of it in their lives. On participant shared how one particular, heartbreaking incident of violence was the defining factor of her decision to leave Colombia:

"They murdered my mother, so to me, I think that is the biggest, the biggest… The biggest force that made me leave Colombia, so much that I still don't even think about going back to Colombia. I am never going back to Colombia." (Valeria)

Another participant shared a story that illustrates how early in life the violence became a part of his life, and gave a trauma that would follow him as he grew up:

"At around two, three years old I moved to Cali. (…) And at that time there was a park, and when you're little you go to the park. And in front was the fire department, and they let me play there, sit in the trucks. Until one day a car bomb exploded. I don´t remember anything, I

remember the park, the firefighters, but that… My mind erased it. But I´ve been told that for around two years I didn´t want to go outside, or to the park, because I was afraid. (…) Yes, that was maybe my first encounter with the violence in Colombia" (Enrique)

The participants also lamented how violence was such a normal part of life in the Colombian society, and witnessing killings were not an uncommon occurrence. *"It's not like `wow, he was killed! ` Its normal. The violence is very normalized. It's like, when I was a kid, when someone was killed, it was a custom to go see them. To see the dead guy. That was normal. Like, the person dying and around him people staring and gossiping"* (Enrique) One participant talked with horror about how her boyfriend, who had attended public school, had told her that from his graduating class only a few - around eight - were still alive, the rest had died or been killed for different reasons.

The words "normalized" and "naturalized" would come up frequently when talking about violence. They described a culture where violence is not only considered a normal part of everyday life, but also often justified and perpetuated by the people:

"Instead of questioning why they are murdering people, […] they are saying, `well, the kid must have done something to get murdered` It's like, they kill tons of people, and always people say, `well they must have done something [to deserve it].`" (Jorge)

"It is so bad, very bad, because there is so much powerlessness in this regard, it kills me, the naturalization of the violence is so strong" (Vera)

The participants shared that they felt Colombians are so accustomed to the violence, that they consider it a part of their culture. Violence is so ingrained in their lives, from childhood exposure, to the romanticization of the lifestyle of drug lords, with guns, money and voluptuous women, reproduced and popularized by TV shows and music. Several of the participant expressed that this has become a part of the Colombian identity, and that many idealize this and aspire to become like them – men and women. "Narco – aesthetics" was mentioned as an issue of discussion in this regard. Young women will get plastic surgery to get the "ideal body" to attract the attention of the "narcos". One participant said when she was in high school, narcos would pursue the most attractive girls, promising to maintain them and give them an

ostentatious lifestyle, and would be for them to get plastic surgery to fit the "aesthetic". The topic of gender will be further discussed below in a separate chapter.

This perceived narco-culture of Colombia also reaches beyond the borders of the country. The participants mentioned that they felt some stigma when people in Argentina heard they were from Colombia. One hand they would hear a lot of "jokes" about Pablo Escobar and the drug-cartels. This were on one hand known for being tough and strong, which would earn them respect and sympathy. On the other hand, especially the men, would also be feared and jugdeg negatively – for example, to rent an apartment would often be difficult, as Colombians had fame for doing "shady business", and were often accused of cheating on the contracts, being far more people than the contract would permit. This felt like prejudice and discrimination, according to one of the participants, Enrique.

7.2.2 Stories of political violence and freedom of expression

Another issue the participants touched upon when talking about the violence in Colombia was what they described as political violence and how they felt the government also uses violence to control and manipulate the population.

Particularly, mentioned by several of the participants, were the suspicious murders of leaders of social movements, particularly those who defend indigenous rights, or try to prevent the exploitation of certain natural resources were mentioned. They claimed that these are often persecuted.

"You can't even fight for a paramo or a river, because you will be murdered. You can't fight, question why they were murdered, because you will be threatened" (Valeria)

"So, if you fight for the protection of some land, some paramos, some kind of natural resource, the normal thing is to be murdered. It happens a lot, and nobody investigates it. It is something the government doesn't touch upon. The murder of social leaders." (Enrique)

Many of them mentioned how there is little freedom for thought and the expression of it, and how dangerous it can be to oppose the established forms of power. One participant summed up this sentiment of impossible change with this:

"To me, the biggest obstacle to change things there, is the political violence. Because you can discuss anything else [except politics]. Anything else can be changed, but in Colombia they kill our ideas. You could be the most brilliant person in the world, but they kill you. It`s what is most difficult to change. The political persecution, the State violence" (Vera)

On this note, another participant discussed party politics, stating that there is a certain discourse on politics that is reproduced. Any opposition to the current political orientation is labelled "communist", often followed by "don't become like Venezuela". Another participant expressed her frustration with the people, claiming many believe "that propaganda of the government". She calls it a strategy of the government, in order to prevent new people to get in power.

Another similarly stated that the general view in Colombia of communism is unheard of, and that it is a testament to the polarization in the country, and how the portrayal of political parties in Colombia is used to strangle questioning of the state, and how the status quo cannot be challenged.

Another participant discussed how shocked he was when he came to Argentina and saw that posters from the communist party on the walls of the city, and described how communists are associated with, or portrayed as "bad guys" in Colombia. *"Venezuela is horrible because they are communists. The communist guerrillas. Communists place bombs. They are completely demonized". (Jorge)* He would ask his Argentinian friends if communists were persecuted there also and was perplexed when he learned that they are not. They felt there is more political freedom in Argentina.

Also, participants mentioned how they experience violence from the police, such as being randomly stopped, and said you could not argue with police. Others mentioned how there was an increase in repression by the state.

"Because it is a country with multiple social problems, with inequality, and also because there are a lot of people who are exiled because there is a lot of political persecution." (Vera)

Interestingly, in August of 2022, a year and half after these interviews were made, Gustavo Petro, representing a coalition of left and centre left political parties. [11] It would be interesting to follow up on the participants to see if and how their views have changed.

7.2.3 *Stories of Gender*

Although issues related to gender and migration, particularly women´s experiences, is not uncommon when exploring migration trends, aspects relating to gender was not a specific aim for this project and was not very recurrent in the conversations in this project. However, a few instances that were gender-related stood out as important, though not explicitly linked to migration, but related to the other themes mentioned above, giving greater detail to these.

One participant when discussing and rejecting the possibility of returning to live in Colombia, simply stated that Colombia is tremendously sexist, without going into detail. With regards to violence, another participant highlighted the continuing occurrence of "*femicidios*" – a term applied about murders of women who are intentionally murdered because they are women (WHO, 2013) – and stated that the patriarchy is still very present.

Concerning work opportunities, the same participant discussed how prostitution is also a prevalent part of the Colombian culture, calling it the business of today, especially as it has now become easier with the internet, and digitalization of prostitution. They explained how many of their female friends had responsibilities – meaning children – and added how almost all of them were single mothers and struggled financially, and that some would therefore choose to make money selling sexual pictures or videos online. They expressed how it was normal, and not viewed in a bad way, just another way to earn money. They added that it made them sad because they thought the country is losing professionals to this path, as many opt for prostitution rather than an education or other work because they are difficult to obtain. This causes a different kind of Brain Drain.

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[11] Así le hemos contado la toma de posesión de Gustavo Petro como presidente de Colombia | EL PAÍS América Colombia (elpais.com)

A third participant attributed problems to the drug culture, "*narcocultura*", and explained how it is typical of the "narco" to have a voluptuous girl by his side and stated that this culture is very prevalent in their hometown. They described how many of their previous female classmates would dedicate time and money to attain a "good body" as well as getting plastic surgery after finishing high school, *"'fixing' their noses and breasts" (Valeria),* in order to achieve this look and then get taken care of by powerful men. In other words, this was another way to secure a financially stable future.

Chapter 8: Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the lives of young Colombian migrants and their experiences as migrants. Building on these findings, I have decided to apply different frameworks to understand and interpret their stories.

Firstly, based on a migration theory perspective, I discuss the dichotomy which dominates discussions on migrations. Secondly, I look at what factors brought the participants to choose Argentina as their destination, or Pull- factors, as well as the aspects that motivated them to leave their home country initially, or Push – Factors. As these two categories are two sides to one coin, they do bleed into each other, but for the purpose of structure, I have decided to organize it this way. Finally, as the qualitative interviews revealed stories of violence, I discuss the findings through the lens of Structural and Symbolic Violence, which influences Colombians lives, and therefore frames the

8.1 Narratives matter

The findings in the general research on the topic suggested that Colombia has experienced several waves of emigration, with different destinations, as well as different motivations for the migration(Palma, 2015, Mejía, 2012, Carvajal, 2017, WMR, 2020) Where earlier research showed that Colombians migrated due to political conflict and civil war, and were considered forcibly displaced, Colombian movement has changed over the years and has in recent years been presented as economic migration**.** As economic migration is an overall current trend within the region of South America (WMR) it has also placed the narrative on Colombian migration within this perspective as well. However, the findings in the qualitative interviews in this research project shows that the motivations of the interviewees were over all too complex to place within either of the two mentioned types of migration, economic and forced, and rather points to how very different motivational factors are intrinsically linked, and should not be separated, reminding us of Bartram's (2015) and Banulescu-Bogdan, Malka, Culbertson (2021) on the dichotomization of migration narratives in policy and statistics.

8.2 Pull factors – Argentina, land of opportunities and openness.

Firstly, the "easiness" of migrating was a factor that influence the decision to migrate to Argentina. From the accounts in the interviews, they related that word spread that it was easy to migrate to Argentina, to get the papers and find cheap transport there. This is supported by what I found in chapter three, which describes how Argentina has historically had an open immigration policy, as well as the existence of cooperation between Latin American countries which facilitates migration. (Ceriani, 2013, Acosta, 2016, Cerrutti & Parrado, 2015, OIM, 2020).

Overall, the findings from the interviews showed, the main motivation behind the attraction to Argentina, was the opportunities that the country offers. The participants in the study highlighted Argentina as a tranquil and preferable alternative to Colombia due to its perceived opportunities and better quality of life. Education emerged as a primary motivator for migration, with all participants citing the pursuit of university education as a key factor. They described Colombia's economic stratification as a significant barrier to accessing education, with private schooling often associated with higher status. The high costs of university education in Colombia, coupled with limited job opportunities and stringent admission exams, motivated many to seek education in Argentina, where public universities offered free tuition and more flexible study options.

Work opportunities also played a significant role in migration decisions, with participants describing the challenges of finding employment in Colombia and the greater availability of work in Argentina. They contrasted the rigid work-life balance in Colombia with the perceived flexibility and abundance of job opportunities in Argentina. However, they acknowledged that work-life balance issues persisted in Argentina, prompting some to consider further migration to other countries. The participants also discussed the informal work sector in Colombia, characterized by the influence of criminal groups and drug trafficking. Extortion and control by criminal organizations were cited as common challenges for informal workers, contributing to a culture of self-reliance and resourcefulness among Colombians. According to Direction of

Statistics in Colombia (DANE), Colombia has a high rate of informal work, between 46% - 49% from 2015 to 2021[12], with more women in informal jobs, (48,2 vs. 46, 9%)

Healthcare emerged as another crucial factor in migration decisions, with participants citing Argentina's free healthcare system as a significant draw. They expressed frustration with Colombia's healthcare system, which they perceived as serving only those with financial means and lacking in quality and accessibility.

Overall, the narratives of the participants painted Argentina as a land of opportunity and contrasted it with the challenges and limitations they faced in Colombia. Their stories highlighted the combination of socioeconomic factors, education, work opportunities, and healthcare access in shaping their migration decisions and perceptions on quality of life.

8.3 Push factors – direct, structural and cultural violence in Colombia

To begin, as in the previous point, I would like to point out how migration is facilitated by countries policies. The same is the case for the emigrating Colombians, as it is facilitated by the Colombian government's policies, which incentivize emigration by expanding rights of diasporas such as dual citizenship or permitting voting from abroad, as well as facilitation of flow of remittances, as argued by Ciurlo (2015), Guarnizo (2006) , and Stefoni (2012).

Secondly, according to the both the interviews and the historical and contextual research, the main driver behind emigration is violence. Violence in Colombia is pervasive and deeply ingrained in society, affecting all aspects of life. We can analyse the stories of violence form three perspectives:

Firstly, there is the direct, or threat of direct violence surrounding the everyday life. Drug-dealers, guerilleros, but also from the State, with examples like persecution from police, as well as repression from the military during protests against the government. The ramifications of

[12] According to DANE, Dirección Nacional de Estadísticas, National Bureau of Statistics, 2021 GEIH - Empleo informal y seguridad social (dane.gov.co)

Colombia's violent conflicts have led to widespread displacement internally in the country, particularly from regions historically affected by intense conflict, and as we find in this study,

Secondly, we can look at the violence from a systemic perspective. Structural violence in Colombia, relating to Galtung's concepts, defines violence as *"avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs"*, and argues that the perpetrator of this violence is not necessarily a person. This is illustrated by the Colombia's institutional inadequacies in basic services, resulting in great inequality, due to unequal access to basic provision such as health care, education, particularly higher education, and dignified work. This we can connect to Aguilar-Forrero & Munoz, who highlight the issue of auto-exploitation in youth in Colombia, illustrating how this takes away the responsibility of the State and the system to provide for the people, and rather puts the whole pressure on the individual. Furthermore, the attempt to address the ongoing, long-lasting conflicts in Colombia, such as the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, have aimed to tackle structural causes of conflict and economic inequality, but have failed to provide solutions that address both direct violence and underlying structural issues.

And finally, there is the force that perpetuates this system of structural violence, which is the culture of violence. Violence is naturalized in Colombian culture, with many justifying it or considering it a natural part of their life. Narcoculture, glorifying the lifestyle of drug lords, contributes to the normalization of violence. Participants when discussing political violence and government repression in Colombia, highlighted the limitations on freedom of expression, and that lamented that opposition to the government is often labelled as communist and associated with negative stereotypes, which again perpetuates the status quo, protecting and strengthening the culture. This we can relate to Foucault's discussion on power relations, and how the most successful way to control a people, is through normalizing the mechanism of the relation.

Furthermore, though gender was not the primary focus of the project, a few instances highlighted important gender dynamics related to migration and identity, and to remind us of Farmers reflections, it is crucial to consider the violence through different lenses. The accounts from the participants, as well as what is described by Aguilar – Forrerro & Muños (2015) and Waldman (2007) can relate to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence which is evident in the naturalization and acceptance of gender-based exploitation and the perpetuation of patriarchal

norms within the culture. One participant pointed out Colombia's prevalent sexism, citing the continuing occurrence of femicides and the persistence of patriarchal norms. Another participant discussed how prostitution has become normalized as a means of financial support, particularly among single mothers struggling financially. Prostitution is normalized, and many women engage in it due to financial struggles and limited job opportunities. Additionally, another participant attributed certain societal issues to the influence of drug culture, that it glorifies objectification of women and contributes to gender-based exploitation, describing how young women often invest in their physical appearance to attract wealthy men and secure a financially stable future. These anecdotes shed light on the complex intersection of gender, and societal norms in Colombia. This is supported by Browne A, Bennouna C, Asghar K, Correa C, Harker-Roa A, Stark L. (2021), who discuss the pressure of gender norms, such as aggressive masculinity, and patriarchal and conservative norms, and how violence is used to get people to conform, particularly by paramilitary groups and in guerrilla groups.

Conclusions

The present study aimed to explore a case of South – South Migration, specifically the case of Colombian migration to Argentina in the past decade and a half. This was done through literature review and analysis of the current and historical situation of two countries of the South, in combination with qualitative interviews with six Colombian migrants.

The study specifically aimed at exposing the experiences of young Colombians in relation to their migration to Argentina, and for these to inform on a continuing phenomenon within current migration in our world. The findings of this research have specifically highlighted how violence in Colombia is pervasive and deeply ingrained in society, affecting all aspects of life – and naturally influenced the decisions to leave the country in search of a better future.

The study found that violence is the main driver behind the decision to emigrate from Colombia was violence. Violence is normalized in Colombian society, with many justifying it or considering it a part of their culture. Narcoculture, and specifically the glorification of the lifestyle of criminal bands, contributes to the normalization of violence, and contributing to it being part of the Colombian identity, within their society, as well as to the world around them. Galtung's concept of structural violence is reflected in the normalization of violence and the structural inequalities in the Colombian State that reinforces exclusion, marginalization and economic inequality, by excluding the people from obtaining work, healthcare and education. Furthermore, political violence and government repression, in combination with oppression of any opposing political thought.

Overall, the findings illustrate how violence, both physical, structural and symbol, permeates Colombian society and affects individuals' lives in various ways. These issues are deeply intertwined with broader social, economic, and political structures, highlighting the complex nature of violence and inequality in Colombia, which is and has for a long time, pushed people to emigrate.

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Migration Data Portal

https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=groups&t=2019&cm49=32

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CAN	Comunidad Andina / Andean Community
ELN	Ejército Libertador Nacional / National Liberation Army
EU	European Union
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics in Colombia
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
HDI	Human Development Index
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
OAS	Organization for American States
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SNM	South – North Migration
SSM	South – South Migration
UN	United Nations
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Work Agency
WB	World Bank