Return migration of descendants from the “Eighth Canary Island”

The influence of capital on the integration of Canarian Venezuelans into Canarian society

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Figure 1: Gutiérrez, 2017.
A man waving the Venezuelan flag with the auditorium of Tenerife in the background.
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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Spanish civil war, many Canarians escaped the poverty of the archipelago for the wealth of Venezuela. The Canarian community became one of the biggest in the Latin American country. In the last couple of decades, but mainly since the beginning of the economic and political crisis in Venezuela in 2013, many of these Canarian Venezuelans are migrating to the Canaries. Their historical and cultural ties with the islands provide many of them with a special kind of capital. This thesis focuses on the possession and usage of this capital for their integration in Canarian society. For this purpose, in-depth semi-structured interviews have been held with a group of Venezuelans, of Canarian descent, about their different forms of capital. By using Bourdieu’s theory of capital, various characteristics that favor the integration and migration to the Canaries have come forward. Especially citizenship, social, and embodied cultural capital, but also locally held, economic capital, have been advantageous for the integration of the Canarian Venezuelans on the Canary Islands.
Introduction

As a result of a long history of migration, the Canary Islands and Venezuela are well connected. That is why the South American country is sometimes called ‘la octava isla canaria’¹ in the archipelago (González Antón, 2005, p. 293). Within this history, the Canaries served for a long time as the sender of migrants to Venezuela. Already during the period of Spanish colonization, the Canarians occupied a notable presence in the South American country. Despite being seen as socially inferior by other Spaniards, some Canarians reached high positions within the administration of Venezuela (Hernández González, 2008, p. 151). After independence, ties remained strong: “Venezuela's ties with the Canaries were closer than with the peninsula through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As much as half of the white population of the colony was described as being descendants of Canarios, an impressive contribution from so small a population pool as the archipelago represented.” (Parsons, 1983, pp. 465-466). The majority worked in the agricultural sector as they were attracted by the immense territories in the country’s interior region. Also other Latin American countries such as Cuba relied on immigration from the Canary Islands during their history, for example when the country was in need of agricultural labor for the sugarcane farms after the abolition of slavery (Hernández González, 2008, pp. 154-155).

Because of Venezuela’s oil boom in the 20th century, this country became the main destination for Canarian migrants who wanted to escape the impoverished conditions of the islands after the Spanish civil war. During the ‘40s the Latin American country starts with a program of import substitute industrialization which requires important investments, made possible by the oil revenues which were growing exponentially (Hernández Arvelo, 1992, p. 628). In this same decade, an impressive immigration flow gets started as Canarians flee from the post-war Francoist regime, as well as poverty and overpopulation. In the beginning, this migration flow is characterized by crowded clandestine sailing boats, also called “barcos fantasma”². At that time the Francoist regime did not allow its nationals to immigrate anywhere else than Nazi Germany, people thus had to leave illegally (Hernández González, 2008, p. 163).

The arrival of these sailing boats in Venezuelan ports led to different responses of the local authorities. Both restrictive and welcoming policies have been carried out depending on the economic tide and the type of government (Hernández Arvelo, 1992, pp. 632-633). In the following decade, the Spanish government reached an agreement for legal migration to Venezuela, but because of the high costs and the bureaucratic requirements, the illegal way remained the most popular one. In the ‘50s flows increased, in 1951 approximately 12.000 Canarians made the journey to Venezuela for instance

¹ Translation: the eighth island of the Canaries
² Translation: ghost boats.
As a result of the stories of family members who had migrated and their apparent success, observable by the remittances for the homestayers, the flows became consistently high until 1961, when the Venezuelan economy started slowing down. Because of this economic slowdown, the government decided to restrict migration to family reunification. Whereas first mostly men immigrated, now their wives and children did (Hernández González, p. 165). Within Spain the Canary Islands and Galicia were responsible for the majority of the emigrants during these decades because of the lack of opportunities in these peripheral regions (Palazón Ferrando, 1993, p. 101).

The Canarian community in Venezuela established itself by creating different cultural associations. The first one, the “Club Social Gomera de Caracas” was created in 1927 by a small community from the island of la Gomera. In the following decades also associations with more political vocations, one of them openly against the Francoist regime, appeared. Right now different Canarian associations exist around the country, to preserve the culture and maintain the ties between the community members. For a long time circular migration was common between the islands and the South American country, but political and economic turbulence in Venezuela has enhanced definitive return migration. For example after the “Caracazo” in 1989, when protests and riots in the streets of Caracas ended in shootings and massacres, more than one thousand Canarians returned. Meanwhile, in the eighties, the Venezuelan currency, the Bolívar, had lost its solid and strong value, while the Spanish Peseta had become a stable currency (Hernández González, 2008, p. 168). Furthermore, Spain had become a democratic state and its accession to the European Union had raised expectations about the country’s future. Despite these pull factors, return migration kept being an incidental phenomenon responding to political outbreaks in Venezuela. The country started being an immigration country, with small but structural flows, after the election of Hugo Chávez as Venezuela’s president in 1999. This new political situation had great impacts on the country’s democratic system and was perceived as conflictive for certain groups (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, pp. 142-143).

In 2013 the country entered a severe humanitarian and economic crisis, characterized by hyperinflation and scarcity of food and medicines. By 2018 the inflation rate had risen to 1.700.000% (El Economista, 2018). Scarcity and a lack of access to basic services have changed daily life for most Venezuelans. According to statistics of the main Venezuelan universities, a majority of the population now lives in multidimensional poverty and 80% has difficulties obtaining sufficient food. Effects on public health are tremendous, as there is a constant lack of medicines and health indicators such as life expectancy and child mortality are worsening (CNN en español, 2019). In addition, crime rates have risen. As a result Venezuela had the second highest homicide rate in the world in 2015 (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017 pp. 145).
These devastating conditions have made millions of Venezuelans leave their country, mostly to Colombia and other Latin American countries. Within Europe, Spain has always been the main destination due to cultural and historical factors. The large Spanish community in the South American country further explains this migration flow (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, p. 153). Their heritage enables them to opt for Spanish citizenship. The Canary Islands are attracting an important part of this community because of their family history. According to statistics of 2018 there were 255,000 people living in Spain which were born in Venezuela (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). These numbers do, of course, not include the return migrants themselves as they were born in Spain. The biggest proportion of people born in Venezuela lives in the region of Madrid because of its economic activity, with 66,000 people, the Canaries are hosting the second largest community, with 59,000 people in 2018 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). These numbers have grown steadily in the last couple of decades, as there were only 22,000 Venezuela-born people in 2000 on the Canaries (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). These Venezuelans are unevenly distributed over the Canary Islands. The large majority, 49,000 people, lives in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, which is composed of the western islands of Tenerife, La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). This can be explained by historical factors. Whereas Canarians from the western Islands such as Tenerife mostly immigrated to Latin America, Canarians from the eastern Islands, such as Gran Canaria, mainly went to the Spanish colonies in western Africa. This migration process was usually not as permanent because of geographical proximity (Martín Ruiz, 2004, p. 5).

Exact numbers about the number of return migrants, who were born on the Canaries, do not exist. However, some experts raise the total of return migrants, their descendants and other Venezuelan migrants to 100,000 people on the islands (El País, 2015). Their choice for the Canaries is peculiar as it is one of Spain’s poorest regions with structurally high unemployment rates, about 21% by the beginning of 2019, a year of economic growth for Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019). Nevertheless, their integration and reception do not seem to have caused any trouble, the case of the retired return migrants exemplifies this situation. Returned retirees have been demanding pension aid from the Canarian authorities since their Venezuelan pensions are frozen. As a result, the regional government created a special pension scheme in 2018 for this group of return migrants, which should cover their basic needs (El Diario, 2018).

This group of Venezuelan-Canarian return migrants and their descendants possess a distinctive kind of capital in comparison to other migrants. Their historical and cultural ties to the islands provide them with this capital, which might be beneficial for their integration on the islands. In this research, I am going to address the integration of the Venezuelan descendants of the Canarian migrants, as they are becoming an active force within the Canarian society with a dual identity. I will make use of a Bourdieusian perspective to evaluate the different types of capital, for example cultural or social capital, which these migrants use to integrate on the Canaries. In order to get an overview of the
possessed capital and experiences of this group, I will interview Venezuelans, of Canarian origin, on the western islands of Tenerife and La Palma. In these interviews, their integration process as a whole, their historical relations with the islands, and their different types of capital will be addressed. These interviews will give me a detailed outline of the determinants for the relatively easy integration process of this group. As a result, I will be able to determine the influence of their capital on the integration into Canarian society. In that way, the attraction of the islands, and the subsequent growth of the Venezuelan community in one of Spain’s poorest regions, are explained. Furthermore, the effects of historical links on different types of capital will be highlighted.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Return migration theories**

Return migration, including the process in which the children of migrants ‘return’ to their family’s homeland, has been studied from different angles. Most studies focus on the benefits for the family’s homeland as the return migrants or their descendants bring skills with them that can be used to develop the country. In these cases, the return migrants and their descendants usually return to a developing country, after having gained experience or educational capital in a developed country (Cassarino, 2004 p. 254). This particular case is different since the economic situation of the involved countries have switched. Venezuela used to be one of the richest countries in the world during the ‘50s and 60s, attracting many European and Latin American migrants. As a result of the discovery of the world’s largest oil reserves, the country’s gross domestic product per capita was already in 1957 estimated to be above $10.000,- a year. This is an exceptionally high number, not only in Latin America but also in Europe (OECD, 2006, p. 288). Spain’s estimated GDP per capita in 1957 was just above $3.000,- (OECD, 2006, p. 278). The GDP per capita on the Canaries was even lower as one of the ten poorest regions of Western Europe in 1950 (Rosés & Wolf, 2018, p. 27). Spain’s GDP per capita reached $10.000,- in 1986, at that time Venezuela was going through a heavy crisis because of the lower international oil prices (OECD, 2006, p. 278). Around that period both countries went through a fundamental change in terms of migration. Venezuela, historically an immigration country, stopped being one while Spain, historically an emigration country, started attracting migrants (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, pp. 134-135). Nowadays, due to the humanitarian crisis in the Latin American country, differences in economic performances between the two have increased. While Venezuela’s GDP per capita shrank to $2.700,- per year in 2018, Spain had a GDP per capita of $31.000,- per year according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2018). However, as is normal for Spain’s southern regions, incomes on the Canary Islands are about one fifth lower than the national average (La Provincia, 2018).
Return migration theorists stress different factors in order to explain sudden return migration flows. Some of them focus narrowly on the descendants of return migrants, as links with the country of origin can remain strong within certain communities. Feelings of not belonging in their actual country of origin, where they were born, can appear as a result of perceived differences by themselves and natives without a migration background. Nevertheless, most return migration theories do not pay attention to these factors. They try to connect the successfulness of a migration story with return migration to the homeland (Cassarino, 2004 pp. 254-255). Neoclassical economists emphasize the economic performances of the migrants. When their expectations are not met in the country of destination, it makes sense for them to return. In other words, return migration is seen as an economic failure (Cassarino, 2004 p. 255). Since I will focus on the descendants of Canarians in Venezuela, I will only evaluate the success of the family or community as a whole. These descendants were usually born in Venezuela and it was, thus, not their decision to move there. However, they belonged to an immigrant community and their family’s successfulness shaped their migration decisions and possibilities.

New Economics of Labor Migration theorists see return migration, as opposed to the neoclassical economists, as a result of a success story. In their eyes, migrated families return home when their economic goals are met (Cassarino, 2004, pp. 256-257). Both theories see the economic context as a determinant for migrant’s decisions, without taking the social, cultural or political context into account. In Venezuela for instance, non-economic factors, such as insecurity, institutional corruption, and political persecution, are important reasons for some migrants to leave. Furthermore, changes in the country of origin are not addressed, while they can be decisive for migrants to return. In this case, for example, Spain’s political and economic changes are favorable for migrants to return, as shown in the first paragraph of this chapter.

The structural approach pays more attention to the socioeconomic context in both countries. It stresses, in opposition to the other theories, the possible impact of return migration on the country of origin as the returnees could exert a role as actors of change. Factors related to time and space, such as the duration of the migration, are taken into account for the impact on the country of origin and the easiness to readapt. An enduring migration, as is the case for the Canarian return migrants from Venezuela, would make the integration process upon returning more difficult as the migrants usually lose contact with family members and the society of origin after some time (Cassarino, 2004 p. 259). As a consequence, the impact of their return on the home country is limited. In addition, the structural approach highlights the context of the place the migrants return to. A business-oriented environment would, for example, encourage returnees to become actors of change (Cassarino, 2004 p. 260). The structural approach can thus be helpful in delineating context-related limitations or promotors of integration in the home country. On the Canaries, the tourism sector can be seen as determining for the job opportunities. For some return migrants this job context might be limiting as the tourism
industry mostly offers low-skilled jobs. The other two aforementioned theories focus on the
successfulness of the first migration experience, this successfulness can be translated into savings,
properties or education. The return migration and subsequent integration may be facilitated by
achieved capital from previous success. In this thesis, I will take different forms of capital into
account to evaluate the way in which these forms have encouraged the integration of Venezuelans of
Canarian origin on the Canaries.

The different types of capital

According to Bourdieu the possession of capital can be seen as power. Each form of capital can be
converted into another one, which may result in a more powerful position within society. Economic
capital can be seen as the easiest one to convert as properties or savings may be used to generate a
higher income, and subsequently a better position within society’s hierarchy (Joy & Game &
Toshniwal, 2018, p. 4). Capital is thus used to reproduce society. Owners of a certain capital have the
agency to raise one’s position and indicate distinction with non-owners of capital, this can, for
instance, be done by behaving in a certain way, related to one’s class or culture (Bauder, 2008, p.
318). Bourdieu argues that an all-encompassing social hierarchy is present in everybody’s mind,
deduced from attached meanings to everyday interactions and relations. “Social divisions become
principles of division, organizing the image of the social world. Objective limits become a sense of
limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons and places
and so forth from which one is excluded.” (Bourdieu, p. 471).

One of the clearest distinctions between people within contemporary societies deals with citizenship
and legal residency. The modern state excludes and includes people in a framework based on certain
criteria. As a result, a group of people is denied access to the labor market and lacks social, political
and economic rights, while the majority in society does not have to face these obstacles (Bauder, 2008
p. 320). With regards to acquiring citizenship, most states have a mix of *ius solis*, based on the
country of birth, and *ius sanguinis*, based on one’s origin. Historically Spain has used the principle of
*ius sanguinis*, usually seen as more restrictive as it is based on ethnocultural notions. Most countries
with an immigration history, such as Venezuela, favored legislation based on *ius solis* (Domingo &
Ortega-Rivera, 2015, p. 31). When Spain became a country of immigration in the ‘90’s it has
incorporated features of *ius solis* in its nationality law, which remained based on *ius sanguinis*.
Furthermore, the country has encouraged immigration from Latin America by easing the acquisition
of Spanish nationality for nationals of former Spanish colonies and Sephardic Jews (Domingo &
Ortega-Rivera, 2015, p. 31). In addition, the “Ley de la Memoria Histórica” of 2007 included
provisions on nationality, in order to revitalize bonds and to do justice to its exile. This law made it
possible for children and grandchildren of Spanish nationals who immigrated during and after the
Spanish Civil War, to opt for citizenship without residing in the country. The large majority of the
beneficiaries were Latin American. Furthermore, Spanish law only permits the acquisition of citizenship without renouncing to the other nationality to Latin Americans and nationals from some other historically important countries such as Portugal (Domingo & Ortega-Rivera, 2015, p. 35). This legislation has created an institutional framework that favors Latin American migrants and elevates their human capital as Latin American citizens or descendants of Spaniards. Capital related to citizenship does not only involve the legal and institutional system, as one’s citizenship or integration is also evaluated in social interactions of everyday life. People with a foreign or dual nationality and identity may suffer discrimination since equal opportunities in the education system and on the labor market may be denied to them. These social discriminative interactions can thus lead to processes of exclusion and inclusion (Bauder, 2008, pp. 323-324). The social and institutional exclusionary practices are usually directed towards the alien part of the population, natives do not have to overcome these obstacles. They possess a distinct kind of capital, originated from their citizenship.

Bourdieu came up with a social dimension of the economic theory about capital, the basis of capitalism. He acknowledged the importance of non-monetary forms of capital, such as cultural and social capital, since they can be converted into economic capital and subsequently in monetary value. Possessing non-monetary forms of capital can thus be seen as having power because of the strong interrelationships between these types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 81-82). Bourdieu recognizes the existence of three types of cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital deals with cultural practices and features that are acquired by living in a particular society or community or inherited as members of a family. “This embodied capital, external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange.” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 83). Time is essential for the transmission of embodied cultural capital. Many characteristics such as accents or cultural features depend on this type of capital. As argued by using the structural approach in the former subchapter, an enduring migration experience can become an issue when returning to the home country. Time abroad can lead to a changed embodied cultural capital. In this case, it might be influenced by Venezuelan culture. Therefore the return migrant, or their descendants, might not be perceived as local or native anymore, which can be problematic for the reintegration. Secondly, Bourdieu speaks of objectified cultural capital, which emphasizes the distinction between owning certain cultural goods and having the ability to comprehend the message this good wants to transmit (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 85). The last type of cultural capital is the institutionalized one, which recognizes one’s cultural capital by institutionalizing qualifications and diplomas. Institutionalized cultural capital has the strongest relation with economic capital as qualifications can be valued in economic terms. “With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence that confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital that has a relative autonomy vis-a-vis its bearer and even vis-a-vis the cultural capital he effectively
possesses at a given moment of time.” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). Institutionalized cultural capital is especially necessary on the labor market as it provides a guarantee for employers, it thus increases the likeliness for job-applicants to be hired.

In addition, Bourdieu mentions social capital, which results from one’s personal network of social connections and relations. It can be seen as a type of capital based on solidarity between different people. “The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). Bourdieu sees someone’s social network as a result of conscious and unconscious decisions that are made to establish links that might be necessary in the future for any purpose, for example for migration purposes (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86).

Social capital can be converted into economic capital, a relationship of trust and solidarity might, for instance, be necessary to get access to a certain job position. Some goods and services can therefore only be acquired through social relations, which are build up by time and mutual commitment. From a purely economic perspective, social capital can be obtained by investing time and attention. “The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space) by means of the conversions least costly in conversion work and of the losses inherent in the conversion itself (in a given state of the social power relations).” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 89). Somebody’s prosperity is thus partly dependent on the possessed volume of all types of capital, the close relations between these types of capital show the importance of possessing all of them for achieving a high position in the social hierarchy (Hernández Flores & Rappo, 2016, p. 701). Migrants’ position in society is generally lower than average due to issues regarding the convertibility of their capital and a lack of equal opportunities (Bauder, 2008 pp. 320-321). Nevertheless, this can be different for return migrants or their descendants as they are historically bound to the country or region of origin. As a result, they might possess more volume of different forms of capital, which would raise their social and economic position in society.

Bourdieu also introduced the term “field” which partly determines the value of one’s capital. The “field” can be seen as the context in which people have to operate to maximize their capital. This context can be based on national preferences as state institutions and powerful actors often determine which kind of capital is valuable (Joy & Game & Toshniwal, 2018, p. 5). The national or regional basis of the “field” can explain many difficulties which migrants deal with when they try to integrate and progress in a new society. Foreign qualifications get a national character when state institutions complicate the recognition of these diplomas (Erel, 2010, p. 648). As a result, access to certain job sectors becomes exclusive for a group of people national cultural capital. In addition, when qualifications are officially recognized employers often require or value local work experience. This
means that certain cultural capital is undervalued within this “field” which leads to lower positions for migrants. However, cultural capital of Western migrants is usually positively valued abroad, their social position is therefore not affected by migration strategies (Erel, 2010, p. 648). Other forms of capital can also be devalued after migrating, economic capital often loses its value because of unfavorable exchange rates, while social capital is difficult to obtain in a short amount of time.

Differences in cultural practices and beliefs, which arose from embodied cultural capital, might further complicate access to social capital. “As actors with depleted resources, migrants find that they lack the power to influence the rules of the field in their favor.” (Joy & Game & Toshniwal, 2018, p. 7). So migrants often do not have another choice than adapting to the unfavorable context. The other key concept Bourdieu introduced is ‘habitus’, central to this concept is the internalization of the new social rules and values, which often translates in a social devaluation for migrants. There are different ways for individuals to respond to such a new context or “field”, these can be called “habiti”. Joy, Game and Toshniwal come up with different “habiti” related to the labor market, the first one assumes the migrant will accept its new position in the social and economic hierarchy. The general thought is that by accepting the offered jobs and working hard, it is possible to improve one’s place in society.

Another “habitus” would be capital accumulation, for which it is necessary to have some initial capital. This capital needs to be converted to make full use of the opportunities in the host society. Extra schooling is a common way to take advantage of new chances. Many migrants also tend to focus on their strongest facets within the host society. By selective positioning, they are able to profit from their best valued capital and limit the possible devaluation of their capital. Entrepreneurship can be seen as a way to avoid such devaluation since institutionalized cultural capital is not assessed in the same way (Joy & Game & Toshniwal, 2018, p. 8). The last option involves withdrawing from the host country or the labor market as a result of the experienced difficulties. Migrants might choose to return, to try their luck in another country or to retire when age seems to pose a problem for starting a career (Joy & Game & Toshniwal, 2018, p. 9).

The Bourdiesian perspective can be used as a guideline to assess individual experiences and strategies regarding integration within society. By emphasizing capital within migration stories, initial advantages, for instance, economic capital, are taken into account in the evaluation of one’s integration. The other fundamental concepts of Bourdieu’s work, “field” and “habitus”, further structure the different integration processes and partly determine migrants’ trajectories in the host society (Erel, 2010, p. 647).

The concept of integration is often used within migration studies, it can be differentiated from assimilation by the right to have a different identity and culture (Giménez Romero, 1996, p. 121). Usually, integration depends on two sides, the migrants themselves and the host society, including its institutions, both of them can be seen as defining for the eventual outcome. A mutual relationship is
expected from these two actors, involving adaptation on both sides. The minority group should be incorporated within the society with the same rights, obligations and opportunities that the country’s nationals have (Giménez Romero, 1996, p. 121). In order for this to happen institutional changes need to be made by the receiving government. Within the integration process, different dimensions can be recognized, I will highlight four dimensions which I will use to structure my analysis. The first dimension deals with the legal aspect of the integration, covering issues such as citizenship, equal rights and access to the labor market (Penninx, 2007, p.10). Secondly, the socioeconomic dimension, also referred to as the structural dimension, discusses the migrant’s social and economic position within the host society, as well as equality of opportunities. The third dimension deals with the social aspect and cultural differences. Cultural adaptation issues, forms of community bonding are addressed within this dimension (Penninx, 2007, p. 11). In addition, I will pay attention to the political dimension as political participation can be seen as an important element of citizenship which gives an individual the possibility to influence their situation or position in society (Solanes Corella, 2008, p. 70). These dimensions together form a basis to assess an integration process.

In Hispanic academia and literature, there has been written a considerable amount of work on the migration history of Canarians to Venezuela. Some of these works stress the connection and the shared identity between the two peoples. “On the Canary Islands, some authors have called the island society Creole, in a clear allusion to the complex biological and cultural hybridization. On the other side of the ocean, in countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, the complex relationship between their populations and the one of Canarian origin is clear, as they are being considered as different from the Spaniards and closer to the Creoles.”3 (Ascanio Sánchez,2008, p. 193). Research has mostly been focused on the different historical migration processes and the following establishment of the Canarian community in the South American country. As Venezuela has become an emigration country relatively recently, there is little written about the return migration of Canarians or their descendants. However, some articles have been written about the Venezuelan migrant community in Spain. The article “Perceptions of Venezuelan migration: causes, Spain as a destination, return expectations” gives a global overview of the attraction of Spain for Venezuelans, mainly attributed to cultural, linguistic, historical and family factors (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017 p. 156). As the article provides recent numbers of the community, the position of the Canary Islands stands out but is not further addressed. The article “Identity strategies of Canary Emigrants returned from Venezuela” addresses the Canarian return migrants and their cultural identity, which has been influenced by their childhood on the Canaries and their entire working life in Venezuela. As a result, their identities have been shaped in an intercultural context. In addition, time plays an important role

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3 Original text: En las Islas Canarias, algunos autores han llegado a denominar a la sociedad isleña como criolla, en una clara alusión a la compleja hibridación biológica y cultural. Del otro lado del océano, en países como Cuba y Venezuela queda patente la compleja relación entre sus poblaciones y la de origen canario, siendo considerados éstos como diferentes a los españoles y más cercanos a los criollos.
as Canarian society experienced important changes while these Canarians were living in Venezuela. The article focuses on the identity strategies that are adopted by these migrants upon returning to a different Canarian society (Buraschi, 2014 pp. 72-73). These strategies are comparable to the “habiti” to which Bourdieu refers, but they differ according to the circumstances and personal convictions. This article emphasizes the change in cultural identity and the emotional well-being of the returnees (Buraschi, 2014, p. 95).

Research Design

In order to gather information about the Venezuelan community of Canarian origin on the Canary Islands, I have conducted 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews on the islands of Tenerife and La Palma, as the Venezuelan presence is more notable on the western islands of the archipelago (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). In total, I interviewed 25 Venezuelans, as some of the interviews involved multiple people. There were some requirements to be included in my research group, first of all, it was important that the participants were of Canarian origin. In that way, I could assess their cultural capital and make a comparison with their parent(s) or grandparent(s) who migrated. I thus focused on the descendants of Canarian migrants, who were born in Venezuela. Yet, in some of my group interviews, I also spoke with Venezuelans without a Canarian background, usually the partner of a descendant of Canarians. Because of that, these partners were familiar with the Canarian culture. However, their migration experience differs as their connection with the islands is different and sometimes they did not have the legal documentation. Their stories were thus helpful to comprehend the position of my research group and to grasp the differences between this group and other Venezuelans on the Canaries. Another requirement involved age and the participant’s phase in life. The Canarian returnees, those who migrated to Venezuela when they were young, are usually retired now and do not have the need to become an active part of the islands’ working force. Their children and grandchildren usually do not have any other choice. Therefore they are obliged to start working or studying. As I am also looking at the integration process from a socioeconomic perspective, focusing on the participants’ careers, I had to restrict the research group to working-age people, therefore I focused on the descendants of Canarians.

I asked the participants about their experiences and strategies regarding their integration, with a focus on their social, cultural and economic capital, which was used to integrate into the host society. Since the political and economic situation started changing in 2013, I focused on the group of migrants which arrived after that year. The situation started worsening rapidly from then on, for instance with regards to scarcity of food and medicines (El Español, 2016). The group of people that left since the start of the crisis usually felt forced to leave to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families, while the group that immigrated before left because of better opportunities but voluntarily. I
will provide a brief comparison between these two groups, regarding their capital and integration, for
that reason I also interviewed some Venezuelans who arrived before the crisis.

I assessed their integration by asking whether they were satisfied with their new life on the Canary
Islands. In addition, I took the aforementioned dimensions into account starting with their legal status
and the experienced difficulties in obtaining legal residency, as well as the perceived advantages of
having dual citizenship. Furthermore, I took aspects such as financial stability and access to the labor
market and public services into account to measure their socioeconomic integration. I also asked
about their career history to make a comparison between their socioeconomic position in Venezuela
and the Canaries. Lastly, we spoke about social life, perceived cultural differences, their social
relations with their Canarian family, as well as the Venezuelan community on the islands. In addition,
during my fieldwork on the Canaries, the general Spanish elections took place, on the 28th of April of
2019 (El Pais, 2019). Because of the importance of political participation within integration, I also
asked them about their political participation and their reasons to vote.

In order to form a research group with differentiated characteristics, I asked different Venezuelan and
Spanish acquaintances for contacts. They brought me into contact with some Venezuelan residents on
Tenerife and La Palma, some of them introduced me to their family members. Furthermore, I have
posted different announcements in Facebook groups for Venezuelans living on the Canary Islands.
People with different characteristics, such as duration of stay on the islands, place of residence,
gender and age were willing to be interviewed. After interviewing these individuals I sometimes used
snowball techniques to find people with interesting characteristics for my research. Apart from these
ways to get into contact with people, I also visited some businesses owned by Venezuelans and a
social club created to connect the Venezuelan and Canarian cultures. As a consequence of using
snowball techniques, there were some respondents who were acquainted with each other, which may
diminish the generalizability of the outcomes. However, by using different ways to get into contact
with individuals I have tried to improve to the representativeness of the research group.

Before starting the interviews I asked the respondents if I could record the conversation and quote
them in my thesis. All of them, except for Jorge and Gabriel, agreed on this matter. I took notes
during the interviews, especially with the respondents who did not want to be recorded. With regards
to the other 23 respondents, I will be using references, indicating the minute something was being said
on the recording. In order to guarantee the respondents’ privacy, I will not be using their original
names. All interviews were held in Spanish. The quotes of respondents and literature were translated
by me into English.

As I was only able to interview a limited amount of people about their integration experiences and the
role of their capital in this process, the research will have some limitations. Some characteristics of
the participants, such as gender, race, class, and age, as well as the place of residence on the Canaries, can have strong influences on the participants’ experiences. I will only be able to describe some of these influences, as they came up in the interviews, but will not be able to fully assess the importance of each of these characteristics for the integration in Canarian society. Furthermore, many Venezuelans with a Canarian background still reside in Venezuela or migrated elsewhere. The participants in the research have had the opportunity to migrate to Spain, many others probably do not. The group does thus not represent the Canarian community of Venezuela as a whole, but only the ones that could ‘return’. In addition, participants have mentioned the experienced differences with the group which arrived a longer time ago and the group of Venezuelans without a Canarian background, and a Spanish passport. I will nevertheless not be able to provide a complete comparison as I have not spoken with enough people with these differentiated characteristics. I will thus stress the differences which are perceived by the participants in daily life, without being conclusive about these characteristics.

Analysis

The Nationality Aspect

As Venezuela started to experience more problems related to security and political unrest in the 2000s, Spain, and the Canary Islands in particular, started being a refuge for some of these Venezuelan migrants (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, p. 153). The country did not only become a popular destination because of linguistic and historical reasons. The legal aspect also played an important role. Of the 255,000 Venezuela-born residents in Spain, 142,000 possessed the Spanish nationality in 2018 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019). This ratio, of 55%, is very high compared to ratios of 23% for Asia-born residents or 20% for Africa-born residents. Levels of possession of citizenship are comparable for other Latin Americans in Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019). However, when Venezuelan presence in the country was lower, before the 2000’s, ratios of possession of Spanish nationality were significantly higher. In 1998 more than 80% of Venezuela-born residents had Spanish nationality. Over time more Venezuelans without a Spanish background have moved to the European country, whereas the first migration flows were mainly composed of Venezuelans with Spanish heritage.

Within Spain, the Canaries have attracted the biggest proportion of Venezuelans with Spanish citizenship, while other regions, such as Catalonia and Madrid, attract more Venezuelans without Spanish nationality (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, p. 154). This difference can be explained by the economic strength of these regions, whereas family reasons and Canarian heritage play a bigger role in the attraction of the Canary Islands. This group, which has migrated to the Islands, is more likely to have Spanish citizenship. This was also the case within this research, 23 of
the 25 participants had obtained the nationality before leaving Venezuela and the other two are also eligible for a Spanish passport because of their ancestry. The reasons for the participants to obtain the Spanish nationality in Venezuela differed. One of my respondents, Valeria, a student at the University of la Laguna on Tenerife, admitted that the connection with Spain did not play an important role for obtaining the nationality. Travel purposes were the main reason back then when the Venezuelan economy was still relatively stable. “I and my sister have the Spanish nationality since we were young, I was only three years old. My father had a Spanish passport because of his parent’s Canarian background, so we got Spanish passports as well. Like that we could go on holiday in the United States without applying for a visa. As Miami is only a two hours flight away I used to go there every year with my family when I was younger.” (Valeria, min. 43-44). Legal reasons, as well as help from family members on the islands, were determinant for Valeria to go to Tenerife to study. “If it would be easier and cheaper to enter the United States legally, without the need to show proof of having sufficient savings, I would have gone there.” (Valeria, min. 44-45). Another participant, Estefanía, a primary teacher, got the Spanish nationality because of educational motives. “Ten years ago I wanted to study a master’s at the University of Valencia, so I obtained the nationality without much trouble, although I did not go to Valencia in the end because it turned out to be too expensive.” (Estefanía, min. 4).

However, for the majority of my participants, the connection with the Canaries was the main reason to obtain Spanish nationality. Almost all of the participants had visited the islands before for holiday purposes, but they did not think that it would once be necessary for migration reasons. Sara, even visited the place where she now works, a social club focused on Canarians with a connection to Venezuela. “Luckily, I had the opportunity to go several times to Tenerife as a visitor. I wanted to know where my parents came from, to get to know the island and to visit my grandparents and other family members.” (Sara, min. 13-14). In order to enter Spain, it was convenient to have the nationality.

In the last couple of decades, certain rules and laws regarding obtaining Spanish passports have changed. Fifty-eight-year-old Fernanda could in the first place not obtain the nationality because her father was a naturalized Venezuelan without a Spanish passport, the nationality could back then not be inherited from women. When this clause was changed by the government, Fernanda got the Spanish nationality (Fernanda, min. 2-3). Nevertheless, a significant group of the interviewees already had Spanish citizenship since their childhood because their parents decided to pass the nationality on to their children. This is possible as a result of the Spanish *ius sanguinis*-based nationality law. Therefore, it is generally easy, as a minor, to get the nationality, even though the parents are born in Venezuela (Fernanda, min. 3). As a result, the majority had dual citizenship since their youth, a common phenomenon for the large group of Venezuelans with a migration background. Between 1940 and 1960 migration flows to Venezuela did not only come from Spain, but also from Portugal.
and Italy. These three countries were responsible for 90% of the European immigration to Venezuela in that period. Apart from these migration waves, many Latin Americans also chose Venezuela as their destination in the 20th century, this was especially the case for Colombians and Argentinians (Chen & Urquijo & Picouet, 1981, p. 27).

The value of a Spanish passport was very clear for the participants and most of them talked about the importance of migrating legally to avoid trouble. Some participants at first had plans to move to other countries, such as the US and Panama. Yet, these were reconsidered because of the difficulties experienced by other Venezuelans without legal documentation over there (Carlos, min. 1). One’s heritage, and subsequent possibilities of obtaining the correspondent nationality, thus become important issues when deciding where to migrate. For Jorge, a bodyguard from Caracas, the high chances of obtaining the nationality because of his heritage were determinant for his decision to come to Europe. He could choose between France and Spain, as his paternal side of the family is French and his maternal side Canarian. Because of his positive experiences on the islands and linguistic and cultural similarities with Venezuela he chose for the Canaries instead of France. As he is one of the two participants who did not have a Spanish passport before leaving the South American country, he also informed himself beforehand on the internet and asked family members about the procedure to get the nationality. This allowed him to make a well-considered decision on his destination (Jorge, notes).

Venezuelans with a European passport from another country also possess an advantageous type of capital as their European citizenship eases the migration process. It is common for the different migrant communities in Venezuela to marry someone outside the community. Some families, therefore, possess different European passports. For instance, the family of Andrea and Francesco, while Andrea has Spanish citizenship and many family members on the Canaries, her husband’s family is originally from Italy. His Italian passport turned out to be useful when they decided to move to the island of La Palma (Francesco, min. 11-12). As a European-passport holder, Francesco could stay legally in Spain, but in order to get access to public services such as healthcare it is necessary to apply for a “Número de Identidad de Extranjero” or NIE, an identity number for foreigners served out by the Spanish state. This document is granted after finding employment or starting a business. In addition, the documentation is necessary to register as a resident at the municipality. As a resident of the islands, you get significant subsidies on flights between the Canaries and the mainland (Ministerio de Fomento, 2019). For Francesco, these subsidies are very useful since he studies and works in Barcelona, while his wife and children live on La Palma (Francesco, min. 4).

For a majority of the participants and Spain’s Venezuela-born residents in general, entering the country and getting access to public services and the entire labor market has been exceptionally easy compared to the ones with only a Venezuelan passport. The two participants who did not have a
Spanish passport beforehand entered the country as tourists. In opposition to the other Venezuelans with a double passport, they had to buy a return ticket and pay more for the journey to show their supposed intention to go back (Teresa, min. 9-10). For Venezuelans it is not necessary to have a visa, therefore they could stay legally in the Schengen zone for a duration of 90 days. However, there are some other entry requirements with regards to accommodation. If you have contacts in Spain which can provide housing, you must bring a “Carta de Invitación” with you. This document has to be requested by the acquaintance in Spain at a police station and costs about €80,- (Ministerio del Interior, 2019). Jorge could obtain this document as his uncle was able to provide housing. His uncle thus applied for this document and served as a guarantee for the Spanish state that Jorge would have shelter during his stay.

However, for Venezuelans that want to come to the Canaries, it is an obstacle, since it is necessary to have social contacts on the islands. The contact needs to be well-established as it is needed to provide a Spanish identity card, passport or NIE. Moreover, the acquaintance needs to declare to be aware of certain legal provisions with regards to illegal immigration: “The Criminal Code classifies as an offense, in its article 318. bis: "the one that directly or indirectly promotes, favors or facilitates the illegal traffic or the illegal immigration of people from, in transit or to Spain, will be punished with a penalty from four to eight years in prison.”” (Ministerio del Interior). Acquaintances can be scared off by having to sign these provisions. It is thus essential for the potential Venezuelan migrant to have good relations with their contact on the Canaries. Having a greater volume of social capital has its benefits since this social capital can be converted into institutionalized legal capital related to one’s possibilities of entering the country.

Sofía, a young entrepreneur, decided to move to London when she felt the necessity to leave Venezuela. An uncle could help her there at the beginning. However, when her mother also wanted to leave the country, she wanted to be there for support. Tenerife was seen as the easiest and most logical destination, because of her mother’s background and the family members on the island who could help them out (Sofía, min. 1-2). In addition, Sofía felt that it would be difficult for her family to adapt to the way of life in the United Kingdom, because of the cultural differences and the language barrier. Right now, Sofía and her mother can also serve as the necessary social capital for her father to be able to migrate to the Canary Islands, since he does not have a Spanish passport. “My father still lives in Venezuela, but he will come any time when I get him his “Carta de Invitación” and so forth. But if I would be in England, he would have to apply for a visa and I would have to pay.. It would be a lot more complicated for him to go there than coming over here”. (Sofía, min. 3). The Venezuelan

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4 Translation: letter of invitation.
5 Identity card for foreigners in Spain.
6 Original text from the Criminal Code: «el que directa o indirectamente, promueva, favorezca o facilite el tráfico ilegal o la inmigración clandestina de personas desde, en tránsito o con destino a España, será castigado con la pena de cuatro a ocho años de prisión». 
community itself serves, thus, also as an attracting force on the islands. Family reunification is made easier because of the high number of Venezuelans on the islands with legal documentation, for instance in Sofia’s case. As a result, some of the respondents mentioned that almost all their family members, including aunts, uncles, parents, nephews, and nieces, now live on the islands (Martina, min. 34). Also in other cases family reasons played an important role for choosing the Canaries. Ana, who owns a minimarket, wanted to have the option to see her parents again in Venezuela. “At first I wanted to go to the United States, but I would have to apply for political asylum as my brother is also there with political asylum but I thought a lot about my parents. They are older already and if something would happen to them, neither of us would be able to go to Venezuela if we obtain political asylum… It is not possible to go to Venezuela until you have the nationality, a procedure which may take seven to nine years.” (Ana, min. 2-3)

For people who lack social capital on the islands but possess sufficient economic capital, it is possible to enter the Schengen zone by showing proof of hotel reservations. Margarita, the other participant who came to the Canaries as a Venezuelan tourist did so in 2012. She has the impression that it was easier to enter Spain as a Venezuelan back then since the migration flows were only starting to grow (Margarita, min. 75). When she arrived, together with her daughter, on Tenerife, the island of her mother, she felt at home. As she is suffering from arthritis, the warm climate of the south of the island was an important reason as well to go to the Canaries instead of the Iberian peninsula. Despite the good feelings about Tenerife, the first two years on the island Margarita had to be careful. She became afraid of police controls when she heard a story from a friend who was asked by the police to show her identification after hearing her Uruguayan accent (Margarita, min. 77). Because of these fears, she tried to stay inside as much as possible. In addition, she used to take taxi’s instead of public transport. After these two years, she obtained legal residence and one year later the nationality thanks to the aforementioned “Ley de Memoria Histórica”, which grants Spanish citizenship to descendants of the ones who fled the Spanish civil war or Franco’s dictatorship (Margarita, min. 29).

Obtaining the nationality while being in Spain is a bureaucratic process. The first step is applying for a NIE. After some months Jorge received this document, which meant legal residency in the country. He now has to reside in Spain for one year to be able to apply for the nationality (Jorge, notes). Like Margarita, Jorge is trying to obtain the nationality through the law on historical memory. For Venezuelan adults with a Canarian background but without a Spanish passport when they arrive, this way seems to be the most common one. Fernanda, who obtained her Spanish passport when her oldest son was already older than 18 years old, is using this law as well to get the Spanish nationality for her son. Her younger children could get the nationality easily as they were still underage when she got the nationality, but obtaining the same for her oldest son, of 38 years old, has not been going well. “We found out that we had been defrauded by our lawyers, who were doing the legal work for my son. My daughter and I are still paying back the debt to the bank since we paid almost €4000,- in advance…

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These lawyers had not been doing anything right, the application had been rejected twice and they did not even let us know… My daughter-in-law stepped in and found out that it was rejected. I thought that these swindle practices only happened in my country but apparently also here.” (Fernanda, min. 29-31).

Because of these experiences, Fernanda did not trust it anymore and she found another lawyer specialized in migration issues, who is helping them out. “They said that they (the former lawyers) do not do migration cases and that everything that they had done was incorrect“ (Fernanda, min 32). Because of the fraudulent experiences with these lawyers, Fernanda feels that her son has lost a year in the migration process. Especially with regards to work, the situation has been difficult for him. “Three months ago my son got into a depression, and we had to give him medication, because the former lawyers had been telling him that he could already start working with some paper which these lawyers had obtained for him, but which was actually worthless.” (Fernanda, min. 32).

Canarian ancestry and a corresponding Spanish passport were one of the main reasons for the participants to return or migrate to the Canaries. A majority of the participants and their families did not encounter obstacles related to the legal framework. They had immediate access to all public services, such as the healthcare system which only gives free assistance to foreigners without legal documentation after spending ninety days in the country (La Provincia, 2018). Furthermore, this group could start working legally upon arrival. In case of unemployment, they are also eligible for the “Subsidio para Emigrantes Retornados”7, a subsidy from the Spanish state for returned emigrants that worked outside the European Union (Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal, 2019). It is not necessary to be born in Spain. Many second and third generation Canarians from Venezuela thus receive this subsidy, which is seen as very helpful when starting a new life (Martina, min. 8).

However, some Venezuelan families in this research were mixed, it is therefore common to encounter individuals with different nationalities and related capital in the same family. Within these families, they tend to help each other out as families are usually close in Venezuela. Obtaining legal residence or Spanish citizenship is seen as one of the main objectives for the integration of all family members as it equalizes the situation for the entire family with regards to rights. Despite the aforementioned advantages in immigration law for Latin Americans in Spain, the system is bureaucratic and procedures usually take a long time. Important inequalities, originating from one’s legal status, thus persist within the Venezuelan community. Usually, these disappear over time when legal documentation is obtained. Nevertheless, a majority of the respondents and the Venezuelan community on the islands did not have to worry about their own documentation (Castillo Crasto & Reguant Álvarez, 2017, p. 154). They were perceived as natives within the legal framework as their Spanish passports gave them the same rights as the local population. Thanks to this citizenship capital

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7 Translation: subsidy for returned emigrants
they acquired a relatively advantageous position in society, especially compared to other migrants. They could for instance benefit from subsidies targeted at Spaniards who had worked abroad. Yet, citizenship capital also deals with someone’s perceived nationality in social interactions (Bauder, 2008, pp. 323-324). The situation on the Canaries differs in this aspect as the Canarian Venezuelans are foremost seen as Venezuelan rather than Canarian. This side will be addressed in the subtheme about the social aspect of integration.

The Socioeconomic Aspect in Venezuela

Despite the relatively easy entrance process for the majority of the Venezuelans with Canarian roots, many of them have difficulties in obtaining flights as a result of Venezuela’s monetary and economic situation. In 2003 Chávez introduced a new exchange control mechanism to avoid capital flight. Fixed exchange rates were established by this mechanism. Because of that, it became difficult for individuals and companies to exchange the local currency, the bolívar, into American dollars or euros (Citylab, 2018). This was also the case for many international airlines and as a consequence, the Venezuelan state owes these airlines almost $4 billion. Many airlines, therefore, decided to stop selling tickets in bolívares, making it more complicated for citizens to buy tickets (Citylab, 2018). Apart from monetary issues, insecurity for crewmembers and passengers, a lack of goods which are necessary for aircraft maintenance and recent power cuts, have been reasons for international airlines to stop flying to Caracas. In the last couple of years, a total of fifteen international airlines have ceased their flights permanently and many others have decreased the number of connections to the Latin American country. As a result, many potential immigration destinations are a lot more difficult to reach for Venezuelans. Remarkably, the Spanish airline “Plus Ultra Líneas Aéreas” started connecting Caracas with Tenerife North in 2018 to satisfy the demand of the Venezuelan community on the islands (El Economista, 2018). The airline operates on a weekly basis and offers a capacity of more than 300 seats (EuropaPress, 2018). Nevertheless, all participants in this research took a connecting flight in Madrid.

Some of the participants talked about the difficulties they experienced when buying flights to Tenerife. Estefanía flew, together with her young son, to Tenerife in 2018. “At that moment they (the two tickets) were sold for more than $2000,-. As a teacher, I did not even earn $20,- per month. That is why most people go to Colombia or other places which are more nearby.” Estefanía wanted to go to the Canaries because of her Spanish nationality and the help she would receive from family members on the islands. “My older brother helped me out as he had some savings in dollars and he paid the tickets for us.” (Estefanía, min. 6). Teresa noticed that it was essential to have contacts or to bribe flight vendors in order to leave the country with her daughter. “The government over there has caused the collapse of the (sales of) flights… We went to Caracas to buy tickets, but the (sales) girl told me there were no flights… She said the flights were not activated.. At that moment it was not interesting
for her to sell me a flight for 500(000) bolívares, because at that time she could already sell them for 2.000(000) bolívares because of the government’s corruption.” (Teresa, min. 11-12). Teresa had to solve this issue and try to buy them another time. “Her father (of her daughter) got hold of a contact within the government, who had access to the flights, and he got us the two flights.” (Teresa, min. 14). Because of the difficult access to dollars and the devaluation of the bolívar, many people have to find ways to be able to afford the trip overseas. Jorge had the opportunity to save money thanks to his job as an official bodyguard in Caracas, a much sought-after and well-paid job in Venezuela due to the increasing unsafety. His wife and children are planning to come to Tenerife as well when he will be able to provide them with an income. In order to gather enough dollars in Venezuela to buy the tickets, they plan to sell their car (Jorge). All participants thus had to possess economic capital or transferrable social capital, for instance having acquaintances who provide loans, to go to the Canaries.

Due to these difficulties, only a small proportion of Venezuelans are able to afford plane tickets to the Canary Islands. Nevertheless, in the decades before the devastating economic downturn, the Canarian community had achieved a stable economic position in Venezuelan society. All participants were thankful for the considerable efforts their parents or grandparents, who migrated from the Canaries, had made for them to have a comfortable life in their country. “They risked their lives by going there in these boats as they did it an illegal way, he (her father) was actually locked up when he arrived. When they released him he started working in a place called la Pedrera, in Caracas, where he had to break rocks… Later for us, it was completely different.” (Mariana, min. 1). Many participants were proud to talk about the success stories of their parents or grandparents, who usually worked hard to provide a better life for their families after escaping the post-war poverty of the Canary Islands. They recognized the importance of the migration to Venezuela for their families and the country in general. “It changed my grandfather’s life, there were many opportunities in Venezuela, when he left, in the mid-sixties, he had not even finished secondary school and worked as a painter for cinemas, selling the film posters, when he arrived. He noticed that it was necessary to study if he wanted to improve, if not he would have been a merchant for his entire life. So, he studied, and luckily universities are free in Venezuela, he finished high school and then studied economy at the Central University of Venezuela. After that, he became the vice-president of the same carton company (which also sells the film posters) for forty years and of course, a vice-president has a good quality of life. He achieved his goals to improve his and his family’s life.” (Javier, min. 4-6). As a result of their parents’ efforts, Javier and many other participants were able to live a comfortable life, in which they could always count on support from their family (Javier, min. 6-7). “Some (Canarian migrants) did not have luck at their jobs, others lost companies, but on average, yeah, the Canarian migrant made progress. Almost everybody did, for instance in my family, everybody had their own house and so forth.” (Martina, min. 43-44). Many respondents talked about the attachment of their parents or grandparents, who had
migrated, to Venezuela. Usually, they preferred to stay in Venezuela as they had been able to build up a good life over there (Javier, min. 27). However, some of the respondents accompanied their parents and grandparents in their return, which was generally seen as forced. Their success did not translate into a desire to go back to the archipelago as the new economics of labor migration theory suggests. Neither was the return of some of them a consequence of a failed migration experience, as they were successful until the economic situation changed drastically. Nevertheless, economic factors were one of the main causes for the return of members of the Canarian community in Venezuela, in line with the ideas of neoclassical economists.

A common problem for Venezuelans who belonged to the middle or higher middle classes, like the majority of the participants, involves their properties. A majority of the participants had to think about selling or leaving their properties behind. As Venezuela is experiencing hyperinflation, with an inflation rate of 1,7 million in 2018, the Bolívar has lost trust and the currency has been devaluated (El Economista, 2018). For many people, it became impossible to sell their properties, without losing great sums of money. A majority of the participants, thus, left their houses, cars, companies, and land behind. Despite these properties being a symbol of the successful immigration story of the Canarian community, it has now become non-transferable economic capital. Most participants could, therefore, not profit from their family’s economic success upon returning to the Canaries. The ones who migrated before the recent crisis were usually able to sell. “One of the most important differences with back then is that the people who owned houses, cars or companies could sell them and bring the money over here. Nowadays we cannot sell, you could sell of course, but the money you are going to get for your properties is worth nothing here.”(Laura, min. 18). As a consequence of the economic and monetary crisis, trust in the Venezuelan economy has disappeared. Therefore investments have gone down and properties have lost value (Julio, min. 19). “So, someone with an apartment could probably get 50.000 dollars or euros for it 10 years ago, nowadays that might be 10.000. It has thus lost value. Therefore, somebody who comes now (to the Canaries), comes with less money to invest and start over here.”(Julio, min. 19-20). In that sense, Venezuelan migrants who arrived before were more likely to bring economic capital with them, which is necessary to start a company for instance.

In addition, there exists a risk of occupation of properties in the country due to the increased insecurity and poverty (Julio, min. 20). Keeping an eye on the properties was an important reason for some of the participants’ family members to stay in Venezuela. Camila’s family, for instance, owns a big farm, where they have cattle to produce milk and they cultivate plantains, yucca’s, pumpkins and avocado’s (Camila, min. 6-7). Despite not earning enough anymore from selling their produce, their parents have not been able to come because of the farm. “My grandfather, when he came to Venezuela, bought land and houses as well… They spent 40 years working and producing… So, it is painful to sell. If you leave it (the land) behind, it will be taken. As they (other people) see it is empty, they can enter and then the government will give them permission because it is seen as
abandoned land. And cattle can be stolen, which already happens nowadays, so imagine what happens when they are not there... Right now she (her mother) is looking into selling some land or leaving it in charge of someone, like a middle man.” (Camila, min. 5-6). Even though the insecurity made some people, especially the elderly, stay to be able to watch their properties. For many respondents, the high levels of insecurity were an important reason to migrate. Estefanía saw the insecurity as the main reason to go to the Canaries as her younger brother, 25 years old, was murdered in 2016. “In the bus they shot him in the head to steal from him. He had a small bag with him, but that’s it. With a phone, maybe they had seen that at the doctor’s practice because over there you cannot take your phone out of your pockets when you’re outside… This happened on a Saturday at 10 o’clock in the morning in front of a market with a lot of people around, but there was no one who would testify except for the bus driver… So then I told myself that I would not stay anymore, as I have a kid and I am only 36 years old so I still have a life ahead of me” (Estefanía, min. 5-6). Some other respondents also shared tragic stories, which together with the economic downfall made them consider to migrate to the Canary Islands.

Most of the respondents had to leave their properties behind but Francesco and Andrea are in an exceptional situation as they can sell their house. “It is difficult, but we are already for three years in this sale process, because it is with the people who are renting it right now. It has been a headache.. We are selling it in dollars and because of that it (the devaluation) has not affected us that much, but it also meant that the negotiations took longer. First of all because for the people over there it is difficult to get access to dollars and then it is necessary to transfer it to a bank over here.” (Francesco, min. 6-7). As a result of the sale, Francesco and Andrea are now able to buy an apartment with a mortgage in Los Llanos de Aridane, on the island of La Palma. The bank has accepted the purchase of the property since they already received a deposit from the sale of their apartment in Venezuela (Francesco, min. 3-4). When the family of four arrived on the island of La Palma in 2017 they could move in with Andrea’s parents, who arrived a few years ago. After initially trying their luck in the United Kingdom, where they had to use their savings to afford the rent of an apartment, it was helpful to immediately have a place to stay. Nevertheless, they have been living for a long time with seven people in a relatively small apartment (Francesco, min. 3). In a couple of months the family’s economic capital, from their property in Venezuela, will thus be used to continue in better conditions on the Canaries. Different types of capital have made it possible for them to improve their social and economic position on the islands. Social capital from Venezuela, as their renters are able to pay in dollars, makes it possible to transfer their economic capital, which is derived from their family’s successful immigration, to the islands.

A couple of respondents, Fernanda and Mariana, spoke about their negative predictions for Venezuela after the election of Hugo Chávez as president in 1998. Mariana felt the urge to keep some money on the Canary Islands in case circumstances would change dramatically. Because of these distrustful
feelings about Chávez, she and her husband bought an apartment on la Palma, where they live nowadays. Furthermore, she wanted to have the security of a Spanish pension. “I said; we are going to pay for the Spanish social security to have a pension, but he (her husband) did not want to. After hammering a lot about it, I convinced him. Then, when we went here to the social security, they said it was impossible to do that because we did not live here. But of course, it was possible… So, we started and we paid for the pension.” (Mariana, min. 16-17). Because of these decisions, Mariana and her husband now receive a Spanish pension, which has eased their life on la Palma.

However, most respondents were not able to benefit from their Venezuelan economic capital because they arrived recently and they had not invested in the Canary Islands. The current economic situation led to a significant devaluation of their Venezuelan properties. Therefore, their economic capital, which can be seen as the result of the successful Canarian migration to the Latin American country, has become non-transferrable in the last couple of years. For a significant part of the participants, buying the flight tickets to the Canary Islands meant using their savings or lending money from family members. The economic and monetary situation had changed their purchasing power, especially in foreign currency, and made them more vulnerable. Their loss of economic capital meant that they had to rely on other forms of capital when they arrived, in order to find employment and a place to stay. The group of Venezuelans that had saved or invested money on the Canaries could sometimes help out for instance. Their economic capital proved to be very valuable when they had to start over on the islands. It provided them for example with the opportunity to work for themselves, a relatively good position when taking the regional unemployment rate into account. It thus facilitated a relatively easy integration. In addition, different families, such as Camilla’s and Mariana’s, still owned properties on the Canaries which dated from before their family’s migration to Venezuela. These could be used as a place to stay when they arrived.

The Socioeconomic Aspect on the Canary Islands

Legal residence plays an important role in determining someone’s possibilities in the labor market. The two participants who arrived as tourists could not work legally when they arrived, their options were thus more limited. However, the Canaries are among Spain’s regions with a high proportion of informal work, about a quarter of the total size of the economy is thought to be made up of undeclared economic activities (El Día, 2019). However, Jorge felt that it was only possible to work illegally in certain sectors, such as agriculture, hospitality, cleaning and taking care of children or the elderly. He had had different temporary jobs, which he obtained mostly because of his social capital but also as a result of social contact on the street. These acquaintances made it possible for him to work in greenhouses and at the oil refinery of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the oldest one of Spain (El País, 2018). Jorge felt very grateful for the opportunities he had gotten by his employers as an undocumented worker (Jorge, notes). Margarita, the other participant who arrived without the legal documentation to
work started as a babysitter for children in the village where she lived. When she obtained her NIE, she could start looking for work in the regular labor market as well. There she found a temporary job at the municipal library for instance (Margarita, min. 57). Nevertheless, her position on the labor market did not improve significantly as the Canarian economy is characterized by uncertain conditions.

Within the socioeconomic aspect of the integration, the local labor market plays an important role as it is determinant for the migrants’ professional options. The Canarian labor market can, therefore, be seen as the “field” to which Bourdieu refers. It is the context in which the newcomers have to use their capital in order to progress (Joy et al., p. 5). The Canarian professional “field” is unfortunately unfavorable compared to the rest of Spain or Europe. Especially the structural shortage of employment on the Canaries is limiting professional possibilities, as the regional unemployment rate is always significantly higher than the Spanish average (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019). Since 2013, the Canarian unemployment rate has nevertheless gone down from 34%, at the height of the recession, to 21% at the beginning of 2019 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019). Apart from joblessness, the regional labor market presents higher levels of over-qualification than the national average. On the archipelago, almost 14% of the workers are highly-skilled but working low-skilled jobs (CaixaBank Research, p. 55). In addition, only 43% of jobs on the islands can be labeled as medium- and high-skilled, compared to almost 53% for Spain as a whole (CaixaBank Research, p. 55). These characteristics make the integration process more complicated as the professional uncertainty affected most respondents when they arrived.

Sara, who works as an administrative assistant, emphasizes the importance of having a job for feeling integrated into society. “As a Venezuelan migrant and as a Spaniard, in my experience, it has been a passion without major problems. Although, I recognize that there are people who, suddenly, had more trouble to feel at ease again… Without a doubt, we, the people that had to migrate… in the last couple of years, we are people with qualifications, experience, and studies. And arriving in a place with high unemployment rates and undesirable labor absorption levels is frustrating for many people. They (the unemployed) feel that they are not able to enter or connect with society.” (Sara, min.26-27). Sara did not face these problems as she came well-prepared to Tenerife, where she found a job at the “Casa de Venezuela”, a social club with sports facilities which connects the Canaries with the Latin American country. “Luckily I could arrange my (educational) papers in Venezuela, they were apostilled so I could submit them here at the Ministry of Education, where they certified that my studies are valid in Venezuela and here as well… Fortunately, here they valorized my experience and my knowledge and I could start (working) at a place which, in addition, connects me to Venezuela.”(Sara, min. 29-30).
Almost all participants addressed the necessity to certify Venezuelan titles in order to be able to work in one’s sector on the Canaries. This authorization process is bureaucratic and can take months. The bureaucracy of the state makes it, as a result, more difficult for foreigners to integrate easily into the labor market. “Unfortunately, we, the ones that come from Venezuela, despite having the nationality, have to start from scratch. Me, for example, I am graduated in administration in Venezuela. But, here you cannot use that for anything. Only after the certification, which costs between €250,- and €300,- … and which may take six months or even more. So, until it is certified by Spain, you cannot start looking for jobs related to that because you are not going to get them.” (Sofía, min. 4).

In addition, the normative character of the economy differs from the informal character to which Venezuelans are used. Many of them felt that the high level of regulation and starting obstacles discourage entrepreneurship. “In Venezuela, there is a lot more informality… So, in Venezuela you can easily engage in different activities, whereas here it is all very regulated, you have to be registered as a freelancer to be able to work.” (Sara, min. 28). Due to the high degree of regulation, the difficulty in certifying work experience and professional titles and a labor market focused on tourism, a majority of the participants started with low-skilled jobs. While in Venezuela most of them were working in their field or they had been running their own company. Martina, who worked as a lawyer for the Venezuelan Supreme Court, experienced such downgrade in her career. “Spain has had an economic contraction, political problems, not similar to the ones in Venezuela… But the opportunities of before are not there anymore. When I returned, it was very difficult to reintegrate for me because there is no work. First of all, because the majority of available jobs can be found in hospitality for which you are not prepared. I knew that this was not something for me, but I thought I could find something as a secretary or something like that.” (Martina, min. 7-8). Martina did not certify her studies as they are bound to Venezuelan law. Therefore she started working in low-skilled jobs. Furthermore, her age also played a role. As she is above fifty years old, she feels she has fewer opportunities than younger job-seekers. This feeling was shared by the other participants above fifty years old. “There are a lot of young people here, which obviously have better capacities, maybe not more experience. But for them (employers) young people are more convenient, as they will gain experience. And I see that also happening to my daughter, she is studying tourism so it is easier for her.” (Margarita, min. 59). Most of these older migrants accepted the unfavorable professional context and are working in cleaning, care-taking, hospitality or shops.

As the participants’ qualifications, or institutionalized cultural capital, are generally not automatically recognized, the newcomers have to develop “habiti” to deal with this devaluation of capital (Joy & Game & Toshniwal, 2018, p. 6). Like the older generation, many young people accept low-skilled jobs but only at the beginning because they have to wait for the certification of their studies for instance. However, some of them got access to high-skilled jobs when the certification process was completed. Gabriel, who graduated in medicine in Venezuela, first had to wait a year for the
certification during which he worked as a vendor in a shop. Then, he could start working at the emergency department of a private hospital in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He admitted that it was more favorable for him, as a Venezuelan, to start there, as labor conditions for emergency personnel are tougher thus making the job less popular with locals. Moreover, it was a position at a private hospital, which means less prestige and salary in comparison with a public one. When the contract ended, he could start as a forensic doctor at the public hospital of the island of La Palma (Gabriel, notes). This habitus can be seen as “position taking” as he employed a strategy that made the entry in the medical world easier, which later translated in a better position on the labor market (Joy et al, p. 8). Gabriel saw the employment of this strategy more often among the Venezuelans on the islands.

Another common habitus among the interviewed Venezuelans deals with capital accumulation. Some participants were re-schooling themselves. They were usually attending free courses of the “Sevicio Canario de Empleo” in order to obtain certificates that give proof of one’s abilities in certain sectors. Camila, who lives on La Palma, an island without universities, was aiming to start studying at the UNED, which is possible online. Two other participants, Valeria and Miguel, came specifically to Tenerife to continue their education. They came, separately, when they were eighteen years old, to study at the public university on the island, the University of La Laguna. “I knew that in Venezuela I was not going to have a bachelor’s, because the universities are striking all the time… since the professors do not get paid… There is no water, no light, so you cannot go to university” (Valeria, min 16). Therefore, both adolescents participated in the “Selectividad”, the Spanish test which gives access to public universities. “The UNED, the distance learning university, has a group of people that go to Venezuela and they let you do the exam over there… It was a giant room and we were about 400 people doing the exam.. to go to different parts of Spain.” (Gabriela, min. 5-6). Both Valeria and Miguel approved and came to the Canaries because of family help, she started studying speech therapy and he started accountancy. Miguel recognizes that he had to get used to the different educational system. “It is also difficult because in Venezuela, the level that I had in high school, was much lower. .. But in the end, when you study a lot, you will succeed.” (Miguel, min. 8). Thanks to the international approach of the educational system and help from relatives, or social capital, it was possible for Valeria and Miguel to start their studies immediately when they arrived. After their graduation, they will not have to go through trouble to prove the validity of their qualifications, like other participants had to do. The same counts for Francesco, an engineer who works and studies a master’s in Barcelona. Because of the scarce job opportunities in his area on the Canary Islands, he only had temporary jobs on the islands and chose to work in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands on construction sites in order to earn more. Meanwhile, his wife and two children are living on La Palma (Francesco, min. 28-29). He thinks that the master’s title of the University of Barcelona will

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8 Translation: Canarian service of employment
9 Translation: National University of Distance Education
improve his chances on the labor market, but he will keep working in mainland Europe. The experienced difficulties in the Canarian labor market and the incompatible desire to earn a decent wage in his field made him adopt a habitus of partial withdrawal from the Canaries.

An alternative form of “position taking” is entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs evade the devaluation of their capital by starting for themselves. As tourism is responsible for approximately 40% of Canarian jobs, the respondents mostly started a business in the hospitality sector, despite being unfamiliar with this specific sector (CaixaBank Research, p.110). In addition, many Venezuelans on the islands have opened “Areperas”, which sell arepas, a typical Venezuelan dish made out of corn, that is nowadays well known and very popular on the Canaries. As Venezuelans, their capital is better valued in such places. Sofia already knew that her institutionalized cultural capital would not be valued on the Canaries, as it was not the case in London either, where she was working as a waitress before coming to Tenerife. “So, I brought my savings from working in London and, although I studied, I always wanted to start something for myself… Here, I opened an “Arepera” in La Laguna with a guy from here. When you arrive in another country, you have to look for somebody who helps you out and knows the place.” (Sofía, min. 6-7). Her, previously achieved, economic capital made it possible to open a business, whereas she could attain the necessary social capital after arriving on Tenerife.

The couple Laura and Julio used to be entrepreneurs in Venezuela already, but their company was specialized in informatics. As computer engineers, it was relatively easy to certify their qualifications after arriving. “But still, there are not many opportunities in this area, of informatics, to develop yourself professionally.. So, in the end, we decided to start a business in something different… We came to Puerto de la Cruz since it is one of the areas of the north with more opportunities because of tourism, but in the end it is also complicated” (Julio, min. 13-15). The couple could open a cafeteria, close to the beach, thanks to their savings. “In Venezuela, it was not common to keep your savings in Venezuela, it has always been a country with inflation, so money in the bank in Bolívares would lose value. Therefore, it has always been common to have savings abroad. Or you would invest in your company in Venezuela or you would save up abroad where the money would have a stable value.” (Julio, min. 40-41). Because of the couple’s connections with the Canaries, they had always stored their money in a local bank. This turned out to be useful when they wanted to open a business on Tenerife. As a result, it was not necessary to take their economic capital with them, as it was already transferred there because of the historical ties with the islands and the financial advantages (Laura, min. 38-39).

Other respondents also profited from economic capital, that had been kept or invested in the Canaries because of Venezuela’s difficult financial situation. Fernanda’s family already owned a small apartment in Puerto de la Cruz for some years, which made the migration process less challenging. “Since my parents are from here, from Tenerife, and my mum had received an inheritance, we bought
an apartment here in case something would happen in Venezuela… Because we already saw eight years ago that it was not going in the right direction… So when we came here we already had a small place. In comparison with other people, this was better, because it is difficult to arrive and find an apartment, as they ask for your pay sheet and so forth.” (Fernanda, min. 1-2). Housing was also a relatively easy issue for Camila as her family still owns a house in Tazacorte on la Palma, the village of her grandmother. Camila, her sister, and their young children are living there since 2018. As Tazacorte is a small village surrounded by banana plantations, the family also owned some of these plantations. “Right now we are making ends meet with the sale of the bananas… Middlemen are taking charge of the plantations” (Camila, min. 37). Camila and her sister prefer to work in other sectors. However, finding a job is difficult because they have to take care of three children together, but until then they can sustain themselves thanks to their economic capital on the Canaries.

Laura’s sister, Rosa, who also works in the bar of Julio and Laura, emphasized the historical importance of the Venezuelan investments and remittances for the Canaries. For a long time, Canarian migrants in Venezuela used to send money back to their relatives or they invested in real estate for instance. At first, the remittances were sent to help out family members who had to stay on the islands, later on, investments were made to avoid devaluation of their money. “Many Canarians say that the Canary islands were built up thanks to the money from Venezuela… Our grandmother also bought something here. Right now I am actually living in the house of the grandmother of my husband, which was bought with money from Venezuela as well. The grandmother did not even get to know the house.. She sent the money to this man who bought the land and constructed the house for her… Surely she had the intention to come over someday but that never happened.” (Rosa, min. 39-40). These different forms of economic capital that have been kept or invested in the Canary Islands for historical and financial reasons are advantageous nowadays as there is no need to transfer them. The capital can, therefore, be used immediately to start over, without relying on other forms of capital.

Nevertheless, most respondents did not possess, locally held, economic capital and could as a result not avoid a devaluation of economic capital and, initially also, institutionalized cultural capital. Together with the unfavorable situation on the labor market this meant that the majority of the respondents had to start working in low-skilled jobs despite their Venezuelan qualifications and work experience. Some of them did not look further and accepted this situation, as it would be more complicated to get access to other ones. In addition, certain issues, such as a higher age and family members who need care, would make following other career paths more difficult for them. However, many others are avoiding such devaluation of institutionalized cultural capital by certifying their Venezuelan qualifications, re-skilling themselves or starting their own business. The necessary capital to do so and adapting certain “habiti” enabled these respondents to achieve better positions on the labor market.
The Political Aspect

Valeria, a student of the University of La Laguna, never really identified as Canarian or Spanish in Venezuela but half a year after arriving on Tenerife she could participate in the general Spanish elections of the 28th of April of 2019. “It is the first time I can vote because I am eighteen years old. It feels very strange to answer; “I am Spanish” when they ask you for your nationality. I do have the nationality but I do not feel Spanish.” (Valeria, min. 43). Nevertheless, Valeria was happy to be able to vote as the political situation in Venezuela made her value democracy. As a large majority of the respondents had Spanish citizenship, their resulting citizenship capital enabled them to participate politically without facing restrictions. Residents without the Spanish nationality can vote, in municipal elections, if their country of origin has a reciprocal agreement with Spain, which is not the case for Venezuela (Solanes Corella, 2008, p. 87). Venezuelans without Spanish citizenship could, therefore, not participate in these elections, nor European, Canarian or local elections (Pan-Montojo, 2019). However, Venezuela’s political situation and Spain’s foreign policy towards the country have become important issues in Spanish national politics, as one of the country’s leftist party, Podemos, has been accused of having ties with the Venezuelan regime (El Mundo, 2018). Therefore, other, in particular rightwing, political parties have included the Venezuelan cause in their political agenda and all major political parties have spoken out about recent affairs related to the legitimacy of the Venezuelan President, Nicolás Maduro, and the opposition’s intention to change the political panorama (Moraga & Anduriz, 2019). For instance, the nationalist Canarian party, “Coalición Canaria”, which governed the autonomous region for the last twenty-six years, has demanded political change and free elections in Venezuela (La Vanguardia, 2019). The political party stated: “We feel very close to Venezuela, which was a land of refuge for thousands of Canarians at different times. That feeling of brotherhood between Venezuela and the Canary Islands makes us live with great concern all that is happening over there, where many Canarians and their descendants still live.” (El Diario, 2019)¹⁰

Madrid can be seen as the center of the Venezuelan exile in Europe, where it tries to influence Spanish policy in Venezuela and Brussels, by organizing demonstrations and lobbying in the institutions (El País, 2019). Furthermore, Venezuelans have been elected in the recent Spanish and European elections. For instance, Leopoldo López Gil, who is the father of the famous opposition leader Leopoldo López, became a member of the European Parliament for the “Partido Popular”¹¹ to defend the Venezuelan opposition within the European Union (El Espectador, 2019). Some respondents thought that Spain had the obligation to defend this position and they were planning to

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¹⁰ Original text: “Nos sentimos muy unidos a Venezuela, que fue tierra de acogida para miles de canarios y canarias en diferentes épocas. Ese sentimiento de hermandad entre Venezuela y Canarias hace que vivamos con enorme preocupación todo lo que está sucediendo allí, donde siguen residiendo muchos canarios y canarias y sus descendientes”

¹¹ Translation; people’s party.
vote accordingly. “Spain owes a lot to Venezuela, in the ‘60s during the period of Franco the Spaniards lived from the money that was sent from there, especially the Canaries as it is the poorest region.”(Javier, min. 30).

Apart from Madrid, demonstrations against the regime are being held in Santa Cruz de Tenerife at the Venezuelan consulate. Some respondents had been to these demonstrations, as all respondents were opposed to the Maduro’s regime. Sara was unable to assist due to her job, but she felt very good about her friends’ initiative to go for her instead. “These days (after the 30th of April), there have been some demonstrations in Santa Cruz (de Tenerife). Some friends of mine went, while they are Canarian. They told me that they wanted to be supportive of me as they thought that my feelings were so real, so genuine… Thus they went there with Venezuelan flags and hats.”(Sara, min. 41) The presence of the Venezuelan issue in Spanish society and politics made the elections more attractive for the respondents, despite the desire to stay on the Canaries and the lost hope of return for most respondents. Partly because of that reason, the majority of the respondents with Spanish citizenship had the intention to participate in the elections. “I do not want the things that happened in Venezuela, to happen over her… I know that this kind of socialism, which we got in Venezuela, does not work… When everything in Venezuela started, we all said that Venezuela would not go in the same direction as Cuba. Because of our oil, nothing would happen. But right now, we are worse off than Cuba. Everybody here says this is not Venezuela, but we used to say the same. Over there they have destroyed everything.” (Laura and Rosa, min. 55-56).

In addition, many respondents have the intention to stay and build a life on the Canaries. Therefore some respondents cared about particular issues such as entrepreneurship, while others wanted to defend the interests of the Canarian and Venezuelan community in Spain. “I am basing my decision on what’s most favorable for the Canary Islands and also for the Venezuelan community… First of all the Canaries need more work supply, there’s a need for quality employment and I think the plan of Ciudadanos could work.”(Javier, min. 28-29) Two respondents, Miguel and Fernanda, also spoke about their political engagement and support for a political party. Miguel, for instance, felt intrigued by the European Union and the integration between the member states. “I like it that, despite all the differences such as the different languages, it has been possible to unify and understand each other on some scale.”(Miguel, min. 27). He was, therefore, also determined to vote in the European elections of 2019. As the Venezuelans with Canarian origin are usually able to vote in all elections upon arrival, they can engage themselves politically without difficulties, in opposition to Venezuelans without Spanish citizenship. The citizenship capital of the large majority of the respondents, therefore, empowered them to vote and defend the interests that matter most to them. The possession of this capital thus includes them in the host society and makes the integration process easier within this aspect.
The Social Aspect

In contrast with Camila and María, who could go to the house of their immediate family, many other participants had to rely on help from distant family when they arrived. Their reception on the Canaries was, therefore, more dependent on social capital and family relations than on economic capital. The descendants of Canarian migrants which maintained the connection to the islands, by preserving all types of capital over there, are thus in a more advantageous position. The circumstances were different for Estefanía as her family had lost contact with the Canary Islands. “When my father left, he kind of forgot them (his family members) as he was only fifteen years old. He spent a whole lifetime over there (in Venezuela) and apart from that, we did not have the technologies that we have nowadays.” (Estefanía, min. 8). Because of this estrangement, Estefanía’s father does not have economic capital on Tenerife. When Estefanía’s grandfather gave away pieces of land to build on to each son, her father did not get one as it was not important to him (Estefanía, min. 35-36). Therefore, Estefanía had to rely on social capital when she arrived in her father’s home village, Los Realejos. “I did not know any family member over here, physically at least. Through the internet, we had been in contact. Since the situation was heavy, I had asked for some help, for example, medicines for my father.. which they sent me. But they also told me that they could help me better over here.” Eventually, her Canarian family convinced her to come as they provided her and her young son with housing. In addition, she could start working as a caretaker for one of her older aunts. (Estefanía, min. 2). “I also thought about going to Peru for example… but I chose the Canaries because of the family and as I came alone with my son.. I would always need some help with that.” (Estefanía, min. 34). Social capital has helped Estefanía in her integration. As her aunt died a couple of months ago, she had to look for another job, which she found in an “Arepera” of a friend.

As a result of social capital, all participants in this research had a place to stay when they arrived. Some of them could stay at their family’s place for months, for instance, Jorge, Gabriel, and Sara, while others had to find something else after a couple of weeks. Sara had already been a couple of times to the Canary Islands and at home, in Venezuela, she was raised with Canarian traditions. “In general, in my experience, the people on the Canaries are very receptive and very friendly… When I emigrated, I always felt embraced by a community, a society that opens its doors … Without a doubt having family and friends over here helped in a positive way. So it wasn’t like arriving in an unknown place, people were there to show me around.” (Sara, min. 31). As it was difficult for Sara to leave her parents and daughter behind in Venezuela, she felt very grateful for the help she received, it made her feel more at home. Social capital was, therefore, very important in her integration. In addition, when she was settled and had her own place, she was able to get her daughter to Tenerife as well. Social capital was also essential for Javier, who could stay at his family’s place for three months without having met them before. Without such help, it would have been difficult to find a place to rent as they
usually ask for pay sheets or other guarantees. Later on, he found an apartment for himself thanks to his family’s social network (Javier, min. 1-2).

However, there is also a significant group that does not have a lot of contact with their Canarian family. “Actually I have a lot of family members here, most of my aunts live here. But I did not have much contact with them before, except for one. And I have cousins, which have had their children already... Sometimes I see my aunt Carmen and we have visited some aunts with my mum, but they are already 90 years old. Because of work and the distance it becomes more complicated.” (Fernanda, min.8). Nevertheless, Fernanda sees many Venezuelan family members on a daily basis. Many participants emphasized the importance of having family members around, something that the majority has as a result of the migration history and the attraction of the islands which makes the Venezuelan community increase in size (INE, 2018).

Despite the Canarian background of the respondents, most of them felt primarily Venezuelan as they were born and raised there. They were usually grateful for the opportunities and the life they had enjoyed in Venezuela before the crisis. A significant part of the respondents also felt partly Canarian. “Over there, in Venezuela, we (sisters Laura and Rosa) were usually seen as Spanish but over here we are the Venezuelans and we defend both with pride, in the same way… We used to bring rabbit for lunch to work, for example, something uncommon in Venezuela. That kind of things differentiated us over there as Canarians.”(Laura and Rosa, min. 24-25). Many Canarians brought their culture with them to Venezuela. In the different social clubs focused on preserving Canarian traditions such as “lucha canaria”, a form of wrestling, the community was united (Martina, min. 38). A majority of the respondents had been to these social clubs, which organize events and have sport and recreation facilities. In that way, the Canarian culture was kept alive in Venezuela. Javier was proud to talk about his parents, who introduced aspects of the carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, one of the world’s most important carnival celebrations, to the Venezuelan public. “My mother and my father created an artistic group, which is very famous in Venezuela. It is called “Payasitas Nifú Nifá”12, like a Canarian “Murga”13. Nifú nifá is a Canarian saying which means that it does not matter. They introduced this saying from the Carnival celebrations of Santa Cruz de Tenerife over there. As my father is a Canarian, he knew all this… They made songs for children, children from the ‘80s and ‘90s remember them… This inspiration of such a clown comes from the Canaries, the wigs, the outfits.” (Javier, min. 7-9). As Javier’s family is not living in Venezuela anymore, family members are trying to make the group known in other places, such as Miami and Tenerife. In order to qualify for performances at municipal festivities, Javier has registered and promoted the group on the islands (Javier, min. 10). His embodied cultural capital, composed of Venezuelan and Canarian cultural features, may enable him to make the group successful in the very location it found its inspiration.

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12 Translation: Clowns “Nifú Nifá”
13 Murga: artistic groups which perform music or theater during carnival
Inspired by the Canarian social clubs in Venezuela, the Venezuelan consul of Santa Cruz de Tenerife opened a comparable social club on Tenerife in 1974, called “Casa de Venezuela” (Sara, min. 11-12). The club offers sport facilities and organizes social events. “The “Casa de Venezuela” on the Canaries was originally created to send a little piece of Venezuela to the Canary Islands for the Canarians that were returning.” (Sara, min. 3). However, Sara who works at the social club admits that nowadays there are fewer Venezuelan activities than before since most members are Canarians. Nevertheless, many members have a connection with Venezuela and Sara was glad to work there, after arriving in 2017 on Tenerife. “Without a doubt, this is a place where, as a Venezuelan who has recently arrived, you can connect with Venezuela as it produces well-being to attend the chapel of the Virgin of Coromoto or a mass which celebrates the patroness... Also when you go to the restaurant (of the club) you can have a Venezuelan meal... it is beautiful.” (Sara, min. 16-17). The presence of the Venezuelan community and its traditions made many respondents, such as Sara, feel more at home on the Canary Islands.

However several respondents mentioned the differences between the average Canarian that went over there and the average Canarian on the islands nowadays, which has changed because of historical and social processes. Martina, for instance, felt that the average Canarian had become individualistic and less solidarity with the arriving Venezuelans, as a result of different processes and passing of time. “I do not mean the family, because my family has been supportive of us, but I mean the average citizen, which is different.. For example, when I tell people that I am from Venezuela, older people remember but some other people do not care about the situation there, they do not feel a connection.” (Martina, min. 25-26). A couple of respondents also mentioned the lack of historical memory of some Canarians, which has sometimes lead to xenophobic comments about taking away jobs. Nevertheless, a majority of the respondents did not experience such conduct. There were also a couple of respondents who spoke about a feeling of resentment towards them in Venezuela, because of their higher social position as children of immigrants (Estefanía, min. 14-15). As a result, a couple of respondents admitted that they never felt Venezuelan. “Here I have found out that I always felt more Canarian… We, as children of immigrants, are different. I don’t know why, but there is a big cultural difference. Here, with my family which I did not know before, it seems as if I have been raised with them.. My aunts, for instance, went crazy because I made them Canarian food, as my dad taught us.” (Estefanía, min. 17-18). Estefanía’s embodied cultural capital, passed on by her father, made her feel more at ease on Tenerife and facilitated social relations with her family.

Despite the partly Canarian upbringing of the respondents and their Spanish citizenship, almost all of them were perceived as Venezuelan back on the Canary Islands. “I think it is a normal position, something that always occurs when you have a different background or when you spend a long time
abroad. Then they will see you as Venezuelan, in our case. Even some of our acquaintances, who have spent fifteen or twenty years over here, are still seen as Venezuelans.” (Julio, min. 25) The dual identity of the respondents is usually not recognized, instead, the foreign identity is highlighted. In general, the respondents attributed this process of othering to their Venezuelan accent. All respondents had a Venezuelan accent when they arrived, although some were already familiar with the Canarian accent and some typical words. Jorge, for instance, was raised by a Canarian father, who had not lost his Canarian accent despite living almost his entire life in Venezuela (Jorge, notes). A majority of the respondents only made slight changes in their vocabulary, but they did not have the intention to change their way of speaking.

The embodied cultural capital of the respondents is, thus, partly Venezuelan and partly Canarian. Obvious features, such as accents and skin color, can nevertheless be determinant for the way they are perceived and treated by society at large. Some respondents admitted that they sometimes felt treated as the “other”, but a majority was very positive about the attitude of the Canarians towards them. “There can always be a case of somebody in particular who is trying to discredit or belittle a Venezuelan, because you are an immigrant, as they are always going to see us as immigrants, but this is really not something to generalize. Luckily, the Canaries is one of the most accepting regions for Venezuelans I think as there are many of us and because of the Canarian-Venezuelan connections.” (Julio, min 38-39). These connections, for instance, family bonds, have been reinvigorated for some families as a consequence of the crisis in Venezuela. In general, such connections have been essential for the growth of the Canarian-Venezuelan community on the islands, nowadays the second one of Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). It was very useful and often necessary for the participants to have a place to stay and personal help when they arrived. For some of them, this help came from unknown family members, while many others already knew some people on the Canaries. Usually, they could also count on emotional support from them, which made the pain of leaving Venezuela more bearable. In addition, their familiarity with Canarian culture and cultural similarities with Venezuela, such as the Spanish language, have made the respondents feel more at ease in the host society.

Conclusion

In this research different aspects of integration have been touched upon. In each aspect, the historically strong relations between the archipelago and Venezuela have been highlighted. These relations have mainly been formed as a result of large Canarian migration flows to the Latin American country. As the economic and political situation of the Canaries and Venezuela have changed in the last couple of decades, the Canaries have started attracting migrants while Venezuela became a country of emigration. Therefore many descendants of Canarian migrants have been coming back to their parents’ or grandparents’ homeland, especially since the start of the crisis in Venezuela in 2013
(Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). In this research I have used a Bourdieusian framework, focused on different forms of capital, to comprehend the distinctive position in which the Canarian-Venezuelan community finds itself. As a result of this community’s cultural, economic, social and citizenship capital their integration process on the Canary Islands can be considered relatively uncomplicated. For all twenty-five respondents of this research, their Spanish nationality or eligibility for Spanish nationality was one of the main reasons to go to the Canaries. The ones with double nationality, the large majority, did not face requirements for entering the country and did not need as much economic capital to be able to go compared to the ones which only possessed a Venezuelan passport. The last ones needed to buy a return ticket, for instance. In addition, the majority, with dual citizenship, had access to the entire labor market, governmental subsidies, such as the subsidy for return migrants, and public services upon arrival. Some members of the Canarian community in Venezuela did not have a Spanish passport when they arrived. The law on historical memory has eased the application procedure for them, but the bureaucratic character of the state delays the process and the wait for the applicants.

Furthermore, possession of social capital, usually family relations, or economic capital, such as properties, provided the respondents with a place to stay when they arrived. Therefore, none of the respondents had to worry about housing at the beginning. In addition, the presence of family on the islands meant that they could count on emotional and practical support. Some respondents could stay for months at the place of their, sometimes distant Canarian, family while others could move in with their direct Venezuelan family. Other respondents owned houses on the archipelago, which were never sold when the family migrated to Venezuela or they were bought to invest and avoid the monetary devaluation of the Venezuelan Bolivar.

In general, the Canarian community in Venezuela was successful, the majority of the respondents had high-skilled jobs or owned companies, for example. Many respondents had to leave their properties, a symbol of their migration success, behind as it was painful and worthless for them to sell them nowadays. The inflation rate of 1.700.000% in 2018 has led to a loss of value and trust in the Bolivar (El Economista, 2018). Usually, the respondents’ economic capital has become non-transferrable, which made most of them dependent on other forms of capital for their integration. Nevertheless, some respondents had predicted crises or wanted to avoid devaluation of their capital. Due to their familiarity with the Canary Islands, they had invested or kept their economic capital on the islands. After migrating there, this capital came in useful for starting a new life. By starting a business, it is, for instance, possible to circumvent a devaluation of institutionalized cultural capital. Usually, Venezuelan qualifications and work experience are not recognized without certifications. Therefore most respondents started working in low-skilled jobs, which are more accessible in the uncertain Canarian labor market. Certifying diplomas, starting a business or re-skilling oneself are ways to
achieve a better position in the labor market and society. Many respondents were adopting such “habits” and some of them had already improved their socioeconomic situation.

Despite the partly Canarian embodied cultural capital of the respondents, they are usually perceived as Venezuelans on the Canaries. Their dual cultural identity is therefore only recognized officially, as most of them are seen as Spanish nationals by the state, while their foreign identity is highlighted within society. In social interactions, for example, their Venezuelan accent marks a difference with the local population. Nevertheless, most respondents felt embraced by the Canarians, which are familiar with Venezuela and culturally seen as close to Venezuelans (Javier, min. 20). Many respondents found this welcoming attitude important for feeling integrated into society. Furthermore, the community’s citizenship capital usually provided them with voting rights and the possibility to change one’s position indirectly in society. The majority of the participants wanted to participate politically in the Spanish general elections. One of the main reasons to do so was the presence of the Venezuelan cause in Spanish politics. However, many of them also based their political decision on regional or personal interests.

Using Bourdieu’s theory has exposed how different forms of capital play a role in determining one’s position in society. Certain forms of capital, such as social capital, can exert an attractive force for migrants. Possessing such capital can amplify the possible destination countries and it, thus, increases the amount of power and possibilities of the individual. The historical connection of the Canarian community in Venezuela with the Canaries has increased their volume of cultural, economic, citizenship, and social capital. This greater volume of capital has facilitated the integration of the participants on the islands. Social, citizenship, and embodied cultural capital has eased the integration process for all of them, while locally held economic capital helped a smaller proportion of the participants. Furthermore, it can be said that Bourdieu’s theory about capital is suitable for research on migration as capital is determinant for one’s opportunities in society but usually bound to a certain country or region. By changing the field, or migrating, capital can, therefore, be lost or gained. The analysis has shown that historical ties with another region increase the volume of different forms of capital, which has a positive influence on a successful integration in society. In future research, it would be useful to compare the integration process of this community with other Latin American communities, without Canarian heritage, on the Canaries. In that way, the influence of the Canarian-Venezuelan capital can be further addressed. In addition, it could be interesting to investigate the function of each form of capital, since most respondents in this research possessed multiple forms.
Bibliography


# General information interviews

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All names have been changed to respect the respondents’ privacy.