

# An Exploratory Approach of the Latin American Migrants' Urban Space Transformation of Antofagasta City, Chile

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**Abstract**—Since mid-2000, the migratory flows of Latin American migrants to Chile have been increasing constantly. There are two reasons that would explain why Chile is presented as an attractive country for the migrants. On the one hand, traditional centres of migrants' attraction such as the United States and Europe have begun to close their borders. On the other hand, Chile exhibits relative economic and political stability, which offers greater job opportunities and better standard of living when compared to the migrants' origin country. At the same time, the neoliberal economic model of Chile, developed under an extractive production of the natural resources, has privatized the urban space. The market regulates the growth of the fragmented and segregated cities. Then, the vulnerable population, most of the time, is located in the periphery and in the marginal areas of the urban space. In this aspect, the migrants have begun to occupy those degraded and depressed areas of the city. The problem raised is that the increase of the social spatial segregation could be also attributed to the migrants' occupation of the marginal urban places of the city. The aim of this investigation is to carry out an analysis of the migrants' housing strategies, which are transforming the marginal areas of the city. The methodology focused on the urban experience of the migrants, through the observation of spatial practices, ways of living and networks configuration in order to transform the marginal territory. The techniques applied in this study are semi-structured interviews in-depth interviews. The study reveals that the migrants housing strategies for living in the marginal areas of the city are built on a paradox way. On the one hand, the migrants choose proximity to their place of origin, maintaining their identity and customs. On the other hand, the migrants choose proximity to their social and familiar places, generating sense of belonging. In conclusion, the migration as international displacements under a globalized economic model increasing socio spatial segregation in cities is evidenced, but the transformation of the marginal areas is a fundamental resource of their integration migratory process. The importance of this research is that it is everybody's responsibility not only the right to live in a city without any discrimination but also to integrate the citizens within the social urban space of a city.

**Keywords**—Inhabit, migrations, social spatial segregation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**IGRATIONS are constant processes that have been occurring since the beginning of human history in the development of cities [1], [2]. Migrations were the main objective of several investigations carried out by E. Ravenstein, a geographer, who was considered the father of

migrations [3]. He argued that migrants prefer to move to big cities in search of better job opportunities [4]. In addition, the urban sociology specialists from the Chicago School claimed that the ways in which migrants inserted themselves into the new urban spaces of American cities [5] were based most of the time on race, nationality, profession, social status, gender and moral characteristics.

In contemporary cities, the migratory process has been increasing constant due to the fact of the neoliberal economic system regulation. Firstly, it has affected the unequal distribution of wealth and economic capital, generating global cities in the world, turning out to be the focus of attraction for those inhabitants of impoverished nations; secondly, the environmental deterioration caused by industrial processes and treatment under transnational corporations that have diminished natural resources and water sources; and finally, the political problems of countries under dictatorships and/or corrupt democracies [6].

Reinforcing the indicated idea, recently, Saskia Sassen pointed out at a symposium, reSITE<sup>1</sup> Prague (2016) that global warming has proliferated an intensifying deterioration of local production territories, and has forced local communities to emigrate from their places of origin in search of new territories that serve as support for their productive-economic activities [7].

Chile, in the Latin-American context, has not been away from the implications of the neoliberal economic model, where migrants have been moving to cities that are inserted into the global economy. As the case of Santiago, the capital of Chile, that concentrates the financial and service centre, and/or the mining extractive regions such as Tarapaca and Antofagasta. Therefore, the first step of the migratory project is the migrants' choice of a productive territory with high income and demand for work in order to ensure a remunerated job [8]. In this context, the region of Antofagasta, historically the mining zone of Chile has attracted not only state investment but also private funds for the exploitation of the mineral resources, and in consequence new labor force [9], attracting internal and external migrations.

The singularity of this case study is that the process of capital accumulation generated by the neoliberal model, has detached the urban growth of the traditional issues, as spatial questions or social subjects [10]. This has generated urban and real estate speculation, which expels migrants from formal

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<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit action for having a better urban environment

housing access to the informal, increasing the socio-spatial segregation existing in the city of Antofagasta. Thus, the question of this investigation is why the migrants' housing strategies are focused on the marginal areas of the city, transforming it, despite their vulnerable habitability that increases the social spatial segregation. In addition, a hypothesis was raised for answering that question: In a paradox way are built the migrants' housing strategies for living in the marginal areas of the city. On the one hand, the migrants choose proximity to their place of origin, maintaining their identity and customs. On the other hand, the migrants' close proximity to their social and familiar place, generating a sense of belonging.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Migration in its most primary conception can be understood as the displacement of people seeking for better life opportunities [11]. However, most of the time, migrations do not occur because of personal decisions; they are caused due to the actions and policies of the governments. "Migrations are made, they do not happen, there are conditions that cause them and that has to do with capitalism" [12, p.1].

In the Antofagasta case study, the capitalist model, with an extractive resource mineral production, has raised the city to the highest PIB<sup>2</sup> of the country with US\$37,205, becoming an attractive city for migrants looking for new life opportunities. Instead, the migrants suffer discrimination and social segregation, where they can only access unskilled jobs not directly related to mining, consequently to inadequate, small and overcrowded housing and finally being excluded from formal access to state housing because most of them are not legal citizens. Reference [6, p. 120] indicates that "the daily practices of immigrants weave strong community bonds; at the same time they represent a clear exercise of participation in civic activities". Hence, these migratory processes have shown the strong contradiction with the capitalism model. On the one hand, the developed states encourage the liberation of economic borders, but on the other hand, they tighten migration policies, stopping the entry of migrants in search of job opportunities. This contradiction between economic globalization and social globalization is what Sassen has called "a new geography of centrality and marginality on a global scale" [13]. However, also migrations can be understood as a set of practices that illustrate the way in which a certain group of individuals characterizes the place where they start living [14]. In this definition, the place where the migrants start living, start also to be important. So, where do they live? At the beginning, they start living in the same deteriorated urban place in the historical city center, where the oldest rural migration used to live. However, what is an urban place? This requires a theoretical definition of the concept of place.

Reference [15, p. 9] points out that "All of us are related to the place we inhabit, the inhabitants are situated in the place and the place is located in the inhabitants". The place is the

physical and material expression of the space where the migrants live, but also is the expression of his own personal space. Reference [16, p. 30] states that "space is not just there, independent from men, space exist when men is understood as a spatial being, because men create space and the surroundings". Therefore, following Pallasma and Bollnow definition of place, it is possible to understand place, not just as a physical place but also as a temporal space, modified and transformed by men. Therefore, migrants start facing on the one hand, the segregation and discrimination of the neoliberal model, where they do not access to formal state housing, but they do it to the informal sector, which operates under the same exclusionary and speculative logic as the formal market (private or promoted by the state). On the other hand, they start rebuilding familiar and social networks, acquire presence in the urban and social realm where their action make the migrants no longer invisible and segregated [6]. In this way, the present investigation is analysed from the social and urban point of view, not only considering the space in absolute terms, but also, from the subjective terms produced by the migrants in certain places and moments throughout their migratory project.

The focus of the right to the city will be taken into consideration, since the right of living in a city manifests the common desire to live and build a better society.

## III. CASE STUDY

The region of Antofagasta and its capital being the same name is located in the north of the country, in the desert of Atacama, historically the mining area of Chile. In the last 10 years, the mining sector has grown notoriously, increasing the demands of workforce, especially of the tertiary or service sector [17]. In this scenario, foreign migration looking for new job opportunities has risen ostensibly. According to DEM<sup>3</sup>, the Antofagasta region is the third pole of attraction for migrants in the country. Specifically, according to 2012 census, the city of Antofagasta has an estimated population of 542,504 inhabitants, with 28,236 of the country's migrant population, representing 6.9%. The historical migration from Peru and Bolivia has now been increased with other Latin American countries such as Colombia and Argentina, with a strong presence of afro descendants of the South Pacific in Colombia [22]. In addition, this process has been related to conflicts, prejudice and discrimination against migrants, in what has become an important public issue. It is worth remembering what was published on February 29, 2016 by the newspaper "El Mercurio de Antofagasta". "*Discussion ends in violent quarrel in the southern sector, where Chileans and Colombians clashed*" [18]. In this context, the community of Antofagasta is manifesting a negative predisposition, based on political, social and historical ideas. Therefore, the social and urban aspects are the criterion to analyze Antofagasta. On the one hand, migrants decide to settle and carry out their migratory project, due to the better life expectations this

<sup>2</sup> Per capital Income

<sup>3</sup> Department of Immigration and Migration of the Interior Ministry and Public Security of Chile

region can offer, but, on the other hand, they are socially excluded, and many of them stereotyped for being “Black Colombians” coming from Cali and Buenaventura cities [9].

Finally, the case study could recommence the debate on

how can people be integrated into societies and economies in global times. We should consider both the contribution from the social perspective and urban planning approach to focus on resolving this issue [19].

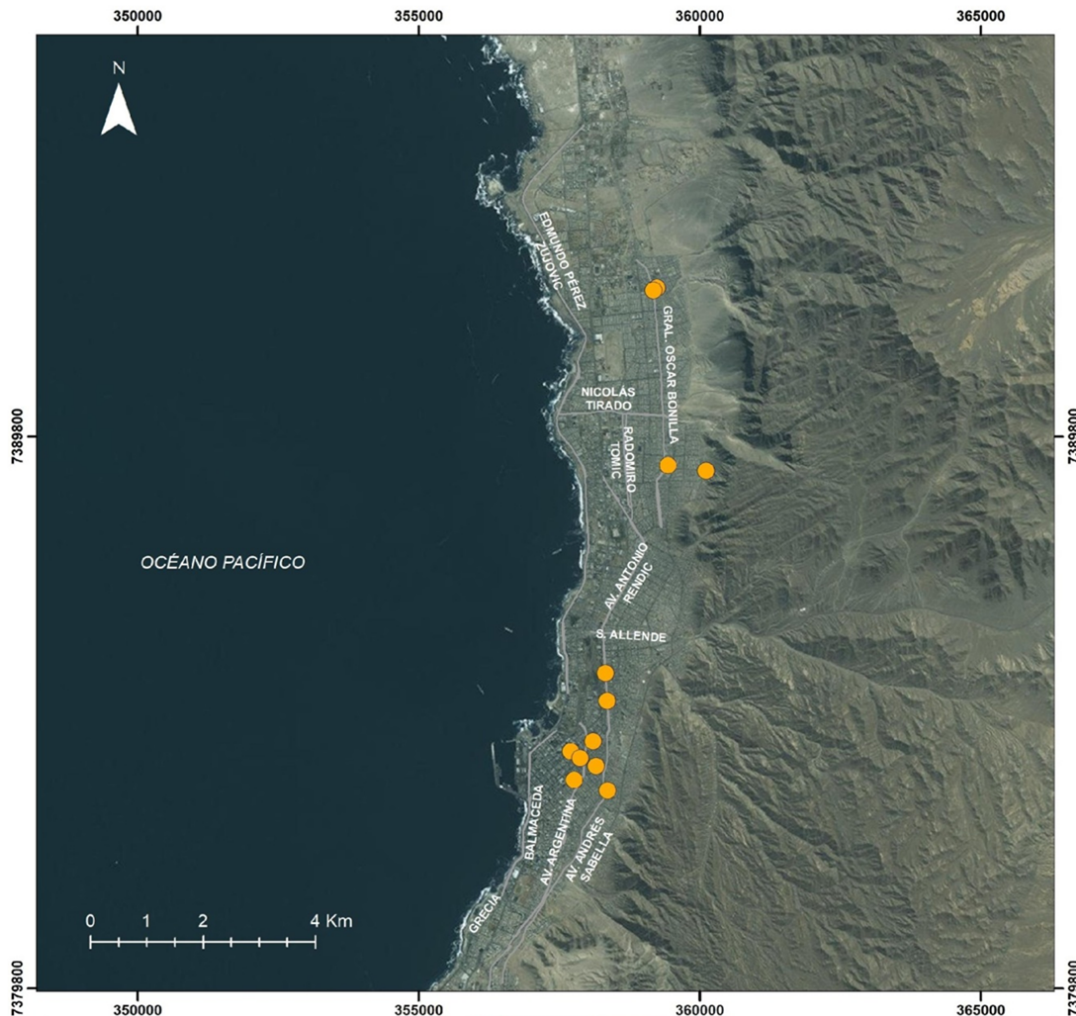


Fig. 1 Location of Antofagasta city

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

Reference [20] talks about strategies (methods) and tactics (techniques), where the term method is defined as “the ability to manage and plan anything”, in contrast to the techniques, which are defined as “all skilful movement”. Therefore, to address the present investigation, the method has been structured in objectives, which will be analyzed with quantitative and qualitative techniques in the city of Antofagasta located in the north of Chile, as shown in Fig. 1.

##### A. Methods

From a methodological point of view, this research is carried out within the social sciences and planning, and epistemologically mixed method. Quantitative and qualitative techniques and triangulation strategy will be used along the research. The aim will be to merge the data gathered

independently, but with the focus on the same objectives to be investigated [21].

The objectives are: Objective 1: analyze the strategies of housing access for Latin American migrants in the mining city of Antofagasta. Objective 2: investigate family and social networks of migrants in the urban spaces they inhabit.

##### B. Techniques

Qualitative and quantitative techniques analysis will be applied and the information will be gathered from the 2017 Census Data, Vid Enlace project, Google Earth, semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews. The qualitative analysis has two stages proposed: first, a space of trust will be created with the migrant, through common activities, and then the following techniques will be used: semi-structured and in-depth interviews.

### C. Analysis

To analyze the strategies of housing access for Latin American migrants in the mining city of Antofagasta, the following activities were done:

#### 1) Spatialization of Vid Enlace Project Information

The information of the project Vid Enlace<sup>4</sup> was gathered with the "El Mercurio" newspaper classifieds of the 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 years and the database of the neighborhood units, IDE, Chile. The aim was to know the formal and informal areas where the migrants inhabit and the distribution of housing rentals.

#### 2) Habitability Conditions of the Migrants

The habitability conditions of the migrants in the formal and informal areas of the city will be analyzed through the in-depth interviews conducted with the migrants

#### 3) Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant actors in the public sector and non-government organization.

##### a) Public Sector

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant actors in the public sector in charge of city planning and decision taking in the region. The aim was to understand the position of the state in order to know possible solutions for migrants living in informal housing areas.

The following relevant actors were interviewed: (JS) Director of Housing and Planning Ministry of Antofagasta Region; (YC) Directress of Housing in the Housing and Planning Ministry; (CF) Director of the Camping Improvement Plan; (NS) Director of the Regional Planning of Antofagasta; (JH) Urban Advisor of the Antofagasta Municipality. The interviewee, the duration and the place where the interviews were conducted are indicated in Table I. The following questions were asked: (1) What plan and/or policy has been made to allow access to migrants' housing in the city? (2) What are the problems in accessing housing land? (3) What are the challenges that the region has in the migratory issue?

TABLE I  
PUBLIC INTERVIEWEES

Symbol	Duration	Place of the Interview
JS	1:54	Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning
YC	0:40	Service of Housing and Planning
CF	0:20	Intendancy of Antofagasta
NS	1:13	Regional Government of Antofagasta
JH	0:43	Municipality of Antofagasta

##### b) Non-Government Organizations

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant actors in the non-profit sector. The non-profit organizations are in charge of the relations between the communities and the state policies.

The following relevant actors were interviewed: (AM) Vice Principal of Fractal NGO; (PB) Catholic Priest; (FV) Catholic University. The aim was to understand the market housing and the non-profit organizations role in the process of housing access. The interviewees, the duration and the place where the interviews were conducted are indicated in Table II. The following questions were asked: (1) Which are the main problems in access to housing? (2) Where do the migrants arrive first? (3) Why do migrants move to the marginal areas of the city?

TABLE II  
NON PROFIT INTERVIEWEES

Symbol	Duration	Place of the Interview
AM	0:52	Antofagasta Library
PB	1:13	La Chimba
FV	1:02	North Catholic University

To investigate the family and social networks of migrants in the urban spaces they inhabit, the following activities were conducted.

#### 4) In-Depth Interviews

The interviewees were chosen through the "snowball" methodology, but also because of the recommendation of some leaders. The interviews were separated in two categories: the migrants living in the centre and pericentre of the city (formal housing) and those ones living in the marginal areas of the city (informal housing). The in-depth interviews done to the migrants' community will be analysed using Nvivo program. This program allows understanding graphically the qualitative information gathered on site. The objective of the interviews was to analyse the reasons of choosing one area of housing (formal or informal) and their difficulties on housing access.

##### a) Centre and Pericentre Areas

In-depth interviews were done with migrants living in the formal urban space, specifically in the centre or pericentre of the city. The profile of the interviewees is defined in Table III:

TABLE III  
INTERVIEWS IN THE CENTRE AND PERICENTRE

Name	Gender	Origen	Occupation
Maria	F	Ecuador	Manicurist
Rosalis	F	Colombia	Saleswoman
Roxana	F	Bolivia	Saleswoman
Maria Ines	F	Colombia	Waitress
Willington	M	Colombia	Hairdresser

TABLE IV  
INTERVIEWS IN THE CENTRE AND PERICENTRE

Name	Gender	Origen	Occupation
Jonhy	M	Colombia	Unemployed
Gamilton	F	Colombia	Security Guard
Juan	F	Colombia	Hairdresser
Vicenta	F	Bolivia	Saleswoman
Angie	M	Colombia	Housewife

<sup>4</sup> Principal Researcher Yasna Contreras

*b) Marginal Areas*

In-depth interviews were done with migrants living in the informal urban space, specifically in the periphery of the city. The profile of the interviewees is defined in Table IV.

V. RESULTS ACHIEVED

*A. Strategies of Housing Access for Latin-American Migrants*

1) Inhabitant of the Migrants

Firstly, it is important to know the results of the spatialisation of Vid Enlace Project Information, shown in Fig. 2, in order to know where the migrants inhabit. When analysing the map, it is possible to observe that most of them are located in the white area, where migrants from different origins and Chileans live in the informal housing market and where it is possible to notice the lowest values of the city, under US\$393. Other areas where migrants are located are the

periphery called “Poza Hornos”, where the cost of rooms for rent/sublease is more than US\$393 and in the city centre where it is more than US\$422.

2) Habitability Conditions of the Migrants

Through spatial analysis and information gathered from the interviews in these different spatial areas, formal and informal, some type of housing could be defined by the habitability conditions of the migrants.

TABLE V  
HABITABILITY CONDITIONS

Characteristics	Centre/Pericentre	Periphery
<i>Holding</i>	Rent	Own
<i>Basic Systems</i>	Yes	No
<i>Type of House</i>	Precarious Housing	Self-construction Housing
<i>Familiar Networks</i>	Number Restriction	Clustering
<i>Social Networks</i>	Vulnerable Networks	Community

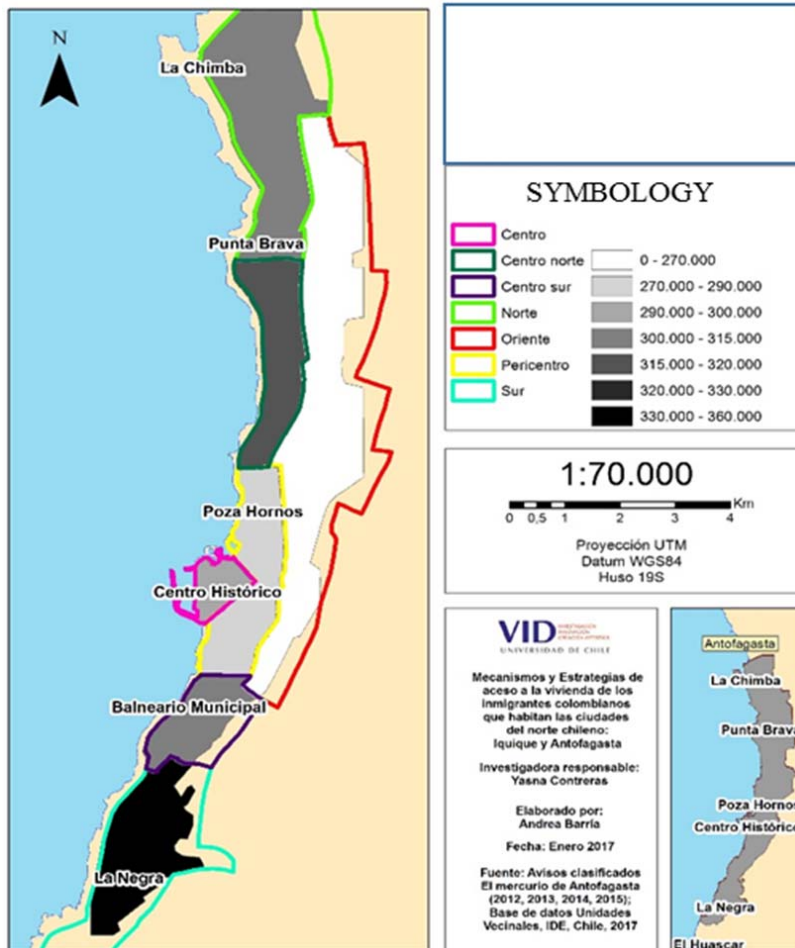


Fig. 2 Mapping migrants' location and housing renting

3) Local Plan and Policies

On the one hand, it is important to understand that the migratory issue is a national matter in Chile that has not been considered as an Urban Policy. (JS) says that the housing

policy has been relegated to the market, which has increased the land values up to prices that can be afford by the mining sector, generating real estate speculation. About the Self-Construction Improvement Plan, (CF) says that it did not

finish because of the change of government, changing also the institution in charge. The plan is currently in the charge of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

Following the discussion, all the interviewees agreed that the main problem in housing access is the land value that has been overvalued according to the living conditions of the mining workers. In addition, (YC) says that there were few state housing solutions during the years 2010 and 2014 due to the earthquake of 2010, which occurred in the south of the country. (NS) indicated that those were the reasons why the migrants began living outside the urban limits, under the risky conditions of alluviums.

The leaders of non-government organizations say that the market migrations are focused on profits. The migrants have to resolve where to live and the market has left the housing problem to the state. To close the gap, they are trying to solve the inequalities and underdevelopment conditions.

To solve the issues raised, (JS) says that the state policy has to focus not on self-construction but on neighbourhood construction, as a political policy that helps to overcome the poverty situation in those areas with self-construction housing.

#### *B. Family and Social Networks of the Latin-American Migrants*

##### 1) Reasons of Choosing One Area of Housing

The reasons for choosing a certain area of the city are related with how long they have been in Chile. At the beginning, and upon arriving at Antofagasta, migrants prefer to live in the city centre and pericentre because they can be closer to their jobs and because most of the time they arrive alone. Therefore, renting just a room is acceptable, as Roxana from Bolivia said, “*I prefer to rent a small place to live; I am near my job*”. However, once the migrants become settled in the city, they prefer to move to the periphery and live in self-constructed housing in order to bring their families together again. Angie from Colombia says, “*At first my husband came alone and when he got a job, we moved to Chile while he was building this house*”. Another reason that came up constantly was that the migrants could send money to their relatives in their countries of origin, what is called “remesas”, because living in self-constructed housing allows them to save money.

##### 2) Difficulties in Access to Housing

The migrants are driven out and excluded from the formal housing market because they cannot afford the high prices of renting a small room in the city centre. Most of the time, Chilean landowners can raise the rent at any time, without any contract or formal agreement. Even though, for migrants, it is a good solution to live in these informal areas, mainly because it allows them to save money and send it to their families back home and because it is a way of eventually bringing them together again. It is also viewed negatively, since there is no public transport, no water and electricity service, and Chilean landlord's practice discrimination, which forces migrants to negotiate for a piece of land.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, one of the main conclusions is that informal market access operates under the same exclusionary and speculative logic as the formal housing market. This process can be divided in four main ideas.

### *A. Beginning*

Generally, migrants arriving in Chile have friends and/or relatives from their countries of origin already residing in the country, so at the beginning, they can start living with those relatives.

Migrants without a network initially settle in central areas because there are cheaper rooms on offer.

### *B. Negotiation*

In some cases, migrants negotiate with Chilean homeowners the price of housing rentals that can go up at any moment. In addition, migrants negotiate with the Chilean owners the responsibility of making housing repairs. Furthermore, many migrants must still negotiate with Chileans to access the informal housing market, despite the inadequate living conditions.

Colombian and Dominican migrants are the ones who have the greatest difficulties in accessing housing. Therefore, they must be linked to Peruvian migrants or other compatriots (who are better established) to access inadequate, small, overcrowded housing.

### *C. Renting*

Some migrants are renting in formal apartment buildings, including sharing dormitories with other immigrants. Some migrants are renting in formal rooms in the west areas (slum housing).

### *D. Self-Construction Housing*

At the end of their migratory process, the migrants choose to live in self-constructed housing as this allows them to send money to their families back home, and eventually, to bring them together again, while building social networks.

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