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Sanctuary Cities in Andean Countries: A Literature Review (2000-2022)

Marcela Tapia Ladino & Victoria de la Vega

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Abstract

This article analyzes initiatives of reception and hospitality in Latin America, specifically in Andean countries such as Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Bolivia during the 21st century. Drawing on the experience of sanctuary cities in the Global North, the study examines local and national initiatives of hospitality and solidarity towards migrant or displaced populations in these countries. The methodology includes a review of ten years of scientific literature using various search engines and databases. The findings indicate that, in general, these initiatives arise through two main pathways: the first being from international organizations to countries and cities, "top-down", and the second being from local social organizations, "bottom-up". The former depends on political will, while the latter often consists of fragmented and temporary actions, making information availability challenging.

Keywords: sanctuary cities; Andean region; solidarity initiatives; hospitality initiatives.

Author Note

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Introduction¹

There is no doubt that the migration phenomenon arouses great interest in academia and the authorities due to the challenges it involves, as well as the impact it has on the countries of origin, transit and destination. Proof of this is the prolific production of publications and reports on different scales and in different latitudes regarding its magnitude and social, economic and cultural effects, as well as the growing criminalization of the flows, especially in the pandemic context. However, one of the dimensions least explored by recent research in Latin America refers to the initiatives for reception, protection and hospitality in the spaces where migrants and forcibly displaced people arrive. The reasons for this are varied; until the pandemic, we witnessed a rapid process of re-borderization (Lara-Valencia & García, 2021, p. 53), that is, the hardening of borders, especially for human mobility.

To illustrate this situation, we know that until 1989 there were six walls in the world, but today there are 63, and many countries have militarized their borders with the deployment of troops, drones, patrols and military personnel (Ruiz et al., 2020). At the same time, we are witnessing a growing criminalization of migration and a punitive shift, particularly in terms of deportations or restrictions on entry to different countries. This is taking place in the context of the rise of Euroscepticism and a nationalist anti-migration discourse with the arrival of Trump to power (2017), the Brexit vote (January 2020) the growth of right-wing parties in France, Spain and Germany (Bauder & Juffs, 2020), and the impact of the Syrian crisis in Europe in 2015.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the global border closures as well as reinforcement measures revitalized the idea of the border as a safeguard, because in practice they served to calm the anxiety caused by the spread of the illness and were the way to contain a virus that *knows no limits* (Tapia, 2022). However, the closure and travel restrictions exacerbated the sense of the national and the perception of the foreigner or those who came from “abroad” as perceived threats. As Cresswell (2020) notes, historically those who move have been perceived with fear because “contagion, epidemic and pandemic are all terms with mobility at their heart.” However, while the pandemic acted as a brake on migration and human mobility in general, displacement did not disappear but became more dangerous and desperate (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2022).

In this context, the aim of this paper is to give an account of reception or hospitality initiatives in Latin America, particularly in the case of the Andean countries, i.e. Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Bolivia in the 21st century. Sanctuary cities or cities of solidarity emerged in the context of the restrictive policies that states, especially those of the global North, implemented with regard to migrant populations. In general, these are local initiatives that sought to address policies that denied migrants and refugees access to services and security and sought their deportation (Bauder, 2021) as we will review below. In Latin America, however, such initiatives do not appear in the same way, although we find some similarities in the cases reviewed. For this reason, we are interested in investigating which initiatives have been developed in the case studies, their scope and timing, as well as their characteristics and duration.

With regard to the methodology used, it should be noted that this study is part of a larger one², for which we organized the Latin American countries into different regions; in this case, the Andean region comprising Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Peru was

¹ This article was developed within the framework of the project “Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective”, Partnership Grants 895-2021- 1000, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canada, led by Toronto Metropolitan University.

² The project “Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective”, run by Toronto Metropolitan University, has regional hubs per continent: North America, Latin America, Africa and Europe.

addressed. This selection responds, firstly, to the geographical relevance of the group of countries, in terms of their location in the Andean region or their participation in the Andean Community (CAN). On the other hand, the cases present variability in their policies and approaches allowing for the examination of how different political and social contexts within the Andean region influence the implementation and perception of practices related to sanctuary cities.

Once the space was delimited, a literature review was carried out by country from different sources, both of academic articles through a search in Google Scholar, Scopus and Crossref, as well as non-academic literature (news, reports, etc.) through Google and Google News. For the keywords used in the searches, those used in the scoping review conducted by Godoy and Bauder (2021) were considered, adding to the search terms the concepts of “solidarity,” “inclusion” and “integration.” The latter in order to identify practices that can be associated with sanctuary cities but are not explicitly labeled with the concept. The documents were selected according to the relevance and applicability of the search terms in relation to the concept of “sanctuary cities” and their associated practices. Given that the term “sanctuary cities” is not commonly used in Latin America (Godoy & Bauder, 2021), a wide range of practices related to solidarity and inclusion were included to ensure that all possible manifestations of these ideas in the region were captured.

Articles and news items from the last 10 years were selected for Venezuela (n=6), Colombia (n=14), Ecuador (n=17), Bolivia (n=5), Chile (n=7), and Peru (n=6), describing both the practice of ‘sanctuary cities’ itself and other related solidarity practices that fit into this category, again considering the limited use of the concept in Latin America. The literature was organized and reviewed through the Zotero reference management software, which was then categorized through a content analysis in order to identify practices associated with the notion of sanctuary cities. All the data were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, which was used to visualize the general panorama of the Andean region. Based on this search, the time frame of the study covered from the beginning of the current century to the end of 2022, which is related to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide.

The article is organized into three main sections: firstly, a brief overview of migration in the Latin American region to contextualize the initiatives to be reviewed; then, the genesis and characteristics of sanctuary cities are presented, continuing with the country-by-country analysis of the initiatives recognized in the Andean region, and closing off with the conclusions.

The Latin American Migration Landscape as a Context for Solidarity Initiatives

To understand the scope of sanctuary or solidarity city-type reception initiatives in the Andean countries, it is necessary to consider the migratory landscape of these countries. This is because the changes in migratory flows in the region, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, have affected the map of human mobility, which partly explains the emergence, permanence and disappearance of solidarity initiatives. The explanations are related to the characteristics of migration in the continent in general and in the Andean countries in particular, mostly because until the beginning of the 21st century these had been countries of emigration, especially to Europe and the United States. However, since the beginning of the current century, important changes have begun to take place in the Latin American migration map, the first of which refers to the growth and consolidation of intra-regional movements as an “everyday reality” (ECLAC, 2022), thus, we distinguish three phases.

The first corresponds to the decade prior to the pandemic; the second during COVID-19 and the impact it had on human movements at the regional level; and the third once the health emergency is declared over. Thus, in the first phase, between 2015 and 2019, a continuous reorientation of migration destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) can be

observed, even excluding the Venezuelan case. Thus, the number of international migrants grew from 8.4 million to 12.8 million, which represents an increase of over 50% for the five-year period. In reviewing the cases that concern us, we note that there was a significant increase in migration in Colombia and Peru, making them new destination countries in the region, with Colombia increasing by 10% and Peru by 3% in 2015-2019 (Inter American Development Bank [IDB], 2021).

In contrast, migration from regions other than LAC decreased from 26% to 14% of total immigrants and reached a minimum level of 9% in 2018 (IDB, 2021). There was also a decrease in immigrants in absolute terms, especially Europeans during the same period. Thus, this reorientation of migratory patterns “suggests the beginning of a transition on the part of LAC from a region that is predominantly a source of emigrants to one of a mixed character, with significant intra-regional flows” (IDB, 2021). In this context, the forced displacement of Venezuelans in the region is added, especially between 2017 and 2019, as almost 80% of this flow was destined for countries in the region. By 2021, it was estimated that nearly six million Venezuelans, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, had fled Venezuela, making it one of the largest human displacement crises in the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021a).

Later, during the pandemic, the entry restrictions to countries by different routes (land, air, and sea) were the most widespread measures globally, estimated at 80% of cases (ECLAC, 2022). In Latin America, countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile decreed different pandemic containment measures, including the closure of land borders, border controls and even militarization of borders, especially to stop the Venezuelan flow. Although migration did not stop, it did increase in complexity, especially due to the impact of forced Venezuelan mobility during this period and the closure of borders, which led to irregular entry and transit.

These movements shaped a new migratory corridor that had been in the making prior to the pandemic, which materialized during the health emergency. The western corridor ran along routes and trails exiting Venezuela, crossed Colombia and continued through western Ecuador and Peru, before entering the Andes through the border with Bolivia (Desaguadero), to reach Chile through the Colchane border crossing (Tapia & Quinteros, 2023). The route included transportation by commercial buses, hitchhiking, and long and strenuous treks. In addition, measures to detect the coronavirus made it difficult to process and issue visas and permits, preventing formalization in the labour market, making life difficult for the newcomers (Herrera, 2021).

By 2024, it is estimated that more than 7.7 million Venezuelans had left the country during this century, of which 6.5 million are considered to have remained in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main destination countries have been Colombia with 2.9 million, Peru with 1.5 million, followed by Brazil, Ecuador and Chile (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024). Thus, with the pandemic, the continent not only consolidated the intra-regional migration pattern, especially in the Venezuelan case, but also recorded an increase in mixed flows, that is, those that mix irregularity, trafficking, smuggling and refuge (ECLAC, 2022).

Sanctuary cities in the United States and the Place of Solidarity

The “Sanctuary Movement” was born in the United States in the 1980s, after religious congregations shifted their focus from assisting military personnel who practiced conscientious objection to the Vietnam War to helping Central American migrants who arrived en masse on the West Coast. Along with this migratory influx, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was enacted during the Reagan administration, which placed a criminalizing focus on the group of migrants arriving in the country, mostly from El Salvador (Varela Huerta, 2018). The arrival of almost a tenth of El Salvador's population, many of whom were precluded from properly claiming their refugee status, were heavily discriminated against. This led five religious congregations in

California and one in Arizona to publicly declare their intention to protect, defend and support Salvadoran and Guatemalan families by March 1982.

The Sanctuary Movement in the United States had several stages. The first stage was the use of churches as sanctuaries, because they were considered "socially sensitive" (Cruz Lera, 2019), a situation that diminished in the 1990s due to immigration regulation laws. In 2001, the movement became active again due to the Patriot Act, a federal law that emerged as a response to the September 11, 2001 attacks and which granted the government greater control to prevent possible terrorist attacks. These measures affected migrants due to increased surveillance, expanded detention and deportation, the imposition of restrictions on access to benefits and services, and strengthened border control. A third stage corresponds to the "sanctuary campus" movement, driven by students and faculty seeking protection for undocumented persons in secondary and higher education. These more recent movements have a broader base, no longer made up solely by religious groups but also by civil organizations and even members of the U.S. Congress.

Currently, the sanctuary movement comes from local governments and seeks to mitigate the impact of the criminalization of migrants who do not have formal status. In this sense, we can point out that the sanctuary movement has a dual origin (Varela Huerta, 2018): on the one hand, from churches that sought to shelter, protect and defend Central American migrants; and on the other, from the sanctuary cities movement, which had a more political scope, and whose purpose was not only the protection of migrants but also to promote their belonging in the communities where they had arrived.

Cruz Lera (2019) details three types of sanctuaries: rhetorical, informal and welcoming sanctuaries. Rhetorical Sanctuaries are those where there is a pro-migrant discourse, but this does not translate into instruments that really allow anti-immigrant laws to be confronted. This definition also includes the case of laws that are ultimately not used due to sporadic cases (such as cities where there is little migratory flow) or, alternatively, laws that cannot be properly applied due to budget problems. The author we follow proposes the city of Denver, Colorado, as an example of rhetorical sanctuary, where there are simultaneously laws that seek not to cooperate with ICE³, but also laws that report immigrants to immigration authorities 24 hours before they are released from local jails.

Informal sanctuaries are places where, although there is a high rate of immigrants, there are no local laws to support them, and rather informal tools are used, such as not respecting state law. In the case of San Antonio, Texas, migration is a prevalent issue due to its proximity to the border, however, internal state opposition has not allowed the enactment of pro-migration measures into law, limiting them to a tacit agreement by the police not to report - or not to ask about- the legal status of immigrants, which has created problems at the national level due to its hinderance to federal law enforcement.

Lastly, welcoming sanctuaries are places where there is indeed a dialogue between public offices and organized migrants, allowing for the implementation of pro-migrant measures with the support of both the state and civil society organizations. Within this category, different types of cities can also be recognized: "welcoming cities," "compassionate cities," and "freedom cities," all of which have sanctuary ordinances. An example of a welcoming sanctuary is the case of Chicago, which has defended and expanded its public policies for migrants, and in 2012 passed "welcoming ordinances," which allowed for services provided by the state to be extended to immigrants regardless of their legal status, including legal aid, English language courses and other inclusion programs, with the aim of raising awareness of the contributions of immigrants in the state (Cruz Lera, 2019).

In the case of Europe, a network of administrations of the major cities, called "Solidarity Cities," was established in 2016, including Barcelona, Naples, Athens, Thessaloniki, Amsterdam,

³ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Gdansk and Berlin. This circle of cities, mostly ports, sought coordination, within the legal framework, to address the so-called “refugee crisis” on the continent. Migration crises seem to break the sense of community and therefore generate a xenophobic and nationalistic reaction, which in turn generates the emergence of advocates for migrants' rights (García Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). Thus, it can be recognized that sanctuary cities are rather reactive, as they tend to arise in conjunction with a previous migration crisis, rather than being proposed from a prevention perspective.

Bauder (2017) summarizes sanctuary cities as a series of policies and practices that are generated at the local level, from municipalities and civil society, consisting of four fundamental pillars: first, that there is a legal framework at the local government level that involves the local police and administration not to collaborate with central agencies in the reporting of irregular migrants. Secondly, a discursive sphere, in which these cities promote a language and discourse based on compassion and solidarity of the local community, and the recognition of the rights of migrants and refugees to have access to a good quality of life. A third aspect is the formation of an identity of the city as a “space of belonging,” noting that these are shaped not only by local policies but also by their inhabitants. Finally, regarding scale, sanctuary cities are configured as a counter-current to national policies, because they seek to “rescale” migration policy to the local level, considering themselves as legally external to national policy.

Recently, from decolonial perspectives, there has been attention paid to the historical continuity of colonial relations in migration matters, especially due to the criminalization of people migrating from the global south to the global north. From this perspective, practices of solidarity and hospitality such as the Latin American concept of “buen vivir” (good living) and the African notion of “ubuntu” have been explored as alternative examples to the concepts of sanctuaries in the United States and Europe (Bauder et al., 2023).

Case Reviews: From Local Initiatives to Venezuelan Mobility Challenges

Cities of Solidarity and the Migrant Seal in Chile

In the review carried out in Latin America, we found that the cases associated with concepts such as “solidarity cities” or “cities of refuge” do not appear under these names but rather associated with other terms such as ‘inclusion’ and ‘integration,’ especially in national and international public policies. The ‘solidarity city’ concept was implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2004 in Latin America and was signed by 20 countries in the region. Its implementation was carried out through the Mexico Plan of Action, which sought to strengthen refugee protection in Latin America. The main lines of action were to strengthen legal frameworks for refugees and internally displaced populations, legislation concerning specific protection needs related to age and gender, as well as National Refugee Commissions and national and regional protection networks. It also included training and promotion of international refugee law and proposed the programs “solidarity borders,” “solidarity cities,” and “regional solidarity resettlement” (Varoli, 2010).

The purpose of UNHCR's Cities of Solidarity was to promote migrants' access to services such as health, employment, education and housing through inclusion in existing national programs. In the case of employment, the aim was to achieve self-sufficiency through the placement of migrants in job positions, or funding for entrepreneurship. Among the Cities of Solidarity implemented under this plan in Latin America are municipalities in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay and Argentina. In Chile, there are the municipalities of Arica, Estación Central, Santiago, La Pintana, Recoleta, Valparaíso, Concepción and Talcahuano, among others (UNHCR, 2021b).

In parallel, UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Habitat created the “Inclusive Cities” program, whose main lines of action were the generation of tools for decision-making regarding the integration of refugees and migrants at the local government level; the construction of inclusive socio-economic, urban and integration strategies; joint actions against xenophobia that promote social cohesion; the strengthening of the capacities of national and local governments, as well as civil society and other actors; and, finally, the generation of an inclusive cities program; joint actions against xenophobia that promote social cohesion, capacity building of national and local governments, as well as civil society and other actors, and, finally, the creation of a community of learning, practice, exchange and solidarity. Cities in Colombia (Cúcuta, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Villa del Rosario), Ecuador (Quito, Cantón de Manta), Argentina (San Cristóbal), Peru (Lima) and the Dominican Republic (Boca Chica) were part of this program (European Union, n.d.).

In a similar vein, we can mention the case of the implementation of the “Migrant Seal” (Sello Migrante) certification created in Chile in 2016 (Passi Livacic, 2023). This measure sought to grant greater powers to municipalities to generate plans, programs and projects focused on the attention and inclusion of the migrant population. This seal is provided by the former Department of Foreigners of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, now known as the National Migration Service (SERMIG), an entity that must provide free advice on possible improvements to be implemented by municipalities, sponsorship for activities that promote interculturality and inclusion, as well as participation in dissemination initiatives at both the national and inter-national level in conjunction with the National Migration Service (United Nations, n.d.). This initiative links the central state structure with the municipalities and functions as a certification that can be of three types or categories: 1) registered municipalities, 2) awarded or recognized municipalities, and 3) revalidated municipalities (Passi Livacic, 2023, p. 9). One of the exemplary cases was that of the municipality of Quilicura, whose work was largely advised by UNHCR. There, in 2010, the Municipal Office for Migrants and Refugees (OMMR) was inaugurated in the context of the increase in the foreign population in the municipality, from 0.82% in 2002 to 2.1% in 2012 (Thayer Correa et al., 2014).

In 2014, Quilicura, alongside the IOM and UNHCR, developed the “Plan for the reception and recognition of refugees,” with the objective of identifying the main problems in the initial incorporation and settlement process of migrant families in the commune. The significance of this study was that the problems and needs identified emerged from the migrants themselves and their experiences, with the aim of generating public policies. Thus, the municipality identified four problem areas: education, work, coexistence and habitat, and health. In the area of education, the need for measures that contribute to respect, and good coexistence was recognized, as well as the extension of these measures to other community bodies.

Regarding the issue of work, training programs were proposed for the integration of migrants into the work environment and training in labour rights, as well as legal assistance to ensure the fulfillment of their rights. The area of coexistence and habitat received the highest number of proposals, all focused on improving associativity, strengthening ties both within the migrant community itself and with the rest of the community, from an intercultural perspective. Finally, in the field of health, measures are mentioned regarding the preventive use of health services, as well as incorporating personnel into the Family Health Centres (CESFAM) who can provide mediation-oriented care between the migrant community and health professionals, to increase trust between the two.

Ecuador: From Sending to Receiving Populations and the Challenges of Reception

In Ecuador, the migratory landscape was activated mainly during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, when international treaties such as the Cartagena Agreement of 1969 gave way to

greater transit between the countries that make up the Andean Community. Valle (2017) also highlights the dollarization of Ecuador at the beginning of the century and the Colombian armed conflict that produced a forced displacement of Colombians to Ecuador. Among the nationalities that have historically emigrated to Ecuador are the countries with which it shares a border, such as Colombia and Peru; but Cuba, Haiti and China have also joined (Valle, 2017).

The 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador states that migration is a right and proposes the concept of “universal citizenship”,⁴ which was put into practice with the elimination of entry visas in the same year during the government of former President Rafael Correa (Gissi et al., 2020). However, this was a formal measure that had no effect in practice due to the lack of a clear policy and resources for its implementation (Ramírez, 2022). In 2010, along with Bolivia, Colombia and Peru, the “Migratory Statute” was signed, which allows access to both temporary and permanent visas among the members of the agreement.

Until 2017, Ecuador established within its legal framework the concept of “Latin American citizen,” which applies to people coming from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and allows them to obtain temporary residence with some restrictions, such as the cost of 250 USD, the obligation to have a passport and an apostilled criminal record, requirements that in many cases hinder the obtaining of these visas (Villamarin et al., 2022). However, with the arrival of Lenin Moreno's government in 2017, there was a return to the border securitization approach, requiring identity cards validated by regional or international organizations, passports valid for at least six months, criminal record certificates, among other documents, generating a paradoxical situation between migration policies in the country, even falling into unconstitutionality (Ramírez et al., 2017; Ramírez & Ospina, 2021).

Regarding practices in line with the promotion of social integration in Ecuador, we can mention the National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017, in the context of the re-election of Rafael Correa in 2013. This plan contemplated measures for both tourists and those seeking refugee status. This strategy had multiple points of action, in collaboration with international organizations such as the United Nations and the country's municipalities. The various actions included integration programs, the promotion of non-discrimination, socialization of current national policies, training for public officials, and facilitating the obtaining of refugee status through the deployment of brigades in border areas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

This social migration integration was initially concentrated along the Ecuador-Colombia border. The efforts were affected however by the lack of resources and infrastructure that the inhabitants experienced beforehand, which complicated the process due to the historical needs of the population in northern Ecuador (Mejía, 2013). On the other hand, measures were also implemented by private institutions, such as economic and labour training by the Economic Promotion Corporation ConQuito (Corporación de Promoción Económica ConQuito) (ConQuito, n.d.) and the implementation of shelters for migrants in transit, managed by Cáritas Ecuador, an international religious confederation (Villacis, 2019).

Another tool used by the Colombian migrant population in the Andean country was MERCOSUR visas, due to the difficulty of obtaining refugee status. In this regard, Ramírez, Ceja and Coloma (Ramírez et al., 2017) add that this option was not widely known; resulting in a lower number of migrants who obtained it than those who used other methods. The authors highlight the lack of coordination that existed with public policies focused on helping the migrant population, which was concentrated in localities on the northern border and in the capital Quito, but without nationwide coordination, and with very different operations depending on the locality and the officials deployed there.

In the case of the Ecuadorian-Peruvian border, the review indicates that it has less movement of migrants than the northern border of Ecuador, so there are fewer policies there or

⁴ It declares that all persons are subjects of law irrespective of nationality, granting, among other things, free mobility.

initiatives to help migrants, as well as social integration initiatives. However, public policies at the national level also benefited Peruvian migrants in the country. In 2011, the Permanent Migration Statute was adopted, a bilateral agreement between Ecuador and Peru that allowed for the regularization of undocumented Peruvian migrants (Valle, 2017). In 2016, the Binational Centres of Border Assistance (CEBAF by its acronym in Spanish), a joint measure of the Andean Community, implemented by the respective government of the territory of location, was implemented on this border to assist Venezuelan migrants who used the border crossing to settle in Peru (Dedios & Ruiz, 2022).

In the context of forced Venezuelan displacement, it is observed that, initially, Venezuelan citizens were able to enter Colombia with some ease, protected by the Organic Law on Human Mobility, the Immigration Statute and the UNASUR visa. This situation changed in 2018 due to the increase in flow, which led to the declaration of an emergency zone in border cities, which brought an increase in control measures. This, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated the situation of Venezuelan migrants, activating a support network that included civil society organizations, but mainly international bodies such as the IOM, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among others, whose main aid included access to food, housing and legal and psychosocial support (Suárez & Castro, 2020). Also noteworthy is the emergence of “digital solidarity” (Mantilla, 2022), which allowed for the organization of groups on social networks where Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador helped other Venezuelan migrants in the country, generating a chain of assistance, information, and recommendations for integration, as well as helping the cohesion of the group.

As can be seen in this case, practices seem to emerge—at first—from the top, that is, the central government, which activated measures in local governments. It can also be seen that when there are actions from governmental or international organizations, there are fewer initiatives from civil organizations.

Colombia: From Sender to Primary Destination of Venezuelan Displacement

Colombia is an emblematic case, as for much of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries it was primarily a country of emigration, due to economic problems and the escalation of the internal armed conflict. By 2005, it was estimated that more than three million Colombians resided outside the country (Courtis et al., 2011), rising to four million seven hundred thousand in 2012 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018a). According to 2024 data, around 4.7 million Colombians live abroad (Rodríguez, 2024). Among the regional destinations, Venezuela was one of the most important. However, in the last two decades Colombia has emerged as the leading destination for Venezuelan forced displacement, receiving almost two and a half million people.⁵ In fact, this country has absorbed “50% of the Venezuelan migratory flow and is a required passage for more than 40% of the remainder” (Rodríguez Duran & Ramos Pismataro, 2019). It was in this context that Colombia promoted migration policies focused on newcomers (Aliaga et al., 2018; Aliaga et al., 2020; Echeverry Hernández, 2012; Mejía-Madroño, 2019). For this reason, the literature search results of Sanctuary Cities practices refer to recent migration flows.

In 2017, Colombia implemented a Special Permit of Permanence (PEP) for Venezuelan migrants, which allows them to obtain temporary residence free of charge, with access to healthcare, work and education. At the time of the literature review, the permit had a duration of 90 days and was automatically extendable for two years. The PEP required legal entry, no criminal record and no current expulsion or deportation orders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018b). That same year, the Border Mobility Card (TMF) was also created, which allowed transit between the

⁵ <https://www.r4v.info/es/colombia>

Colombian-Venezuelan border for Venezuelan citizens who frequently crossed to the Colombian side. This card did not allow them to work regularly, nor to access healthcare or educational benefits in Colombia. Since 2018, the issuance of this document has been suspended (Koechlin & Eguren Rodríguez, 2018).

During the pandemic, the Special Permit of Permanence for the Promotion of Formalization (PEPFF) was also implemented, which made it possible to access regularization with a work contract of up to two years, a measure exclusively for migrants in an irregular situation (excluding those who are in the country with the PEP or those who are within the permitted period of stay). The Temporary Protection Statute was also created, comprising the Single Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RUMV), a process aimed at registering all Venezuelan migrants in Colombian territory, regardless of their migration status. Finally, the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) was implemented, an identification document that allowed migrants to access basic services for a ten-year period while they applied for permanent residency. The intention of this statute was to replace the previous permits, granting permanence in the country to regular migrants who entered Colombian territory until January 2021, as well as to migrants who entered through authorized crossings up to two years after the statute's implementation, in November 2023⁶ (Bitar, 2022).

In the Colombian case, national public policies on migration have a focus on the regularization and integration of immigrants, mainly Venezuelans. This is done through measures that allow this population to access social services in education, health and other types of assistance, in addition to training for employment and entrepreneurship. This is especially visible in the efforts made by the municipality of Bogotá, with the implementation of the Migrant Attention Centres (CAM),⁷ as well as programs such as "Venezuela Aporta" (Venezuela Contributes) which sought to highlight the contributions of the Venezuelan population in Bogotá, to reduce cases of xenophobic discrimination.⁸

Colombia also subscribed to the Mexico Action Plan and is part of UNHCR's "Borders of Solidarity" program along with Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama, on account of that, initiatives were also carried out to help the refugee population from Venezuela. These international policies focused on the border area where legal advice, access to basic necessities such as food, housing, basic medical care and other services are provided (UNHCR, 2019). According to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document, almost half of the aid received by migrants in Colombia came from the government, similar to the situation in Ecuador, where the articulation of solidarity practices starts at the central level (Bitar, 2022).

However, as in Ecuador, along with integration and regularization measures, other measures were implemented aimed at restricting the entry of Venezuelan citizens into Colombian territory, such as the creation of the Special Migratory Group, a border control police unit comprised of the National Police, the National Tax and Customs Department, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare and Migration Colombia, with the aim of controlling smuggling at the border, in addition to the use of the TMF and the PEP (Gissi et al., 2020). These measures generated criticisms of the registration process and implementation of the PPT, which, although it protected most Venezuelan migrants in Colombian territory, it restricted access to permits for those who did not meet the requirements of having entered the country by a certain date (Ramírez & Ospina, 2021). This situation left a significant number of people in an irregular situation without recourse to access a status with greater rights.

⁶ <https://help.unhcr.org/colombia/regularizacion-para-personas-venezolanas/>

⁷ <https://bogota.gov.co/mi-ciudad/teusaquillo/centro-de-servicios-integrales-para-venezolanos-en-teusaquillo>

⁸ <https://www.elnuevosiglo.com.co/nacion/bogota-aumenta-oferta-para-atender-migrantes>

Peru and Bolivia: Between Destination and Transit of Venezuelan Displacement

Similarly to Colombia, Peru experienced a novel situation with the increase in immigration to the country, as it was the first time it faced an influx of the magnitude of the Venezuelan forced displacement. In fact, by 2019, it was the second largest recipient of this population, accounting for 50% of Venezuelans outside their country along with Colombia (Sacristán-Rodríguez & Llanez Anaya, 2022). Currently, it is estimated that more than 1.5 million people from that country have arrived in Peru, making it the second largest migratory destination in Latin America.⁹ However, as Peru is mainly an expelling country, its migration policy was outdated, even with the creation of a new law in 2015 that was not implemented due to a lack of regulations (Blouin & Freier, 2019). In 2017, with the new Migration Law, the Peruvian government implemented a Temporary Permit of Permanence (PTP) card for Venezuelan citizens, which allowed beneficiaries to access employment, healthcare, education, banking institutions, among other things. This program was even highlighted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which categorized it as an example for the region (Parent, 2017). However, in a dichotomous manner, the new Migration Law also implemented an increase in the expulsion period and allowed the intervention of the Peruvian National Police to apply sanctions, for which it could be considered a control policy with a “humanitarian face” (Domenech, 2013); this is again in line with what has been seen in other countries in the Andean region.

In 2020, a new type of permit, the Temporary Permit of Permanence Card (CPP), was implemented, which provided a temporary identity document for people in irregular situations in the country. Then, in 2021, Peruvian migration policy changed again, this time establishing facilities for the regularization of children and adolescents and an extension of the foreigner's card. This allowed those who did not yet have a residence permit, but who had applied for it, to obtain it (Dedios & Ruiz, 2022).

Regarding integration measures, in the first instance—as mentioned in the case of Ecuador—these were implemented at the border between Ecuador and Peru with the Binational Centre for Border Attention (CEBAF), in coordination with the Superintendent of Migration, the National Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the IOM, UNHCR, the Red Cross, among other entities. The busiest CEBAF was the one in Tumbes, which helped Venezuelan migrants obtain refugee status and other humanitarian aid, but did not coordinate with other organizations to provide medium- or long-term assistance (Dedios & Ruiz, 2022). During the pandemic, the CEBAFs remained closed. Public policy focused on expanding existing programs for the Peruvian population and did not necessarily create new measures specifically for the migrant population.

At the local level, the practices were focused on Lima, which is the city with the largest number of Venezuelan migrants in the country, making up 10% of the total population (Infobae, 2022). In addition to the expansion of programs such as Vaso de Leche¹⁰ (Glass of Milk), Lima te cuida¹¹ (Lima takes care of you), and Manos a la Olla¹² (All hands on the pots), assistance was provided for at-risk populations, such as homeless people, victims of gender-based violence, and LGBTIQ+ people. Labour market insertion was promoted through entrepreneurship (International Labour Organization, 2020) with the help of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the facilitation of access to municipal public services through the Office of the Migrant Neighbour,

⁹ <https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes>

¹⁰ Food assistance program targeting children aged 0-6 years and pregnant mothers.

¹¹ Program implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic that provided information, humanitarian aid and psychological support to the population of Lima.

¹² Program of municipal support to “common pots” (soup kitchens) managed by civil society organizations, also in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic.

implemented with the help of the Mayors Migration Council and its Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Response to the Pandemic¹³ (Dedios & Ruiz, 2022).

Despite the multiplicity of recognized good practices, the UNDP report on recent migration to Peru (Dedios & Ruiz, 2022) also pointed out the lack of coordination between global, national, and local actors. This affected the effective use of all the implemented measures, hindering their continuity over time and their proper documentation for evaluation.

Finally, within the Andean case we have Bolivia, which, like the other countries in the region, has seen a considerable increase in migration in recent years, also in relation to the Venezuelan migration crisis. However, it has been the country that has received the least amount of migration, as it has been treated as a transit or passage country. It is estimated that until 2019, there were around seven thousand Venezuelans in Bolivia (Gissi et al., 2021), rising to 15 thousand by July 2022 (R4V, 2022). Within the literature review, Bolivia is the country with the least amount of information available. There are top-down initiatives, such as the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2023-2024, a joint effort by UNHCR and IOM through the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V). This is in conjunction with civil society organizations, including initiatives in education, health, food security, transport, integration, sanitation and hygiene, among others.¹⁴

Conclusions

The review of cases and policies in Latin America that resemble the sanctuary cities of the global North highlights the differences and distances that exist between the two spaces. The review shows that the cases most similar to sanctuaries are those framed within the Solidarity Cities program led by UNHCR, which, unlike in the United States, emerge as a series of best practices in the form of international-local collaboration in the participating countries. The emphasis is on securing rights for migrants that are already enshrined by states. In general, these are initiatives that arise fundamentally through two channels: the first, from international organizations to countries and cities, from the “top down”; and the second, from local social organizations such as municipalities, NGOs and civil society organizations, or “bottom-up.” The former depend on political will in each case, while the latter tend to be rather atomized and temporary. Of the latter, there is often little or very scattered information and a lack of records.

The cases reviewed (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru) are countries that have subscribed to and been part of international regulations for the integration of migrant and refugee populations, which—to some extent—has allowed the local government-central government dichotomies to not have the same characteristics that existed in the sanctuary cities of the United States. This is also in line with Godoy and Bauder (2021), who recognize certain characteristics of migration policies in the global south: a prevalence of top-down initiatives, in which supranational organizations generate links with local governments and civil society organizations. Added to this is the continued activity of faith-based organizations, similar to the origins of the “sanctuary cities” movement in the United States, although the authors note that the literature uses other types of terminology such as “hospitality” and “interculturality.”

The cases reviewed have elements in common as well as differences that help to explain the findings. Regarding the former, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia are countries that until the last few decades were fundamentally expellers of population. However, from 2010 onwards, the first three have become receiving countries, especially of the Venezuelan forced displacement. In other words, in a very short time the situation was reversed, and although the

¹³ In English: Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response.

¹⁴ <https://bolivia.iom.int/news/acnur-y-oim-presentaron-el-plan-de-respuesta-para-refugiados-y-migrantes-de-venezuela-2023-2024-rmrp-para-bolivia>

balances remain negative, it's undeniable that the Venezuelan exodus determined the current migration landscape. This was compounded by the impact of the pandemic and health control measures on human mobility, which made the situation more vulnerable and precarious. The humanitarian crisis produced by the congruence of both phenomena determined the need to incorporate humanitarian measures on the routes and in border cities, as well as residence permits and entry to the territories.

In the case of Chile, since the 1990s, it has been on the migration map with an initial increase in border migration, followed by Caribbean and cross- border migration in the first decades of the current century. The concentration of foreign populations in some of the cities and municipalities of the country imposed the challenge of incorporating strategies and practices of inclusion and interculturality, in accordance with the political will of the authorities in office. For its part, Bolivia, with a long history of emigration and little immigration, became a transit point for Venezuelan forced displacement during the pandemic.

What is observed in the cases reviewed is a lack of preparation to address the challenges of immigration in general and of the Venezuelan forced displacement in particular. The intervention of global organizations such as UNHCR and IOM, as well as the action of churches and NGOs, have made it possible to address this situation in a context that favoured the emergence of xenophobic and racist outbreaks. On the other hand, we identified few civil society or local government initiatives similar to those of sanctuary cities in the United States. However, we also noted an under-recording in the information, given that many social organizations carry out inclusion initiatives, but leave little record of these actions and generally are very atomized. This situation opens a future opportunity to consider social networks, given that in them we find information that is brief and in audiovisual format on different initiatives. Some seek to establish elements of sanctuaries, such as denouncing situations of injustice, while others promote the human rights values of migrants.

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