Risks and opportunities of recent regional migration for the SIDS, case Curacao

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ABSTRACT.
This paper analyses the risks and opportunities (benefits) of regional migration to Curacao as a small island state. The paper presents associations in recent regional migration on Curacao and concludes on the risks and opportunities of regional migration to Curacao.

General Terms: Governance, Social Work, Education, Healthcare, Integral Development of Curacao

Keywords: Caribbean migration, small island states, social development, labour market, education integration

1. INTRODUCTION
Worldwide, migration is an important issue in socio economic development. Migration decreases the risk of poverty and increases and spreads surviving chances of families. Remittances are today world wide the highest investment in developing countries. Small Island development states are often heavily characterized by migration. Curaçao is a classic example with a history of centuries of migration, from forced migration by slavery onwards to many different economic migration flows to the metro pole or in the region in the last decades. Before 1860 en 1920’s there was mostly emigration from Curaçao to the region, after 1920 a huge immigration to Curaçao started.

Today about 160 different nationalities are found on the island of Curaçao. In the previous decades, thousands of migrants came to the island. Migration has been changing the island of Curaçao continuously mostly over the last 100 years. Each migrant group has its own migration history and migration pattern but in general, migrants on Curaçao, like most migrants in the world, search primarily for a better life and more opportunities whether poor or rich, Jewish, Arab, Jamaican, Colombian, man or woman.

In the early 20th century many migrants with a Dutch, Portuguese, Surinamese, Jewish or Lebanese background arrived on the island to work for the Shell refinery on Curaçao, in the next decades also migrants from Indian and Chinese heritage came to the island to start their own businesses. New in the last years is that, most of the migrants arrive from countries in the Caribbean region. The focus in this study is on this new recent migration to Curaçao from five countries of origin: the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Colombia and Venezuela. These countries are selected because most immigrants in the past years came from one of these countries. There are certain dynamics between the countries of origin and Curaçao because most people still have family in their country of origin and some own properties. Many migrants have roots in two different societies and form transnational communities who travel back and forth, stay in contact with family and friends in the country of origin and sent money back home for children or to build an own property. This affects the efforts migrants make to integrate and participate in the local community in Curaçao.

This study analyses the impact of the presence of migrants on institutions and the community and focuses on the benefits on the one hand and on the hazards or risks on the other hand. The impact is defined as positive or negative and can be considered as a positive effect, but also negatively and the impact will influence a country and specifically a small island state, in different ways. New migrants change the composition of the population, have impact on the economy, the cultural diversity of a country. The findings in this study are clustered around 5 themes: Labour market, Education, Healthcare, Integration and Justice, Crime and safety.

The central questions in this study are:

What is the impact of recent migration (in the last decade) from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, Colombia and Venezuela on Curacao as a Small island development state?

How do migrants integrate and participate in the local community of Curacao?

Impact of migration is often positive for most of the involved. On the other hand there can be imbalanced impact on institutional burdens and on the community as whole. Integration and participation are important for the newborn country of Curacao but also for migrants when they need to build a new life as citizens in a new country. Integration and participation are analyzed the social capital theory which posed the quantity and quality of social capital as a mail factor for successful integration and participation, measured by participation in society, activities, social ties and networks. It is a challenge for the government to let migration benefit to the country of Curacao.

Our research is a follow up from an early study on the island the "Impactstudie Vreemdelingenproblematiek" (2006) of Nisbet, Tielen and Van der Biezen. The study is an overview of what was known about the presence of migrants in Curacao governmental institutions. Major conclusions point at the need for improvement of immigration procedures to prevent illegal
migration and fraud. The study indicated the importance of more insight in the impact of migrants on the society of Curaçao. In 2008 the Social Network Curaçao-Nederland (SKCN) organized a conference ‘cooperation in the social field of Curaçao’ including the issues of migration and integration, lack of insight in the living conditions of migrants and the importance of data collection for a study into migrants on Curaçao.

An extra relevance for this study is the new constitutional status of Curacao. Recently, at the 10th of October 2010, Curacao has become an autonomous country in the Kingdom of The Netherlands. In response to this new development, there is a growing attention to what issues are relevant for the country and the (immigrant) people: What makes Curacao, what makes someone a Curacaoman or Yu di Korsou? Is it birthplace (Ius Soli-right of soil as in the US) or Ius Sanguin (right of blood; determined by the nationality of the parents and more common in European countries) or ones contribution to the new society? What is the definition of a Curacaoman citizen, what may be expected of new citizens and what can new citizens expect from the government when they settle on the island as migrant? This study intent to contribute to the debate on the future of Curacao and the role, the quantity and quality of new regional migrants on Curacao, their rights and their duties.

The research is funded by the social economic initiative (SEI) sponsored by the Dutch Department of Interior Affairs and Kingdom relations and the Government of Curacao. It is a three year programme with the focus on research, knowledge and policy development. The research is executed by the University of the Netherlands Antilles (2010-2012 and Sociaal Kenniscentrum Curacao). The societal incentives were several: the lack of (recent) statistical data, the supposed rising numbers of illegal migrants, the lack of migration and integration policy, the need to improve the migration process, the low perspectives for (illegal) migrant children, the ongoing shortages on the Curacao labour market of construction, tourism and cleaning and some issues on Safety, Justice and Crime. In March 2011, the Central Statistics Agency (CBS) will execute the Census 2011. The new data on migrants will be analyzed and integrated in our study in 2011 and 2012.

This paper is structured in four parts. The second paragraphs present a theoretical framework on international migration and integration. The third paragraph gives an overview on migration to Curacao, the impact of recent migration on the labour market, on education and healthcare institutions, and the rates of integration and social cohesion of five regional migrant communities on Curacao which are subject of this paper and we will finish with conclusions on the impact of recent regional migration on Curacao from the perspective of the position of Small Island development states.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2.1 International Migration

In the past thirty years, many theories have been developed on international migration patterns and theories. Migration flows have constantly changed in character and direction influenced by international economic and social developments in subsequent decades. Migration flows themselves have an impact on society (both socially and economically) of the country of origin and on the immigration country. Besides this, it affects the sovereignty of states (Castles and Miller 2009). This is the result of migration of undocumented or illegal immigrants. A second important factor relates to the emergence of transnational communities. Migration enables a growing number of people to build a lasting relationship in two or more countries while they do not just feel loyalty towards one country. Transportation and communication have greatly improved and ensured that distances between countries, and families became smaller. It is more easy to stay in contact with family and friends in the country of origin because of the availability of internet, the use of blackberries and facebook. The availability of direct air connections provides easy access to other countries and makes it easier to travel.

There are several theories developed to explain migration flows. The most important are described below. Economic migration theories are linked to the individual level which is the central point of view in the neoclassical theory (e.g. Ravenstein and Todaro 1976). Migration is seen as an individual process in which various push and pull factors are crucial. Other economic theories are based on the demands of the labour market and the key role that families and households (can) have in migration. Migrants are selected by their family to ensure a better future. Massey (1998) a.o. indicates that economic factors are of major impact on migration, but that migration cannot only be explained by economic variables. The neo-classical migration theories have their roots in the 70s of the last century. The world system theory and dependency theory assume a centre-periphery model (Frank 1980) in which the rich countries are surrounded by a periphery of the developing countries. Though, the complexity of current migration makes clear that this view is too one-sided. In the first place countries cannot be divided in centre or periphery, secondly, the influence of historical and personal factors in the migration process should not be underestimated. One example is the recruitment of migrant workers by companies or countries.

System and network theories combine economic, institutional, social and cultural factors and distinguish a macro and micro level in the migration process (Castles and Miller 2009, De Haas 2008). Macro factors (including institutional, political, economic factors besides the intended relations between countries and legislation) interact with micro factors (related to personal networks, habits, images and beliefs). A meso structure of migration related industry (travel agencies, banks, lawyers, agents, smugglers, etc.) has been responding to the needs of migrants and institutions. The family and environment play an important role in migration networks because they provide financial support in addition to social and cultural capital.

2.2 Other Developments in Integration

A remarkable trend in recent years is the feminization of migration. In our research we will analyze the different sex rates

1 Litt. Child of Curacao

of studied migrants groups. Migration does not have to be a reaction to negative circumstances in the country of origin. Even in more prosperous countries, emigration increases. Economic development in poorer countries increases migration when individuals or families are able to (let a person) travel abroad. Migrants-to-be are often carefully selected by families. Not the people with the least skills and capabilities will be given the opportunity to leave because the family puts her fate in their hands. A negative consequence of the department of the higher potentials is the brain-drain. Jamaica and Haiti have lost more than 80% of their graduates but remittances are of growing importance for many developing countries. (Fajnzylber and Lopez 2008). Migrants send money to their families in the country of origin. These remittances generate a number of positive impulses to the economic development of developing countries. Jamaica receives $ 700, - per person per year, in the Dominican Republic 20% of the households receives remittances on a regular basis. Remittances are of major importance for the countries of origin. For the country of immigration, the flow of money to a different economy can be considered as detrimental in specific when migrants are undocumented. They will send large shares of their salaries back home and do not pay tax.

2.3 Integration and Social cohesion

The impact of migration and the influence of ethnic diversity in society in countries of immigration are high especially after the attacks in the U.S. on 9 / 11 and in Madrid, The Netherlands etc. Many settled migrants identify more with the culture of their country of origin than with the immigration country. The mother tongue and own cultural aspects are important for the newly arrived migrants as well for the next generation. There are generally two ways to analyze the position of migrants or “integration” in society. The first is characterized by the principle of assimilation: migrants go through an (unilateral) integration process before they are fully assimilated within the population. The second approach is characterized by the acceptance of cultural diversity and is described as multiculturalism.

The theory of social capital (Putnam et.al. 2000) put forward the importance of social networks for integration, social cohesion and economic opportunities. Putnam distinguishes bonding (exclusive ties in the own group) and bridging social capital (inclusive, links different groups). When migrants only focus and participate in their own ethnic network (an example to illustrate this concept are Chinese communities all over the world), this can be considered as bonding social capital. These contacts are very important for migrants after arriving in a new country when people need to find a house, a job etc. Bridging social capital with ties between groups and communities can be considered as integration. These ties are in the interest of the community especially in small island states where participation is even more important because of the limitations caused by scale.

Many immigrants search for a better future and try to achieve this by working hard. In case of unemployment, it can be difficult for the local population to reconcile with their own social position; it is easy to point at migrants. In some situations, migrants are considered by locals as a group that steal jobs, drive up housing prices and benefit from social services. There are countries where migrants are easily accused of crime, abuse and unemployment, stigmatized and treated as second-class citizens. Large-scale migration and increasing diversity have great influence on political institutions and national identity.

3 RESULTS

The historical perspective of migration on small island development states and Caribbean migration in specific has been described by scholars like Rose Mary Allen (in R. Gowricharn ed. 2006) and Elisabeth Thomas Hope (Caribbean Migration 1992). Thomas-Hope gives an overview of the migration from Jamaica, Barbados and St. Vincent. She describes a circular and self-perpetuating model of migration in the Caribbean. Migration has become part of the institutional framework of the Caribbean societies. Thomas-Hope distinguishes migration from the upper class to the metropolises and the lower class in which individuals migrate with the intention to return and where remittances play a major role. Each class has its own migration patterns and goals. Caribbean migration is described as an open system which not only requires social, political and economic factors. In her overall view, culture (which she describes as symbols of power and prestige) plays an important role.

A recent project of Kas di Kultura (House of Culture) on Curacao focuses on oral history and is about the stories of migrant communities who settled during the last century on Curacao. The Caribbean region has been influenced by migration between the islands and to Europe and the America’s. The migration flows within in the Caribbean and Central America has been dominated by the need for workers. Rose-Mary Allen describes the migration form Curacao men to Cuba in the 1920 and their return migration. The Shell refinery brought a huge amount of jobs to the island. Immigrants from Venezuela, The Windward Islands, Bonaire, The Netherlands, Madeira, Suriname, and The West Indies came to work in the refinery, others came to engage in commerce (Indians, Lebanese, Chinese and Jews from Poland). For recent migration, the Curacao Census figures over 2001 already shows an increase of immigrants from other Caribbean Islands (Haiti, Jamaica, Dominican republic) and Colombia. There is need for specialized skilled workers for instance for the dry dock in Curacao or doctors and optometrists and on the other hand, low skilled workers find their way in building and construction, gardening, domestic work.

In most Caribbean states, citizens or potential migrants focus on the former colonial metropolis because of historic ties, language and relatively cheap and easy access to the educational systems (Gowricharn ed. 2006). Jamaicans tend to focus on migration to England or the US and Colombians, Venezuelans and Dominicans focus on Spain. Haiti was the first independent state in Latin America (1804) after the successful revolution of the slaves but suffered later on a lot form dictators and natural disasters (CIA World fact book). In Venezuela, the regime of Chavez can be considered as a push factor for migration of the middle and higher class (Newsweek ‘Brain drain’ 18-7-2009).

3.1 Local policies towards migration

There are several options to become a legal resident of Curacao. People who want to work need a permit or so called “vestigingsvergunning” (Landsverordening Arbeid Vreemdelingen 2001 en Landsverordening Toelating en Uitzetting 2006). When local companies are not able to find local
employees, the government can grant permission to recruit abroad. People should stay abroad during the procedure. It is mandatory to have a guarantor and a deposit must be paid. After 5 years of temporary residence permits, there is the possibility to apply for a residence permit or apply for naturalization. Family reunion is the second option used by migrants from the region. Immigrants in the country of Curacao can apply for naturalization which may be obtained the Dutch nationality. The requirements for naturalization adjusted in 2010. People should demonstrate sufficient knowledge of society, Dutch and Papiamentu and pass an exam. Migrants who successfully pass the exam will be invited to the ceremony where they acquire Dutch nationality after making the declaration of solidarity. The Dutch passport can be used to settle in The Netherlands as well in (most) other countries of the European Union.

Many female migrants arrived on tourist visa or temporary 3 months work permit to Curacao and overstayed their permits. To work in the (legal) brothel on the island (where only foreign women were allowed to work), in the past decades, many women from Dominican Republic and Colombia came on a 3 month visa but wanted to stay and found employment as (illegal) domestic workers. Some of them started relationships with Curacauan men expecting to be granted a permit after marriage or having a baby. In 2009, the former Minister of Justice and Immigration decided to enable undocumented (illegal) residents to apply for a one year permit. According to the final report (October 2010) to decrease the number of illegal residents, to provide a better view on illegal migrants and decrease human trafficking en develop further policy where necessary. Conditions for eligibility were health insurance and work and the procedure was only open to migrants who arrived before 2005. The Brooks Tower permit was valid for one year (until Nov. 2010), but people who meet the conditions to the regular immigration process could apply for a regular temporary permit. Around 3500 permits are provided last months.

3.2 Statistics
The most important sending countries to Curacao (legal migrants of the first generation) in the region between 2000 and June 2010 were Colombia (4432), Dominican Republic (3309), Venezuela (1271), Haiti (2689) and Jamaica (957) (CBS Netherlands Antilles/Kranshi). Figure 1 shows that migration on Curacao rose sharply in 2001 to peak in 2002 and in 2010 again. The peak in 2002 was caused by a process whereby undocumented migrants could opt for a legal residence permit (Lei di Gracia). In 2009 a similar procedure was set (Brooks Tower agreement) which recently ended. People who have lived and worked for a few years in Curacao and are insured for health care, could apply for a permit for one year if they met the conditions. This permit could be changed into a regular permit till January 2011. Around 3500 migrants applied successfully for a temporary permit. In particular Haitians have taken advantage of this opportunity (over 1100 permits). This was to be expected because of the assumed rate of illegal migrants from Haiti. The number of illegal or undocumented migrants on Curacao is by several key persons (2010) estimated on 30.000.

Figure 1 Year of settlement on Curacao by country of birth (June 2010)

Figure 2 gives an overview of the numbers of migrants of the five largest region sending countries on Curacao. Most (first generation) regional migrants are originally from the Dominican Republic (around 6000) and Colombia (around 5800). The last influx of Haitians who applied for the Brooks Tower permit is not yet available in this figure. We expect a raise in the number of Haitian migrants in the statistics over 2010.

Figure 2 Migrant population by country of birth Curacao, January 1st 2001-2010

The results of the study are clustered around five themes which cover most relevant issues in society. For each theme, key persons have been interviewed. In the survey amongst migrants, these issues have been asked for as well.

3.3 Labour market
Most migrants come to Curacao to work hard for a better future. Traditionally, each migrant group has his particular sector of work and occupations. The gardening sector has been run by Portuguese people (mostly from Madeira); they now ask Haitians to work for their companies. Haitians have the most drives to become middle class. Arriving very poor, they successfully take every job they can get, the soon they are able to build their own
company in gardening and start to employ newly arrived migrants again. Haitians are good savers and considered to be good for their families. They work hard to build a better life and are hardly involved in problems. The growing tourism sector on Curacao increases the demand for labour in construction, gardening and the service sector Many women from Colombia, Dominican Republic and Jamaica in general have jobs as domestic worker (cleaning houses, offices, as nannies). In the informal economy, it is well known that in particular women from Colombia and Dominican Republic, also work as dancer or in the prostitution, one well informed key person estimates the number of lady’s in this business on 6000 on a total population of 138,000 (legal) citizens.

Often migrants fulfil jobs at unskilled positions for which no local workers can be found. There are also specialized workers from abroad for example to work with marble for a new hotel, in the earlier mentioned dry-dock or for the oil refinery. Figure 3 gives an overview of the presence of migrants (arrived since 2000) from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Venezuela, specified by gender. From Colombia, Dominican Republic and Jamaica, more female migrants came to Curaçao while from Haiti more men arrived.

![Figure 3 Number of migrants (since 2000) on Curacao by gender and country of birth](image)

The migrants from Colombia can be divided in a lower and an upper class who visited university. In the hospital for instance work Colombian doctors as well on a one year work permit. Venezuela is nearby and Curacao used to be a holiday destination for the upper class. The group of immigrants from Venezuela is on average better educated than other migrants from the region and the analysis of data about where migrants live on the island showed that they live in ‘better neighbourhood’s (like Jongbloed, Jan Thiel, Julianadorp and Bottelier). It is known that many people from the middle and higher class migrate to the US, Panama and other countries because of the Chavez regime. On Curacao, some informants report that also students from Venezuela arrive and try to study at the local university. De survey showed that Venezuelans are less likely to send remittances back home than other migrants.

### 3.4 Education

On Curacao, all immigrant children are allowed to participate in education (UN Convention on Child rights). Schools receive funding for each pupil including illegal students. Some schools situated in neighbourhoods with many migrants have many undocumented students and other students with a migrant background. A school in (the neighbourhood of) Steenriijk with over 80% of the students with a migrant background (1st or 2nd generation) who do not speak Papiamentu or Dutch as first language. The government is obligated to fund the education of undocumented children (UN Children’s rights convention), some issues need more attention according to teachers and policymakers. In the first place, undocumented children who participate in secondary education are not allowed to participate in the final exams, therefore it is impossible for them to graduate. In the second place, the government supports in transportation to schools for the lower incomes but parents need to show a pay slip. Undocumented parents won’t be able to show a pay slip and therefore on the island some undocumented children do not go to school. Exact numbers are not available but the issue is known by the department of education.

A total of eleven schools, ranging from nursery school to high school with migrant visitors amongst the population have been spoken to about the position of migrant children, the results, cultural differences, language difficulties, undocumented children, the position of parents and the pressure on schools and teachers caused by the presence of (sometimes high percentages) of migrant children.

All newly arrived migrant children need to learn Papiamentu and Dutch and most of them experience difficulties with a new language. Many teachers are able to speak at least some Spanish and English but the Creole from Haiti is hardly understood. For students who arrive after the primary education (FO1), it is according to teachers hard to learn the new languages. For elder students, there is a special program called “Springplank class” where the lessons focus on language skills.

Sometimes newly arrived students are linked to students with the same background who have managed to speak Papiamentu and/or Dutch. Nine of the eleven schools interviewed indicated that most Dominicans, unlike most Colombians and Venezuelans, have more difficulties with learning and adapting a new language. According to some experts, this problem is due to the difficulties many Dominicans, specifically the group from more rural areas, have with their own language and grammar. One school specialized in Spanish to improve the language level in the mother tongue.

Schools do not report lack of integration of one or more groups. According to about five schools Haitians are considered to be decent, shy and very motivated. Haitian parents stimulate their children more than other migrant parents to learn. Jamaican students are according to some schools, considered to be more aggressive because of a more than general harsh way to raise their children and/or the violence in Jamaica. In every group, students use their parents’ current (low) socio-economic situation as a trigger to do well in school for a better future. In some families, children are forced to work after school or even during school hours. Not all parents are able or willing to pick up their
children when schools are out at 13:00. Some parents let even very small children wait for ours. Also schools report that many migrant parents are unfamiliar with the school system and cannot be reached in case of problems or for an appointment at school. Undocumented parents are scared to come and talk to the teacher about their child’s grades because they fear being deported; they use different false contact details to prevent problems.

About seven schools pointed out that Venezuelans and Colombians unlike Dominicans are often better established socio-economically. This obviously results in better grades. According to all schools it is necessary the government develops a clear policy in favour of the position of undocumented students. It happened that families were deported but the police refused to inform the school. According to the schools this is not only because of children’s rights but also beneficiary for Curaçao because better education benefits the economy of Curaçao and lowers the crime rates. Another remark by teachers is about the role of the parents in (lower socio economic) migrant families. All parents should invest in their children’s education, but they need to learn why and how and therefore they should be reached somehow.

3.5 Healthcare

Healthcare in Curaçao is according to health professionals and the Health Council compared to other Caribbean states on a high and accessible level. This is widely known on other islands in the Caribbean and in some cases according to several health professionals, migrant women travel to Curacao in case of high risk pregnancies.

Accessibility is necessary to provide the health care people need. On the “Consultatiebureaus” (free primary care for 0-4 years where vaccinations were given) the attendance is very high. Also undocumented families come to the clinics because it is commonly known that it is free and they trust the doctors and nurses. According to the head of the youth health care division, this is very important because children and parents need the attention and the grade of vaccination will stay high which prevent new outbreaks of diseases like polio or diphtheria. The government is proud on the high attendance but the professionals have to deal with a lot of issues. Many migrants are not able to speak Papiamentu, sometimes other children translate for their parents but often it is hard to communicate although the most professionals are able to communicate in English or Spanish. Some migrants simply refuse to learn the language “I speak English” was what a Jamaican woman told the nurse. In a panel discussion with several professionals, cultural differences were mentioned as relevant issue. They noticed different behaviour in how people interact with care physicians, the role of their environment, the way people raise their children or take medication. Some migrant women for example take antibiotics almost every day or buy medication in Colombia where more than on Curaçao, medication can be bought without prescription. This can cause resistance so that no more drugs will help when really necessary. Another example is about a mother who feed their 6 weeks old baby black beans and complains about colic at the Consultatiebureau or one who serves her toddler coffee. A midwife who has many undocumented clients, mentioned religious rituals in Haitian families which show that some people do not know what is best for the health of mother and newborn children. In these cases, communication is very important and should not be hindered by language deficiencies. The Consultatiebureau wants to provide information in other languages when necessary. Some other Caribbean countries started language training for health and social workers in order to improve communication with migrants (ECLAC 2005)

In case of illness, people without sufficient insurance refuse to see a doctor when ill or use the Health insurance card of a relative, which is dangerous because medical information like blood group is part of the system. The hospital (SEHOS) has to deal with large debts ($1.6 million every year), because of non paying patients and a conflict with the government about responsibility for treatment and the costs of those treatments. When patients have no insurance, the hospital provides in a payment schedule but too often, this doesn’t lead to the necessary payments. A few times a year, this leads to major problems for the hospital, for instance when a child which was born to early from undocumented and uninsured parents who had to stay in neonatal care for months ($800,- a day). It is estimated that 50-70% of the unpaid bills are for care provided to illegal immigrants without insurance. The other part is on behalf of locals.

3.6 Integration and social cohesion

Integration, we defined following Putnam as participation in local social and economic issues. Participation on the labour market is important and social contacts and participation in activities as well. Only three out of ten countries in the Caribbean (Dominica, Trinidad & Tobago and Dominica) have reported to the ECLAC study in 2005 to promote the integration of non nationals. Most countries fear the idea of permanent migrant settlement in a new country and made plans to reduce permanent immigration. (ECLAC 2005). In The Netherlands, integration policy has been practiced for more than 10 years but Curacao lacks policy on the position of migrants (except from the immigration procedures). Foreign migrants in The Netherlands have to pass an exam in language and knowledge of the society. This is also the new policy for naturalization (opt for the Dutch nationality) on Curacao but many migrants do not necessarily opt for the Dutch nationality while stay on the island for many years or the rest of their lives.

Data on integration of migrants were gathered in the survey amongst migrants on Curacao. Integration is operationalized as speaking the language, as participation in church attendance, memberships of ethnic or local organisations and the interethic background of friends. A first analysis has been done and the first tentative conclusions show that based on self report, many migrants (especially from Haiti and Colombia) are able to speak Papiamentu but less are able to speak Dutch. People were asked about social activities and membership of organisations. Around 50% of the interviewed persons visits a church on a regular basis (Adventist, Pentecostal, Catholic) and only a small group participates in other activities like a soccer team or carnival group. Some churches, services in Spanish or English are held and churches in neighbourhoods where many migrants live, can be considered as important community centres. There are a few (formal) migrant organisations on Curacao, the most important is
a Dominican organisation. The consulates used to organize some activities as well but these activities focus more on the elite integration and on the tie between the local community and Venezuela as a country (e.g. Spanish lessons, musical classes). A majority says they feel “connected” or “at home” on Curacao and has even more affection for Curacao than for their country of origin. These conclusions are based on a first analysis.

The position of migrants in Curacao, whether they integrate and participate or not, is an issue in the local community because the society inevitably changes. The discussion on Curacao is polarized around the idea that new immigrants (also from India, China, The Netherlands) do not (want) to speak Papiamentu. But the Haitian migrants who learn and speak Papiamentu in a few months, are the most discriminated-against people on the island. Increasingly, the (recent) economic migrants are in general considered as people who take away the work of the locals or cheapen the cost of labour. A second issue is the increasing relationships between males from Curacao and female migrant women who are considered to be attractive because of their lighter skin colour and physical features. This caused tension between local women and migrant women (Allen in Gowricharn 2004).

3.7 Justice, safety and crime

The fifth theme of the study is about justice, crime and safety. The statistical data are not available yet but a key person in this sector sketched an image that corresponds with the remarks of teachers and health care workers. Haitians are hardly ever suspect of a crime and Jamaicans and Dominicans are more than average involved in criminal behaviour. One of the issues where Dominicans are accused of is fake marriages. Jamaicans relatively often are accused of violent crimes and stabbing. Instead of Venezuelans, Colombians need a visa to enter Curacao. Colombians have more than once been caught with a falsified Venezuelan passport. According to the key person, more should be done against companies who hire illegal migrants to work for them. An instruction has been made by the prosecutor and can be used by the police and Department of Justice but until now, companies escape prosecution. It takes more time to start a procedure against a company than to pick up illegal workers and throw them out of the country.

4 PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

While the study is in progress and only preliminary results are available yet, some provisional concluding remarks can be made based on the results presented in paragraph 3.

The global trend of feminization of migration we see also for some migrant groups on Curacao, but not in all groups. Migration from countries such as Dominican Republic, Colombia and Jamaica is increasingly characterized by women who migrate in contrary to the all male migration of 30 to 40 years ago. This feminization of migration has been caused by the growing demand for domestic workers in Western countries and on Curacao as well.

The theoretical framework for migration to and from Curacao is quite complex. Some countries in the Caribbean region can be described as periphery (Haiti) where people are eager to leave in search for a better future. The reason why migrants choose to leave for Curáçao can be several and depends on the social and economic opportunities in relation to the country of origin, the demand for labour, the availability of direct flights, the gateway that Curacao offers (after naturalization) of just a politically stable place to live. But migration from Colombia (partially) and Venezuela is based on other push factors.

On Curacao, on the other hand there is emigration to the metropole: The Netherlands and immigration (not only remigration) to Curacao from The Netherlands. Curacao has a specific position as migration country which can be described best when both economic and personal levels were taking into account from the perspective of the system or network theory which combines the individual and institutional level which is different for every country and every migrant.

Main results from the survey show that for most migrants their migration is in the first place a search for a safer and economically better life for themselves and their families. Curacao is an attractive destination because of the opportunities on the labour market, the reason of free and qualified education for children and the regional relatively high level of health care. There are direct flights several times a week between Curacao, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela. Also existing myths make Curacao an attractive destination country for migrants. Many women still believe that their Curacao born child will become a Dutch/European citizen. From a small island development economic perspective regional migrants are important for the economic development of Curacao; On the other hand, when migrants send as much as possible money back home or do not pay taxes because of their illegal status, the local government and society benefit less from the presence of migrants.

In education and health care, professionals search for smart solutions in lack of a central policy. According to teachers and healthcare workers, there needs to be attention to the position of migrant children, especially the undocumented children. When the communication is problematic because of language deficiencies, parents need to be reached in their own language, eventually by a native speaker in Spanish or English (social workers). Professionals in education and health are very committed and do the best they can but it demands a huge personal effort to communicate, deal with the problems in some families and convince parents to make decisions in the children’s’ interest.

The central questions in this proposal are about the institutional impact of recent migration from the region on Curacao as a Small island development state and about the integration and participation of regional migrants on Curacao community.

Based on our first results, the institutional impact of recent migrants is not problematic. At the moment, on Curacao the presence of migrants doesn’t lead to large scale problems. Many migrants have jobs and contribute to economic development of the island despite the (estimated) large undocumented group. Maybe the fact that Curacao has been an island characterized by migration for centuries is due to this positive development. The integration of new migrants in the Curacao community looks so far partly unproblematic, partly there is more bonding than
bridging social capital (no integration), and partly there are signs of discrimination as well. In our further research we will pay attention to this last element.

Worldwide migration and (lack of) integration is a growing issue. To prevent a growing gap between different groups in society, a debate about citizenship is important. It should be clear what citizens should contribute to society and what their rights and duties are. In recent debates on Curacao about citizenship and the future of the island, subdued feelings emerge. Projects like that of Kas di Kultura pay more attention to binding elements between migrant groups and the hosting society. All over the world migrants are being stigmatized and tensions between local citizens and migrants escalate and different groups grow apart instead of building the future together. Precisely for this reason it is important to facilitate the (necessary) debate and policy development in the newborn country based on reliable data about migration, unemployment, issued permits, fees, duties and obligations. This study hopes to contribute to the debate. In according to negative developments, the advice is not to wait till it is too late. Migration is part of the history and of the future of Curacao.

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