



¿PURA VIDA O VIDA DURA?

A RESEARCH ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF MALE
NICARAGUAN MIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA AND THEIR FUTURE
STRATEGIES.

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¿Pura vida o vida dura?

Left image: Seaside in Manzanillo. Right image: house of a Nicaraguan migrant.

Source: Kirian Baggerman

Loose translation of the title: the good/pure life or the hard life?

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PREFACE

Costa Rica is a country that is most famous for its biodiversity. Densely vegetated rainforests alternate with dry forests, beaches and highlands, volcanoes and wetlands. Multicolored toucans and macaws fly in the air, howler monkeys and sloths relax in the forest, while caimans and dolphins reside in the water. The versatile country is overwhelmingly beautiful: Costa Rica is *goose bump material*, I can guarantee that.

Not only the country's biodiversity is overwhelming from time to time, the people living there – proudly calling themselves Ticos – are most definitely not subordinate to the flora and fauna. The Ticos we encountered in our journey were always friendly, helpful, curious and smiling. From the security guard at the front door of our internship organization's office to the staff of the pizzeria just around the corner. They made us feel welcome and looked after.

Whereas Costa Rica is well known for its nature and the attraction of tourists, not many think about the country as a migration country. Its location in Central America makes that in terms of migration, many researchers focus on transitory migration: migrants who travel through Central American countries – with or without documents – to reach the United States. However, in 2013 Costa Rica had the highest migrant share of the total population of all countries in the Central American region and is thus a country to take into account (MPI, 2013). For me those are the facts that make the topic of migration to Costa Rica interesting: it is not widely studied, but migrants are certainly an issue.

Although Costa Rica has many beautiful aspects, a study of Marquette (2006) shows that there are also more negative sides to the country. Migrants take the jobs with a low status that are badly paid and they are even treated badly sometimes. In our research we – my co-researcher and I – focused on Nicaraguans living and working in Costa Rica and we have seen with our own eyes that in several cases their conditions were very poor. This is reality as well and we should also pay attention to these opposite sides of the country.

After all, a personal dream came true by going to Costa Rica and conducting a research on migration, but I could not have done it by myself. That is why I want to show my appreciation, firstly to my supervisor, Dr. Ernst Spaan, who always provided me with useful feedback, insightful comments and most of all words of motivation. After every one of our meetings I had more faith than ever I would bring this thesis to a successful conclusion. I also want to thank my co-researcher, Irene Bremer. We built upon each other and this created a stable and supportive factor throughout the process. Further, I am grateful for our internship organization *Centro Internacional para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes* (CIDEHUM) and the opportunity they gave us to conduct the research. They had a lot of faith in us and hopefully our findings will be of great value for their mission to protect the human rights of migrants.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Mora family, where we spend our first two weeks in Costa Rica. They received us in their home while we were taking Spanish classes at the Nosara Spanish Institute in Guiones. Living at their farm close to the Pacific Ocean for two weeks, enjoying the Spanish language, Tico culture and of course the many recreational

activities, has made our stay into an unforgettable experience. They provided a solid basis for our further residence in Costa Rica.

Moreover, I appreciate all the work Javier Enrique Lopez Castro has done for us. He helped us in the search for respondents and he translated interviews into German to give us more understanding of the complex situation of Nicaraguan migrants. Being a Nicaraguan labor migrant himself, he involved us in his daily life – the struggles, positive feelings and his mixed emotions about working in Costa Rica and having a wife and two children who are living in Nicaragua. We got to learn a lot from him and I wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Lastly I want to thank my family and friends, who never obstructed me to leave the Netherlands and face the adventure called an internship abroad – even when this adventure became reality within the time period of only three weeks (!). They were always interested in the research and supported me with motivating messages when I needed them.

Living in Costa Rica for slightly more than three months feels like a dream on the one hand for all the above mentioned. On the other, it was a great reality check. I encountered people who had nothing: no house, job, clothes or family for support. Seeing these distressing situations has been a learning experience for me in terms of appreciation, putting things in perspective and setting priorities. Being happy and enjoying the little things in life are most-valuable. Ticos are masters in enjoying life and they like to express their appreciation for all good things and their country in a certain motto. Therefore I say,

PURA VIDA!

Daniëlle ter Brake

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Costa Rica has a long history with migrants and especially those from neighboring Nicaragua. Nowadays Nicaraguans mainly come to Costa Rica searching for work. They form a great labor force for the Costa Rican economy and the government acknowledges this. In 2010 they adjusted the laws aiming to make it easier for migrants to get a work permit and to advance their integration. However these changes have the opposite effect: integration deters and irregularity increases. Obtaining a permit is an expensive and time consuming process that many migrants cannot pay for and thus they do informal labor, travel from job to job and decide over and over what their next step will be.

This research focuses on male Nicaraguan migrants: how they experience their life as a migrant, what factors are enabling and restraining them and what future they pursue. The permits and its procedures are taken into consideration, alongside other social and economic factors that play a role in migrants' lives. Currently Nicaraguan men indicate they are in Costa Rica because back home there are little jobs and opportunities to develop professionally. Nicaragua is a poor country and many men want a better life for their family. In Costa Rica there are more jobs available and the wages are much higher. Nevertheless, without an official permit it is also in the host society more difficult to get a job. This means they should apply for a permit, but for many men that is too expensive. Nicaraguans end up in a vicious circle of wanting a permit, but not being able to afford it. Irregular labor is an outcome for them to still earn more money than they would in Nicaragua and not having to spend it all on permits. On the negative side may informal jobs sometimes entail discrimination and exploitation.

For the future most of the male Nicaraguan respondents would like to return to Nicaragua to reside in their own country with their family. This decision is very much influenced by the geographical location of the (immediate) family, nationalism and experienced discrimination in Costa Rica. However, also a considerable amount wants to stay in Costa Rica and this choice is mainly affected by the available labor, the better life quality the country has to offer and the fact that men built a life there. Some Nicaraguans also decide to travel between the countries in order to see their family in Nicaragua to cope with the separation and work in Costa Rica for the higher wages. Political factors are barely mentioned and do not seem to affect the future strategy that much. It is thus questionable if Nicaraguan migrants will benefit from government measures and even let that influence their decisions. Many see migration as a way of earning more money in a shorter period of time after which they return back home to their families.

RESUMEN ESPAÑOL

Costa Rica tiene una larga historia con los migrantes, y especialmente con aquellos provenientes de su país vecino, Nicaragua. Hoy en día, los nicaragüenses van a Costa Rica principalmente en busca de trabajo. Ellos forman una gran fuerza laboral para la economía costarricense, y el gobierno reconoce éste hecho. En el 2010, el gobierno costarricense ajustó las leyes con la intención de facilitar que los migrantes consigan el permiso de trabajo y para avanzar con su integración. Sin embargo, estos cambios tienen el efecto opuesto: la integración se deteriora y las irregularidades se incrementan. Obtener un permiso es un proceso tardado y costoso, el cual muchos migrantes no pueden pagar, y para poder costearlo realizan labores informales, van de trabajo en trabajo, y constantemente tienen que decidir cuál será su siguiente paso.

Ésta investigación se enfoca en los migrantes nicaragüenses: ¿Cómo ha sido su experiencia como migrantes? ¿Qué factores les están ayudando y cuáles los están restringiendo? Y ¿Qué futuro persiguen? Los permisos y sus procedimientos son tomados en consideración, al igual que otros factores sociales y económicos que juegan un rol en la vida de los migrantes. Actualmente, los hombres nicaragüenses indican que se encuentran en Costa Rica porque en Nicaragua hay pocos trabajos y pocas oportunidades para desarrollarse profesionalmente. Nicaragua es un país pobre, y muchos hombres quieren una mejor vida para sus familias. En Costa Rica hay más trabajos disponibles y los sueldos son más elevados. Sin embargo, sin un permiso oficial, es más difícil conseguir trabajo en la sociedad anfitriona. Esto significa que deben aplicar para conseguir el permiso, pero para muchos hombres es un proceso demasiado costoso. Los nicaragüenses terminan en un círculo vicioso de querer el permiso, pero no ser capaces de costearlo. El trabajo irregular es una opción para que ellos sigan ganando más dinero de lo que obtendrían en Nicaragua sin tener que gastarlo en permisos. En el lado negativo, dichos trabajos informales en ocasiones implican ambientes de discriminación y explotación.

En el futuro de la mayoría de los nicaragüenses encuestados les gustaría regresar a Nicaragua, para residir en su propio país con sus familias. Ésta decisión es influenciada por la ubicación geográfica de sus familias (inmediatas), nacionalismo, y experiencias de discriminación en Costa Rica. Sin embargo, una considerable cantidad de los encuestados quisiera quedarse en Costa Rica, y ésta decisión es afectada principalmente por la disponibilidad de trabajo, la mejor calidad de vida que Costa Rica les puede ofrecer, y el hecho de que los hombres han construido una vida ahí. Algunos nicaragüenses también decidieron viajar constantemente entre los países para poder ver a sus familias en Nicaragua para poder lidiar con la separación, y trabajar en Costa Rica por los salarios altos. Los factores políticos raramente son mencionados, y parecen no afectar demasiado a las estrategias a futuro de los migrantes. Y es así que se cuestiona si los migrantes nicaragüenses se beneficiarían por las medidas gubernamentales, e incluso si dejarían que éstas influenciaran sus decisiones. Muchos ven a la migración como un modo de ganar más dinero en un corto periodo de tiempo para después regresar a sus hogares con sus familias.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES	10
LIST OF TABLES	10
LIST OF FIGURES	10
1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Costa Rica not for migrants?	11
1.2. CIDEHUM	13
1.3. The common thread	14
1.3.1. Research objective	14
1.3.2. Research questions	14
1.3.3. Scientific relevance	15
1.3.4. Societal relevance	17
1.4. Thesis structure	17
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1. Theories on international labor migration and integration	19
2.1.1. Economic theories on migration, assimilation and social integration	20
2.1.2. Social theories on migration and integration	21
2.2. Repeat or circular labor migration	22
2.3. Irregular migration	23
2.4. Threshold approach	25
2.5. Relevant theories	26
3. METHODOLOGY	
3.1. Methods, research setting and unit of analysis	29
3.2. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data	32
3.3. Reflection	33
3.3.1. Researcher's identity	34
4. VISAS, PERMISOS Y RESIDENCIAS	
4.1. General Law of Migration and Alien Affairs (no. 8764)	35
4.2. Migrant requirements for visas, work and residency permits	36
4.2.1. Tourist visa	36
4.2.2. Work permits	37
4.2.3. Residency permits	40
5. LA PURA VIDA EN COSTA RICA?	
5.1. Motives	43
5.2. After crossing the border	45
5.3. Threshold approach	50

6. SUEÑOS FUTUROS

6.1. The pursued future	52
6.2. Social, economic and political factors affecting future strategies	56
6.3. Threshold approach applied	68

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Concluding remarks	70
7.2. Female perspective	74

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

1. Spanish interview guide
2. English interview guide
3. Interview respondents table
4. Spanish survey
5. English survey

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 3A.	Panoramic picture of the northern part of Parque La Merced	30
Image 3B.	Nicaraguan restaurant – that also offers money transfers – close to Parque La Merced	30

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5A.	Overview of the statuses of all respondents of the research	45
Table 5B.	Overview of all document types and their corresponding allowances	46
Table 5C.	Overview of all respondents with and without job	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5A.	Pie chart of examples of discrimination	48
Figure 6A.	Pie chart of future strategies of interview respondents	53
Figure 6B.	Pie chart of future strategies of survey respondents	53
Figure 6C.	Histogram of the explanations on the choice of future residence of survey respondents	54
Figure 6D.	Pie chart of the explanations on the choice of future residence of interview respondents	55
Figure 6E.	Histogram of survey variables residency of the partner/children and future	57
Figure 6F.	Histogram of survey variables current work and future	58
Figure 6G.	Histogram of survey variables sufficient wage and future	59
Figure 6H.	Histogram of survey variables timeCR and future	61
Figure 6I.	Histogram of survey variables conditions and future	62
Figure 6J.	Histogram of survey variables discrimination and future	64
Figure 6K.	Histogram of survey variables recommendation and future	65
Figure 6L.	Histogram of survey variables government improvements and future	67

1. INTRODUCTION

“PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD LIVE IN COSTA RICA, BUT THE MAJORITY IS FROM NICARAGUA.”

David, 28

Worldwide many people are on the move. Some do so because they are forced by hunger, war, natural disasters or climate change. Others go voluntarily for they want to see the world, experience living and working in an unknown country, with another language and a different culture. However there is also a group of migrants that moves because of economic reasons. In the place where they live, the conditions are bad: they have insufficient money, food, housing and they see migrating as a way of improving their lives. For us this might not seem a decision that they are forced to make, but in many cases for those migrants it could be a necessary survival mechanism (Spaan, 1999). This is also reality for many Nicaraguans. The wages in the country are low – the lowest in the Central American region – and in 2010 only 46 percent of the employed workers have the jobs that are defined as “paid employment jobs” (World Bank¹). They migrate to Costa Rica in search for labor and the opportunity to give their family a better life.

The first part (§1.1) shows why Costa Rica is an appealing destination for migrants and how the Costa Rican government is trying to anticipate this flow of migrants. It concludes with my own personal motivation for the research. After this paragraph 1.2 shows information on the organization for which the research is conducted. CIDEHUM is a small organization, but functions as a bridge between local and global. Thirdly (§1.3) the research questions and its aim is elaborated. It answers the question why it is important to conduct this specific research, giving the societal and scientific relevance. In the end the structure of the thesis is unfolded.

1.1. COSTA RICA NOT FOR MIGRANTS?

Central America is well known as a migration region. For decades migrants from South-America travelled through the countries in Central-America, heading for their dream destination: the United States. This journey is a dangerous one, leaving many migrants in insecure, violent and life-threatening situations while crossing borders and traveling or living in (transit) countries. A whole industry arose around migrants, sheltering, accompanying and recruiting them. A negative side of this migration industry is the rise of human traffickers and smugglers, which causes a lot of migrant victims and human rights violations. These intermediaries play an increasing role in the migration process (Nyberg Sørensen, 2013).

Not all migrants' destination is the United States: some also decide to go to countries in Central-America. Costa Rica has the highest migrant share of the total population, namely 8,6 percent in 2013 (MPI). The country is popular, because of its relative wealth and safety that is quite unique in this region of the world. This given is also known by Costa Rica's northern neighbor: Nicaragua. Nicaraguans are the biggest migrant group in Costa Rica and most of

¹ Source: <http://databank.worldbank.org>

them cross the joint border to work, for there is a great demand for Nicaraguan employees. This particular group contains cheap workers and they form a significant proportion of the Costa Rican labor force in the agricultural, construction and domestic service sector (Marquette, 2006). They are more economically active – meaning they work more hours and have a higher labor participation rate – and are willing to take the low paid and low status jobs the locals do not want. Hence they are gladly hired by Costa Rican employers.

The above is a reason for the Costa Rican government to adjust the laws surrounding this situation. In 2010 they changed the policy from one of controlling migration flows to one of the integration of migrants with the law called “General Law of Migration and Alien Affairs” (Sojo-Lara, 2015). This law was supposed to let the migrant workforce integrate better in Costa Rican society and reduce the inequalities between local and foreign workers. To do this, the government decided to make it easier to regularize the status of unauthorized workers. They can do so by applying for a work permit and temporary residence permit which can be extended and so the migrants can stay in Costa Rica. Besides this, the law contains sanctions for employers who hire irregular migrants and for migrants that stay irregularly in Costa Rica. However, it turned out that the regularization of irregular labor migrants did not go as desired, mostly because of the high costs and time consuming process for both the workers and the employers (Sojo-Lara, 2015). The government has made several changes to try to increase the number of regular (Nicaraguan) labor migrants, but up till now they did not regularize themselves en masse.

This triggered several questions: why are migrants not taking this opportunity? Is it truly only because of the expenses and time? Expectations were there must be more to this situation than what was written down and that is why my co-researcher and I decided to go to Costa Rica to investigate the current situation of the Nicaraguan migrants themselves. Having a background in anthropology, I strongly feel for a bottom up approach, so in this case starting with the Nicaraguan migrants. In order to get a good and broad understanding of the situation, it is necessary to get the opinions and perceptions of migrants themselves. All the laws and their adjustments are about them, so it is only fair to let them participate in the process. They know best what they need and by listening to them, the outcome of the laws will most probably have a bigger positive impact.

Furthermore I was very interested in doing this research, because migration is a phenomenon of all times and it brings along several sentiments. From positive ones, like learning from each other’s culture and language to more negative ones, such as racism and xenophobia. In my bachelor thesis I wrote about the debate on open and closed borders in relation to xenophobia, which highlights a very different side of migration. For this Master thesis I wanted to investigate migration again, but then from another angle (although of course a migrant’s situation in his guest country, borders and xenophobia are interconnected). Luckily I was able to do this and combine my interest in the topic with my interest in Central American countries.

1.2. CIDEHUM

El *Centro Internacional para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes*, (hereafter CIDEHUM) is an organization in Costa Rica that fights for the protection of human rights of migrants². Since its creation in 1999, they developed programs themselves regarding the protection of the rights of migrants (including economic, social and cultural rights), gender equality and the assistance and protection of migrant women and unaccompanied children/adolescents. Besides, they took part in projects related to human security, conflict prevention and human trafficking. The centre does not only do projects in Costa Rica and the Central American region, but worldwide and with several NGOs, commissions and governments. In the last years CIDEHUM also focused on working with children, adolescents and teachers and the education about migration, prevention of violence and human rights.

CIDEHUM's mission is thus to promote effective protection, defense and assistance of all migrants' human rights, but also the rights of their families. They want to be an organization that is taken into account and is seen as valuable and trustworthy. Further they directly support and advise on legislation and policies that match the international agreements on the human rights of migrants. CIDEHUM thus functions as a bridge between the micro level (migrants) and the macro level (governments).

The organization's interest in this research is high, because improving the migrants' situation will hopefully lead to acknowledgement of the (human) rights they have. When migrants regularize themselves it is easier for them to get access to health care or education. Besides they are less vulnerable to for example exploitation by employers. Moreover they will be able to earn more and the difference in wages between locals and Nicaraguans will diminish. Thus the organization will better be able to assist the undocumented migrants who are applying for a work/residency permit. Furthermore, CIDEHUM can function as a mediator between governmental institutions and migrants so the application process will run smoothly.

It was the organization's special request to do the research through a gender lens. Although CIDEHUM mainly focuses on women and children, the male perspective is also important to create a broader and deeper view on the situation of Nicaraguan migrants. In 2000 there were a total of 225.583 registered Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica and the proportion male/female was almost 50/50 (World Bank³). Unfortunately it is difficult to say this 50/50 balance of male/female is actually right, because there are also a lot of migrants residing in Costa Rica irregularly. Estimates based on community work suggest that one third of the Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are irregular (Sandoval-García, 2015). However looking at the facts, both the male and female perspectives are important for this research, for both groups are present in Costa Rican society. Besides the migration experiences of both groups could differ, because they for example work in different sectors and thus comparing the two cases can lead to valuable insights.

² This and more information available on www.cidehum.org

³ Source: <http://databank.worldbank.org>

1.3. THE COMMON THREAD

Consecutive the research objective, questions and scientific and social relevance are set out. These form the common thread of the research and were a guidance throughout the process. When in doubt, looking back at the objectives, questions and relevance, gave grip on the research and on writing the thesis.

1.3.1. Research objective

The aim of the research is to gain insight in the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica. We do this by looking at different social and economic factors and the Costa Rican migration policy that could influence their situation. Further attention is paid to the strategies used by male Nicaraguan labor migrants to support their livelihoods in their current situation and to determine their strategies in the future. Collecting information on the factors that influence a male migrants' life will show if also migration and integration policy had an effect on his life. The extent to which this is the case or not also affects his decisions for the future.

Nicaraguans are the biggest migrant group in Costa Rica and they are very important for Costa Rica's economy. Their high economic activity in mainly the domestic, construction and agricultural sector, keeps the economy running. Thus it would be important for both parties – migrant and government – to improve the migrant's situation. Migrants that are treated better, have permission to work and are happy would most likely want to stay and most probably have an even higher economic activity which in turn benefits the country.

Besides this, CIDEHUM can raise awareness about the risks that are involved with staying irregularly in the country. Many migrants do not have the right legal documents to work and so they work undocumented. Some may know the risks, but others do not and thus it is important to collect information about the current situation. In the end, providing for advice to migrants, other NGOs and the government can contribute to the protection of the human rights of migrants.

Theoretically, all the information on the male Nicaraguan migrant is linked to theories on migration and the theory of the threshold approach as developed by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011, 2015). The research contributes to the latter theory by showing that the approach not only applies to 'new migrants', but also to migrants who already migrated before. The latter group is involved in passing several thresholds, as much as the former group. These thresholds form barriers to further mobility and concern the decision-making on if, where and how to migrate. The threshold approach is thus further developed and the research contributes to the theory. The overall objective of this research may be clear by now: gaining insight in the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants and their future strategies in order to improve their situation, protect their rights and theoretically contribute to the threshold approach.

1.3.2. Research questions

The research is based on and structured around one research question and five sub questions to support the former. The answers to the five sub questions will altogether provide a basis for the answer on the research question. The research question is:

What social, economic and political factors influence the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica? To what extent do these factors affect the future strategies these migrants pursue?

The research question consists of two parts: the first describes what factors are influencing the life of the male Nicaraguan migrant who lives in Costa Rica. The second question focuses more on the decisions this group of migrants will make to pursue their preferred future strategy and how the factors from the first question play a role in how to decide that strategy. The following five sub questions support the above mentioned research question:

What factors affected the migrant's decision to move in the past?

What social factors influence the migrants' current social and labor situation?

What economic factors influence the migrants' current social and labor situation?

What political factors influence the migrants' current social and labor situation?

How do these factors affect the future strategies the migrants pursue?

The first four sub questions give an overview of the social, economic and political factors that played and play a role in male Nicaraguan migrants' life. Logically these factors are important and have an impact on a migrant's social and labor situation. The fifth sub question shows to which extent these factors are enabling or constraining in the decisions migrants make regarding their future strategy. Whereas I investigate the male point of view, my co-researcher is doing her research on the female perspective (Bremer, 2017). This means she has a similar research and sub questions, but focused on Nicaraguan women who live in Costa Rica. Looking at both genders provides insights into the similarities and differences in their position in Costa Rican society and the future migration plans as part of their livelihood strategies. This can lead to appropriate migration and integration policymaking adapted to the needs of both male and female migrants.

1.3.3. Scientific relevance

Costa Rica has a lot of experience with migrants and through the years more and more academic literature on migration related topics and Costa Rica came available. For example Sandoval-García (2004) and Gindling (2008) wrote about the extent to which migrants – and especially Nicaraguans – are a threat to the Costa Rican national identity, security and economy. Other topics that cover both migration and Costa Rica are discrimination against migrants, so called migrant jobs or migrant labor sectors and irregularity amongst foreign born people (Marquette, 2006; Fouratt, 2016). These topics are often linked to Nicaraguan migrants, because they form the biggest migrant group in Costa Rica.

This research aims to get insight in the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica, for there are still negative images attached to Nicaraguan migrants as pointed out above. Several theoretical concepts can be used to support this research and explain the social and labor situation better. Therefore theories on international labor migration are set out to show the processes that create migration. For this research it is important that the Costa Rican government acknowledges they need migrant labor force and do not want to ban foreigners from their country. Hence the segmented labor market theory is

explained in chapter two to show the macro processes involved in international labor migration. However the individual, micro perspective is also of importance and for this reason the new economics of labor migration and network theory are elaborated as well. Male Nicaraguan migrants do not often make the individual decision to migrate, but together with their family, whether these family members are located in Nicaragua, Costa Rica or another country. It shows the strength of social relations and (worldwide) networks Nicaraguan men maintain.

Furthermore the concept of circular migration is set out, because it appears that many Nicaraguan migrants move from one place to another in search for labor, for example during the harvest seasons of several crops (Marquette, 2006). They do not seem to intent to stay permanently in Costa Rica and thus the theory on circular migration is relevant for this research to explain why this could be the case. Besides, irregular migration is further elaborated because there is a great group of Nicaraguan migrants – both male and female – that in one way or another stays irregularly in Costa Rica (Marquette, 2006). Lastly this research focuses on the threshold approach as developed by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011, 2015). This theory shows the complex decision-making process migrants are going through before and after they decide to move. Nicaraguan men went through the same process – and are still in it – and this research investigates the factors that influence the decision-making process.

Although these theoretical concepts support the research, the other way around this research contributes to the theory as well. For example, the knowledge on irregular migrants is still scarce, because it is a sensitive subject. Analyzing migrants in such an ‘in-between’ position can provide new insights in their migration processes, including the decision-making. This also counts for circular migrants: it is interesting to look at their decision-making process since they stay at places temporarily and follow multiple trajectories (Schapendonk and Steel, 2014). This shows the ongoing mobility migrants experience which could influence their migratory decisions greatly. Moreover the research contributes to the threshold approach by showing that the theory not only applies to ‘new migrants’, but also to migrants who already migrated before. The latter group is very much involved in passing several thresholds, as much as the former group. The threshold approach is thus further developed by broadening its scope by applying it to circular and irregular male Nicaraguan migrants.

In the analysis we also take the migration policy of Costa Rica into account. In general, migration policies are aimed at controlling migration flows. They are based on protecting the national security and managing these flows of migrants, letting the good ones pass the border and keeping the bad ones out (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2013; Sandoval-García, 2015). Among other countries, Costa Rica tries to implement a more moderate migration policy. The government does want to control migration, but created laws that focus on the integration of migrants instead of their exclusion (Sandoval-García, 2015; Sojo-Lara, 2015). The aim of this ‘soft(er)’ policy is to attract the necessary migrant labor force, which could affect migrants’ decisions as well. Keeping this slightly different policy in mind, can add a new viewpoint to the addressed theoretical concepts.

1.3.4. Societal relevance

Since the government acknowledged the importance of the Nicaraguan migrants for the national economy, they tried – together with organizations – to change the situation in favor of the migrants and their human rights. This resulted in the migration law created in 2010, which was supposed to make it easier for migrants to regularize their status (Marquette, 2006; Sandoval-García, 2015; Sojo-Lara, 2015). Unfortunately, the law hasn't been a great success and it is important for the government and organizations to know on what aspects the law is failing and what difficulties migrants encounter, so they can change it for the better.

However there is not much information available on the difficulties of the application process for a work or residency permit. It is therefore relevant to investigate, in order to improve the migration policy and ultimately improve the application process and conditions for Nicaraguan migrants. The research will be a “duo research” in which we have divided two groups, women and men. My student colleague will investigate the female point of view, whereas I will do research on the male standpoint. CIDEHUM requested this gender lens and we think it is relevant, because there could be big differences between male and female experiences. The organization is then able to respond adequately to the needs of both male and female Nicaraguan migrants.

CIDEHUM's special focus lies on gender equality and on women and children in vulnerable situations. They have developed as an actor that builds the bridge between the government, non-governmental organizations and migrants. Currently one of the specific objectives is helping migrants with migration routes, let them participate in decision-making processes and creating policies and to support initiatives that want to prevent irregular migration. This objective is consistent with the research, because its aim is also to let migrants play an active role in the decisions that are made concerning migration policies. Besides, it suits the research well, because irregular migration is being tackled by regularization of migrants' statuses. Furthermore the policy greatly affects the decisions migrants make concerning their future migration strategies. Migrants could decide to stay irregularly, go back because they do not want to experience the risks that come with being irregular or they can decide to regularize their status. The path the policy is taking, could affect migrants' decisions in the future.

For CIDEHUM to be able to reach their goal, they need deepened understanding of the current situation among both male and female Nicaraguan migrants. Transferring the outcomes of the research to the organization, can help them improve the situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica. The organization has connections with the Costa Rican government and other (global) organizations, so they can lobby and advocate for changes in the policy. It is important that the migrants' situation improves: of course for the migrants themselves, but also for the Costa Rican government. Both parties can benefit from the research and also CIDEHUM's interests are met. It will strengthen their knowledge and assists in achieving their objectives.

1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis consists further of a theoretical framework (chapter two) in which all relevant theories are set out and justified. The third chapter is the methodology of the research that explains the methods, setting and unit of analysis. It also contains a reflection on the research

and the role of the researcher. The fourth chapter shows a more elaborated description of the content of the law established in 2010 and the requirements migrants have to meet in order to get a visa, work or residency permit. Chapter five delineates the motives of Nicaraguan men for moving to Costa Rica and their current situation in the country. Subsequently in chapter six the future strategies of male Nicaraguan migrants are set out and all the factors that could influence the decisions on these strategies are analyzed. Thereafter follows the conclusion with a recommendation for a more appropriate migration policy and the comparison to the female perspective.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“THIS IS NOT MY FIRST TIME IN COSTA RICA; I HAVE BEEN TRAVELLING BACK AND FORTH SINCE I WAS 17.”

Eduardo, 27

The theoretical framework gives direction to the thesis. It shows the theories and approaches that are most relevant for the fieldwork that was conducted in Costa Rica on male Nicaraguan migrants their social and labor situation. Paragraph 2.1 starts with general theories on international labor migration. Most relevant for this research are the more economic theories and to a lesser extent the social theories. Integration is discussed as well, if it is desirable within the different perspectives. Thereafter, theories on repeat or circular migration are elaborated and the opportunities policy makers find in this type of migration (§2.2). Circular migration often goes hand in hand with irregular migration. This will be explained in paragraph 2.3 and the pros and cons of irregular migration are set out. Then the threshold theory of Van der Velde and Van Naerssen is described: it shows that migrants go through a complex decision-making process (§2.4). Lastly in paragraph 2.5, the theories that are most relevant for this research are set out.

2.1. THEORIES ON INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

Lots of research has been done on international labor migration and this resulted in different schools and opinions on how the topic should be approached. The most well-known are in all probability the economic theories that are developed to explain international labor migration. However more social and historical theories are established in the field of migration as well, showing that not only economic factors affect labor migrants/non-migrants and home-/host-societies. Of importance is for example the social network of migrants and the individual country's history, because this forms migration in these societies too. Different theories can explain the (labor) migration from Nicaragua to Costa Rica as well, because through the years this migratory movement had fluctuating natures from an economic/labor one to a political to a socioeconomic one (Cortés Ramos, 2006). For this research nonetheless the economic theories are most suitable and because this is still a very broad concept, several more specific theories that fit our research are further elaborated.

Besides migration, the topic of integration is explained within the specific theories, because migration and integration are inseparable. Migrants and their offspring should become part of the receiving society and states have to facilitate this process (Castles and Miller, 2009). Governments can choose different approaches for the incorporation of migrants, such as assimilation, integration and multiculturalism. Migrants can assimilate: they are incorporated in the destination society through a one-sided process of adaptation. This means they have to devote themselves completely and suppress their distinctive characteristics such as language and cultural traditions. Integration is another possibility, which is a gradual process of incorporation that requires effort from two sides. Migrants can

maintain their cultural characteristics and form communities, but should also partly adapt to the host society. In the end, full incorporation is still the goal of integration. Lastly multiculturalism means that migrants and locals should live together as equals in the receiving country. Migrants do not have to give up on their culture, tradition, language or religion, but are expected to adapt to several key values of the host society. Besides these three types of incorporation, there are migrants that are actively participating in their home country as well, they are almost equally active in two social settings (Schunck, 2011). Hence, there are several extents to which migrants can be incorporated in the host society and this could greatly affect his decisions concerning the future. Therefore it is further explicated in this section as well, to create a broader understanding and support the research.

2.1.1. Economic theories on migration, assimilation and social integration

The segmented labor market theory argues that international labor migration is caused by an intrinsic demand for migrant labor in developed nations (Piore, 1979; Massey et al. 1993) and focuses less on individual decision-making. This intrinsic demand means that in a destination country the natives have motivational problems to do the jobs on the bottom of the labor hierarchy and thus other workers have to be recruited. The gap at the bottom is filled by migrants that are willing to do these low status and low paid jobs. A division on the labor market is created: a primary, capital-intensive and secondary, labor-intensive labor sector arise (Piore, 1979; Castles and Miller, 2009). Workers in the first sector have more human capital, this means they for example have higher education or more experience and they have more opportunities to develop themselves professionally. The latter sector contains unskilled, low-educated workers for whom further schooling and upward economic mobility are less relevant (Constant and Massey, 2005). Also the work environment, kind of employment and earnings differ greatly between the primary and secondary sector. The second sector is more dangerous and instable, includes more physically demanding work and pays less than the primary sector.

Workers may want to move upwards from the secondary to the primary labor sector, but there are social barriers preventing them from moving up. Especially for marginalized groups such as migrants, it is difficult to break through the over the years established system and its structures (Constant and Massey, 2005). Certain jobs become labeled as ‘migrant jobs’ if many migrants work in a particular sector, such as the agricultural or domestic service sector (Böhning, 1972; Piore, 1979). These sectors then become inappropriate for natives to work in and so mainly migrants do that labor. Like this the image of the ‘migrant job’ subsists.

Constant and Massey (2005) argue that economic assimilation of migrants depends on the labor sector in which migrants are employed. If they are employed in secondary labor sector jobs (the typical ‘migrant jobs’) they will not experience economic assimilation, because they do the jobs with many other migrants, not with natives. This indicates they still earn less and that the income remains flexible even over a long period of time. The wage gap between natives and migrants will only get bigger. Hence, economic assimilation is not likely to happen; on the contrary, ethnic stratification by occupation occurs. Labor market discrimination even arises when minority groups – in this case migrants – are treated less favorable than the majority group – natives – although they have identical skills (Becker, 1957). Characteristics such as age, race and sex are used by employers to assign certain

workers to certain labor sectors (Harrison and Sum, 1979). This discrimination expresses itself in occupational and wage differences between both groups (Constant and Massey, 2005). Segregation of all workers is a result of discrimination by employers.

Remarkably very little information can be found on how social incorporation could take place in host societies within the approach of the segmented labor market theory. The theory has a clear focus on the labor market and thus does not pay attention to the migrants' social characteristics. Following the neoclassical economic theories that state return migration means a migrant has failed to integrate in the host country (De Haas, Fokkema and Fihri, 2015), my conclusion is that full adaptation or assimilation is desirable within the framework of the segmented labor market theory. When a migrant keeps transnational ties with his home country, this could stand in the way of successful incorporation (Snel et al., 2006). Thereby, residential segregation by ethnicity creates borders and it restricts contact with natives, not advancing the migrant's incorporation (Farwick, 2011). By assimilating fully into the destination society a migrant has more chances on climbing the ladder, both professionally as well as socially (Greenman and Xie, 2008). Therefore he has to commit to the host country, suppress the own culture and cease most contacts with the home country.

2.1.2. Social theories on migration and integration

The new economics of labor migration (NELM) is a more socioeconomic approach that still focuses on economic factors influencing the migrant's decision to move, yet proposes that migration is a social matter. The choice is not an individual one, but a joint decision that is made by a larger unit of related people, such as a family or community (Massey et al., 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009). The larger unit sees migration as a livelihood strategy to diversify income risks and to overcome home society's market constraints to eventually maximize the income (De Haas and Fokkema, 2011). The idea of NELM is that the most suitable individuals make the move to gain an income across borders. The money they earn will be sent back home to increase income there and improve the living conditions. Risks will be reduced and opportunities to make investments arise. The biggest difference with the segmented labor market theory is the focus on the micro level, to which the neo-classical approaches do not pay attention to. It focuses more on a macro level: the demand for labor is causing international labor migration, not a livelihood strategy.

Within the new economics of labor migration perspective, adaptation is desirable (De Haas and Fokkema, 2011). Reaching an optimal incorporation in the host society, increases the income and decreases risks for households in the home society. This may sound like residing permanently in the host country will lead to an optimal integration and thus to maximum benefits for all, but that is not the case. Many migrants are 'target earners/savers' which means they essentially migrate to earn and save money for a specific goal back home. It implies that they will return to their home country, but only when the goal is met. This return can be postponed if integration in the destination society is abortive, because the income is lower when a migrant is not or less integrated: it takes more time to save enough money to achieve the goal. Hence incorporation is desirable, to maximize the benefits and achieve a target as soon as possible. However permanent settlement (on the long term) is not per se essential, because migrants will reach their goal eventually with the prospect of living

at home with their family. Reaching optimal incorporation thus does not necessarily mean assimilation or permanent long term settlement.

Another theory on international (labor) migration that imputes a role for a larger unit is the migration network theory. It suggests that migratory decisions are usually affected by families and not individuals, just like the NELM theory argues (Castles and Miller, 2009). Migrant networks are connections between migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in home and host countries (Massey et al., 1993). These connections can be based on family descent, friendship or community origin and form a sort of social capital on which migrants can revert. Migration networks lead to declining costs and risks of moving as the network itself grows. Costs diminish because the preceding migrants create a network in the destination country where following migrants can rely upon: it gets easier to find a job and housing. Risks also decrease because the network expands further and further with every person that migrates and thus for other potential migrants it gets less hazardous to move. Lower costs and risks cause more people to migrate, hence migration networks create more migration (De Haas, 2010). This process is called cumulative causation: *“each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely”* (Massey et al., 1998: 45).

Incorporation of migrants is not per se desirable within the viewpoint of the migrant network theory. Vertovec (1999) points out that there are increasing possibilities for migrants to stay in contact with their families back home or other migrants around the globe. In the current era there are phones, televisions and internet that make it easy to stay involved in the life in the home country. This idea led to the opposition of the classic assimilation models that migrants have to adapt themselves to the host society (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999). Adaptation in the host society and commitment to the home society complement each other (De Haas, 2010) and hence the successes of a migrant do no longer depend on the degree of incorporation (Goldring, 1996; Guarnizo, 1997b). In the next paragraph the concept of circular labor migration is set out, which also shows that incorporation is no necessary precondition for a successful migration.

2.2. REPEAT OR CIRCULAR LABOR MIGRATION

Migration is often marked as a permanent move from the home country to a host country (Constant and Zimmerman, 2011). Likewise return migration is explained as a final return to the home country and thus the end of the migratory movements of a person. However, there is also a type of migrant that crosses borders regularly to other countries and returns back home whereafter he migrates again and so on. This repetitive and temporary form of migration can also be described as repeat or circular migration. Typically repeat/circular migrants search for work at any place and this can be a way of getting the most out of their economic and social situation at any time. It is common in several labor sectors such as agriculture (seasonal harvests), catering, construction and the domestic service sector (Castles and Miller, 2009). Besides it can be a form of coping with the separation of family members, by going back home once in a while (Constant and Zimmerman, 2011). Repeat or circular migration seems to be a win-win-win situation, because it benefits destination countries, home societies and migrants themselves (IDC, 2004; Vertovec, 2007). First, destination countries profit because they can attain employees without incorporation problems and worker shortages are filled.

Second, home societies gain because of monetary and social remittances, skills and knowledge. Last, migrants themselves benefit from jobs, income and experience (GCIM, 2005; Castles and Miller, 2009).

Social networks that cross borders play an important role in circular migration (Massey, 1987). The people in a social network communicate to each other where to go, where jobs are available, how to get the job and where to find a place to live (Vertovec, 2007). This creates migration of a repetitive and circular nature, because migrants go from one place to another in search for labor following in others' footsteps. Massey and Espinosa (1997) also showed in their study that circular migrants will more likely go on another trip if they already went on a trip before. The social network they create during their trips is an important factor for their continued travels. The wider and stronger the relations in the social network, the higher the chance on a following trip. This relation can be linked to the cumulative causation of migration that migration causes more migration (see §2.1.2.)

Policy makers think that circular migration is the way forward for migration policies worldwide (Vertovec, 2007). They start acknowledging the importance of the social network as explained above and the shifting migration patterns from settlement to a more temporary form of migration (GCIM, 2005). A focus on circular migration can create (developmental) benefits for home communities, host countries and migrants (see two sections above: win-win-win situation). The recommendation of the Global Commission on International Migration (2005) is that destination countries start promoting circular migration and make it easier for migrants to move between their country and the home country. Examples of measures that can be made to make it easier, are offering future return to the same jobs, making dual citizenship available and creating more flexible visa regimes (IOM 2005). Besides economic improvements that can be made, also more social benefits can be achieved (World Bank, 2006). For example the loss of skills for the country of origin decreases, because migrants return to the country and could even bring back more skills.

However, Hugo (2009) argues that there is also a negative side on circular migration, namely that these migrants are vulnerable for exploitation and exclusion. The temporary character of circular migration can lead to a lack of incorporation in the host society and economy that can result in social and economic exclusion. Besides Vertovec (2007) points out that previous programs, such as the guest worker programs in Europe, collapsed, so will new schemes and policy changes work? He and Castles (2006) suggest that in some cases programs for circular migrants will bring opportunities and have great benefits, but in other cases the win-win-win situation will not apply.

2.3. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Repeat or circular migration is interconnected to the topic of irregular migration. These types of migrants often move from place to place looking for labor, but they do not have the right documents (Constant and Zimmerman, 2011). This means for example that a migrant's entry is irregular if they do not have a valid passport or a required visa to travel across borders (Ghosh, 1998). Employment can be irregular when a foreigner does not have legal authorization to do labor in the country. Besides, the residence could also be irregular if a foreigner does not meet the formal requirements or obtained permission by the law for living in the country. It happens often that migrants overstay the period of their (tourist) visa and

then reside and/or work in a country, which they are not allowed to without legal permits. These three parts (entry, work, residence) of irregular migration are not separated from each other, but interrelated. For example irregular employment does not necessarily mean that someone has entered the country irregularly. A person could do irregular labor for he/she does not have a legal permit to work, yet he/she could have crossed the border with a passport (and optionally a tourist visa, depending on the rules of destination countries and the person's nationality) and thus be legally in the country.

Irregular migration has several pros and cons that are addressed by academics. First the benefits of irregular migrants for destination countries. Receiving governments see the labor needs filled by undocumented migrants without having to make difficult decisions on migration and integration policies (Castles and Miller, 2009). Also for employers, it is cheaper to hire irregular migrants because they work for a lower wage than natives. Besides, countries of origin may profit because a labor surplus is removed, monetary and social remittances are received and overseas investments are made (Koser and Van Hear, 2003).

However, irregular migration also has its disadvantages. Governments of receiving countries worry about the state sovereignty (Weaver et al., 1993). Migrants that cross borders irregularly are a threat, because they undermine the rights of states to control their borders. Undocumented migrants are also seen as a threat to state security – especially after 9/11 – because they could supply ways for terrorists to enter a country (Huysmans, 2005). These nevertheless are generalizations, for irregular migration often represents only a small amount of the total migration. Thereby are the ‘bad intentions’ unfairly ascribed to irregular migrants, because most of them do not have these intentions (Uehling, 2004). Another negative aspect of irregular migration for destination countries is that it allegedly pushes down wages at the expense of citizens and legal migrants (Hanson, 2007). This causes discontent among the population and it increases abuse and exploitation.

Migrants that travel irregularly can be dependent of intermediaries, such as smugglers, to help them enter a country (GCIM, 2005; Koser, 2010). These intermediaries benefit of the fact that migrants need them and ask high prices in return for their help. The trip can be dangerous, through desolate areas and with the risk to get caught by the (border) police. If undocumented migrants want to do labor across borders they are vulnerable for labor exploitation and social exclusion. Because they experience it is difficult to get a job without documents, they are willing to take any job. Employers take advantage of this and they pay irregular migrant workers less and make them work more and sometimes under dangerous and dirty circumstances. Furthermore migrants with an irregular status are often unable to make use of and develop their skills and experience (further).

A lot of countries have created policies or programs to make sure more migrants enter the country with a regular status, because of the above disadvantages. Governments want to protect the state sovereignty and security, but also the security of the migrants themselves (GCIM, 2005). Billions of dollars have been spent by the more developed and wealthier states on several border control techniques, for example on more frontier guards and the construction of border fences. However, Ghosh (1998) argues that a restrictive and controlling policy will have the opposite effect: it will not decrease irregular migration, but increase it. Such policies influence the labor and supply mechanisms in countries, causing more demand for irregular migrant workers. These contradicting opinions show that irregular migration is a

complex and diverse phenomenon, which cannot be ‘solved’ easily or with just one approach (GCIM, 2005).

2.4. THRESHOLD APPROACH

For this research special attention is paid to the threshold approach as created by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011). The approach aims to clarify the decision-making process of the border-crossing of mostly international labor migrants and consists of three parts: people, borders and trajectories. The three parts match the corresponding thresholds, which stand for obstacles that have to be overcome during the decision-making process to migrate. They also need to make decisions whether to stay or leave the host country and they will face obstacles during that process.

There are three thresholds to overcome before the definite decision to migrate is taken: the mental border threshold, the locational threshold and the trajectory threshold (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). Overcoming the mental border threshold means that people start to think about becoming a migrant. People have created a space of difference, which is the space that is familiar and identifiable – **here**. On the other side there is also a space of indifference, everything that is unfamiliar and unknown – **there**. The latter influences the decisions to move or not, because people have to leave their own space and side of the border and end up on the other side where they might not feel at home. Social networks create a bigger space of difference and thus affect this decision as well. If a person has family members or friends living across borders that will contribute to the creation of the ‘home away from home’. Eventually this social network creates and facilitates cross border migration (Faist, 2000; Madsen and Van Naerssen, 2003). The mental border threshold is thus linked to the migration network theory and cumulative causation of migration as explained in paragraph 2.1.2. Hence the first threshold that has to be overcome is the decision to leave the bordered space of difference and become an active migrant (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2015).

Once this threshold is overcome, the second forms an obstacle. The locational threshold concerns the destination migrants choose (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011; 2015). All kinds of locational factors – of both origin and possible destination countries – known to the potential migrant will be taken into account before a choice is made. Borders for example play a role in this decision, because strict border control could scare potential migrants. Besides, at this threshold the social network is also important, for the decision is affected by the familiarity with the destination. Members of the network living in certain foreign countries are an incentive for potential migrants to move there as well, because they have people they can rely on and costs and risks are reduced. People pass the locational threshold once they have decided their destination. Logically, if they decide not to move they do not pass the threshold.

Lastly, the third threshold poses an obstacle: the route to the destination (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2015). A potential migrant should think carefully about how they want to reach the desired host country, especially if the migrant travels in an irregular fashion. Of importance at this threshold is the safety of the route, the possible help of intermediaries and the payment of the journey. All of these factors can make or break the routes that are planned. Once the route is decided, the migrant is ready for departure and the last trajectory threshold

has been overcome. Although this does not mean that the route they planned will be the route they take.

The thresholds do not have to be followed in this particular order per se, because people can change their mind and these changes affect the process. For example, someone can decide to migrate, but cannot find the right destination and thus makes the decision to stay at home. The whole process will start over if that person decides he does want to migrate and so on. A potential migrant can also opt for another host country, postpone the trip or even cancel the travel, because of the high costs they have to pay for intermediaries or for safety reasons (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). Hence, crossing one threshold does not mean the rest of them will automatically be overcome. Furthermore is this approach not just a theory of mobility, but also of immobility (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). It can explain both the enabling and constraining factors in the decision-making process of potential migrants and the extent of their influence on that process.

2.5. RELEVANT THEORIES

In this paragraph the choice of theories is justified. It is necessary to elaborate both economic and socioeconomic theories on migration, because the research wants to get insights in the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants. Some theories match the research better than others, which will be explained in this paragraph. First the international labor migration theories are defended, and then repeat/circular labor migration and irregular migration are elaborated. The last paragraph explicates the focus on the threshold approach in this research.

The segmented labor market theory is set out, because after reading in to the topic of Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica, it was found that many Nicaraguans move to Costa Rica because of more employment opportunities there than in Nicaragua (Marquette, 2006). This pointed out that labor migration is affected by the demand for labor in the more developed countries and that this attracts migrant workers from less developed countries. The Costa Rican government acknowledges they need migrant labor force and does not want to avert foreigners from their country (Sandoval-García, 2015). This shows processes on the macro level that are involved in international labor migration. In the preparation for our fieldwork it was found as well that Nicaraguans work in the lower labor sectors of the economy: they do construction, agricultural and domestic work (Marquette, 2006). This also shows the division of labor markets and the stigmatization of ‘migrant jobs’. Both the demand for migrant labor and the division of labor markets are aspects of the segmented labor market theory and are thus very suitable for this research.

Other economic theories like the neoclassical ones are less relevant because they are more individualistic and ahistorical. It emphasizes the individual migration decisions that are based on a comparison of the costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving (Castles and Miller, 2009). However, this implies that the potential migrant knows the context in home and host country, which is hardly ever the case and thus migrants can never make the perfectly measured comparison and choice. Besides this, the neoclassical theories suggest that migrants migrate for their own maximization of utility and human capital. Nevertheless, what can be read in following chapters of this thesis is that migrants want to improve the situation at home and thus migrate for their family and not just for themselves. This makes the segmented labor

market theory the best economic theory for our research, because the case in Costa Rica is quite similar. It suggests that labor migrants' motives for moving are economic, but that the demand for workers in more developed countries also creates labor migration.

The new economics of labor migration (NELM) and migration network theory are relevant for the research, because NELM shows that migration is not an individual choice, but a joint decision of a family or community. Sandoval-Garcia (2004) shows that Nicaraguans also make joint decisions to migrate to Costa Rica and thus the NELM theory supports this research well. The migration network theory is useful, for the social networks of Nicaraguan migrants are strong (Marquette, 2006). The networks facilitate migration to Costa Rica and supports new migrants in the search for housing or jobs and in the adaptation process. Marquette points out: *“social networks may be playing an important role in sustaining flows of migrants from Nicaragua to Costa Rica since 2000”*. This shows that these migratory flows are cumulative, which makes the cumulative causation of migration relevant for our research as well. These theories pay attention to the social factors that contribute to the decision-making process of (potential) migrants, such as family and the social network, but do not lose the economic aspects out of sight.

Other general theories on international (labor) migrations that are about dependency of one state to another are not as competent for this research. One theory based on dependency is the world system theory, which suggests so called ‘peripheral’ underdeveloped regions are incorporated in a world economy that is led by ‘core’ developed nations (Wallerstein, 1984). Multinational corporations from the core move to the periphery in order to bring economic development, but migrant workers also moved to the core regions in the world to work there. This caused a reinforcement of the global hegemonic powers and less developed regions were dependent on core regions. The world system theory is not applicable, because both Nicaragua and Costa Rica are not part of the ‘core region’ of the world. The Nicaraguan economy is not incorporated in the Costa Rican one nor are many Costa Rican businesses moving to Nicaragua. Moreover, the world system theory focuses mostly on economic and social structure and not on the role of people in the migration process (Castles and Miller, 2009). This explanation for the cause of international (labor) migration is thus less relevant for the research, because of the non dependent history between the countries and our emphasis on people's motivations and strategies.

Further the choice for circular migration was made, because Marquette (2006) shows that up to 100.000 Nicaraguan migrants come to Costa Rica during the harvest seasons of several crops. Thus, in the agricultural sector migrants move from one plantation to the other to harvest various crops in different regions of the country. The same counts for the construction sector, in which Nicaraguan men work until the job is done whereafter they move on to the next construction job. It appears the Nicaraguan migrants move from one place to another in search for labor, but do not necessarily have a predetermined plan where to go or what labor to do. Circular migration is more suitable to the research than return migration, because this refers to one move abroad and one return back home (Hugo, 2013). If the frequency of the travels goes up, circulation arises. However, circular migration is not the case when a migrant crosses borders every day and returns home daily: then it is called commuting. Circular migrants thus return home regularly, but not daily, which happens a lot in Costa Rica (Marquette, 2006). Seasonal migration would neither be an appropriate concept

for this research, for in Costa Rica not all jobs that are done by migrants are season bounded, yet they can have a rotating nature. Therefore circular migration is better, because it is a broader concept and covers seasonal migration. Besides, circular migration includes permanent residents of destination countries who (shortly) visit their home communities and returned migrants that pay a visit to the former guest country (Hugo, 2013). A great group of Nicaraguan migrants have a residency permit (both temporary and permanent), namely 287.764 in 2011 and they visit Nicaragua regularly or once in a while and can thus be counted as circular migrants (DGME, 2012).

These numbers are very limited though, because worldwide there are a lot of undocumented migrants. These migrants may work and live in a country, but are not counted for the official numbers. The interactive maps of the IOM⁴ show that the number of Nicaraguans staying in Costa Rica regularly is 299.340 in 2015, however the actual number is much higher than these data indicate. Irregular Nicaraguan migrants form a great group in Costa Rica – estimates of Marquette (2006) and Sandoval-García (2015) designate that the actual population is underrated with one third of the documented population – and thus it is an important subject for this research. Besides, the motives of Nicaraguan men are analyzed, showing they do not have any bad intentions (Uehling, 2004) or form a thread to the state security (Huysmans, 2005). Only investigating the documented migrants will give incomplete outcomes and would affect the research negatively, for it is expected that the status is very decisive for the future strategies Nicaraguan men pursue. Thus both regular and irregular migration is needed for this research in order to reach the most comprehensive results.

Lastly the threshold approach is important for this research, because the aim is to further develop the approach. It focuses on the mental processes of the (potential) individual migrant, what complements this research well. When the thresholds before migrating are passed, the move will take place and as Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011, 2015) point out: these thresholds can be overcome in a random order and can possibly emerge again during the trip. Our fieldwork indicates what factors affect the decisions that are made and that cause people to pass the thresholds or not. However, this research shows that migrants that already reached their destination remain situated in that decision-making process of migration and still face the thresholds. The ever present dynamic process is emphasized by asking about future strategies and the factors influencing the decisions on these future strategies.

⁴ Source: <http://www.iom.int/countries/costa-rica>

3. METHODOLOGY

“IF A GRINGA⁵ COMES BY, I WILL GO WITH HER!”

Andres, 40

In this chapter the methodological approach of the thesis is set out. I refer to ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘the researchers’, because my co-researcher and I used the same methods to conduct the research. In close consultation and mutual agreement we decided to do the research in the way we did it in the end. Interviews and surveys were conducted in order to gain insight in both the male and female perspective on the situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica and in their future migration strategies. Eventually we compare the results of both genders to find similarities and differences between them. More practical reasons we did it together, are because of our basic knowledge of the Spanish language and thus for a greater understanding of the interviews and for the matter of our safety. Besides it was useful to hear both the male and female side of the situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica, because of the complementary aspect of the research.

The first paragraph describes the research setting and the methods used to gather data. The interviews and surveys were mainly conducted in *Parque La Merced* in San José, the capital of Costa Rica. Besides, I will reflect on the applied methods and explain why these were better than other methods. Second, the techniques how the data are analyzed will be explained, using AtlasTi for the interviews and SPSS for the surveys (§3.2). In the last paragraph (§3.3) a reflection is made on the research and the role of the researcher.

3.1. METHODS, RESEARCH SETTING AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the introduction, my personal opinion prefers a bottom up approach. In order to get a good and broad understanding of the situation in Costa Rica, it is important to investigate the perceptions and opinions of the migrants themselves next to those of policy makers and (non-governmental) organizations. Mixed methods suit this research well, because it covers all sub questions and it ultimately answers the research question. The sub questions are answered by qualitative research methods: small talk and semi-structured interviews. The information needed were motives, feelings, perspectives and strategies of the male Nicaraguan migrants and this is best obtained by using qualitative methods. By applying these methods, it is possible to ask further questions and gather more in-depth information in contrast to for example a survey which has limited answering options and thus does not provide underlying motivations or meanings (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010). This was also the best method to approach irregular migrants: the migrants without (valid) documents. Their status is very sensitive, hence time and effort was put into creating a confidential sphere. However, quantitative methods were used as well – next to qualitative methods – for our last sub question to test the most important topics that came out of the interviews. The analysis has a descriptive and supportive function in this thesis.

⁵ A term used in Latin America for a female foreigner, especially those of American or British descent.

Our research has been on the labor and social situation of Nicaraguan migrants in the country of Costa Rica and what future migration strategies the migrants want to pursue. My unit of analysis is male Nicaraguan migrants of all labor appropriate ages (15 and over) living in Costa Rica. We conducted both semi-structured interviews and surveys, thirteen Nicaraguan men were willing to talk about their situation and one hundred and three filled in a survey. The interviews took place in two parks in the capital of Costa Rica, San José, which were meeting points for Nicaraguan migrants from the whole country. One of the parks – *Parque La Merced* – is well known by both Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans, because of all the Nicaraguans recreating and meeting each other there. In the blocks surrounding the park, there are many ‘Nicaraguan facilities’, such as restaurants, bars, banks and music groups (see image 3A and 3B). It emphasizes the presence of this particular migrant group in the neighborhood. The other park is *Parque Central* where Nicaraguans also spend their time, although to a lesser extent. By conducting interviews we were able to gain deep insights in their family lives, how and under what conditions they came to Costa Rica, how their economic and labor situation is and how they feel about the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan government. The Nicaraguan migrants shared many experiences and personal stories with us that showed the complex situation they are in and the thresholds they have to overcome frequently. Furthermore we were informed about the future migration strategies they pursue: reasons to stay in or leave Costa Rica and ideas and dreams for the future passed by.



Image 3A. Panoramic picture of the northern part of Parque La Merced.



Image 3B. Nicaraguan restaurant – that also offers money transfers – close to Parque La Merced.

All the respondents were randomly approached in the park. Because the research involves sensitive subjects, we were not looking for particular people who ‘fitted’ the research. The personal stories mattered most, so other characteristics besides sex and age were less defining. At times it was difficult to find people who wanted to talk about their life in Costa Rica. This made it important for the researchers to create a confidential sphere and make the respondents feel comfortable. To keep all information private, names or explicit characteristics are not used in the thesis. Snowball sampling was the best method to find respondents for our interviews for the reason of confidentiality. In this manner we gained some trust at future respondents because their friends were already participating or they saw other people in the park joining our research.

A special note has to be made for our key informant Javier, whom we encountered via a friend. They met in *Parque La Merced* while she was making pictures and Javier approached her. She told him about our research, which made him very enthusiastic to participate. He was our very first respondent and after the interview he wanted to stay involved in the research. In the end, Javier proved himself to be very important for us, because he helped us find respondents for the interviews, translate the interviews from Spanish into German when we didn’t understand it and gave us a glimpse into his life as a Nicaraguan migrant living in Costa Rica. With him by our side we were better able to gain trust of our respondents, because he knows best what it is like to be a migrant, an outsider, a “Nica”.

Furthermore the thirteen respondents were all men between twenty and fifty five years old. Some of them have a residency permit, others travelled to Costa Rica with only their passport and a visa. They all lived in different neighborhoods in San José; five of the respondents did not have a permanent place to reside. We conducted the interviews in a period of one month and Javier was present at all of these interviews where he functioned as an interpreter as well as a translator.

Besides interviews, the researchers also conducted a survey to ask a bigger and broader amount of people about the most important issues raised in the interviews in order to test the actual importance and generalizability of the topics. We wanted more answers to the striking subjects of the interviews, principally topics regarding their family, discrimination, legal documents and politics. The surveys were also randomly conducted and taken at several spots throughout the country, most of them in *Parque La Merced* in San José, namely about sixty surveys. Besides the park we used our network to find more Nicaraguan migrants, which led us to other places throughout the country. With a Costa Rican friend, we travelled to Puntarenas on the west coast of Costa Rica, where we conducted about twenty *encuestas* with male Nicaraguan migrants. After this, we moved further to the peninsula of Nicoya, to take almost 20 surveys more. Our host family of the time we took Spanish classes connected us to the Nicaraguan community in the small town of Garza. We approached them and they were very willing to help us with the survey. In both Puntarenas and Garza we went to the neighborhoods where many Nicaraguans live, so we went to their homes to take the *encuestas*.

Hence, in these three places we conducted the surveys and they were also performed randomly. Like with the interviews, many migrants were afraid we have connections with the police or other governmental institutions, which sometimes made it hard to find people that wanted to join the research. This is why we decided to approach basically everyone that looked Nicaraguan and about fifty percent of the people who filled in a survey, redirected us

to neighbors, family and friends. Thus via snowball sampling we gathered respondents, just like we did when finding migrants for our interviews. I also had a quota of one hundred completed surveys I wanted to achieve, which means I used quota sampling as well. The goal of one hundred surveys thus was completed via snowball sampling.

3.2. ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

To identify important topics and challenges in the lives of male Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica, the interviews are analyzed through coding in AtlasTi (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010). I distinguished several social, economic and political factors that came to the fore in the interviews. These three factors are further subdivided into smaller and more concrete codes. For example, the code ‘social factors’ is further divided into codes such as partner/children, migrant family members, non-migrant family members, pull factor Costa Rica, push factor Nicaragua, repel factor Costa Rica and discrimination/prejudices. Under the umbrella term ‘economic factors’ I placed the following codes: job, work permit, sufficient wage, pull factor Costa Rica, push factor Nicaragua and repel factor Costa Rica. The ‘political factors’ contains the codes: Costa Rican/Nicaraguan government and migrants’ ideas for helping migrants. Some codes can be linked to more than one of the three factors, so they are noted more than once. For example, the codes pull factor Costa Rica and push factor Nicaragua give both social and economic reasons why to go to Costa Rica and leave Nicaragua. Three other codes were also distinguished, namely trajectory/circular migration, recommend to migrate/get a work permit and future strategy. I decided to keep these codes separate because it is difficult to place them under one of the above mentioned factors. Together they do give a lot of information on the future migration strategies migrants pursue, so linking these codes with each other – among other codes like repel factor Costa Rica – is giving useful information for the fifth sub question.

The more certain topics were coded in the interviews, the more important they appear to be for the respondents. For example, the codes work permit, job and Costa Rican/Nicaraguan government were used, 43, 33 and 22 times and these were thus identified as important. Together with all other codes, analyses are made how male Nicaraguan migrants live in Costa Rica and what enables and constrains them in that life as a migrant. This information provides a good basis for answering the sub questions.

The most important topics out of the interviews were questioned in the surveys to see if a bigger group shares the same opinion. Questions about family and their geographical location, discrimination, status, jobs, future strategies, recommendations and the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan government were asked to randomly approached Nicaraguans. All these topics could greatly affect the decision-making of a migrant and it also shows the complexity of this particular process. Although the research is not representative for the whole Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica, we do think we can broaden our assumptions a bit further, because approximately one hundred men and fifty women filled in the survey.

The answers on the survey questions were filled in the IBM SPSS Statistic Data Editor where we identified the variables matching with every question. Examples of variables are sex, age, resfam (the residence of the family) and future (where does respondent want to live). Analyzing these variables gives us descriptive outcomes that supports the research and complements the results from the qualitative research methods. Pie charts are added to give a

simple and quick overview of certain topics and histograms are included to show to what extent certain variables relate to each other.

3.3. REFLECTION

Despite the fact we collected a lot of information with the interviews and the survey, the research does have some shortcomings. For example, issues like a language barrier, the recording of interviews and the sampling. These issues are further extended hereafter.

My co-researcher and I barely spoke Spanish before we went to Costa Rica. We did a two-week intensive language course at the very beginning of our stay to learn the basics of Spanish. After these two weeks we had considerably more knowledge of the Spanish language, which was a good basis for our further stay. In practice we learned even more: in San José not many people speak English, so we were forced to speak Spanish. In three months we spoke basic Spanish and our understanding of the respondents was good. However, it is possible we missed certain opinions, motivations or meanings, because our Spanish was not at a sufficient level (yet). Another possibility is that we misinterpreted certain information, which thus could lead to skewed results. We did have our key informant Javier, who could translate the Spanish answers that were given into German or he repeated the answers slowly in Spanish. I believe this made a broader understanding possible and in this manner we did get as much information as possible.

Besides the language, there was another practical problem, namely the recording of the interviews. We planned to record the interviews – partly because of the language – so as little information as possible would be lost. However, when we arrived at the research setting (mainly *Parque La Merced*) it was very difficult to record the interviews. The park was located in the middle of the city, so there was a lot of background noise of people, cars and buses. The recordings were as good as useless, because we could barely hear the respondents talk. We decided it would be better to listen carefully and make notes to expand those notes after into reports. Because we did not have recordings, it could thus be possible we missed information, despite the translation and interpretation efforts from Javier, our key informant, and the standard discussion after each one of our interviews.

Another issue I found troubling was our sampling. Because of the already mentioned trust issues many migrants had, we were not able to do as many interviews as we wanted. For the survey it was not very convenient to select respondents from for example a citizen file, because there are a lot of irregular migrants living in Costa Rica. Using a citizen file would mean that these possible irregular respondents are left out. On the other hand, it would be difficult to find irregular respondents on other lists, because those are most likely anonymous and confidential. For example, we visited a shelter where every night hundred homeless people could sleep, but it was not possible to do surveys there for safety and protocol reasons. The only way was to use snowball sampling and non-probability sampling to find our respondents. We approached people in the park and the aforementioned other places. This means that our research is not representative for the entire Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica and we had to take this into account for our analysis. Although the research is not representative, I do believe we gained important insights in the social and labor situation of Nicaraguan migrants and their future strategies.

3.3.1. Researcher's identity

A researcher always influences the research he or she is doing, called the Hawthorne effect (Gobo, 2008). I also experienced this in our research. Being a white, young female from the Netherlands it was sometimes difficult to get in contact with male (or female) Nicaraguans. Some people initially did not trust us, because they thought we had contacts with the police or government, but after explaining our motives most did cooperate in the research. Some were even determined to join, because they were pleased the research was being conducted: they felt we cared for their situation and that their voices were heard. Over all, about fifteen percent of the people we approached did not want to cooperate, more women than men. We believe this is the case because of the subordinate role women have in Central American societies – if not everywhere around the world (Pateman, 2014). For example, if women sat with men, they were less likely to fill in a survey: they let the men do it. Another reason could be that women are often a little bit more shy and scared and would rather leave participation to someone else.

At other times my own identity influenced the research in a different way. We were perceived as *gringas* by the male migrants, implicitly meaning women with higher economic and social status and thus a good 'catch' for a Nicaraguan man. Once in a while we experienced men hinting on a relationship or such like (see Andres' quote at the top of the chapter) and this was a reason for us to be very selective about the information they gave us. Their answers could have been unreliable and their motives for participating in the research could have been false. It was not a good basis for an understanding and confidential setting for the researchers and respondent.

Having this identity was thus sometimes difficult to cope with, because it obstructed me from investigating the migrants' situation. Luckily we found a solution for these problems: our key informant Javier. Being Nicaraguan himself and in similar situations as many other Nicaraguan migrants, he was able to gain trust of our respondents. He could explain clearly that the research was conducted for the migrants and a migrant organization (CIDEHUM), not for the government or their institutions. Also the fact that he is a 48-year-old man made sure that we were looked after and not bothered by male Nicaraguan migrants. We were taken more seriously because of his company.

4. VISAS, PERMISOS Y RESIDENCIAS

“THERE IS A LOT OF BUREAUCRACY. MIGRANTS ARE BEING SENT FROM PILLAR TO POST, WHICH COSTS EXTRA TIME AND MONEY”

Antonio, 22

Before the social and labor situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica is described and the data are analyzed, the law changes of 2010 and the requirements that migrants have to meet for a visa or permit are elaborated. Paragraph 4.1 starts with the law changes of 2010. It shows the aim of the alterations the Costa Rican government made and how these changes actually have the opposite effect. The second paragraph sets out the requirements for obtaining a visa, work and residency permit. It reveals the extensive amount of paperwork that is necessary for getting authorization to be, work and/or live in Costa Rica.

4.1. GENERAL LAW OF MIGRATION AND ALIEN AFFAIRS (NO. 8764)

Costa Rica has struggled with anti immigrant – mostly anti Nicaraguan – sentiments and inequalities for years (Sandoval-García et al., 2013). Since 2010 the government of Costa Rica adopted a ‘softer’ approach towards migration to attack the problems. Alterations were made regarding the vocabulary linked to security, changing it into a vocabulary related to human rights and taking into account international agreements effective in the country. The law focuses on the migrant integration into the Costa Rican society based on several principles such as respect for human life and diversity of cultures and people.

Despite the changes from the government, the number of residency applications decreased with fifty percent between 2010 and 2011 after implementation of the new law. Hence, it has the opposite effect than anticipated: the law creates irregularity and deters incorporation in the Costa Rican society (Sandoval-García et al., 2013). This decrease is ascribed to the high costs and requirements for both workers and their employers (Sojo-Lara, 2015). Not only the application itself costs money, also the required (and possible additional) documents and change of migratory status are increasing the total sum. Sandoval-García (2015) even suggested that two third of all irregular Nicaraguans in Costa Rica qualify for a residency permit, because their children were born in Costa Rica or they are in a relationship with a (Costa Rican) resident. This makes them eligible for becoming a resident, but because the costs of all the paperwork in the application process are too high, they will not make a request. Furthermore, an application is a time consuming process for all the documents have to be collected, often within a short period of time. Many permanent residents in Costa Rica lose their permit, because it has to be renewed in the last three months of the old permit’s valid period (Sandoval-García et al., 2013). For every month their stay is irregular, they get a US\$ 3 fine or they have to leave the country and are forbidden to re-enter for the tripled time of the irregular stay.

Migrants can even be held in custody – according to Article 18 of the migration law – without evidence that they committed a crime (Sandoval-García et al., 2013). This violates Article 37 of the Costa Rican Constitution, which states deprivation of freedom should never be the rule, especially when there is no criminal evidence. The fact that migrants can get

detention without any evidence, leads to more racial profiling and random detention. These contradictions only create more problems in society among locals and migrants, especially Nicaraguans. Furthermore, the law gives a lot of power to the General Directorate of Immigration. They can extend the detention of a migrant and confiscate their passport or other travel document without restrictions and/or juridical authorization. The separation and balance of powers as guaranteed by Article 9 of the Costa Rican Constitution is also undermined by the granting of this much authority to one section only. The Constitution and principles of human rights are being ignored, while the law was supposed to be based on these principles. Hence again, the law is not stimulating integration and the decrease of inequalities, but moreover opposes and increasing it.

4.2. MIGRANT REQUIREMENTS FOR VISAS, WORK AND RESIDENCY PERMITS

In this paragraph the most common visa, work permits and residency permits for Nicaraguans are set out. There can always be exceptions, but for the clarity of this thesis only one or two of the permits are chosen to elaborate further. Besides, many requirements differ only slightly and thus the application procedures are quite similar to each other. The forthcoming sections show the extensiveness of the applications, especially the ones for a work and residency permit.

4.2.1. Tourist visa

When Nicaraguans want to travel to Costa Rica for any reason, they have to obtain a visa prior to entering the country.⁶ They have to meet different and more severe requirements than people from Europe or the United States. They need to go to the Costa Rican embassy in Managua or the Costa Rican consulate in Chinandega or Rivas in Nicaragua to apply for a tourist visa, which costs US\$ 32. Every person that wants to travel across borders to Costa Rica must acquire the visa personally and meet several conditions. Hereafter the documents that have to be presented alongside the application for a tourist visa are point by point enumerated:

1. All personal information have to be addressed: name, nationality, passport number, residency place, reason for travel, estimated time of stay in Costa Rica, approximate place and date of arrival and departure from the country, profession or occupation, exact address of intended place of stay in Costa Rica, date and place of birth of the applicant, fax number to receive notifications, date and signature.
2. A valid passport that will not expire in the six months upon the date of arrival, including a photocopy of that passport.
3. Ticket reservation, return ticket or onward journey ticket.
4. Proof of financial means of the Costa Rican person or resident to demonstrate the ability to take care of the applying person in Costa Rica. (For tourists from for example European countries this is not necessary, but as aforementioned, Nicaraguans are in a group that must meet stricter requirements).

⁶ All information on visas, work permits and residency permits available on <http://www.migracion.go.cr>

5. Submit valid criminal record in Spanish language.

Besides, the consul or otherwise the General Directorate of Immigration can request, if necessary, additional documents issued in the applicant's country of origin every time their submission is fundamental for the visa application. The above points are thus the minimum number of documents migrants have to present for the application. The consul has to take up the request within thirty days and indicate the date and time for the outcome of the application. Hence, an application does not necessarily mean the person requesting it, is obtaining a visa. If however, the person does get the visa, he/she has to use it within sixty days – starting from the date of the notification the visa is acquired – and it is valid for one entry only.

After entering Costa Rica, Nicaraguans can stay for the maximum of thirty days with the possibility to prolong the visa up to sixty days. This extension has to be requested at the Migration Office in Costa Rica before the expiry of the original visa. Again some personal traits have to be presented (name, nationality, number and type of passport, exact address in Costa Rica and telephone/fax number, name of parents, place and date of birth) including a reason for the extension. Furthermore, three recent passport size photographs, a certified copy of the passport and prove of financial solvency are needed. Lastly, a receipt of the payment of US\$ 100 or the similar amount in Costa Rican *colones* (¢) to *Banco de Costa Rica* has to complete the application for extension. Hence, a visa application and/or an extension costs money and calls for a number of documents and paperwork. Nevertheless is this the most common and easy way for Nicaraguans to enter Costa Rica legally. Some of the migrants will start working in the thirty or ninety days they are legally allowed to be in the country, however this is not permitted. The tourist visa is for 'tourists': people that pay a visit to the country and are not working or living there. This is in accordance with Ghosh (1998) who argues migrants can have a regular status in one field (for example entry) and an irregular status in another (for example labor). Also the migrants overstaying their visa period become irregular migrants, because they do not have any permission to stay in Costa Rica. It is one of the most frequent ways in which migrants 'irregularize' (Ghosh, 1998).

4.2.2. Work permits

If Nicaraguans decide they want to work in Costa Rica they must apply for a work or residency permit in order to be legally allowed to do so. To make this application, it is important they are in the country legally and their (tourist) visa is not yet expired. Furthermore, it is mandatory for migrants to change their tourist visa into a temporary or permanent residence if they want to apply for a work permit. The costs for this adjustment are US\$ 200 and are inevitable, because no (temporary) residence means no work permit.

The migration department of the Costa Rican government distinguishes fourteen procedures for getting a work permit all related to different types of labor. For Nicaraguan men, generally two of these procedures contain the appropriate requirements to meet. Migrants can work at a business with one director who owns it (*persona física*) and a business with a directors/executive board that manages it (*persona jurídica*). The two procedures and corresponding requirements differ slightly, but only because of the type of chief a company has. In the case of *persona jurídica* the documents about labor are authorized by an executive board, so it is the responsibility of a group of people. In the case of *persona física* these

¿Pura vida o vida dura?

documents are authorized by one person, which means that person bears all responsibility. Hereafter both types and the corresponding documents, certificates and statements that are needed to complete the application for a work permit are set out. Firstly all requirements for working at a company with a *persona jurídica*:

1. Submit a complete application; including a printed, readable and signed letter (see point 2).
2. Letter explaining the reason for application for a work permit. Full name of the applicant, nationality, age, occupation, address, telephone/fax number for notifications must be provided. Letter must be signed in the presence of a migration official or verified by a lawyer.
3. Receipt of payment of ₡125 (US\$ 0,22) and ₡2,50 (US\$0,0045) for every extra page submitted with the application. Receipt must name the applier as depositor.
4. Two recent passport size photographs from the front.
5. Submission of criminal record issued by the Ministry of Public Security.
6. Submission of tourist visa.
7. Birth certificate of applier issued by country of origin, authenticated by the Costa Rican consulate.
8. Submission of criminal record issued by country of origin or the residence of the past three years, authenticated by the Costa Rican consulate. Additionally a copy of the tourist visa – proof of legal stay in Costa Rica – has to be provided by the applier.
9. Photocopies of all pages from a valid passport of the applier. These copies must be certified, meaning the migration official has to see the original passport or it has to be authorized by a notary.
10. Job description that indicates the function, work schedule and income earnings signed by the employer.
11. Certification of income, balance and income statement, issued by a *Contador Público Autorizado* (a notary that is certified by the government to handle state related cases, e.g. an application for a work permit)
12. The employer must be up to date with his obligations towards his workers, according to article 74 of the Law established by the Costa Rican Social Security department.
13. Certificate of the corresponding insurance company, designating the employer company is up to date with the payments for its work risk policy.
14. Certification of legal status of the company or institution with a date of issue, not being over one month old at time of the application for temporary residence. (When applying for a work permit, a migrant needs a (temporary) residence as well, see §4.2.3)
15. Confirmation that the company is up to date with the payment of municipal taxes.

Likewise an overview of the requirements for working at a company with a *persona física* (this also applies to domestic service workers):

- Points 1 to 9 are the same requirements as *persona jurídica*.
- 10. Letter from employer guaranteeing the legal stay of the applier in Costa Rica in the intended migration status (thus a temporary or permanent residence).

11. Certified copy of employer's valid identity document or original one copied and checked by a migration official.
12. Job description that indicates the function, work schedule and income earnings signed by the employer.
13. Verification of economic solvency of the employer through one of the following documents:
 - a. Certification of income issued by a *Contador Público Autorizado*.
 - b. Wage record.
 - c. Patronal order (issued by the government) or official letter from employer himself indicating the gross and net income, position and years of service.
 - d. Retirees must provide proof of pension, submitting receipts or a certification issued by a competent authority stating the pension and time of retirement.

At both procedures twenty important notes are made, mostly concerning exceptions on the requirements stated and the authorization and validity of the documents. These enumerations show how extensive an application is in terms of documents, money and time. Migrants need documents from both Costa Rica and Nicaragua. To get the documents from Costa Rica they can go to several institutions in the country, but documents needed from Nicaragua are more difficult to obtain. These have to be authorized by the country of origin first, whereafter they are sent to the Costa Rican Embassy or Consulate in Nicaragua for further authentication. In some cases migrants even have to return to Nicaragua to obtain the documents issued by the origin country in the first place and get them authorized. This gathering of documents costs money and time and there is also a possibility they have to pay for the documents in both countries. It means that the costs of US\$ 250 (of the application costs and changing the visa) are only a part of the entire amount of money the whole process will ultimately cost. The time the whole process will eventually take because of making appointments, arranging, waiting and travelling is also a lot, sometimes exceeding the time within a migrant has to make an application.

Furthermore the employer has to cooperate in the request for a work permit, because they have to provide personal and/or business documents (economic solvency, identification, insurance) and sign documents for the employee. If the employer does not want to contribute to the employee's work permit, the permit will not be issued. This is an extra difficulty a migrant faces for his application process, especially when the employer benefits from irregular migrants. The latter's wage is usually lower than the wage of documented migrants (Castles and Miller, 2009), which could thus be a reason for employers not to cooperate in getting a work permit.

Migrants are able to extend their work permit and therefore certain requirements have to be met. For an appointment at a migration office these documents have to be brought:

1. *Persona jurídica*: Certification from the company signed by the legal representative stating the employee maintains the position for which he was hired.
Persona física: Letter from the employer stating the employee maintains the position for which he was hired.
2. Work permit or DIMEX (Residency Identification Card) in good condition.
3. Proof of affiliation to the assurance systems of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund.

4. Receipt of payment of the renewal fee that names the migrant as depositor. Must be paid in *colones* on the account of the Bank of Costa Rica.
5. Valid passport in good condition.

Again some important notes are made concerning the application. The work permit can be renewed from three months prior to its expiry and if migrants renounce they are fined US\$ 3 a month after the expiry. If after more than three months of the expiration the migrant does want to renew its permit, he has to include a letter of justification explaining why he did not renew it within the valid period. Also if the migrant has been out of the country for more than one year, he must submit a criminal record from the country he has been. The DIMEX has to be renewed as well and the criminal record is indispensable for this renewal. Furthermore, the costs for a work permit renewal vary and will be determined during the appointment. In the next paragraph the temporary residency permit is further explained and also the conditions for receiving permanent residence in Costa Rica are set out, because – as pointed out several times – this permit is needed in order to get a work permit as well.

4.2.3. Residency permits

Temporary residence

The application for a temporary residence in Costa Rica often interconnects with the application for a work permit. Migrants that want to work in the country cannot do so on a tourist visa. Hence, they have to change their status as a tourist into a status as a temporary resident (costs US\$200). The Costa Rican government's department of migration distinguishes twelve procedures for getting a temporary residency permit all related to different types of people and their jobs. For this research, one of these procedures fits best namely temporary residence as a dependent employee. This means the employee is working at a company, what can be described as a typical patron-client relation. Hereafter all requirements for a temporary residency application are enumerated:

1. Submit a complete application; including a printed, readable and signed letter (see point 2).
2. Letter explaining the reason for application for a temporary residency permit. Full name of the applicant, nationality, age, occupation, address, telephone/fax number for notifications must be provided. Letter must be signed in the presence of a migration official or verified by a lawyer.
3. Receipt of payment of US\$ 50 that names the applier as depositor. This amount has to be paid in *colones* on the account of the Bank of Costa Rica.
4. Receipt of payment of ¢125 (US\$ 0,22) and ¢2,50 (US\$0,0045) for every extra page submitted with the application. Receipt must name the applier as depositor.
5. Two recent passport size photographs from the front.
6. Submission of criminal record issued by the Ministry of Public Security. Only for persons that are twelve years old and over.
7. Proof for registration at the Costa Rican consulate in the area the applier lives in.
8. Birth certificate of applier issued by country of origin authenticated by the Costa Rican consulate.

9. Submission of criminal record issued by country of origin or the residence of the past three years, authenticated by the Costa Rican consulate. Additionally a copy of current visa/permit – proof of legal stay in Costa Rica – has to be provided by the applier.
10. Photocopies of all pages from a valid passport of the applier. These copies must be certified, meaning the serving migration official has to see the original passport or it has to be authorized by a notary.
11. Labor contract in accordance with articles 23 and 24 of the Labor Code.
12. Affidavit (declaration under oath) signed by the employer verifying the experience of the employee specifying the specialized function and knowledge for the position.
13. Proof of validity of the company, quality of the goods and payment of taxes by the employer submitted to the Ministry of Finance or a collecting agency.
14. In case of a spouse: in addition to the above requirements, proof of the relationship has to be provided in the form of a marriage certificate, authenticated by the Costa Rican consulate. The applications of minor children and children with disabilities must be made by their parents. They have to show the handicap by means of a medical report which is verified by a judge.

Permanent residence

A migrant can obtain a permanent residency permit, if they are related to a Costa Rican resident (parents or children). Also the ones who have had a temporary residency permit for three years in a row can apply for a permanent permit. Likewise for this application, if the migrant entered Costa Rica on a tourist visa he has to pay US\$ 200 to change that category and US\$50 for the application itself. Further requirements are:

- Points 1 to 10 are the same as the application for a temporary residence.
- 11. Proof of relation with a Costa Rican resident issued by the *Registro Civil* (the population register). The application for residency must be within two months after the date of the release of this document.
- 12. In the case of older disabled siblings or children of Costa Ricans, they must show the handicap by means of a medical report. This medical report has to be verified by a judge.

Both the applications for a temporal and permanent residents require many documents, money and time, similar to the work permit procedures aforementioned (see §4.2.2). The documents issued by Nicaragua have to be authenticated by the Costa Rican authorities in that country, whereafter they are sent to Costa Rica. Obtaining and authenticating these documents costs time and effort and thus the whole process is lengthy and asks for patience. Migrants can decide to extend their temporal or permanent residency permit and therefore certain requirements have to be met. For an appointment at a migration office these documents have to be brought:

1. Residency permit or DIMEX (Residency Identification Card) in good condition.
2. Proof of affiliation to the assurance systems of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund.
3. Receipt of payment of the renewal fee that names the migrant as depositor. Must be paid in *colones* on the account of the Bank of Costa Rica.
4. Valid passport in good condition.

The same important notes are made at residency renewals as with the work permit renewals. Renewal is possible from three months before expiration and every invalid month costs the migrant US\$ 3. A letter of justification has to be submitted and in case the migrant has left Costa Rica for a year or more, he needs a criminal record issued by the country where he stayed. Furthermore the costs for a residency permit renewal vary and will be determined in consultation.

All the above entry and stay requirements are extensively elaborated to show the sum of the documents, time and money that is needed to successfully acquire a visa or permit. The extensiveness of the process poses financial and administrative thresholds for Nicaraguan migrants, which influence their decisions on obtaining a permit. Most of our interviewees point out an application for any permit is too expensive or difficult and the ones that did obtain one got help from their employers or their children – in the case of a residency permit. None of the Nicaraguan men pointed out they got help, for example from an organization like CIDEHUM, to accompany and help them with the application procedure. Most of the men simply don't even start the application for the great costs and efforts and thus do not deal with these thresholds.

However, it is also interesting to look at Nicaraguan migrants their plans for the future, because these also affect the decisions on obtaining a permit or not. Six of the interviewed men are target earners and are solely in Costa Rica to earn money, achieve their goal and return to Nicaragua. In this case making money as quickly as possible outweighs the advantages of a work permit (higher wage, more security), especially because it will cost them money and only benefits them on the long(er) term. Besides, irregular workers are also beneficial for employers, because they are paid less and work more hours. Migrants want to maintain their job and employers take advantage of that. Businesses will keep hiring irregular migrants and those men will not regularize their status, for the employers' cooperation is necessary. Therefore the Costa Rican government should evaluate their changes on the current migration law, because there is a group of migrants that do not want a work or residency permit and a group of businesses in the labor sector profits from irregular labor migrants. Assuming that not all migrants want a permit, the government should look at an arrangement for circular migrants and target earners. For the men that do want a permit, adjustments to the current law must be made in order to achieve major regularizations among Nicaraguans.

Hence, this chapter has shown the aim of the law changes and its opposite outcomes. Besides it illustrated the extensiveness of all permit procedures in terms of documents, efforts, time and money. These thresholds make Nicaraguan men resistant towards regularization, although there is a group that does not want to change their status (target earners/circular migrants) and therefore do not even take the thresholds into account. The next empirical chapters elaborate on the social and labor situation of Nicaraguan migrants and their pursued futures. These chapters pay attention to the political context as well.

5. LA PURA VIDA EN COSTA RICA?

*“MY MOTHER IN LAW SAID: YOU SHOULD COME LIVE HERE, PURA VIDA,
EVERYTHING IS GOOD HERE.”*

Juan, 28

The fifth chapter shows a part of the data collected during the fieldwork in Costa Rica. It lays out the situation of the male Nicaraguan migrant living in Costa Rica and how they got to that current point in time. The interviews are mostly used to illustrate the labor and social situation of the migrants and the survey data have a descriptive and supportive function as well. When using the survey data it is explicitly indicated that those data are being discussed.

In the first paragraph several characteristics of the unit of analysis are pointed out to give more background information and the motives of male Nicaraguan migrants to come to Costa Rica are explained. They have economic, social and even political reasons to move to the neighboring country, hence factors like (the lack of) jobs, professional opportunities, family and the social network affect the decision to migrate. After this, the current situation of Nicaraguan men living in Costa Rica is set out, whereby attention is paid to the migrants their status, jobs and contingent experienced discrimination (§5.2). The last paragraph (§5.3) shows the thresholds the Nicaraguan men overcame in the past and thus how they ended up in their current situation.

5.1. MOTIVES

Before setting out the motives of Nicaraguan men for moving to Costa Rica, a brief description of the unit of analysis is made. All interviewees are between twenty and fifty five years old and have had some sort of schooling in Nicaragua. The education levels differ from primary school – learning how to read, write and calculate – to university – being academically schooled. The educational level could affect the job and wage a man can get in the host country: this becomes clear in the next chapters. Two men did not have a job before moving to Costa Rica, one simply because of a young age and the other for the inability to find a job within his professional preference. All other men had jobs in Nicaragua, for example in the agricultural sector, security and education and thus they have some degree of experience. All thirteen interviewees have a partner and eleven have biological children: the majority has one or two children, only three have three or more. The family is very important for male Nicaraguan migrants and this and the next chapter will show how the family affects motivations, the migrant’s situation and their future strategies.

As set out in the theoretical framework, the dual labor market theory suggests that there is a division of labor between the highly paid, skilled workers and the poorly paid, non skilled workers which causes international migration (Massey et al., 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009). In this case Costa Rica is the high paid, skilled sister of low paid, non skilled Nicaragua. This means that there are low paid and low skilled jobs in Costa Rica for which locals cannot motivate themselves to do and therefore there is a demand for migrants to fill these jobs (Massey et al., 1993). Our interviewees are aware of this, as one of them said: the locals do not want to do the jobs that Nicaraguans do (Javier, 29 April 2016). Nicaraguans are willing

to do these jobs, because they mostly just want to earn money. They can separate the own social status from the status of the job, because they are target earners (Piore, 1979). They want to achieve a specific goal for their family or community in Nicaragua and worry less about the status of the work they do, as long as it generates income.

Respondents indicate in the interviews that the upper middle income status of Costa Rica creates a great pull factor for them to go there. The motives that made them decide to move to Costa Rica are mainly economic ones. They said the wages in Costa Rica are higher than in Nicaragua and there are more and better (in terms of money) jobs available. Logically it follows that Nicaragua has some economic push factors as well: the wages are low(er), it is a poor country and there are less jobs and opportunities to grow professionally. Providing for the family is important for the interviewees and because the economic circumstances are better in Costa Rica, men decide to make the move in order to take better care of their family. More than two third of the interviewees indicated that they have one or a combination of the above reasons for migrating to Costa Rica.

However, the interviewees not solely have economic motives for migration, they also give social motives. Men show that the family plays a role in the decision-making process. Although one man (Ivan, 05 May 2016) felt forced to leave because of family problems, three others (Andres, Eduardo and Juan) express that they left Nicaragua upon recommendation of family. It shows the importance of the social network that (potential) migrants have and the effect of family members on the decision to migrate, which fits well to the new economics of labor migration and the network theory (Massey et al. 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009). Although the data do not show that the decision was a joint one of the family to diversify risk and maximize income, the value of the network is still pointed out. Besides, many men indicated they made the move southwards to earn money, which is in the interest of their family. The family is thus both an economic and a social motivation for migration.

Another theory that suits these data well is the cumulative causation theory, meaning that migration causes more migration (Massey et al. 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009). Two third of the interviewees have family members and/or friends that migrated as well, to both Costa Rica and other countries. Eleven of the men also explicitly talked about family back home in Nicaragua with whom they speak regularly. Evidently male Nicaraguan migrants establish a network through migration which consists of their friends and family, but migration also establishes a broader network. Our key informant Javier is a good example, he came in contact with many fellow migrants and he helped them find their way in the host society: he functioned as some sort of mentor. Besides, he stayed in contact with a couple of the Nicaraguan migrants we encountered and in this manner he broadened his own and the other migrant his network. These networks thus affect people at home in Nicaragua, other migrants in Costa Rica and even migrants at any place in the world.

In some cases interviewees were not convinced by family members to migrate, but they figured out themselves that life in Costa Rica is better. Like mentioned in the introduction, Costa Rica is a relatively wealthy and safe country in comparison to the surrounding countries in the Central American region. Four men literally say that life in Costa Rica is better than in Nicaragua, mostly because there are more jobs and opportunities to get work. Because Nicaragua is such a poor country – having a lack of jobs or professional opportunities – they

want to leave. Hence, the social and economic motives of male Nicaraguan migrants to move to Costa Rica are strongly interconnected.

One interviewee (Javier, 29 April 2016) states that a reason to go to Costa Rica was the government of the country. He says they are very open about the fact they need migrants to keep their economy functioning. This is the exact reason why in 2010 the laws surrounding migration and integration changed (Sandoval-García, 2015; Sojo-Lara, 2015). The government wanted more regularization among (Nicaraguan) migrants, in order for them to integrate better in their host society and to reduce inequalities between locals and migrants. It would be more appealing for migrants to work in the country and it would be better for the Costa Rican economy, because more migrants would come/stay. The government knows they need migrants to keep the economy running and this was a reason for Javier to go to Costa Rica. The state does not relegate migrants from the country, which makes him more secure he can stay in Costa Rica and retain his job.

5.2. AFTER CROSSING THE BORDER

Besides motives to move to Costa Rica, this research explores how male Nicaraguan migrants live in the country. The knowledge about their social and labor situation is essential, because it shows the enabling and constraining factors for living in Costa Rica and the migrants' incorporation in the country. This could determine their future decisions to go back to Nicaragua, stay in Costa Rica or migrate to another country. Assessing these factors can help the government make appropriate changes to the General Law of Migration and Alien Affairs (no. 8764). The law was established to make it easier for migrants to obtain a work permit, but had the opposite effect. Therefore this research can help create a law that will pursue the desired aim and that improves the social and labor situation of Nicaraguan migrants. For the evaluation of their current situation are jobs, work or residency permits and discrimination of importance, which are further elaborated in this paragraph.

	Interviews	Surveys
Number of respondents (N)	13	103
Respondents without documents	0	1 (1,0%)
Respondents with a passport	9	56 (54,4 %)
Respondents with a work permit	0	4 (3,9%)
Respondents with a residency permit	3	34 (33,0%)
Naturalized	0	2 (1,9%)
Missing values	1	6 (5,8%)

Table 5A. Overview of the statuses of all respondents of the research. N=116

Table 5A illustrates the status of all our respondents in Costa Rica. Three of the interviewees have a residency permit, while 33% of the respondents of the survey have residency. This permit gives them the right to reside and work in Costa Rica, so they do not need a separate work permit to be able to do labor (see table 5B). However, this residency permit has to be extended and therefore it is indispensable to have a job or a migrant will not be able to pay for his residency (Enrique, 22 May 2016). Hence having a residency permit

does not necessarily mean that life in Costa Rica is easier. One third of the interviewees indicate that Costa Rica is an expensive country and the same applies to migrants with a residency permit. However, working (and living) in Costa Rica still generates more money than working in Nicaragua (Ivan, 05 May 2016).

Document type	Allowance
Passport and tourist visa	Maximum stay: thirty days, after extension three months. Not allowed to work in Costa Rica.
Work permit and temporary residency permit (passport required)	Allowed to work in Costa Rica and live there on a temporary basis. (extension of permit possible)
Permanent residency permit (passport required)	Allowed to live in Costa Rica permanently, regardless of having a job or not. (extension of permit possible)

Table 5B. Overview of all document types and their corresponding allowances.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked if they had a work permit and striking was that none of the interviewees had one. From the survey data is retrieved that 3,9% of the men who filled in the question have a work permit, but this percentage is very low. The expectation was that more respondents would have a work permit because of the law changes in 2010 (Sandoval-García, 2015; Sojo-Lara, 2015). With a work permit – in combination with a temporary residency permit – a migrant is permitted to work in Costa Rica and to live in the country on a temporary basis (see table 5B). A permanent residence in the country is only possible with a permanent residency permit and with this particular permit a job is not required.

Nine interviewees had a passport, but no further official documents and also the survey respondents mostly had a passport (54,4%). Having a passport means that the Nicaraguan men are legally in the country on a tourist visa that lasts for a maximum of three months after which they have to return to Nicaragua (see table 5B). They are not allowed to work with a tourist visa, but remarkably all the interviewed men did have or were looking for a job. This could indicate that the seven interviewees with a passport and tourist visa that do labor in Costa Rica, are working irregular. Six of the interviewees are in the country for more than three months and point out they only have a passport, which means they are living (and possibly working) in the country irregularly. It is in accordance with Ghosh (1998) who suggest overstaying the tourist visa is one of the most frequent ways in which migrants 'irregularize'.

Eight of the interviewees point out that it is difficult to get a work permit. As elaborated in chapter 4, the application itself costs US\$ 50 and changing the tourist visa to a temporary residence is even more expensive: US\$ 200. Migrants need many legal documents for the application, which most of them do not have easy access to. Nicaraguan men even sometimes have to go back to Nicaragua to get access to the documents and this is creating extra costs in terms of time and money. Although the Costa Rican government aimed to make it easier to get a work permit (Sandoval-García et al., 2013), two respondents (Rodrigo, 05 May 2016;

Ivan, 05 May 2016) even state that it was easier to get a permit years ago; they have residency for seventeen and thirty years. Hence, it is difficult to obtain a work permit, but it is also severe living and working in Costa Rica without a regular status. As mentioned, for the costs and lack of documents it is hard to get a permit and therefore a job, which means there is little to no income and migrants face difficulties providing for their families.

Although interviewees say getting a permit is difficult, simultaneously half of them point out they do want a work permit, because it gives more security. They think having a work permit is creating more opportunities on the labor market. It seems like a vicious circle: Nicaraguan men would want a work permit, but because it is expensive and the administrative burden is high (need for many legal documents and a long process) they cannot get one. However, living irregularly in Costa Rica is not desirable either and a permit gives them more security. The situation is dead ended, because the migrants are stuck and they do not have a choice at this moment if things do not change. The evaluation of the law changes showed as well that the expenses and time consuming process are reasons why migrants do not regularize (Sojo-Lara, 2015). It is difficult to get out of the vicious circle if the costs of work permits do not go down, wages for Nicaraguans go up or the administrative burden becomes less.

While male Nicaraguan interviewees point out that it is hard to get a job without a legal permit, remarkably ten of them do have one or they at least are able to make some money. Of the Nicaraguan men who filled in the survey, 73,5% indicate that they have a job (table 5C). The majority of the men of the interviews work in construction, whereas tour guide, security guard, parking help, mechanic and cook were the other jobs of the interviewees. Most of these jobs (7) have an informal nature, because these interviewees do not have a work or residency permit and are not officially allowed to work. In the survey came to the fore that men also work in construction, are merchants, have their own business or work in security. Striking is that many of the respondents work in construction which matches the secondary, labor-intensive labor market as discussed by Piore (1979) and the typical ‘migrant labor sectors’ pointed out by other academics writing about Nicaraguans in Costa Rica (Marquette, 2006; Gindling, 2008; Sandoval-García, 2015; Sojo-Lara, 2015).

	Interviews	Surveys
Number of respondents	13	102
Respondents with job	10	75 (73,5%)
Respondents without job	3	27 (26,5%)

Table 5C. Overview of all respondents with and without job. N=115

At the time of the interview three men did not have a job, although one, Eduardo, has had jobs in the agricultural sector before in Costa Rica. Another, Adriano, got a job as a parking help as well, two weeks after the interview. That many of our respondents work in construction and the service sector and for example not in agriculture, has to do with the geographical location of the research. Since it mainly took place in the capital of the country, San José, there is less agricultural and more construction and service sector work available.

About the jobs, the interview respondents say they earn a lot more money than they would in Nicaragua. Javier for example, earned US\$ 4 per day in Nicaragua and US\$ 60 in

Costa Rica and David his monthly income increased from US\$ 150 in Nicaragua to US\$ 700 in Costa Rica. Although this increase is relative, for the living expenses in Costa Rica are also higher than in Nicaragua, the benefits are worthwhile. Interviewees indicate it is easier to find a job as a professional, because of a specific education and/or experience (David, 23 May 2016; Juan, 24 May 2016). In Nicaragua people who went to school can't find a job, there are simply not many job opportunities which is one of the most important factors for people to leave Nicaragua. In Costa Rica there is more work available, but it is important to invest in your job (Javier 29 April 2016; Ivan, 05 May 2016). For instance, it is useful to have a mobile phone so your employer can contact you easily. This costs extra money, but according to the interviewees it is worth investing in.

A more negative standpoint on working in Costa Rica is also expressed by the interviewed Nicaraguan men. They state that they are being verbally abused, exploited and discriminated against. Besides the interviewees, also the men who filled in a survey show they are discriminated against on the labor market. Of thirty-four survey respondents indicating they experience discrimination, thirty-two gave an example. 34,38% of them categorizes it as labor discrimination (fig. 5A). As David (23 May 2016) explains, Nicaraguans are cheaper for employers than locals, because most of them do not have the legal documents to work, so they are willing to carry out a job for a lower wage and under discriminatory conditions. Constant and Massey (2005) pointed this out as well: economic assimilation of natives and migrant workers will not happen and thus the wage gap persists and natives are treated favorable, because they are the majority group in the country. Besides the cheap workforce, Nicaraguans are economically more active. As Marquette (2006) and Gindling (2008) show: they work more hours and have a higher labor force participation rate than natives, which could make them vulnerable for exploitation. Koser (2010) explicates this is because many do not have the right documents to work and are willing to take any job, even the dangerous and dirty ones. An example of exploitation comes from Juan (24 May 2016) who works in construction. One day he started working at nine o'clock in the morning, but there were no building materials available. The workers waited until 5 o'clock in the afternoon, when the materials finally arrived. Their employer then said: you work now until late tonight, or you can leave. At long last they worked until half past ten in the evening, because they were threatened to be fired if they didn't work past their hours.

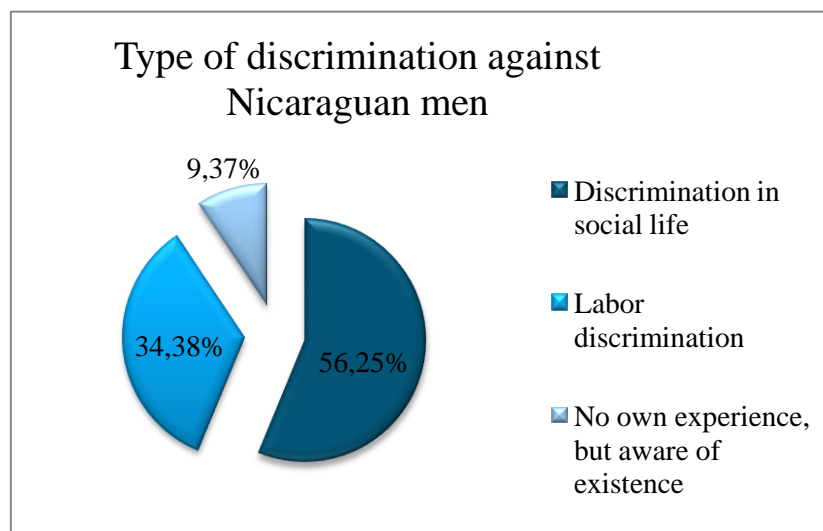


Figure 5A. Pie chart of examples of discrimination. N=32

The locals do not want to do the low paid and low status jobs as explained above, but simultaneously they say the Nicaraguans take their jobs and that wages fall because of their flow into the Costa Rican economy (Javier, 29 April 2016). This is also a form of bullying Nicaraguan men who work in Costa Rica and Javier's response is *"I do not want to take your job. I can help you, teach you how to speak German"*. Like this he shows he is a nice person and he wants to be a friend of Costa Ricans. As Gindling (2008, 19) sets out as well: *"we find little evidence that Nicaraguan immigration had a large impact on earnings, inequality or poverty in Costa Rica"*. Thus scientific research undermines the statement that Nicaraguans take the jobs and are bad for the economy (Marquette, 2006). The economy is even relying upon Nicaraguan migrants, both men and women (Sandoval-García, 2015). For example in the agriculture sector, the production and processing of fruits and coffee depends on labor migrants and also the infrastructure that made the tourist boom possible was largely constructed by Nicaraguans. Both the agriculture sector and tourism are important for the Costa Rican economy, so it is only fair to say that Nicaraguans are contributing to the economy of their host society.

Nicaraguan men not only experience labor discrimination, also in their daily life they are being judged. Three of the interviewees feel they are being discriminated against, the other men say they do not experience it themselves, but do know discrimination against Nicaraguans exists. Of the survey respondents saying they experience discrimination, 56,25% relates this to their daily social life (fig. 5A). Prejudices prevail that Nicaraguans are stupid, lazy, dirty and/or addicted to alcohol or drugs (Javier, 29 April 2016). Bonilla-Carrión and Sandoval-García (2014) show that discrimination is indeed still experienced every day by Nicaraguan migrants. "Nica" became some sort of swearword in Costa Rica and logically refers to Nicaraguans, whereas a much heard phrase is *"no sea Nica"* meaning "do not be Nica". Discrimination against Nicaraguans was also found at observations and conversations in Costa Rica. During small talk with locals, they spoke in a demeaning fashion about Nicaraguans and made jokes referring to their seemingly low IQ. It is comparable to the relationship between the Dutch and the Belgians: we think the Belgians are stupid, they say we are stingy.

Over all, the conclusion is that there are positive and negative sides for Nicaraguan men to live in Costa Rica. For many it is hard to get a residency or work permit, because of the high costs and administrative burden that comes with an application. Not having any kind of permit makes them feel less secure of being in the host society. Living in Costa Rica with just a passport and a tourist visa is hard, because officially men cannot work, but when they do, they work for low wages and often under bad circumstances. Still according to many respondents, in terms of earnings it is better to live and work in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua, because the wages are higher. Although this is a positive aspect, on the other side male Nicaraguan migrants experience discrimination or they at least know it exists which does not make living abroad easy. The respondents that do have a (residency) permit point out that it makes their life in Costa Rica considerably better and that they feel more secure about residing there than without a permit.

5.3. THRESHOLD APPROACH

This thesis wants to extend the threshold approach as developed by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen further. In the above analysis logically all thresholds distinguished by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen were passed, because describing their motives for migrating and the current labor and social situation means they already moved. However, explaining how they passed the thresholds in the past, illustrates how the approach fits this case study.

The Nicaraguan men passed the mental threshold, because they started to think of themselves as a migrant (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011, 2015). The respondents of the interviews had several motives for crossing the joint border with Costa Rica. The living conditions in their home country make them consider moving, in search for a better life. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in Central America, where 29,6% of the people lived below the national poverty line in 2014 (World Bank⁷). In the same year the life expectancy in Costa Rica was higher (79,4 against 74,8 in Nicaragua), there was less child mortality (9,9 children per 1.000 births against 22,8 in Nicaragua), which indicates a better health care, and the GDP in US\$ differed almost forty million in favor of Costa Rica. The interviewees point out that their income was too low to provide for their family and/or there are not sufficient jobs available. Two of the men also said they need a mobile phone and internet connection for the job they have, which was not at hand in Nicaragua: they were not able to invest in their job in their own country.

A social network wherein migrants function as a motivation and safety net for potential migrants is important for the passing of the mental threshold (Faist, 2000; Madsen and Van Naerssen, 2003). Those migrant family members or friends create a bigger space of difference – the space that is familiar and identifiable - wherein people feel comfortable enough to cross borders. The two third of our interviewees having friends and/or family members that migrated as well, were motivated by them to take a likewise step. Their network generated a bigger space of difference that caused the change in their mindset, from being a non-migrant to a migrant.

After the mental threshold, the Nicaraguan men passed the locational threshold in deciding to migrate to Costa Rica. As mentioned in this chapter, the availability of jobs, higher wages and better living conditions are great pull factors of Costa Rica. Besides, the closeness of the country must have played a role as well: it is easier to go back to see your family in Nicaragua and culturally the countries are similar (Van Naerssen and Van der Velde, 2015). For example the religion and language are over all similar, which could make it easier for Nicaraguans to fit in into the Costa Rican society. Also the social network is important at this second threshold. The friends and relatives living in Costa Rica recommended to some of our interviewees to follow their example and so people in the social network can influence the destination.

Lastly the male migrants determined how to come to Costa Rica and thereby passed the trajectory threshold. Although not extensively talked about in the interviews nor mentioned in this chapter, some of the interviewees did tell us about the trajectories they followed to come to Costa Rica. Some men travel back and forth between Costa Rica and Nicaragua or it is their plan to do so. Another man travelled from Mexico all the way south to Panama via the

⁷ More statistics on <http://databank.worldbank.org>

Pan-American Highway. He had no money for a visa in Panama and decided to move back to Costa Rica. Hence, the routes were/are most of the times determined in advance, but can also change during the trip such as in the latter case (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011).

In the next chapter the focus lies on the future strategies of male Nicaraguan migrants and the threshold approach addressed once again, because as a migrant you are always involved in a decision-making process. The Nicaraguan men have to make decisions on whether to extend, apply or not apply for a work/residency permit, to stay in or leave Costa Rica and in the latter case, where to go next and why? The factors that influence these decisions will be set out in chapter six and it shows which one are most important in the decision-making process.

6. SUEÑOS FUTUROS

*“I WANT TO WORK IN COSTA RICA FOR SOME TIME AND SAVE MONEY.
WHEN I GO BACK TO NICARAGUA I WANT TO BUY LAND AND BUILD A
HOUSE WHERE I CAN LIVE WITH MY FAMILY.”*

Felipe, 44

The sixth chapter focuses on the future strategies that Nicaraguan men in Costa Rica would like to pursue and why. It pays attention to the future plans to discover if migrants even want a work and residency permit and plan on staying in Costa Rica or if they have other ideas in mind. The decisions on their future are affected by several factors that play a role in their current life, as described in the previous chapter. Looking at the more political (administrative/financial) factors and whether or not these are named as decisive for the strategy, the law implementation of 2010 can be evaluated. This provides information on the potential adequacy of the law or that new adjustments must be made in order to meet the needs of migrants in the country. Also in this chapter, both the data of the interviews and the survey are used to give a more complete description.

The first paragraph sets out the different future strategies that male Nicaraguan migrants pursue and the reasons they have for that particular strategy. Both the interviews and surveys showed very varying strategies and opinions for the future. Thereafter possible relations between eight different variables and the variable 'future' are investigated using histograms (§6.2). The information of the interviews will be linked and plays a supportive and deepening role for the survey analyses. In paragraph 6.3 the threshold approach is applied to the analyzed data, pointing out that migrants are continuously in a decision making process.

6.1. THE PURSUED FUTURE

In both the interviews and the survey, the researchers asked the respondents about their preferred future residence and why. Four categories were distinguished, namely live in Costa Rica, live in Nicaragua, travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and live in another country and the opportunity was given to explain this choice. First the answers of the interview respondents are elaborated, thereafter the ones of the survey respondent and finally the explanations for the choices are described further.

Eight of the interviewees would like to go back to Nicaragua sooner or later, in one way or another (see fig. 6A). Two of them explicitly said they want to leave Costa Rica to go to the United States and Spain or Russia to earn more money, whereafter they want to return to Nicaragua. Five men indicated they want to travel back and forth between Costa Rica to work and Nicaragua to see their families, until they have earned enough money to reside in Nicaragua. This oscillating between the countries is thus a form of coping with the separation from their family as argued by Constant and Zimmerman (2011). It indicates the circular aspect of the trajectories these migrants want to pursue. The men wanting to travel back and forth are typical ‘target earners’: they want to earn money in Costa Rica until they saved enough to live in Nicaragua (De Haas and Fokkema, 2011).

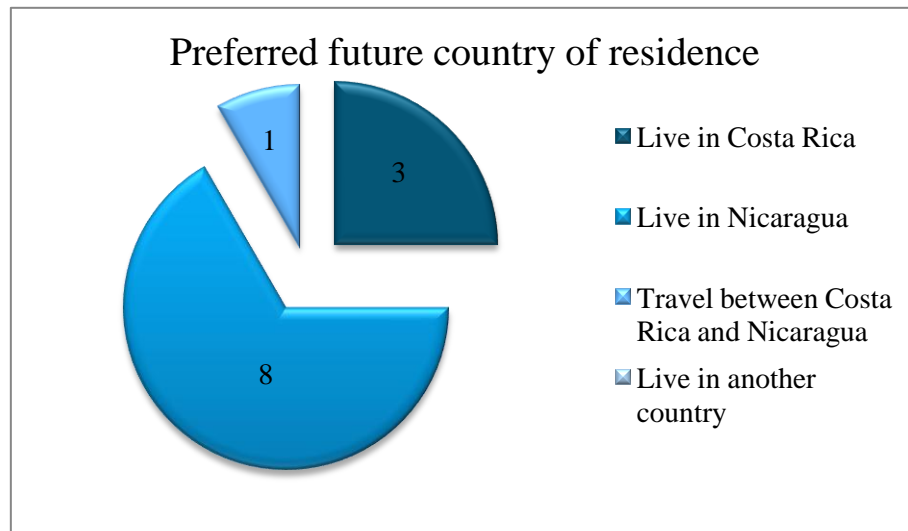


Figure 6A. Pie chart of future strategies of interview respondents. N (number of respondents) = 12

Only one interviewee answered he wants to travel between both countries: *“In Nicaragua I see many sad faces of the people that didn’t succeed, who are in debt. That is why I want to keep working in Costa Rica.”* (Javier, 29 April 2016). Three of the men said they want to stay in Costa Rica (fig. 6A). One of the interviewed men did not talk about his future strategy: although he built his life in Costa Rica and probably wants to stay there, the decision was made to leave him out of the analysis.

The same question was asked in the survey and one hundred men answered it: the outcome is visible in figure 6B. Nicaraguan men answered a little bit more often that they wanted to live in Nicaragua than to live in Costa Rica. Slightly more than a quarter of the respondents also answered they want to travel between both countries and only a small proportion wants to live in another country than Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

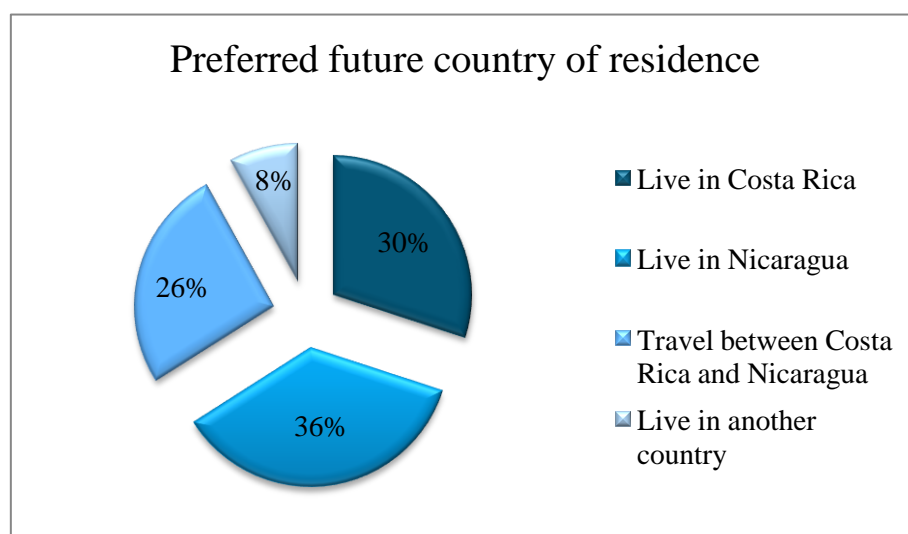


Figure 6B. Pie chart of future strategies of survey respondents. N=100

Eighty-two men took the possibility to elaborate their choice of future residence in the open question. The reasons the respondents of the survey give for their future plans are set out in relation to the future strategies and how many times it is mentioned (fig. 6C). All explanations of the respondents were put in the best suitable category and thus only one reason per person is registered. The family is by far the greatest influence on the future plans of the Nicaraguan men that joined the research. It was mostly written down by the respondents wanting to return to Nicaragua or the ones wanting to travel between the countries. An often read explanation is ‘because my family lives there/here’ and this shows that the space of difference – as part of the mental border threshold (Van der Velde and Van Naersen, 2011) – is very much defined by family. In most cases it is the family they want to return to or visit regularly, because that is where they are comfortable. Sometimes, migrants dream about going back to Nicaragua for their families, even if they built a life in Costa Rica and are there already for a long time. The reason described as ‘Nicaragua is my country’ is mainly mentioned by the men wanting to return to their homeland. Together these two reasons are referred to most by the respondents that want to live in Nicaragua.

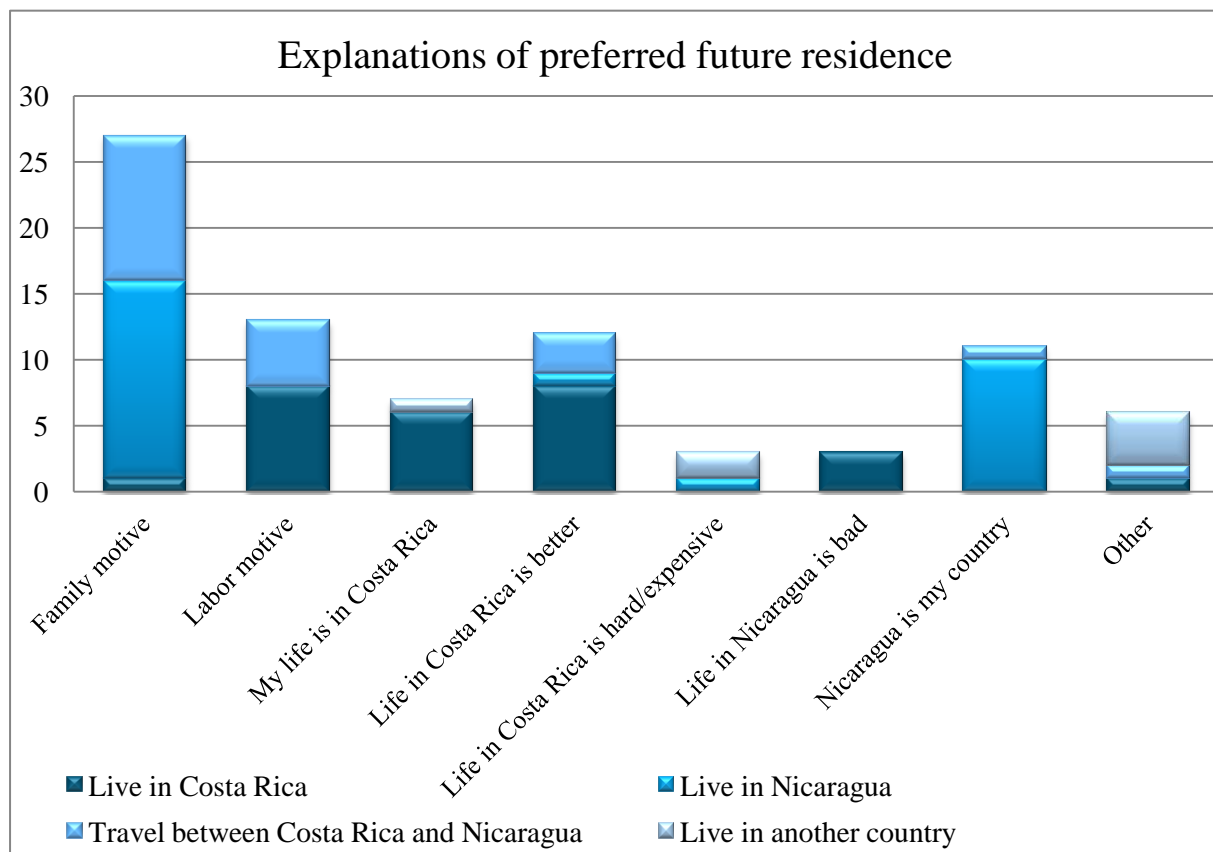


Figure 6C. Histogram of the explanations on the choice of future residence of survey respondents. N=82.

The labor motive is named second most after the family motive and is mentioned by the respondents that want to remain in Costa Rica and the ones wishing to travel back and forth. As the introduction and theoretical framework also showed, there are more jobs and higher wages in Costa Rica which form the greatest reason to stay in or come back to Costa Rica. The respondents wanting to travel between countries are typically searching for labor at any place and in any sector. For them it is convenient to work in temporary or circular positions:

doing construction jobs or working during harvest seasons (Castles and Miller, 2009). After the work is done, they can decide to return to Nicaragua or move on to another job and like this they can get the most out of their economic and social situation (Constant and Zimmerman, 2011). The motives following are ‘life in Costa Rica is better’ and ‘my life is in Costa Rica’, both mainly remarked by the respondents that prefer to stay in Costa Rica. Respondents qualify the answer that life is better in terms of living conditions and economic opportunities. These latter two reasons constitute – together with the labor motive – the main reasons why Nicaraguan men want to live in Costa Rica.

Sporadically mentioned are ‘life in Costa Rica is hard/expensive’, ‘life in Nicaragua is bad’ and ‘other’. The first is mentioned by the men that want to return to their country of origin or that prefer to move to another country because they experience life in Costa Rica as difficult. This can be related to their legal status or obtaining permits, because respondents point out that for them it is too expensive and there is too much administrative burden to get one. This has also been pictured in chapter 4: for a work permit migrants need at least fourteen documents – both personal and from their employer – that all have to be certified or authenticated in one way or another. Besides they have to apply for a temporary residency permit as well. Although the migrants with an irregular status and without the wish to regularize do not have the costs and burden, they do endure difficulties, for example with finding a (well paid) job or get medical care. Respondents wishing to remain in Costa Rica claim life in Nicaragua is bad, for there are little jobs and opportunities to develop professionally, the country is poor or the government is bad. As several interviewees explicated: the wages in Nicaragua are much lower than in Costa Rica (Javier, Ivan, Enrique, David, Eduardo, Juan). The men of the survey that prefer to live in another country, point out they have another reason to leave: they want to get to know different countries and cultures.

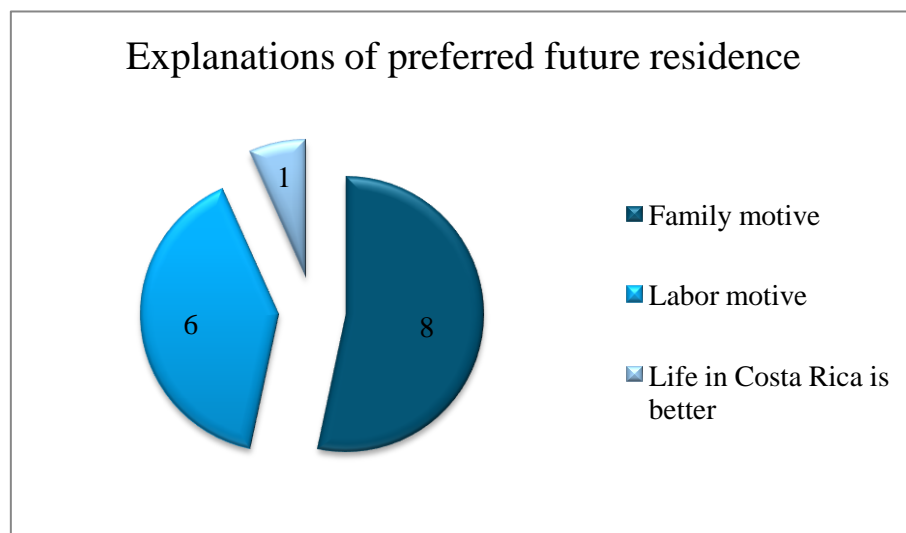


Figure 6D. Pie chart of the explanations on the choice of future residence of interview respondent. N=12

The interview respondents explain their choices for the preferred future residence similarly as the survey respondents. Eight of the twelve interviewees explicitly say they want to be in Costa Rica or Nicaragua because of their family: *“I want to live in the country where my family lives”* (Rodrigo, 05 May 2016). Six of them also give a labor motive (in combination with the family motive) and five of those six men all have the same plan: to work

and save money in Costa Rica and then return to Nicaragua. For example as Oscar (05 May 2016) argues: “ [...] *first I want to work in Costa Rica to earn money. Thereafter I want to go back, because it is my country and my family lives there*”. Other men, such as Felipe (see quote on top of the chapter) and David (23 May 2016), emphasize they have a more concrete plan: “*In the future I would like to go back to Nicaragua. My plan is to work in Costa Rica for five years, save money and then start a restaurant in Nicaragua. That is my dream and I want it to come true*”. These interviewees with and without a concrete plan could be called target earners (Piore, 1979; De Haas and Fokkema, 2011) The interviews show that the economic and social factors are closely interconnected in the lives of Nicaraguan men, because many come to Costa Rica to earn money and are guided by their family for the choice of their preferred future residence. One interviewee (Adriano, 24 May 2016) says that the life in Costa Rica is better, implying it is easier to find a job. This economic factor is also linked to a social factor: he wants to stay in the country for the better economic circumstances, but wants his family to come live with him.

6.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING FUTURE STRATEGIES

For answering the last sub question, analyses of eight variables of the survey are made to find out to what extent the social, economic and political factors – discussed in the previous chapters – influence the decisions of Nicaraguan men on their future country of residence. Every variable is thus linked to the variable ‘future’ and the results are presented in histograms. This gives a clear overview of the groups with different future strategies and their answers on the questions of the survey. In four cases the relationship between variables is even significant after performing a Chi Square Test in SPSS with $p = 10\% = 0,1$ (observed significance level). If p is less than 10% or 0,1, it means these factors have a great effect on the decision-making process of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica. When a relation is significant, it is pointed out in the relevant section. Furthermore, the qualitative data of the interviews will support, nuance and deepen the information set out in the histograms. In the end there is the possibility to point out which factors influence the future strategies of Nicaraguan men mostly and which do not affect their plans so much. In succession these variables are discussed: residency of the partner and/or children, current work, sufficient wage, total time in Costa Rica, conditions, discrimination, recommendation and government improvements.

Family

Because the respondents’ family turns out to give direction to Nicaraguan men their decisions for the future, further attention is paid to the residency of the partner and/or children. Thirty-seven survey respondents have their family in Nicaragua, thirty-five men live with their partner and/or children in Costa Rica and eight filled in they have their nuclear family in both countries (signifying the family is separated and spread between Costa Rica and Nicaragua). Only one man does not have his partner and/or children in one of the two countries. In the interviews was found respondents would like to reside with their family, meaning they have to come to Costa Rica or the migrant returns to Nicaragua. The assumption is made that the

survey respondents would like to reside in the same country as their family as well: the results are set out in figure 6E.

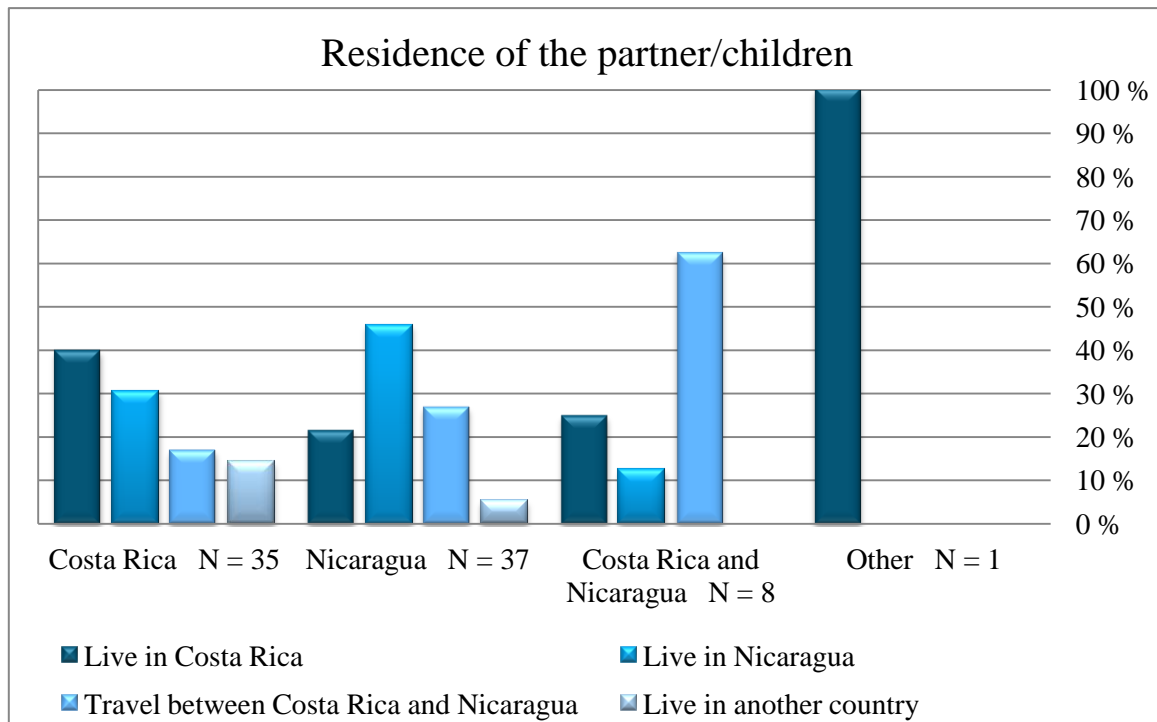


Figure 6E. Histogram of survey variables residency of the partner/children and future. N=81

Of the men having their family with them in Costa Rica, the majority (40%) wants to stay in that country. 30,6% of these respondents indicate they want to return to Nicaragua. Most of the men who have their family in Nicaragua would prefer to go back there, namely 45,9%. These outcomes indicate that migrants make decisions based on their social networks of which family members are part as well (Massey et al, 1993). The respondents with a separated family – for example a wife in Costa Rica and children in Nicaragua – mostly choose to shift between both countries (62,5%). It confirms the statement of Constant and Zimmerman (2011) that migrants choose to do temporary and circular jobs, so they can alternate working with returning to their family in Nicaragua. This also comes up in the interviews: *“my future is in Costa Rica to work, but I will travel back to Nicaragua for my family”* (Javier, 29 April 2016). Besides as written previously, five interviewees want to work and earn money in Costa Rica and so they see this more as a temporary situation they are in. They are the target earners, as Piore (1979) and De Haas and Fokkema (2011) point out in their work on migration. Nevertheless is family thus a great factor, because many Nicaraguan men migrated for their family, to be able to maintain them and live together in the future in better living conditions.

It is clear to see in figure 6E that the country where the partner and children live is most of the time the preferred country of future residence for male Nicaraguan migrants. The social network and most importantly the family members in the social network of a migrant play an essential role: not only in their decision to leave their country of origin, but also in the decision to return to the home country or remain in the destination country. It shows that the micro level – people, communities – influences future plans of Nicaraguan men in accordance

with NELM and the network theory that also impute a role for a larger unit (Castles and Miller, 2009). Hence the assumption is correct for this particular case study. After performing a Chi Square Test it was found that this relationship is significant: $0,098 < 0,1$ (p). The residency of the family is one of the most important factors for the choice where to live in the future. The geographical location is in most cases the place where the respondents want to live. However, the note has to be made that the unit of analysis is too small to generalize this result to the entire Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica.

Although many interviewees indicate they want to live with their family in the future, most of them say they want to live with their family **in Nicaragua**. They strongly feel that Nicaragua is their country and one day they would like to live there with their family, regardless of the family's current country of residence. This explains that also 30,6% of the men with a family in Costa Rica want to return to Nicaragua.

Labor

Besides the family motive, labor plays an important role in the decision-making of Nicaraguan men (see fig. 6C). Therefore two histograms of the variables job/future and sufficient wage/future are made. This gives an insight in the future strategies of men with and without a job differ and if the sufficiency of wages affects their decisions as well.

Firstly hundred and two men answered the question if they currently have a job: 73,5% of them said yes and 26,5% answered no. The hypothesis is that men with a job would rather stay in Costa Rica, because they earn money and have some sense of certainty. Besides the presumption is that men without a job would want to go back, because they are not doing labor and earning money. Interviewees pointed out that is a difficult situation and they would rather go back to Nicaragua, the country they know and where they have their family. In figure 6F an overview is presented: what percentage of the men with and without a job wants to live where.

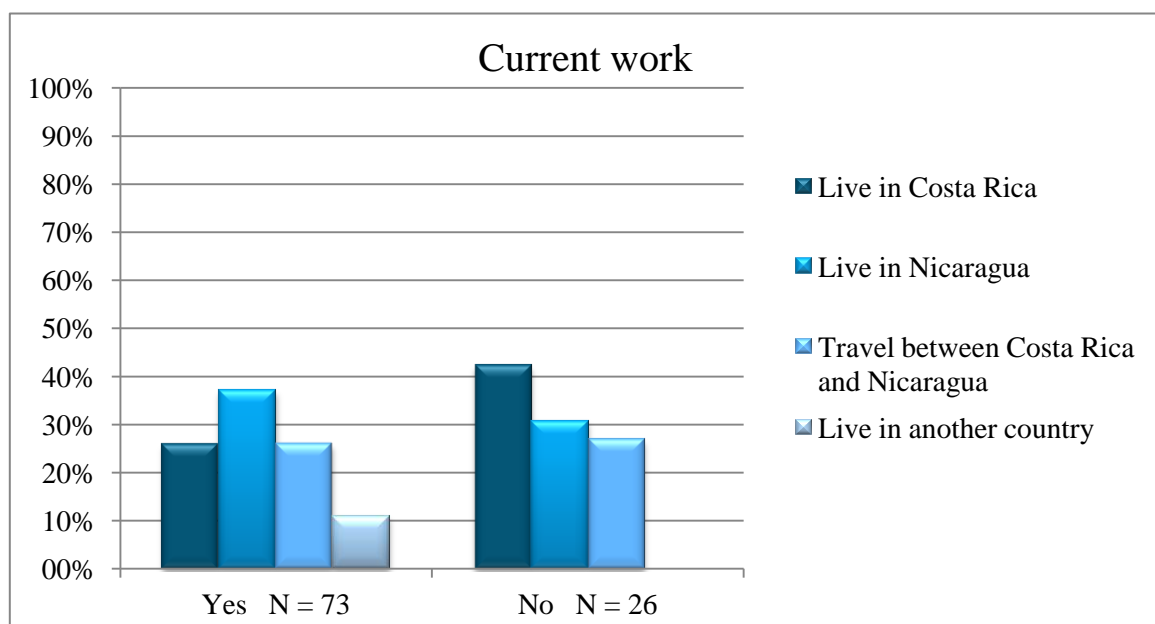


Figure 6F. Histogram of survey variables current work and future. N=99

The histogram shows that of the men with a job the biggest share wants to go back to Nicaragua (37%), whereas most of the unemployed men say they want to live in Costa Rica (42,3%). These outcomes are the exact opposite of the hypothesis. The first sub-group, Nicaraguan men with a job preferring to return to Nicaragua, want to because of their family and the love for their country. This is in accordance with information from the interviews. Homesickness was the reason Adriano (24 May 2016), one of the interview respondents, returned to Nicaragua: he missed his family and did not earn enough money. He could have experienced the inability to move upwards from the secondary to the primary labor sector (Constant and Massey, 2005). Migrants cannot break out of the stigmatized labor sectors with ‘migrant jobs’, such as construction and agriculture (Böhning, 1972; Piore, 1979) and could therefore decide to develop themselves professionally in Nicaragua. Other interviewees indicate they want to live in the country where they were born, because they feel they belong there. Making the return move could be easier, because they go back to their space of difference in which they are at ease (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). The survey respondents could have similar explanations for their choice as the interviewees.

Looking at the other group – unemployed Nicaraguan men wanting to stay in Costa Rica in the future – mostly argue that life in Costa Rica is better and there are better economic circumstances. They may not have experienced a low, disappointing wage, insecurity or labor exploitation yet. Namely the majority of the interviewees wants to return to Nicaragua whereby it does not matter if they have a job or not at the moment. As repeatedly noted, the respondents without a work or residency permit are in Costa Rica to make money and often their intention is not to stay and live permanently in the country: they are circular migrants and/or target earners. One older interviewee with a job and residency permit even said he wanted to go back to Nicaragua, because he wants to live in the country where the rest of his family lives (Rodrigo, 05 May 2016). It creates the romantic idea that living in the country where you were born is the ultimate goal, even for long term migrants. Once more this indicates that the original ‘space of difference’ in which someone grew up, its place and the people, creates a sense of belonging and is the place where Nicaraguans want to return to.

In the survey was also asked if the income of the respondents is sufficient to support their family and life style. The hypothesis is that an insufficient wage could be a reason for Nicaraguan men to return to Nicaragua to be with family and friends. The other way around a sufficient wage can be a motive to stay in Costa Rica. Seventy eight respondents filled in this question and 62,5% answered that their income was sufficient, 37,5% gave a negative response. Figure 6G sets out the analysis of the variables sufficient wage and future.

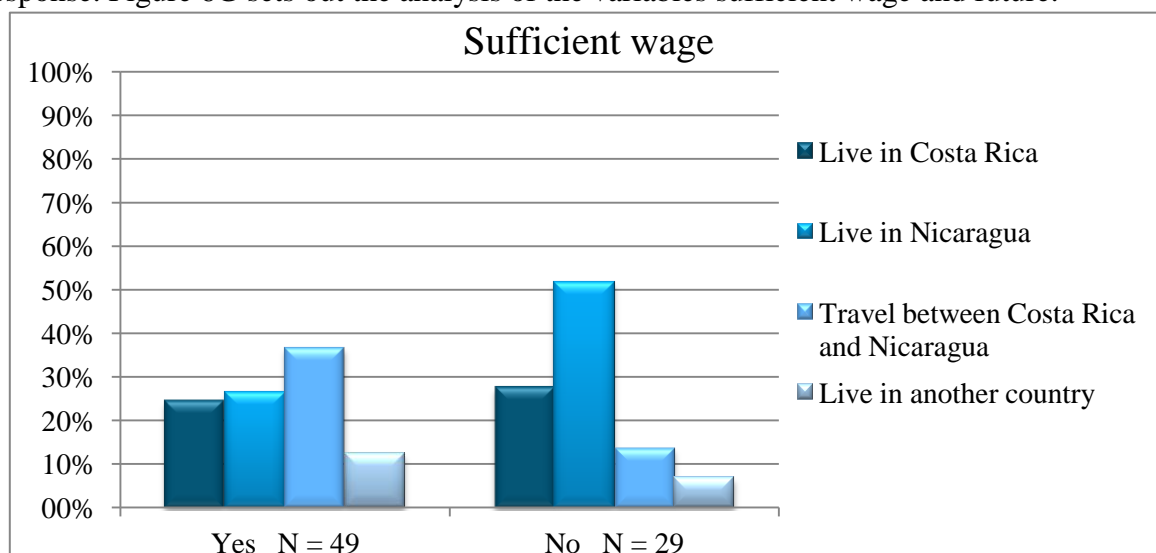


Figure 6G. Histogram of survey variables sufficient and future. N=78

Most of the Nicaraguan men with a sufficient wage would like to travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua (36,7%). Many of them say they want this, because of their family and partly because of labor. This indicates the respondents earn enough in Costa Rica and want to keep this income, but at the same time want to visit their friends and family. Being a circular migrant and travel back and forth retains both (GCIM, 2005). Javier (29 April 2016) is a good example of such a migrant. As a tour guide he takes group trips and earns money, but he can also decide to go back to see his family after he did a tour. As many interviewees point out, the sufficiency of the wage also depends on the worked hours: the more hours, the more money, which logically supports the family better (Enrique, 22 May 2016; Juan, 24 May 2016). Thus at the time of the survey the wage could have been sufficient, but a month later it could not have been enough. This varying, unstable income can be the reason 26,5% of the men with a sufficient wage wants to live in Nicaragua, because they look for a more stable economic situation. Besides can family in Nicaragua be a great supportive factor: in financial and emotional sense, which can alleviate a lower wage in the home society.

The majority of the men without a sufficient wage wants to go back to Nicaragua, namely 51,7%. This can be explained with similar reasons as the previous variable: the migrants argue they want to go back for their family and because it is their fatherland. They have experienced that the move was not successful in financial terms and thus does not outweigh being separated from family and friends (Constant and Massey, 2005; Constant and Zimmerman, 2011). One interviewee also argued his wage was not sufficient to sustain his livelihood, but he wants to keep looking for a better job (Felipe, 21 May 2016). His aim is to earn enough money to buy land and build a house in Nicaragua. Hence, he wants to return to his home country, but first has a goal to achieve, which makes him a typical target earner. The same could count for survey respondents indicating their wage is insufficient and wanting to return to Nicaragua. This return move is one that will be made in the interest of the family, often after a target has been reached.

The Chi Square Test showed that the relation between the sufficiency of the wage and the preferred future residency is a significant one: $0,057 < 0,1$ (p). Hence, it is a factor that Nicaraguan migrants seriously consider when deciding where to live in the future. The migrants without a sufficient wage want to return to Nicaragua because it does not outweigh being separated from family and friends.

Total time in Costa Rica

Another investigated variable that could affect the decision-making process is the total time someone lives in Costa Rica. Sixty nine men filled in the total time they spent in Costa Rica and figure 6H pictures that the longer respondents live in Costa Rica, the greater the percentage for 'live in Costa Rica' gets in comparison to the other categories for the variable 'future'. The same counts the other way around: the shorter a respondent has been in Costa Rica, the more he wants to live in Nicaragua. Explanations are that the men living in Costa Rica for thirty years or more have build a life, family and obtained a residency permit in that country (one survey respondent has a work permit). They created a space of difference in Costa Rica in which they feel comfortable and that they do not want to leave (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). However, one interviewee who is in Costa Rica for less than six months prefers to reside there in the future, because he believes life there will be more

prosperous than in Nicaragua for his family. This is also a motive survey respondents give: life in Nicaragua is bad, the country is poor and there are not many chances on a better life.

Of the ones that only left Nicaragua in the last six months, 70% argues they want to return to Nicaragua in the future. Often they have their family back home, are still very much connected to their home country and less familiarized with their host society. All respondents of this group have only a passport, except one who has a work permit. It shows they are not (yet) integrated in their host society and Costa Rica is for them the space of **indifference** that is marked by insecurity and unease. However, one interview respondent lives in Costa Rica for thirty years and he wants to go back to Nicaragua as well: *“I want to live in the country where my family lives”* (Rodrigo, 5 May 2016). This creates the romantic idea of residing in the native country at last.

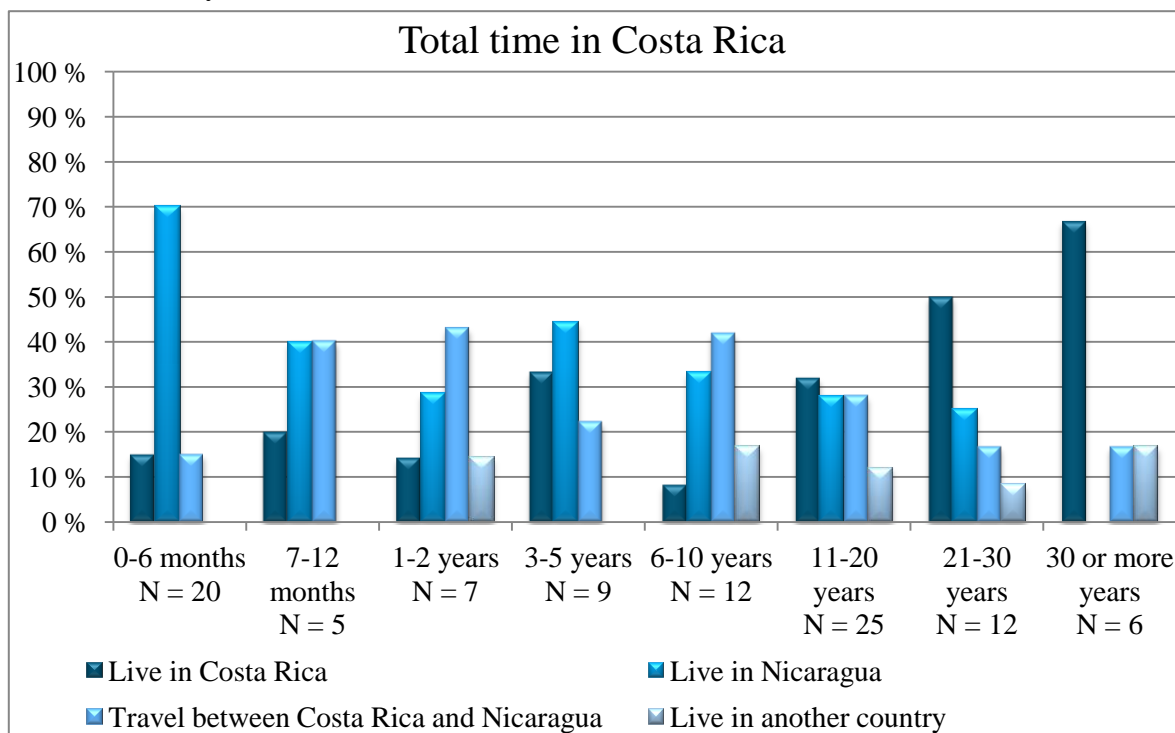


Figure 6H. Histogram of survey variables timeCR and future. N=96

Conditions

The total time in Costa Rica and the conditions in which respondents are in Costa Rica are interconnected. As aforementioned, the longer someone is in Costa Rica, the more often this person has a work or residency permit. This does not necessarily mean the people without a permit cannot stay for long in Costa Rica. In our survey group, slightly more than three third of the respondents with only a passport, is living in the country for five years or more. If they keep coming back that means in all probability that they are working and this is prohibited by law. Ghosh (1998) argued, they might have entered the country regularly with a visa, but are working irregularly without a permit. However, as interviewees point out it is difficult to stay and work in a country without an official permit. A permit creates more opportunities on a job and more security for the family (Antonio, 23 May 2016; Adriano, 24 May 2016). Hence, the status of male Nicaraguan respondents (thus, only a passport and tourist visa, work permit, residency permit, nationalized and no documents) is important to analyze as well, to see if this

has an effect on their future plans. The presumption is that men with a residency permit who can live and work regularly in Costa Rica would want to stay in that country for the better life quality, income and thus security they have there. A note has to be made that the category of residency permit means **permanent** residency and the work permit category includes the work permit and its corresponding **temporary** residency. Figure 6I shows the results of the analysis.

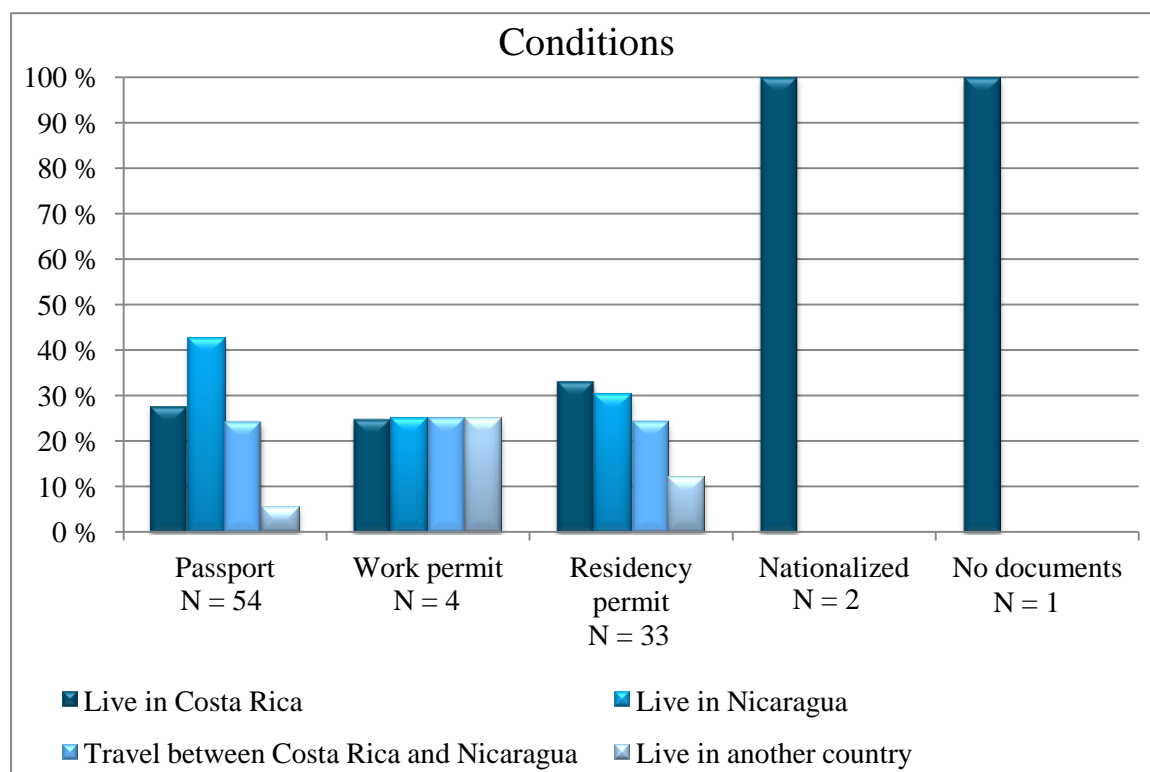


Figure 6I. Histogram of survey variables conditions and future. N= 94

Of the men with a residency permit that ticked the box, most (33,3%) want to live in Costa Rica. The two respondents that are nationalized logically want to stay in Costa Rica as well, since they are officially Costa Rican residents. This shows that the respondents with legal permission to stay in the country also mainly choose to reside there. However, the numbers are very close together, 30,4% wants to live in Nicaragua and 24,2% want to travel back and forth. The percentages indicate that a work or residency permit does not necessarily mean that the security and better income in Costa Rica outweighs the separation from family and friends in Nicaragua and the difficulty of living in a foreign country. This also comes to the fore in the interviews: every three or four years Ivan (5 May 2016), an interviewee with a residency permit, goes back to Nicaragua to see his family. It is a way to cope with the separation and difficulties abroad (Constant and Zimmerman, 2011) and for some these are also the reasons they want to return to their home country permanently. One interviewee is travelling between Nicaragua and Costa Rica – occasionally to other countries like Panama – for seventeen years already (Eduardo, 24 May 2016). He does this more out of practical point of view, because he does not want to overstay his visa but he does want to work in Costa Rica. His entries in the country are regular, but his labor activities are not.

The majority of the respondents that are staying in Costa Rica on a passport and tourist visa indicate they want to live in Nicaragua, namely 42,6%. All respondents, both of the survey and interviews, give the reasons that they want to be with their family and that it is their country. The interviewees argue as well that it is hard to live a good life in Costa Rica without some sort of permit: it is more difficult to get a job and claim their rights. This confirms the hypothesis that the respondents with only a passport are more vulnerable in Costa Rica, because they do not have an official permit and may not want one for the high costs and the administrative part. Logically follows that in all probability they rather go back to Nicaragua, because their status is secure there. Another explanation is that migrants work irregularly in Costa Rica to earn some extra/more money and do not intend to stay in the country much longer. Irregular labor could possibly entail discrimination, an inability to work oneself up or gaining experience, leading to the decision to leave Costa Rica. Again this accords to the target earner that moves abroad in order to work and save money, after which he returns home (De Haas and Fokkema, 2011). This is supported by the interviewees: five of them intent to work until they have reached their (monetary) goal, such as David (23 May 2016) who is working for money to open a restaurant in Nicaragua.

However, there are exceptions as well: 27,8% of the respondents without a permit wants to stay in Costa Rica. They argue life in Costa Rica is better (in social and economic terms) and Nicaragua is a poor country with bad living circumstances. One interviewee agrees: life quality is better than in Nicaragua and he wants his family to come live with him (Adriano, 24 May 2016). It appears they do not feel insecure enough about their status and/or jobs to leave the country. Life in Costa Rica might be difficult, but it is better than in Nicaragua.

Discrimination

Furthermore is discrimination a factor that could influence the decision-making of Nicaraguan men in Costa Rica on where to live. This factor is linked to 'life in Costa Rica is hard/expensive', a reason that men give for their country of choice (see paragraph 6.1). We asked if respondents have had negative experiences in their daily life or at work in Costa Rica. Interviewees point out they are being discriminated against sometimes, which does not make them feel at ease and like they belong in Costa Rica. The hypothesis is that when migrants experience discrimination, they are more likely to move out of Costa Rica. In figure 6J the answers of one hundred men that filled in the question are set out.

Most of the respondents that do experience discrimination, want to live in Nicaragua (42,4%). Becker (1957) argued sixty years ago that labor discrimination arises when minorities are treated less favorable than the majority group. It creates two groups of employers and corresponding labor sectors, that is in line with the segmented labor market theory. Migrants do the jobs locals do not want to do, namely the low status and low paying ones (Piore, 1979; Massey et al, 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009). They are working in the secondary, labor intensive sector and the locals work their way up into the primary, capital intensive labor sector. This is also what happens with Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. They are concentrated in particular labor sectors like construction, agriculture and domestic service. Our survey respondents give examples of labor discrimination like not getting a job for being Nicaraguan, not being paid enough and not getting a vacation. Also in daily life Nicaraguans

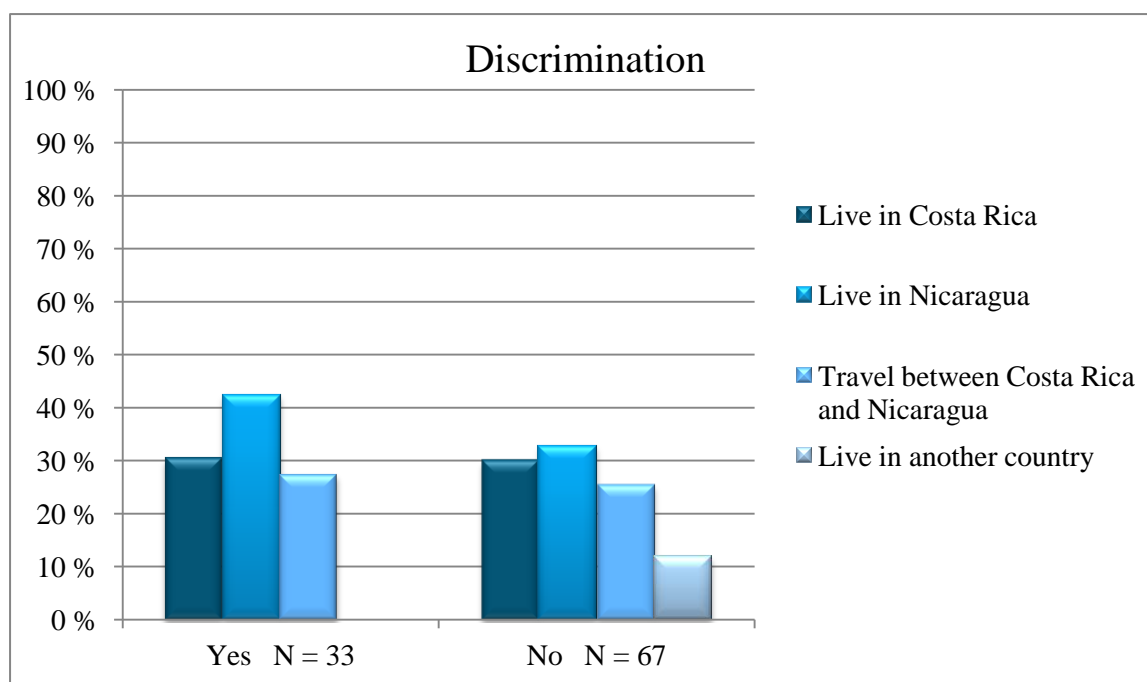


Figure 6J. Histogram of survey variables discrimination and future. N=100

are being discriminated against: people talk bad about them, because of their skin color or the way they speak and one respondent was even denied a medical treatment for being Nicaraguan. This triggers them to move back to Nicaragua, because there they are a native and discrimination will occur less likely.

Of this group of Nicaraguan men experiencing discrimination thirteen have a residency permit, slightly more than one third, and nineteen have a passport only, a little bit less than two third. Hence, migrants without a permit feel discriminated against more often than the ones with a permit, although they do have negative experiences as well. The answers of interviewees partly support this outcome: three men experience discrimination in their daily life and at their job. People shout at them for being Nicaraguan (Eduardo, 24 May 2016) and prejudices exist, for instance that they are lazy, stupid, dirty, criminals, drug and alcohol addicts (Javier, 29 April 2016). None of these men have a permit, what could also be a reason they are not accepted in the host society.

The Nicaraguan migrants that did not have negative experiences in Costa Rica give more divided answers: 29,9% wants to live in Costa Rica and 32,8% in Nicaragua. Besides 25,4% wants to travel between the two countries, thus the men that do not experience discrimination are more scattered between the categories. Men without a permit still rather go back to Nicaragua than stay in Costa Rica, while migrants with a residency permit prefer to stay in Costa Rica or travel back and forth between both countries. Three interview respondents say they do not experience it themselves, but they know it exists. This could still make them feel uncomfortable in the country: two of the men prefer to return to Nicaragua, both having only a passport. It shows that migrants who experience discrimination are more triggered to leave, but the other way around – no discrimination gives reason to stay in Costa Rica – does not count, especially for the men with only a passport.

The Chi Square Test however showed that discrimination significantly affects the preferred future residence of Nicaraguan migrants, $0,087 < 0,1$ (p). The men who experience

discrimination prefer going back to Nicaragua, while the ones not experiencing it are more divided on their future residence.

Recommendation

The second to last analyzed variable is recommendation. By asking our respondents if they would recommend it to other Nicaraguans to come to Costa Rica, insights are gained on their image of the country and if this image affects their future strategies. Three interviewees would not recommend to others to make the move, because living in Costa Rica is expensive, difficult and even dangerous because many migrants find themselves sleeping on the streets. Their image of Costa Rica is quite negative and these three men all want to return to Nicaragua. Therefore the hypothesis is that survey respondents that negatively recommend Costa Rica, would prefer to go back to Nicaragua and the ones that positively answered the question would want to stay in Costa Rica. In figure 6K the outcomes of the analysis are pictured.

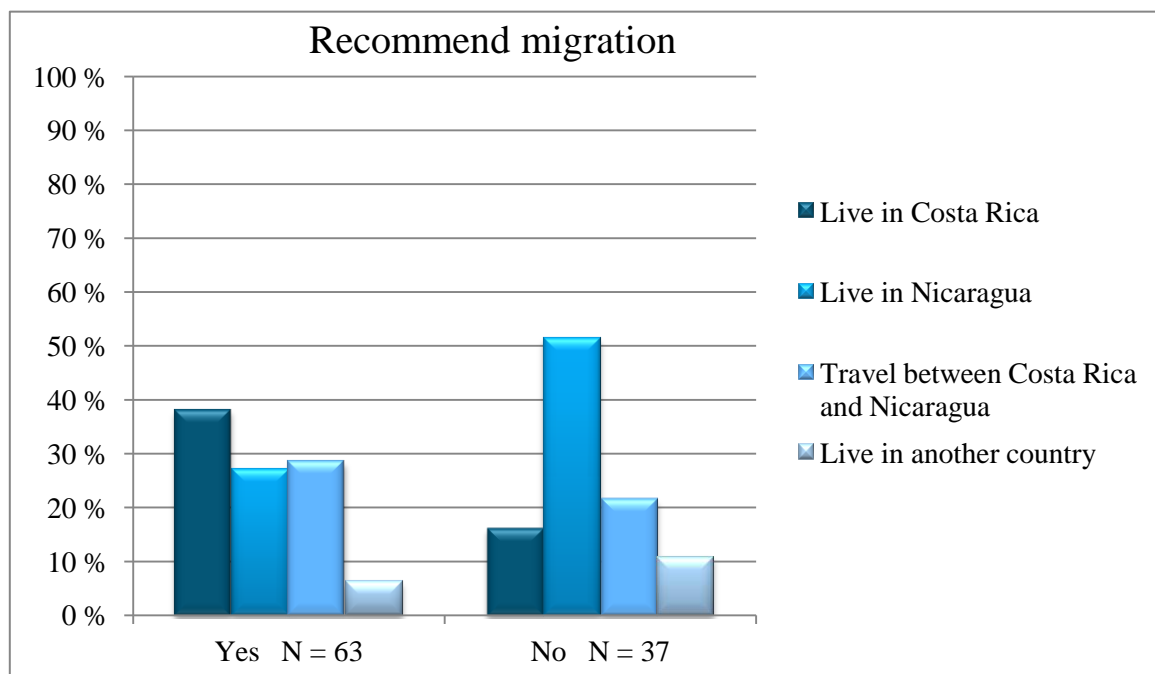


Figure 6K. Histogram of survey variables recommendation and future. N=103

62,1% of the respondents answered they would recommend to other Nicaraguans to come to Costa Rica, whereas 37,9% answered they would not. Most of the people positively recommending Costa Rica, want to stay in that country (38,1%), but it is not a great majority. If one recommends to another to go to Costa Rica, it is thought they have a positive opinion on the country. The availability of jobs and the better life quality contribute mostly to this positive image. These are reasons for the migrants themselves to stay in Costa Rica in the future. Although they would recommend migration, 28,6% wants to travel between home and host country and 27% desires to return to Nicaragua. They argue they want this mostly because of their family and love for the home country, which is not depending on the host country they are in. This is in accordance with the statements of the only interviewee that recommends migration. He does so because of the better living conditions, but in the future he

wants to live in Nicaragua with his family. Hence living with family outweighs the better life in Costa Rica.

The majority of the respondents not recommending others to go to Costa Rica wants to live in Nicaragua: 51,4%. They point out that life in Costa Rica is hard, because of the high costs and discrimination of migrants. A negative image of the country is sketched by these migrants and it follows that they would prefer to leave or not be there permanently (21,6% wants to travel between the countries). Also as mentioned above, three interviewees would not recommend to migrate, because living in Costa Rica is expensive, difficult and at times even dangerous. In this case the hypothesis that respondents who negatively recommend Costa Rica would prefer to go back to Nicaragua, is correct. Furthermore, it strikes that the sub group of respondents with only a passport answered almost twice as often yes as they did no. They mainly explain their choice by pointing out there is more employment, more safety and better health care. The migrants that have a permit and are more secure of their status – unlike the group without a permit – answer almost fifty-fifty, slightly in favor of a positive recommendation. This is remarkable, because it is expected that licensees live in the host country for a long time, meaning the economic and social circumstances must be good and thus a positive recommendation should be made. However, they argue as well that life in Costa Rica is difficult, there is a lot of discrimination and work/residency permits are difficult to obtain.

Three interviewees gave a more nuanced answer, stating that they would and would not recommend migration at the same time. They all had a different condition which they thought potential migrants should meet when moving to Costa Rica. First Enrique (22 May 2016) explains he would only recommend to migrate if you have work in Costa Rica and if not, you do not have money, a house or food, which is really difficult. Second Adriano (24 May 2016) says that he would recommend to go if you have family members in Costa Rica, otherwise life is very hard. Third David (23 May 2016) points out that professionals/specialists have more job opportunities in Costa Rica. If you're not, he advises to stay in Nicaragua, because living in Costa Rica without money means sleeping on the streets and that is not a good life.

After performing the Chi Square Test in SPSS it turns out that the non recommendation of the survey respondents is substantial for their future plans. Respondents that do not recommend to potential Nicaraguan migrants to come to Costa Rica in most cases want to return to Nicaragua themselves. This is closely interconnected to the negative image they have of Costa Rica.

Government

The last examined variable is government improvements, meaning respondents were asked if they thought the governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua could do something (different) to improve the situation of migrants in Costa Rica. Ten of the twelve interviewees had negative remarks on the government and seven of them wanted to return to Nicaragua. Hence, the hypothesis is that the survey respondents who think the governments cannot improve the situation in the future would want to go back to Nicaragua, because there the costs are lower, they are not discriminated against and they can reside with their family. In figure 6L the outcomes of the analysis are depicted.

61,5% of the respondents think the governments cannot do something to improve the situation for migrants in Costa Rica and want to return to Nicaragua. They indicate that the political relation between both countries is bad, do not have faith in either president and thus do not believe it will improve quickly. These results are in accordance with the interview outcomes: ten men speak negatively about the governments and seven want to go back to Nicaragua. They believe the governments can do a lot more or different, because now there is a lot of bureaucracy and corruption. Besides, two men point out as well that the relationship between Costa Rica and Nicaragua is bad. The other three interviewees want to stay in Costa Rica, two because they are residents and built a life and family in the country (Ivan, 05 May 2016; Enrique, 22 May 2016). The other man wants to stay in Costa Rica despite the negative image, because he sees life there as more prosperous than in Nicaragua (Adriano, 24 May 2016).

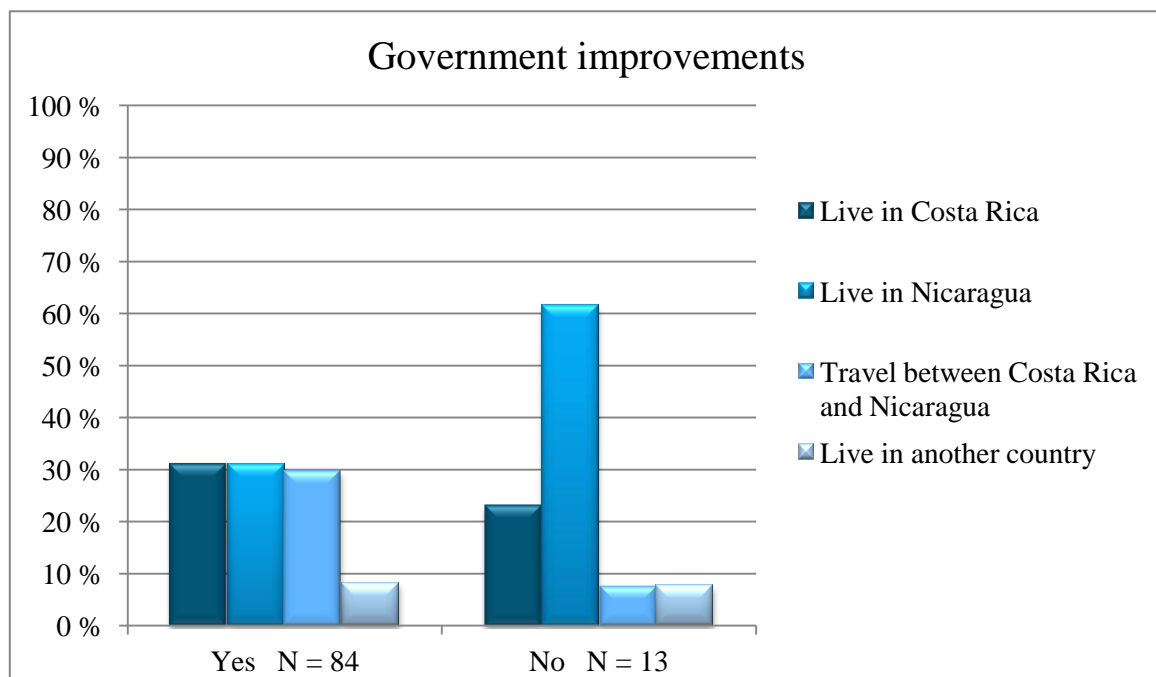


Figure 6L. Histogram of survey variables government improvements and future. N=100

The respondents that do think the governments are able to make improvements, are much more divided on their choice of future residence. The percentages for the categories live in Costa Rica and live in Nicaragua are even equal (both 31%) and also the percentage of travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua comes very close (29,8). Nicaraguan men who think future improvements will better their situation in Costa Rica, decide to stay in that country. On the other hand people decide to go back to Nicaragua, because although they think improvements could be made, they are not they will definitely be made. Out of the sub-group that has a residency permit, most migrants want to stay in Costa Rica. They argue that the living conditions in the host country are better and they have build their life there. Many also want to travel between the countries to see the family once in a while. Javier (29 April 2016) can relate, because his future is in Costa Rica for the better economic circumstances, but he also wants to travel to Nicaragua, for it is his home country where his family lives. The other sub-group with only a passport chooses most of the times to return to Nicaragua, for their

family, their own habits and traditions and their citizenship. This is also what one interviewee indicates, although he believes the Costa Rican government does enough to guarantee his welfare, he wants to go back to Nicaragua to be with his family (Antonio, 23 May 2016).

Striking is that most respondents – whether they answered yes or no on government improvements – elaborated their answer further and stated the governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua are in a political conflict for years now. This conflict is about the San Juan river that forms the border between the countries on the east end. In 1858 the Cañas-Jerez Treaty was established, stating the river is Nicaraguan territory, but Costa Rica has the right to navigate the river for trade purposes. The dispute began with the plans for the San Juan river becoming the route for a Nicaragua Canal and up till now there are various disagreements about what land belongs to which country and what they can do with it. The respondents indicate that the countries have to come to an agreement, before the governments will start paying attention to the situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica.

Other often read comments are about labor. For example that the government of Costa Rica should make it easier to get a visa or permit. Currently migrants think it is too expensive and they need too many documents (passport, (visa), birth certificates, criminal record and so on). Furthermore, many indicate that Nicaragua should create more jobs, so the people are not going to migrate in search for labor. By investing in the economy the country can develop itself further.

This paragraph has set out several social, economic and political factors that – to a different extent – influence the decision making of Nicaraguan men on their future strategies. According to the quantitative analysis, factors that significantly affect this process are the residency of the family, wage sufficiency, discrimination and the recommendation on migration. However the qualitative data from the interviews gave a more nuanced perspective, showing that the decision is not an easy one and the choices could change over time.

6.3. THE THRESHOLD APPROACH APPLIED

Applying the threshold approach of Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011, 2015) to the decision-making on the future strategies of Nicaraguan men, shows that labor migrants are involved in this process. The respondents already crossed all thresholds before, because it became in their mindset to become a migrant (mental threshold), they decided to move to Costa Rica (locational threshold) and – although not widely discussed – they took a certain route to come to Costa Rica (trajectory threshold). However, the above analyses confirm that the men are still in the middle of the process, because they are thinking of returning to Nicaragua (forty-four respondents) or moving to another country (eight respondents). This reveals that this group of migrants once again passed the mental threshold, because they started to reconsider themselves as migrants (Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2011). Many factors mentioned in chapter five and six can contribute to this change of mindset, such as wanting to be with family, having a job (or not), its insufficient salary and experienced discrimination. Even the Nicaraguan men that want to stay in Costa Rica could have taken this mental threshold, because they might have had doubts about their future residence. This is mostly drawn from the interviews, because those respondents had the chance to explain their choices further. Ivan (5 May 2016) for example says he doesn't exactly know where he wants to live. For now he states he wants to live in Costa Rica, but maybe if the situation in

Nicaragua changes (better economic conditions) he would want to go back. This informant shows that a migrant is always considering his options and is thus involved in a decision making process.

Thirty-six survey respondents and eight interviewees also passed the second, locational threshold in deciding to live in Nicaragua in the future (see table 6A and 6B). Most of them made this decision stating it is their homeland and their family lives there, thus confirming the residency of the family has a significant influence on the future strategies. This is what Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2015) also argue: decisions are not taken randomly, but affected by familiarity with the destination and the sense of belonging to it. Nicaragua is the own country and forms a place of difference.

The eight survey respondents wanting to live in another country could have also passed this threshold because they might have chosen a destination. They give very divergent opinions on why they do not want to stay in Costa Rica, but answers provided are 'life in Costa Rica is hard/expensive' and 'I want to see/know other countries' (covered by 'other'). The choice for another country can be influenced by a social network of fellow migrants, family and friends who create a home away from home in this other country (Massey et al., 1993; Van der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2015). Survey respondents never mentioned the social networks, but Nicaraguan men that were interviewed did. Two interviewees spoke about other countries, namely the United States, Russia and Spain, where they would want to live, work and pursue their happiness. The country they want to go to is also the country where they have family and/or friends so they can rely on their social network. The research reveals that migration decisions are indeed imputed to a larger unit, the social network, and how migration leads to more migration (Castles and Miller, 2009; De Haas, 2010)

Nicaraguan men that want to stay in Costa Rica will not pass the locational threshold, for they do not want to change the country they are residing in. Most mentioned reasons for staying are the labor motive, life in Costa Rica is better and my life is in Costa Rica. This includes the family that most respondents, mainly with a residency permit and only a passport, have in Costa Rica. Again this confirms that the residency of the partner and children affect the future destination. Besides, residents have formed their space of difference in Costa Rica, by building a life and family there, which makes them feel they belong. What strikes is that labor is mostly mentioned by respondents as a factor for wanting to stay in Costa Rica and family and the home country are the factors that mostly affect the ones preferring to return to Nicaragua. A combination of labor and family is why respondents argue to travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

The trajectory threshold is little appointed in these analyses, because we did not ask the respondents how they would like to travel back to Nicaragua or another country. However, we do have the categories of people that would like to travel back and forth between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and the ones that want to move to another country. This indicates some sort of trajectory, but a route, transportation or the involvement of intermediaries is not known to the researchers. Furthermore is this threshold less difficult to take for the respondents with a residency permit, because they can move freely between the countries. For respondent with a passport and (expired) visa it is more difficult, because they run the risk of being caught passing borders irregularly or that they have been working irregularly.

7. CONCLUSION

In the concluding chapter all information of the above chapters is interlinked and together it will form an answer to the research question posed in the introduction. Furthermore a comparison with the outcomes of my co-researchers analysis is made to see if the male and female points of view differ and how to anticipate to these opinions. Moreover recommendations are made on how the migratory flows from Nicaragua could be approached and more specific how the application procedures for work and residency permits can be improved.

7.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Before making some concluding remarks the research objective and questions are briefly reiterated as a reminder of the topic the researchers investigated and what their aim is. This thesis aspired to give an insight in the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica after the migration law changes of 2010, in order to evaluate the success or failure of these alterations. Furthermore attention is paid to the future strategies Nicaraguan men pursue and to what extent the current enabling and constraining factors in their life affect these strategies. By pointing out the most influencing factors, conclusions can be drawn about the General Law of Migration and Alien Affairs (No. 8764) and its intended purpose.

To gather all information on the social and labor situation and the future strategies of male Nicaraguan migrants, the following research question was established: *what social, economic and political factors influence the social and labor situation of male Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica? To what extent do these factors affect the future strategies these migrants pursue?* Five sub questions supported this research question and the answers collectively form the answer to the main question. It is put in the context of the law changes, so a recommendation can be made on how to approach Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica.

Following the first sub-question on the factors that affected the migrants' decision to move in the past, we find that several factors are noteworthy. Most men come to Costa Rica for the better economic circumstances, on recommendation of members in their social network or for the better living conditions. Better economic circumstances include higher wages and more available jobs than in Nicaragua. The social network provides a safety net where new migrants can fall back on. This makes the move less dangerous and costly, hence it multiplies migration as well. Better living conditions contain less poverty, more safety and better social services, for example medical care.

The second, third and fourth sub-question focused on the social, economic and political factors that influence the current social and labor situation of Nicaraguan men. During our fieldwork we encountered migrants that built a family and stable life in Costa Rica on the one hand. On the other, there were men roaming the streets with nothing more than a plastic bag with their belongings. Hence the situations of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguan men differ greatly. The social factor influencing the migrants' life most is family, whether they live with them in Costa Rica or back in the home country of Nicaragua. Providing for a partner and children is their priority and when they are not together in Costa Rica they are always in their minds. Also (other) family members who live in Costa Rica are important, as

aforementioned, because they have a supportive role. Besides is discrimination a social factor that affects the lives of Nicaraguan men in Costa Rica. The status of the migrant is not important, both migrants with just a passport and the ones with a permit experience discrimination in their daily life and/or in the workplace. For example, they are verbally abused for being Nicaraguan or exploited by their employer (mostly undocumented migrants). This negatively influences the situation of migrants, creating unease and a reduced sense of belonging. The last social factor that can affect the life of male Nicaraguan migrants is the life quality in Costa Rica. Most respondents state life is better in the host country, for the safety and advanced social services.

Economic factors are central to the third sub-question and are very important for Nicaraguan men. Respondents indicate that there are more jobs available in Costa Rica and it gives them the opportunity to further develop themselves professionally. In most cases a job ensures our respondents to make ends meet and take care of their families, because the wages are higher than in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan men have typical migrant jobs in labor sectors such as construction, agriculture, tourism and security. However, sometimes migrants cannot find a job or keep it up financially and they struggle in Costa Rica. Without the proper documents (work or residency permit) it is more difficult to find a job and respondents experience more insecurity when they do not have a permit and a job.

The fourth sub-question focuses on the political aspects of the male Nicaraguan migrant's life in Costa Rica. These are very interconnected to the previous economic factors, because working and having a permit go hand in hand. The group of migrants with a work or residency permit – who are thus permitted to work and live in the country – feel secure. They have a job, are part of the social security system and have the security in general that they possess the documents allowing them to reside in Costa Rica. For another group, the ones without these documents, the stay is far more insecure. They experience the application for a work or residency permit as difficult, expensive and time consuming. Getting a job without any kind of permit is more difficult and there are higher chances of labor discrimination, but an informal job in the host country still generates more money than a job in the home country. In many cases these undocumented migrants also deal with the separation of their family that still lives in Nicaragua, whereas the majority of the documented migrants have their family in Costa Rica. Hence living in Costa Rica as a Nicaraguan man has positive and negative sides, which partly depends on the status (regular/irregular) of the migrant.

The future strategies and the link to above factors are covered by the fifth sub-question. For the future, Nicaraguan men in Costa Rica have very different strategies. There is a group wanting to stay in Costa Rica, a group preferring to return to Nicaragua and to a lesser extent men that want to travel between the countries or to a different country. Most mentioned reasons by male Nicaraguan migrants themselves for their future residency of choice are consecutively family, labor, life quality in Costa Rica and nationality/nationalism. Our analysis showed as well that there is a relationship between the residence of the family and the future plans of Nicaraguan men. Besides it indicated that a sufficient income has a influence on the future strategies the migrants want to pursue. Hence, the family and labor motive are two aspects that come to the fore in interviews/surveys with Nicaraguan men, but also in our own analysis. Furthermore it was found that discrimination and a recommendation to other Nicaraguans are factors that affect the future strategies of male Nicaraguan migrants.

Discrimination has also been discussed in chapter five about the current social and labor situation of Nicaraguan men. It shows that it is a topic of importance in both the current situation and in the future.

Striking is that the status – thus being documented or undocumented – is not decisive for the future plans and neither are the opinions on the governments. Out of this the conclusion is drawn that political factors are not as important for the future plans as social and economic factors. And so the policy changes of the Costa Rican government that aimed to increase regularity and integration, may not have many positive or negative effects on Nicaraguan men. They themselves do not appoint it as important for their future strategy and the analysis reveals the same.

To make Nicaraguan men take a work or residency permit application into consideration, the current procedures have to be changed. When speaking about this topic, the majority of the male Nicaraguan migrants indicate it is difficult and expensive to get a permit and that the government should make changes. Most of them want easier and cheaper applications and better, quicker access to all necessary documents. One of the respondents came up with an idea: make all documents available at the Nicaraguan embassy or consulate in Costa Rica. In this way the migrants do not need to get their documents in Nicaragua, authorization by the Costa Rican embassy/consulate is not necessary and a lot of time and costs will be saved. This could solve the aforementioned problems Nicaraguan men nowadays experience when applying for a permit.

Besides this, the migrants state that more information should be available on the whole process of getting a work or residency permit. Not everyone has a phone or internet and are less informed than the ones who do. Therefore suggestions were made to put up posters and hand out flyers at places where many Nicaraguans come, such as for example *Parque La Merced*. If Nicaraguan men are better informed and they know about the money and effort they have to invest in an application, they can make a more deliberate choice and negative connotations with permits could decrease.

However, there will still be a group of Nicaraguan men that come to Costa Rica to work and earn money without the wish to apply for a permit: the so-called target earners. They want to reach a goal or a specific amount of money before they return to Nicaragua. This means these migrants would not quickly choose to apply for a work or residency permit (under the present circumstances), because they want to save costs to maximize their income. Besides, they do not see the point of applying for a work permit, because sooner or later they want to go back to Nicaragua to reside with the family. Hence, they do irregular labor and are not interested in regularizing their undocumented status. Another characteristics many of these target earners have, is that they do temporary, repetitive (and at times seasonal) labor. They move back and forth between Nicaragua and Costa Rica and within Costa Rica, searching for any kind of labor.

Recommendation

The Costa Rican government should pay more attention to irregular and circular labor migrants, because they are well represented in the Costa Rican economy. An arrangement between Costa Rica and Nicaragua about irregular and temporary workers has to be made. The tourist visa could for example be further developed, giving Nicaraguan migrants the

opportunity to regularly work and live in the country for a certain number of months, for the same amount of money and documents. After these months they go back to Nicaragua, whereafter they can decide to apply for a new work visa or to stay at home. This would meet the needs of the target earners that are largely in accordance with the strategies many respondents have: travel between both countries to earn money and see their family until they have reached their monetary aim and return permanently. Sometimes this aim can be achieved within a couple of months, sometimes more moves are necessary to reach the goal. A multiple entry visa is not suitable for Nicaraguan migrants, because often they are not businessmen or travel agents and do not have a job before moving to Costa Rica. They would need to prove the contractual relationship to an organization or institution in Costa Rica and as a result they are not eligible for a multiple entry visa. A cheaper work visa or temporary work permit can be something migrants are able to apply for.

A system will grow, in which Nicaraguan migrants circulate and alternate so more Nicaraguans get the chance to migrate. It can bring benefits for all parties involved (Koser and Van Hear, 2003; Vertovec, 2007; Castles and Miller, 2009). The Nicaraguan migrants themselves profit from a higher income, work experience and an increased social status. Moreover, temporary and circular labor allows them to go back to their family once in a while, which makes it easier to cope with the separation. Costa Rica benefits, because migrants do the jobs the locals do not want and thus the labor shortage is being filled by cheap manpower. Besides could such an agreement lead to more documented labor and less discrimination or exploitation. Nicaragua gets the monetary and social remittances and the return of more experienced workers. These remittances and experience can build a stronger economy and a higher living standard. Hence, more attention for circular migration in the Costa Rican migration policy and a suitable arrangement between the governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua could lead to more benefits for all parties and less frustrations among Nicaraguan migrants.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the threshold approach as developed by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011, 2015) by giving deep insights in the life of Nicaraguan migrants and their future strategies. It provides a great look into the decision-making process of international labor migrants and the factors affecting the decisions, which results in the overcoming of the thresholds or not. Massey and Espinoza (1997) argued that a person who decides to move will make more migratory movements thereafter, leading to more migration (cumulative causation of migration). It shows that once a person migrates they are always in the decision making process of if, where and how to make a next migratory move. Hence, this process does not stop when a migrant has reached its destination, even if he stays there for a longer period of time. Whereas Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011) speak about how long-distance migrants might need to take the thresholds again along the way, I argue that does not only count for long-distance but also for long-settled migrants. The qualitative analysis shows that men who lived in Costa Rica for fifteen years and more, also consider going back to Nicaragua and thus make another migratory move. Migrants that are both for a long and short time in the destination country encounter situations during their stay with Costa Rican natives, employers and the law which can make them decide to migrate once more or to remain in Costa Rica.

This thesis has described the current situation and the most important enabling and constraining factors for male Nicaraguans migrants living in Costa Rica. Attention was paid to the future strategies they prefer, but it is not known to the researchers if the migrants will actually pursue these strategies. Therefore, further research is recommended to show the extent to which Nicaraguan men indeed are pursuing their preferred strategies and if the social, economic and political factors this thesis set out, are indeed the factors that determine their decisions. As described in §3.3 this research has some shortcomings – mostly in its sampling – and for future research I would recommend a random sample, so each Nicaraguan individual in Costa Rica has the same chance of being involved in the research. In the case of our research, some individuals had more chance, because we used snowball sampling to find our respondents. For instance, the Nicaraguans in *Parque la Merced* had a higher chance of participating in the research than Nicaraguans in other parts of the town or country. Besides, I recommend a large scale survey, so the results can be generalized to the Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica. Furthermore a multivariate analysis and corresponding (more advanced) methods could deepen the information on the connection between the variables.

7.2. FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Finally the female perspective of this research is pointed out in order to show the similarities and differences between the positions of both migrant groups in the Costa Rican society. This thesis showed that several social, economic and political factors – such as family, jobs and permits – are important in male Nicaraguan migrants' their lives and futures. Bremer (2017) showed as well that family plays an important role in a female Nicaraguan migrant her life. Women have to leave their children behind with family members when they leave for Costa Rica. Separating from their children is a great step for them, in all probability even greater than for men, because of the patriarchal culture and classical gender roles (Pateman, 2014). Women take care of the children and household, whereas men provide for the family economically. However, some women migrate and start to become breadwinners as well, for extra money and supporting the family. The choice for Costa Rica is quite easy, because of the prospect of more employment and higher salaries and its proximity to the home country (Bremer, 2017). Women also rely upon their social network – relatives, friends and acquaintances – which makes it easier to make the move, because they can help out with finding a home and job. The motives to come to Costa Rica are thus similar to the motives Nicaraguan men have.

The current situation of Nicaraguan women in Costa Rica is also comparable to the situation of Nicaraguan men. They experience that finding employment and applying for a permit is difficult. The latter is a time and money consuming process and it is hard to find an employer that wants to help them obtaining a permit. Although the wish to obtain a permit is high, the foregoing process is complicated. Without any permit it is difficult to make ends meet, because life in Costa Rica is expensive. For example, some women are forced or decide to sleep outside, because that is the cheapest option.

Besides do women experience discrimination, more often than men, especially the group that do not have the legal documents to work. They are more vulnerable for exploitation by employers, because they have limited rights. However, Bremer (2017) points out that many women do not explicitly talk about discrimination and we should take into

account that much more Nicaraguans – male and female – encounter some form of discrimination during their time in Costa Rica than they want to discuss.

For the future strategies of Nicaraguan women, the geographical location of the family and their status are important. Most respondents with a residency permit have their family in Costa Rica and the families of the ones with just a passport or work permit often reside in Nicaragua. This is similar to the situation of Nicaraguan men: the status defines the sense of belonging and integration in a country and the longer a migrant lives in Costa Rica, the more often they do so with their family. The women that build their life in Costa Rica also mainly want to stay there in the future, whereas the women without a permit have more varying opinions. The latter group contains target earners and those who have reached their aim want to return to Nicaragua. Others want to try and create a stable life in Costa Rica, after which they want their children (family) to come live with them.

A difference between the sexes regarding their future is that most women want to live in Costa Rica and men mainly choose to reside in Nicaragua. The note has to be made that the female group of respondents was half the number of respondents in the male group (female N = 50, male N = 103) and thus this comparison is quite skewed. Besides, since the decision-making process of migrants is very dynamic, these future strategies can differ from time to time. However as above mentioned, in general many factors that affect female and male lives in Costa Rica are similar. They have the same (mostly economic) motives to move southwards and deal with the same difficulties. Therefore, the migration policy does not have to pay more attention to one of the two sexes, but organizations like CIDEHUM could raise awareness for the difficulties many Nicaraguan migrants face, such as discrimination and the complicated permit application process.

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APPENDIX

1. Spanish interview guide

General

Antes que nada me gustaría agradecerle por estar aquí y tomarte el tiempo de hablar conmigo. Antes de iniciar le daré un poco de información general y le haré algunas preguntas acerca de la entrevista, está bien?

- Primeramente le diré algunas cosas sobre mi. Soy una estudiante Holandesa especializada en estudios migratorios y me interesé en los migrantes de Nicaragua en Costa Rica por lo que me puse en contacto con CIDEHUM. Me interesa investigar las leyes, derechos, y condiciones de trabajo que tienen efecto sobre los Nicaraguenses aquí.
- Los resultados de esta entrevista y de toda la investigación serán traducidos y entregados a CIDEHUM y mi universidad. Su información será tratada cuidadosamente y será confidencial para que nadie sepa quién es, a menos que usted quiera que esto sea diferente.

Cuál es su:

- Sexo
- Edad
- Barrio

Factores Sociales:

Dígame algunas cosas sobre su familia.

- Tiene esposo/esposa?
- Tiene hijos?
- Dónde viven? En Costa Rica, en Nicaragua o en otro país?
- Alguien más de su familia ha migrado? Si la respuesta es sí, ¿A dónde?
- Otros miembros migrantes de su familia fomentaron su decisión de migrar? Por qué?

Ruta de Migración

- Cómo vino a Costa Rica?(¿ en qué condiciones está en Costa Rica, con permiso de trabajo temporal, o en forma indocumentada o con permiso vencido) . Con la ayuda de amigos o familia?
- Fue esta la primera vez que migró a otro país? Si no, dónde más ha vivido?
- Cuanto tiempo ha vivido/trabajado aquí?

Educación

Trabajó en Nicaragua antes de venir a Costa Rica? Si sí, el trabajo que tuvo se relaciona al que tiene en Costa Rica? Se relaciona también con la educación que tuvo en Nicaragua? O está por encima o por debajo de su educación? Está trabajando usted en lo que le gusta?

Discriminación

¿ha tenido alguna experiencia negativa aquí?

No hacer preguntas directas en este tema “discriminación”, sin embargo continuar con el tema cuando el entrevistado mencione algo sobre experiencias negativas.

Factores Económicos

- Qué trabajo realiza actualmente? Es el único trabajo que tiene en Costa Rica? Si no, ¿qué otro trabajo tiene?
- Cómo consiguió su trabajo actual? Sabía usted que realizaría eso antes de llegar a Costa Rica o migró y luego encontró un trabajo?
- Sabía usted sobre el permiso de trabajo que necesitaba? Me puede decir algo acerca de ese permiso? Es difícil de conseguir?
- *Migrantes Irregulares: Sabía sobre el permiso de trabajo? Por qué no tiene uno? Es muy caro, toma mucho tiempo? Por qué decidió quedarse en el país irregularmente?*
- Este trabajo soporta y mantiene su estilo de vida/familia? O necesita dinero extra para vivir?
- Qué quiere en el futuro? Quedarse en Costa Rica? Regresar a Nicaragua? Viajar y regresar entre Costa Rica y Nicaragua? Ir a otro país? Por qué?

Factores Políticos

La última parte de esta entrevista consiste en un par de preguntas acerca del sistema político de Costa Rica.

- Antes usted mencionó que era caro/ lento, tardado/difícil/etc. conseguir un permiso de trabajo.
 - Le recomendaría a otros ir a Costa Rica y aplicar por un permiso?
 - Siente usted que el gobierno hace suficiente para proteger su bienestar?
 - El permiso de trabajo hace que se sienta más seguro/segura? Ayuda a mantener sus derechos?
 - Qué quisiera usted que fuera diferente?
 - Le gustaría aplicar por un permiso nuevo cuando el suyo caduque (Solo para los que tienen permiso)?

2. English interview guide

General

I would like to thank you in advance for being here and taking the time to speak with me.

Before we begin, I have some general information and questions about the interview, OK?

- I will firstly introduce some things about myself, I am a Dutch student, specialized in migration studies. And I became interested in the Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica, which is how I came into contact with CIDEHUM. Leading to the development of a research on laws, rights and working conditions of the Nicaraguans here.
- The results from this interview and the research as a whole, will be translated into a report for CIDEHUM and my home university. Your information will be treated carefully and will be kept confidential, so no one will know it was you, unless you would like to see this otherwise.

What is your:

- Name
- Age
- And where do you live?

¿Pura vida o vida dura?

Social factors:

Tell me something about your family.

- Do you have a wife/husband?
- Do you have children?
- Where do they live? In Costa Rica, in Nicaragua or in another country?
- Has anyone else of your family migrated? Where to?
- Did other migrant family members influence your decision to migrate? Why (not)?

Migration route

- How did you come to Costa Rica? Alone? With the help of family/friends? Or with the help of an intermediary/agent/broker?
- Was this the first time you migrated to another country? If not, where else have you been?
- How long have you lived/worked here?

Education

Did you work in Nicaragua before you came to Costa Rica? If yes, does that job relate to the one you have in Costa Rica? Does it also relate to the education you had in Nicaragua? Or is there over/under education? Are you doing the job you want to do?

Discrimination

No direct questions on this topic, however continue on the matter when the respondent mentions something about negative experiences.

Economic factors

- What job are you doing at the moment? Is this the only job you have in Costa Rica? If not, what other jobs do you have?
- How did you get your current job? You knew you would do this work before you left to Costa Rica or you migrated and then found a job?
- Did you know about the work permit you needed? Can you tell something about it? Is it difficult to obtain, costly, etcetera?
- *Irregular migrants: Did you know about the work permit? Why do not you have one? Is it too costly, does it take too much time? Why did you decide to stay in the country irregularly?*
- Does this job support your livelihood/family? Or do you need extra money to live?
- What do you want for your future? Stay in Costa Rica, go back to Nicaragua, travel back and forth between Nicaragua and Costa Rica or travel to another country? Why?

Political factors

The last part of the interview exists out of a couple of questions on the political system in Costa Rica.

- Before, you mentioned that it was easy/difficult/costly/etc. to obtain a work permit.
 - would you recommend others to go to Costa Rica and apply for a permit?
 - do you feel like the government does enough to protect your well-being?
 - does the work permit make you feel more secure/safe; does it help with supporting your rights?
 - what would you like to see different?
 - would you like to apply for a new one when yours expires? (only for those with a permit)

3. Interview respondents table

Respondent	Age	Total time in Costa Rica	Geographical location of partner/ children	Permit	Job	Sufficient wage	Remarks on government	Preferred future residence
Javier 29-04-2016	48	4 months	Nicaragua	Passport	Yes	Yes	Positive	Travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.
Rodrigo 05-05-2016	55	30 years	Costa Rica	Residency	Yes	Yes	Negative	Nicaragua
Oscar 05-05-2016	20	9 months	Costa Rica	Passport	Yes	Yes	Negative	Nicaragua
Ivan 05-05-2016	36	17 years	Girlfriend + one child in Costa Rica and one child in Nicaragua	Residency	Yes	Yes	Negative	Costa Rica
Manuel 11-05-2016	22	1 day	Nicaragua	Passport	No	No	Negative	Nicaragua
Felipe 21-05-2016	44	3 months	Wife in Costa Rica and children in Nicaragua	Passport	Yes	No	Negative	Nicaragua
Andres 22-05-2016	40	17 years	Costa Rica	Passport*	Yes	Yes	No answer	No answer
Enrique 22-05-2016	32	15 years	Costa Rica	Residency	Yes	Yes	Negative	Costa Rica
Antonio 23-05-2016	22	1 year	Costa Rica	Passport	Yes	Yes	Positive	Nicaragua
David 23-05-2016	29	4 months	Wife in Costa Rica and children in Nicaragua	Passport	Yes	No	Negative	Nicaragua
Adriano 24-05-2016	28	5 days	Nicaragua	Passport	No	No	Negative	Costa Rica
Eduardo 24-05-2016	27	Travelling back and forth for 17 years	Nicaragua	Passport	No	No	Negative	Nicaragua
Juan 23-05-2016	28	2 weeks	Nicaragua	Passport	Yes	Yes	Negative	Nicaragua

*Is married to a Costa Rican woman and should automatically get residency permit because of the marriage. However, he doesn't have residency nor a visa and is staying in Costa Rica more or less irregularly. This particular situation is interesting: in all probability he had problems in the past with his visa, which causes problems now and makes it difficult to get the residency permit.

¿Pura vida o vida dura?

4. Spanish survey

Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen



CIDEHUM
CENTRO INTERNACIONAL PARA LOS DERECHOS
HUMANOS DE LOS MIGRANTES

Investigación de migrantes nicaragüenses

Tema de investigación: la situación social y laboral de los migrantes nicaragüenses en Costa Rica, de ambos sexos.

Enfoque:

- Con o sin permiso laboral.
- Como presan los migrantes nicaragüenses que se puede mejorar su situación y integrarse laboralmente en Costa Rica.

Toda la información es confidencial y solo para Radboud University Nijmegen de Holanda y Centro Internacional para los Derechos Humanos de los Migrantes (CIDEHUM) de San José, Costa Rica.

Nota: las preguntas extensas puede ampliar su respuesta si lo cree necesario.

Factores sociales

☐ Mujer ☐ Hombre

Edad: _____

¿Dónde vive usted?

☐ San Jose ☐ Otro: _____

¿Tiene usted un(a) compañero/compañera?

☐ Sí ☐ No

¿Tiene usted hijos?

☐ Sí ☐ No

Si es así:

¿Dónde viven su(s) compañero(a) y/o hijos?

☐ Costa Rica ☐ Nicaragua ☐ Otro: _____

¿Cuanto tiempo está en Costa Rica en total?

¿Ha tenido alguna experiencia negativa en Costa Rica? (Como discriminación en su trabajo o su vida diaria).

☐ Sí ☐ No

Cual experiencias: _____

Factores económicos

¿En que condiciones está en Costa Rica?

☐ Pasaporte ☐ Permiso de trabajo ☐ Permiso de residencia

¿Tiene usted un trabajo en este momento?

☐ Sí: _____ ☐ No

Si es así:

¿Este trabajo es suficiente para sustentar los gastos de la vida?

☐ Sí ☐ No

Si no es así:

¿Tuve usted un trabajo en Costa Rica?

☐ Sí: _____ ☐ No

¿Tuve usted un trabajo en Nicaragua?

☐ Sí: _____ ☐ No

¿Que quiere usted en el futuro?

☐ Vivir en Costa Rica ☐ Vivir en Nicaragua
☐ Viajar entre Costa Rica y Nicaragua ☐ Vivir en otro país

Porque: _____

Factores políticos

¿Le recomendaría a otros nicaragüenses de venir a Costa Rica?

☐ Sí ☐ No

Porque: _____

¿Cree usted que los gobiernos de Costa Rica y Nicaragua puedan hacer algo diferente para mejorar su condición de migrante?

☐ Sí ☐ No

Porque: _____

Muchas gracias por su tiempo!

¿Pura vida o vida dura?

5. English survey

Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen



CIDEHUM
CENTRO INTERNACIONAL PARA LOS DERECHOS
HUMANOS DE LOS MIGRANTES

Research on Nicaraguan migrants

Topic of the research: the social and labor situation of male and female Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica.

Focus:

- With or without work permit.
- In what way do Nicaraguan migrants think their situation and (labor) integration in Costa Rica can be improved.

All information is confidential and only used by the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands and the International Center for the Human Rights of Migrants (CIDEHUM) in San José, Costa Rica.

Note: you can explain your answers further in the open questions if necessary.

Social factors

☐ Female ☐ Male

Age: _____

Where do you live?

☐ San Jose ☐ Other: _____

Do you have a partner?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have children?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

Where does/do your partner and/or child(ren) live?

☐ Costa Rica ☐ Nicaragua ☐ Other: _____

How long are you in Costa Rica in total?

Have you had any negative experiences in Costa Rica? (Like discrimination at your job or in your daily life)

☐ Yes ☐ No

What experiences: _____

Economic factors

Under which conditions are you in Costa Rica?

- ☐ Passport ☐ Work permit ☐ Residency permit

Do you have a job at the moment?

- ☐ Yes: _____ ☐ No

If yes:

Is your current income enough to maintain your life style?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no:

Did you have a job in Costa Rica in the past?

- ☐ Yes: _____ ☐ No

Did you have a job in Nicaragua in the past?

- ☐ Yes: _____ ☐ No

What do you want in the future?

- ☐ Live in Costa Rica ☐ Live in Nicaragua
☐ Travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua ☐ Live in another country

Because: _____

Political factors

Would you recommend to other Nicaraguans to go to Costa Rica?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Because: _____

Do you think the governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua can do something (different) to improve the migrant situation in Costa Rica?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Because: _____

Thank you for your time!