edição on-line
TEXTOS & DEBATES
Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociedade e Fronteira (PPGSOF) e do Centro de Ciências Humanas (CCH) da Universidade Federal de Roraima (UFRR)

Operation Welcome and Integration of Venezuelan Migrants in Brazil: Relevance and Challenges of the Public Policy

Nathan Pagliari Raposo de Oliveira de Souza
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9992-3760
Mestre em População, Território e Estatísticas Públicas (ENCE/IBGE), bacharel em Relações Internacionais (UFRRJ) e licenciado em Geografia (UERJ);
https://lattes.cnpq.br/7413232142350616
E-mail: nathanpagliari6@gmail.com.

Vicente Neves da Silva Ribeiro
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3005-6944
Doutor em História pela Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). Professor Associado da Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS). Professor permanente do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ensino de História da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (ProfHistória/UFSC).
http://lattes.cnpq.br/8149128579717632
E-mail: vicente@uffs.edu.br.

César Augusto Marques da Silva
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4935-112X
Coordenador-geral adjunto da Escola Nacional de Ciências Estatísticas (ENCE/IBGE) e docente permanente do Programa de Pós-Graduação em População, Território e Estatísticas Públicas. Doutor em Demografia pela UNICAMP, com pós-doutorado pela Universidade de Viena.
http://lattes.cnpq.br/3609913115310529
E-mail:cesar.m.silva@ibge.gov.br.

Abstract
This article analyzes the relevance and challenges of Operation Welcome (Operação Acolhida), Brazil's main public policy for receiving and relocating Venezuelan migrants and refugees. Drawing on debates about migratory social networks, migratory corridors, and multiterritoriality, it examines how displaced Venezuelans are redistributed across the country and integrated into local communities. Based on data on employment, education, and social protection, it highlights the central role of social networks in integration and the formation of migratory chains. Although internationally recognized, the policy faces limitations in intergovernmental coordination and was instrumentalized for political-ideological purposes. The article reflects on the construction of transnational spaces in Brazilian cities and underscores the need for greater migrant participation in public policymaking.
Keywords: Venezuelan migration; Operation Welcome; Internal relocation.

Resumo
Este artigo analisa a relevância e os desafios da Operação Acolhida, principal política pública brasileira de recepção e interiorização de migrantes e refugiados venezuelanos. A partir dos debates sobre redes sociais migratórias, corredores migratórios e multiterritorialidade, examina como os venezuelanos deslocados são redistribuídos pelo país e integrados às comunidades locais. Com base em dados de emprego, educação e proteção social, destaca o papel central das redes sociais na integração e na formação de cadeias migratórias. Embora reconhecida internacionalmente, a política enfrenta limitações na coordenação intergovernamental e foi instrumentalizada para fins político-ideológicos. O artigo reflete sobre a construção de espaços transnacionais nas cidades brasileiras e aponta a necessidade de maior participação dos migrantes nas políticas públicas.
Palavras-chave: Migração venezuelana; Operação Acolhida; Interiorização.

Resumen
Este artículo analiza la relevancia y los desafíos de la Operación Acogida, principal política pública brasileña de recepción e interiorización de migrantes y refugiados venezolanos. A partir de debates sobre redes sociales migratorias, corredores migratorios y multiterritorialidad, examina cómo los venezolanos desplazados son redistribuidos por el país e integrados en las comunidades locales. Con base en datos de empleo, educación y protección social, destaca el papel central de las redes sociales en la integración y en la formación de cadenas migratorias. Aunque reconocida internacionalmente, la política enfrenta limitaciones en la coordinación intergubernamental y fue instrumentalizada con fines político-ideológicos. El artículo reflexiona sobre la construcción de espacios transnacionales en las ciudades brasileñas y señala la necesidad de mayor participación de los migrantes en las políticas públicas.
Palabras clave: Migración venezolana; Operación Acogida; Interiorización.

1 Introduction

Population displacement across borders has numerous origins, experiences, and motivations, revealing human trajectories that intersect with issues of human rights, social class, gender, political and religious positions, nationality, and ethnicity. Migration encompasses various complex factors

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

that, to some extent, relate to the social, economic, and institutional vulnerabilities to which populations are subjected.

In recent years, South America has become the setting for a significant influx of Venezuelan migrants and refugees who, in the face of the deterioration of living conditions in their country, have turned to migration as part of a broader social context in search of better survival opportunities elsewhere.

The recent Venezuelan emigration has gained international visibility and mobilized numerous joint responses by governments, international organizations, and civil society. The political, social, and economic crisis in Venezuela has generated a substantial population exodus—the largest in the recent history of Latin America. Official data from the United Nations (UN) estimate that more than 7.89 million Venezuelans have left their country (nearly 25% of the total Venezuelan population) between the onset of the crisis and November 2024.

Venezuelan citizens have migrated to several countries in the region, especially to Colombia and Peru, but also to Brazil, which is the Latin American country that has, to date, granted refugee status to the highest number of these migrants. According to the UN, Brazil ranks third among the countries that have received the largest numbers of Venezuelan migrants. By November 2024, more than 626,000 individuals had entered Brazil, and by June of the same year, more than 132,000 had been recognized by the Brazilian state as refugees, according to the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE).

Venezuelan migration allows for the reproduction of diverse forms of sociability in destination locations and the possibility of accessing and connecting diverse territories in a network. Thus, migrants and refugees function as social reproducers of their communities of origin in other territories, in order to expand and reconfigure their origin society in new spatialities.

This article analyzes the relevance and challenges of Operation Welcome (Operação Acolhida), Brazil's main public policy for receiving and internally relocating Venezuelan migrants and refugees, examining how state-directed migration shapes processes of territorial integration and the formation of migratory corridors. Drawing on secondary data from four official sources — the Annual Report on Social Information (RAIS), Brazil's Unified Social Registry (CadÚnico), the Brazilian School Census (Censo Escolar), and the Operation Welcome Interiorization Dashboard —

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

the article traces patterns of labor market insertion, educational enrollment, and access to social protection among relocated Venezuelans across Brazilian regions.

While existing studies have examined Operation Welcome primarily through legal and humanitarian lenses (Jarochinski Silva & Baeninger, 2022; Ramos, 2020), this article contributes by integrating empirical evidence on relocation outcomes with theoretical frameworks of multiterritoriality (Haesbaert, 2003), migratory social networks (Massey et al., 1987), and directed migration (Baeninger, 2018). In doing so, it argues that Operation Welcome functions not only as a humanitarian instrument but as a spatial governance mechanism that produces structured migratory corridors — particularly between northern entry points and southern labor markets — while simultaneously creating conditions for the emergence of Venezuelan multiterritorialities in Brazilian cities.

Methodologically, the article adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on four publicly available administrative datasets — RAIS (formal employment), CadÚnico (social program registration), Censo Escolar (school enrollment), and the Operation Welcome Interiorization Dashboard (relocation flows) — covering the period from 2016 to 2024. The analysis identifies spatial patterns of Venezuelan integration across Brazilian regions, interpreted through the theoretical framework presented.

The article proceeds as follows: Section 2 reviews Brazilian migration policy and legal frameworks for Venezuelan reception. Section 3 describes Operation Welcome and its relocation modalities. Section 4 presents the theoretical framework. Section 5 analyzes relocation flows, labor market integration, school enrollment, and social protection access. Section 6 addresses controversies and challenges. Final considerations synthesize the argument and point to future research directions.

2 Brazilian Migration Policy and Legal Frameworks for the Reception of the Venezuelan Population

Brazil's migration policy underwent a significant transformation over the past two decades. The Foreigners' Statute (Law No. 6,815/1980), enacted during the military regime, held a securitized view of migration: it emphasized prohibitive aspects, treated migrants as potential threats to national stability, and was not centered on the defense of migrants' rights (Souza, 2025). This framework became increasingly inadequate as Brazil transitioned from a predominantly emigrant-sending nation to a significant destination country. With the mass arrival of Haitians and Syrians in the early 2010s,

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

political pressure mounted for updated legislation that would recognize migrants as rights-bearing individuals rather than as threats to national order (Oliveira, 2017). The result was Law No. 13,445/2017 — the Brazilian Migration Law — which established the guarantee of human rights regardless of nationality as its central principle (Ramos, 2020), marking a paradigmatic shift from national security to human rights as the foundation of migration governance.

As the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela deepened from the mid-2010s onward, the profiles of migrants arriving in Brazil became increasingly diverse and the northern border — particularly the state of Roraima — began to concentrate entry flows (Jarochinski Silva & Baeninger, 2022). This new reality exposed the limits of even the recently enacted Migration Law and demanded specific policy responses. The Venezuelan crisis thus acted as a stress test for Brazil's new migration governance framework, revealing both its advances and its implementation gaps.

In response, the federal government issued Provisional Measure No. 820 in February 2018, establishing emergency assistance measures for individuals in situations of vulnerability due to humanitarian migratory crises. Although not explicitly naming Venezuela, the measure addressed the situation implicitly; Decree No. 9,285, issued the same day, specifically recognized the vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants on Brazilian territory. The Provisional Measure was subsequently converted into Law No. 13,684 of June 21, 2018, which formally instituted a coordinated federal response — encompassing social protection, healthcare, education, and territorial redistribution — and serves as the direct legal foundation for Operation Welcome.

This legislative trajectory is analytically significant beyond its procedural dimension. The shift from the Foreigners' Statute to the Migration Law, and from the Migration Law to the emergency framework of Operation Welcome, reflects a broader tension between rights-based and security-based approaches to migration governance — a tension that, as this article argues, is reproduced within Operation Welcome itself, most visibly in its militarized implementation and in its instrumentalization for ideological purposes during the Bolsonaro administration.

3 Operation Welcome: A Humanitarian Policy Response

The main public policy of the Brazilian government concerning Venezuelans migrating to Brazil is Operation Welcome (Operação Acolhida), created by the already cited Provisional Measure No. 820/2018 and later converted by the National Congress into Law No. 13,684/2018. It is a

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

humanitarian policy focused on emergency assistance actions for receiving individuals in situations of vulnerability due to migratory flows triggered by humanitarian crises. It also established the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, regulated by Decree No. 9,970/2019. Operation Welcome is implemented and coordinated by the federal government through the Armed Forces, in partnership with UN agencies, international organizations, civil society organizations, and private entities. The program operates through three main pillars: border control, shelter provision, and the internal relocation of migrants.

As of 2024, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) serves as the coordinator of the Federal Subcommittee for the Reception and Internal Relocation of Migrants in Situations of Vulnerability. The subcommittee facilitates cooperation in the services provided in shelters in the state of Roraima and in the internal relocation strategy, organized alongside partner agencies, state governments, and municipalities throughout the country.

The internal relocation strategy aims to decentralize service demands by redirecting them to areas with greater infrastructure. The arrival of a large number of Venezuelans in the small town of Pacaraima (state of Roraima), a region with low population density, led to insecurity, fear, rejection, and xenophobia toward migrants among the local population. It also caused congestion and overburdening of public services not only in that city but across the entire state of Roraima. According to the last two Brazilian censuses, the population of the state increased from 451,227 in 2010 to 636,707 in 2022—an increase of 41.1%.

3.1 Modalities of Internal Relocation

With the aim of mitigating the strain on the state of Roraima, Operation Welcome offers migrants the strategy of internal relocation. This strategy consists of transferring individuals—in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through a Technical Cooperation Agreement—to various municipalities in other states across Brazil in search of new life opportunities and socioeconomic inclusion. Internal relocation introduces new localities and territorialities into the migratory context. There are four possible modalities for migrants wishing to participate in the relocation process: (I) transfer from shelters in Roraima to reception and integration centers in destination cities (institutional modality: shelter-to-shelter); (II) family reunification; (III) social reunion; and (IV) job offer placement.

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

The institutional modality involves the support and funding of reception and integration centers (CAIs) across Brazil. In this modality, Venezuelan migrants/refugees are transferred from a shelter operated by Operation Welcome in Roraima to shelters operating in other regions of the country. These CAIs serve as temporary housing facilities (typically up to three months) that support the socioeconomic integration of individuals in the destination cities, by enrolling children in preschools and schools, offering Portuguese and vocational courses to adults, engaging employers and creating job opportunities for the sheltered population, referring them to healthcare and social protection services, and assisting in the search for permanent housing.

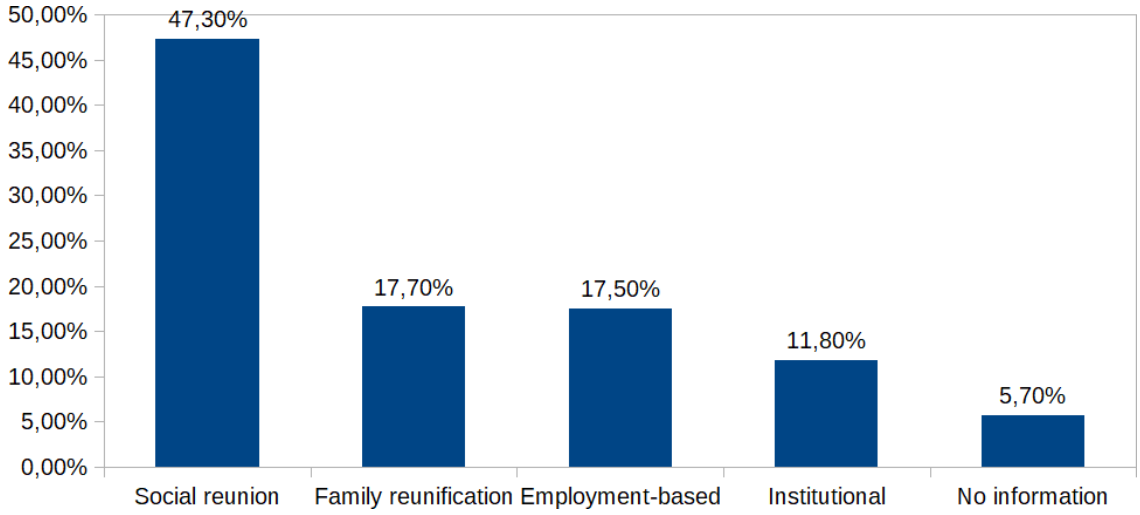
The social reunion modality is composed of migrants and refugees who wish to reunite with individuals with whom they have bonds of friendship or affection, or with family members whose kinship cannot be documented—unlike the family reunification modality, which requires proof of familial ties and represents the second most common method of relocation. In both cases, hosts must demonstrate the ability to provide for the housing and sustenance of those being received in the destination areas.

The job offer modality involves the relocation of migrants and refugees who have received confirmed job opportunities from Brazilian companies in various regions. The selected migrants are supported by Operation Welcome in their travel to the municipality where they will be employed. To prevent labor exploitation, background checks are conducted on the hiring companies. Meatpacking companies in southern Brazil—particularly in western Santa Catarina—stand out as major recruiters in this modality. As Ribeiro and Betoni (2025) document, some of these companies maintain permanent representatives inside Operation Welcome's coordination centers in Boa Vista, actively selecting workers before relocation. This practice illustrates what Demétrio and Baeninger (2023) term humanitarian recruitment: a process in which humanitarian infrastructure functions simultaneously as a labor recruitment platform, connecting vulnerable migrants with labor-intensive industries. Graphic 1 shows the distribution of Venezuelan migrants and refugees relocated under each modality.

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

Graphic 1: Interiorization of Venezuelans by Operation Welcome by relocation modality (2018 – March 2025)



Source: Interiorization Dashboard – Operation Welcome. Accessed on May 5, 2025.

Graphic 1 indicates that by March 2025, 147,013 individuals had been relocated through Operation Welcome. Of these, 47.3% were relocated through the social reunion modality, 17.7% through family reunification, 17.5% through job offer placement in other regions of the country, and 11.8% through the institutional modality. There are also cases with missing information, totaling 5.7%.

The prevalence of the social reunion, family reunification, and job offer modalities highlights the important role of social networks—elements of interaction, bonds, and relationships built between people before, during, and after the migratory process—which serve as strategies for reducing the risks associated with forced migration and for supporting integration and settlement in the destination (Souza, 2025; Massey et al., 1987). Yet the growing weight of the job offer modality also reveals a structural feature that extends beyond network dynamics: it reflects a deliberate articulation between humanitarian governance and labor market demands (Demétrio & Baeninger, 2023; Baeninger, 2018), constitutive of the policy's design and outcomes.

4 Theoretical Framework

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

Although multiple and often undefined, definitions of migration primarily refer to people in movement across space, which brings the topic closer to studies focused on the spatial dimensions of migration, considering how space is transformed, appropriated, and recreated.

Migration involves both the expulsion of populations from a given space and the absorption of flows and the spatial transformations they generate in the destination area (Marandola Jr., 2011). These processes have increasingly been understood through their relationship to territory—that is, the delimitation, appropriation, or occupation of space through power relations in which cultural, historical, symbolic, political, and economic aspects are relevant for characterizing the dynamics present in space, whether defined by physical borders or fluid boundaries.

Thinking about migration from this perspective makes it possible to understand it as a process of articulation between two territories — origin and destination (Marandola Jr., 2011) — which resonates with Canales (2015), for whom migrants act as social reproducers of their original communities within new spaces, extending and reconfiguring them in new spatialities.

Unlike early 20th-century migratory flows, contemporary migration enables the formation of a transnational field of meaning and collective action, where globalization facilitates both the material and imaginary construction of communities beyond their places of origin (García Canclini, 1999).

According to Canales (2015), international migration is part of a broader process of social reproduction in contemporary society. It activates mechanisms of integration and articulation between migrants, their communities of origin, and the host societies. This creates a global scenario in which local social reproduction processes in the communities of origin are intertwined with those in the destination regions.

For Rogerio Haesbaert (2003), this articulation configures what he terms networked reterritorialization, in which migrants are capable of inhabiting and producing more than one territory simultaneously. Displacement thus enables the reconstruction of the original territory in a singular way by individuals, social groups, or migrant institutions. The reproduction of multiple forms of sociability in the destination territory—which allows migrants to access and connect with multiple spaces—is what Haesbaert calls multiterritoriality.

The locus of connection in contemporary migration shifts from a local-to-local model to global spatialities, challenging methodological nationalism and giving rise to the idea of fluid frontiers. The reproduction of sociabilities from communities of origin — integrated with those in the destination

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448



Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

— becomes possible through the social relationships established between people, operating as a strategy to reduce the risks and uncertainties of migration and to enhance the prospects for integration.

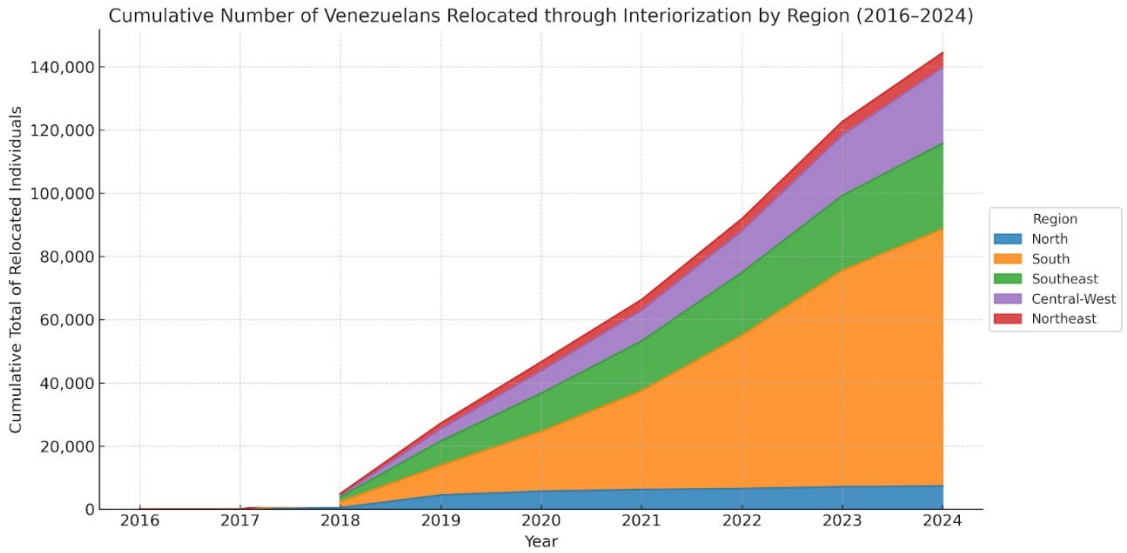
As social networks consolidate throughout the migratory process, they give rise to a form of human social capital capable of channeling flows toward specific areas, forming long-lasting migratory chains (Massey et al., 1987).

According to Massey et al. (1987), the conditions that initiate migration are often different from those that sustain it over time. While structural changes in origin and destination societies may give rise to international migration flows, social networks act to stabilize these flows and, over time, transform them into mass movements.

5 Social Networks, Internal Relocation, and Venezuelan Migratory Corridors in Southern Brazil

As social networks strengthen and robust human social capital is established in certain regions, migration flows—initially stimulated by a state initiative, in this case Operation Welcome—begin to be sustained and expanded through self-initiated movements. Baeninger (2018) interprets the direction of flows toward regions with greater labor demand as directed migration: a state policy that regulates the migratory process in accordance with the needs of the domestic labor market. Southern Brazil—a region of industrial growth, especially in food processing—has stood out since 2018 as the primary recipient of Venezuelans relocated through Operation Welcome, as illustrated in Graphic 2.

Graphic 2: Cumulative number of Venezuelans relocated through internal relocation by region (2016–2024)



Source: Interiorization Dashboard – Operation Welcome. Accessed on May 5, 2025.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448
Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

As flows are directed toward specific areas, transnational articulations emerge between two territories that are not necessarily contiguous (Haesbaert, 2003; Canales, 2015). Over time, with the formation of sustained migratory chains, interactions between the sociabilities of the origin and those of the destination intensify. Critically, however, these are not articulations between equals: they are produced within a highly asymmetric structure of mobility governance in which the Brazilian state, the Armed Forces, UN agencies, religious institutions, and private companies each play distinct roles in shaping where migrants go, in what conditions they arrive, and into which labor niches they are inserted (Demétrio, Jarochinski Silva & Baeninger, 2025).

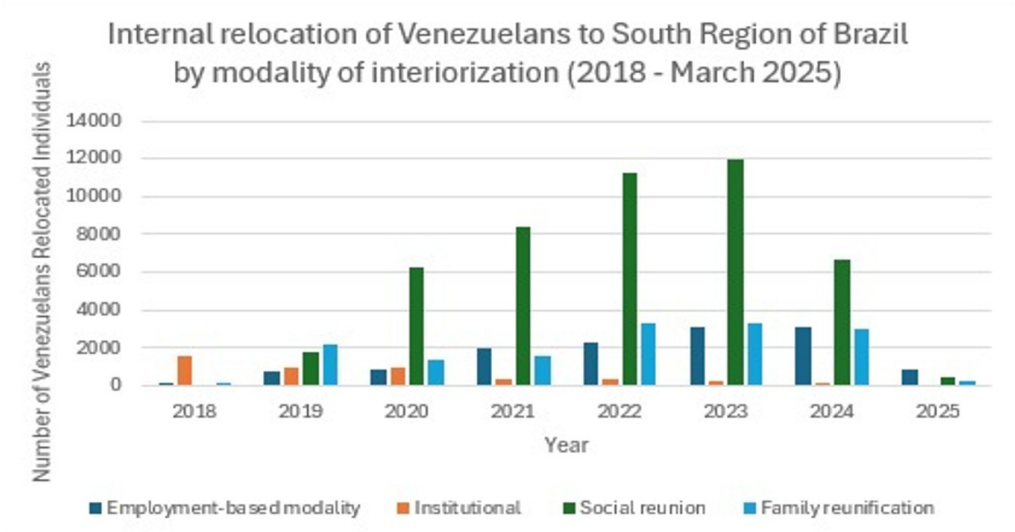
This governance structure produces a specific pattern of territorial integration, best understood alongside the dynamics of social networks and multiterritoriality. In western Santa Catarina, which received about half of all relocations to the state between 2018 and 2024, the concentration of Venezuelan workers in the meatpacking sector reflects the active presence of agro-industrial companies within Operation Welcome's coordination infrastructure, recruiting workers prior to relocation through the job offer modality (Ribeiro & Betoni, 2025). The result is what Ribeiro and Betoni (2025) describe as a tension between mobility and immobility: migrants are territorially mobile but sectorally immobile, channeled into specific segments of the labor market by linguistic, racial, and cultural barriers.

Given that the South has become the region with the highest concentration of relocated Venezuelans—and also has a high demand for labor—Graphic 3 illustrates how the profile of relocation modalities to this region has evolved over time.

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

Graphic 3: Interiorization of Venezuelans to the South region of Brazil by relocation modality (2018 – March 2025)



Source: Interiorization Dashboard – Operation Welcome. Accessed on May 5, 2025.

As shown in Graphic 3, as the volume of relocated migrants increased in the South, the institutional modality—which had been predominant in 2018—gradually declined, while modalities influenced more directly by migrants' own networks became more prevalent. This shift suggests that Operation Welcome's initial role as a state-directed pipeline gave way to a self-sustaining migratory corridor — defined by the IOM (2020) as the accumulation of migration flows over time between a specific origin and destination — in which the infrastructure built by the policy was appropriated by migrants themselves to organize subsequent relocations.

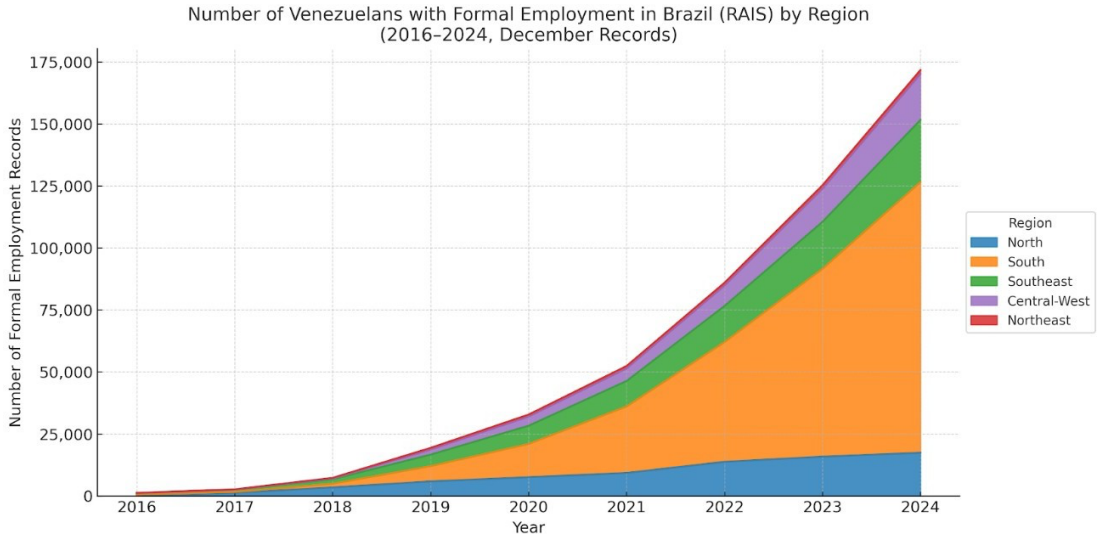
Just as the integration of sociabilities from origin and destination spaces reflects transnational aspects, migratory corridors should not be seen as merely one-directional or binary movements: they are transnational arenas of contestation, defined by unequal power relations and constant transformation, emerging from the tension between a global space produced through relationships and a lived space, redefined daily (Lefebvre, 1991).

Graphic 4 highlights the growth in formal labor market participation of Venezuelans in southern Brazil—a region with high demand and turnover in industrial labor, especially in meatpacking plants.

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

Graphic 4: Number of Venezuelans with formal employment in Brazil (RAIS) by region (2016–2024, December records)

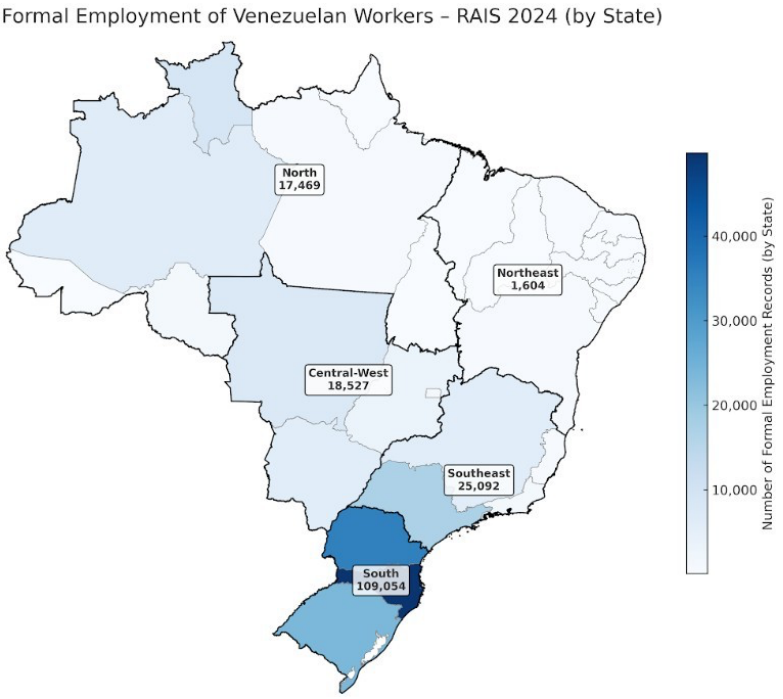


Source: RAIS (Annual Report on Social Information). Ministry of Labor – December data.

Map 1 reinforces the concentration of formal employment in the South in 2024, a trend that has been evident since the beginning of the relocation process in 2018.

Map 1: Venezuelan workers with formal employment – RAIS 2024 (by State)

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.



Source: RAIS (Annual Report on Social Information). Ministry of Labor.

The spatial concentration of formal employment in the South — and particularly in western Santa Catarina, which by 2024 accounted for the largest share of Venezuelan workers with formal employment contracts in the country, with approximately 23,200 jobs, of which 55% were in the meatpacking sector (Ribeiro & Betoni, 2025) — illuminates the specific character of Venezuelan multiterritoriality in Brazil. Haesbaert's (2003) concept of multiterritoriality describes the capacity of migrants to simultaneously inhabit and produce more than one territory. In the case of Venezuelan workers in the South, however, this multiterritoriality is partly constrained: the territories they inhabit in Brazil are largely defined by labor market segmentation, with their spatial insertion shaped more by the demands of specific industries than by autonomous territorial choices. This does not negate the agency of migrants in building social ties, forming communities, and constructing transnational identities — but it contextualizes that agency within a structure of governance that conditions the terms of their territorial integration.

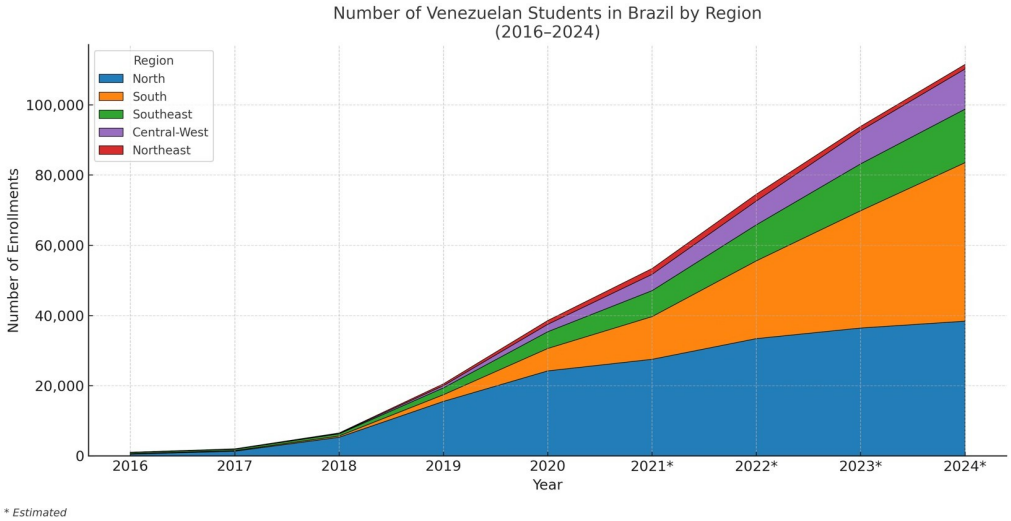
The integration of the Venezuelan population in host regions involves spheres of social life beyond employment alone. Considering that most internal relocations are composed of families, and, as noted by Stark and Taylor (1989), migration tends to involve households rather than individuals, a

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

significant portion of those relocated—comprising children and adolescents—enter the Brazilian school system either upon arrival through the state of Roraima or after being internally relocated. Graphic 5 shows the number of Venezuelan students in Brazil by region from 2016 to 2024.

Graphic 5: Number of Venezuelan students in Brazil by region (2016 – 2024)



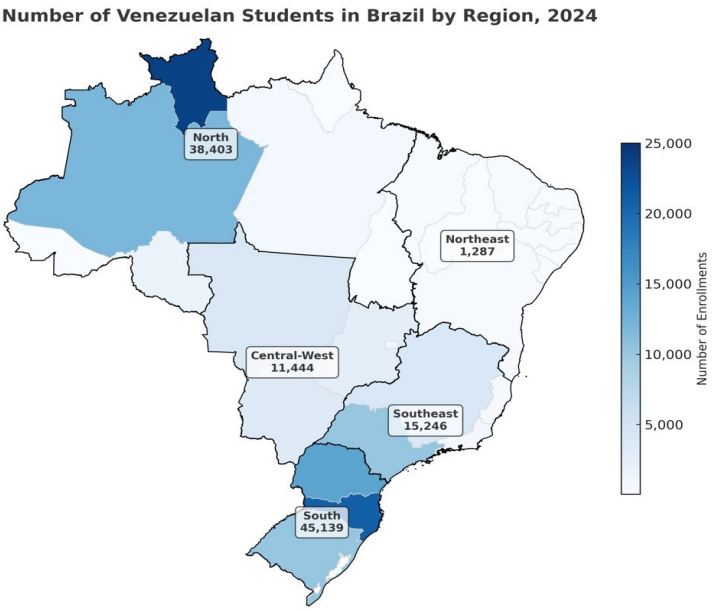
Source: Censo Escolar (Brazilian School Census). Ministry of Education.

Given that Venezuelans are primarily concentrated in the North and South regions—the former due to geographic proximity to the border, and the latter because of the higher number of internal relocations—Map 2 shows that, in 2024, the number of school enrollments of Venezuelan students was greater in these two regions.

Map 2: Number of Venezuelan students in Brazil by region, 2024

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.



Source: Censo Escolar (Brazilian School Census). Ministry of Education.

The concentration of Venezuelan student enrollments in the North and South reflects two structurally distinct processes. In the North, enrollments are driven by the spontaneous arrival of families at the Roraima border awaiting documentation or relocation. In the South, their growth — accelerating from 2019 onward — is temporally consistent with peak interiorization flows recorded in 2018 and 2019, suggesting that educational integration follows the spatial logic of the policy. More significantly, families enrolling children in local schools signal an intention to remain, evidencing the progressive territorial stabilization of Venezuelan communities in the primary destinations of directed migration.

6 Operation Welcome: Controversies and Challenges

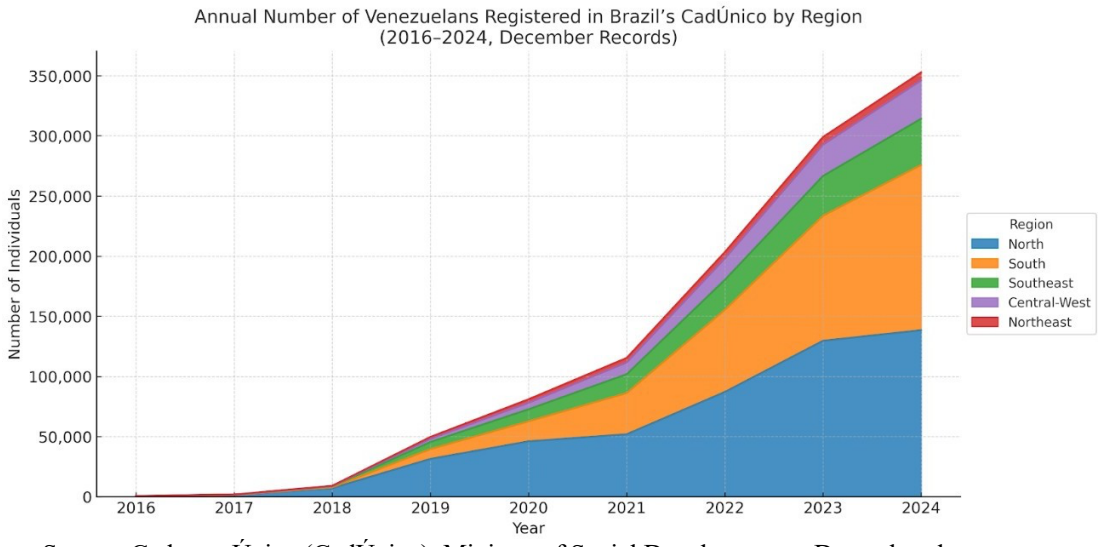
Although important and considered by UNHCR as a good practice by the Brazilian State in welcoming Venezuelans, Operation Welcome seems to function more as a means of alleviating pressure on public services in Roraima—by redistributing migrants across the national territory—than as a genuine strategy for promoting the integration and economic inclusion of these individuals in the cities to which they are relocated. The articulation among federal, state, and municipal levels for more effective monitoring of relocated individuals becomes a crucial challenge for Operation Welcome, as a policy that plays an active role in the spatial distribution of Venezuelan flows across Brazil.

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

It is important to highlight that the coordination among government levels, although foreseen in legislation, faces significant challenges. Still, according to Graphic 6, the number of Venezuelans registered in CadÚnico (Brazil's Unified Registry for Social Programs) has grown in all regions of the country since 2018, indicating the participation of this population in public policies beyond the scope of Operation Welcome.

Graphic 6: Annual number of Venezuelans registered in CadÚnico by region (2016–2024, December records)

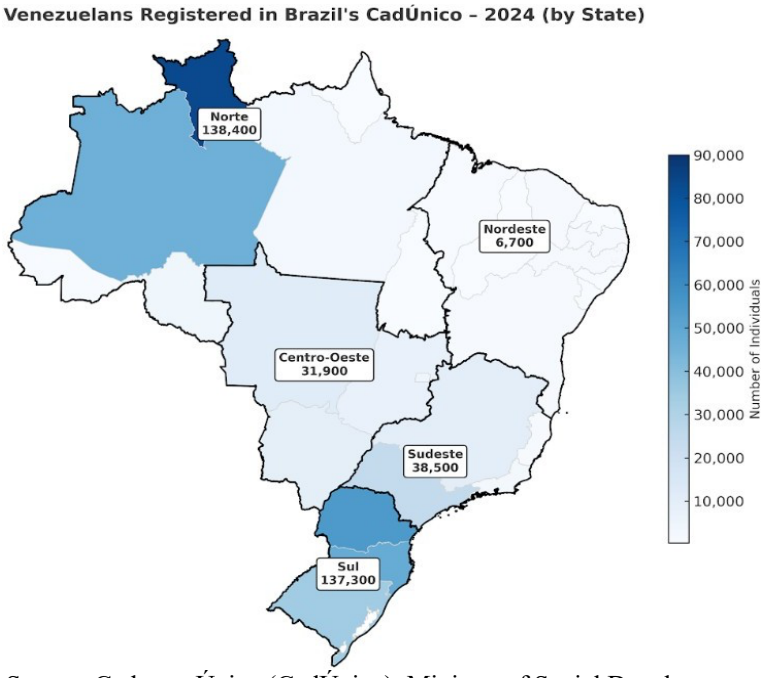


Source: Cadastro Único (CadÚnico). Ministry of Social Development – December data.

CadÚnico registration is the primary tool for identifying low-income families for participation in social programs managed at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Map 3 shows that, in 2024, most registrations of Venezuelans were concentrated in the North—where the main entry point is via the land border in Roraima—and in the South, which receives the largest share of relocated migrants.

Map 3: Venezuelans registered in Brazil's CadÚnico – 2024 (by State)

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.



Source: Cadastro Único (CadÚnico). Ministry of Social Development.

However, despite the strong federal presence through Operation Welcome, once Venezuelans are relocated to other cities, they often face challenges in continuing to access federal benefits or local-level policies for reception and integration. The absence of effective monitoring mechanisms hinders the full inclusion of this population in the social protection systems of the regions to which they are relocated. Strengthening coordination across the different levels of government is essential to ensure secure and sustainable settlement.

It is also worth highlighting the structural dimension of Operation Welcome's militarization, which precedes and exceeds its ideological instrumentalization during the Bolsonaro administration. As Demétrio, Jarochinski Silva and Baeninger (2025) document, Operation Welcome consolidated a Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) model in which international agencies — including UNHCR and IOM — operate in subordination to the Armed Forces' strategic command, a configuration that generates persistent tensions between the humanitarian principles these organizations espouse and the security-oriented logic that governs the operation's design. This militarized model is not an aberration: it reflects longstanding patterns in Brazilian migration governance, in which the state has historically combined the welcoming of migrants with their instrumentalization as labor supply, directing population flows in accordance with the needs of the national economy rather than the rights

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

and aspirations of migrants themselves (Demétrio, Jarochinski Silva & Baeninger, 2025). The ideological orientation adopted during the Bolsonaro administration further sharpened this tension. The narrative promoted through Operation Welcome's official communications associated Venezuela with socialism and backwardness while framing Brazil's Armed Forces as providers of freedom and order. Through this discursive construction, the operation was instrumentalized as an anti-communist symbol and a mechanism for expressing Bolsonaro's alignment with far-right ideology (Curi, 2023) — revealing how a humanitarian policy can be repurposed for domestic political contestation without abandoning its operational continuity. Despite this ideological capture, Operation Welcome continues to operate and retains its relevance as a spatial governance mechanism for Venezuelan flows in Brazil. This persistence underscores the importance of distinguishing between the policy's structural functions — directing migration, supplying labor, managing border pressure — and its rhetorical uses, which have varied significantly across administrations.

Final Considerations

This article has analyzed Operation Welcome as more than a humanitarian emergency response: as a spatial governance mechanism that simultaneously manages migratory pressure at Brazil's northern border, channels displaced Venezuelans toward regions with high labor demand, and shapes the conditions under which territorial integration unfolds in destination communities. The empirical evidence assembled — drawing on data from the Operation Welcome Interiorization Dashboard, RAIS, CadÚnico, and the Brazilian School Census — consistently points to a structured and uneven pattern of integration, concentrated in the South and driven primarily by the agro-industrial labor market rather than by organic settlement dynamics.

Central to this process are the migratory social networks that migrants and refugees build before, during, and after displacement. As these networks consolidate, they generate robust human social capital capable of sustaining and expanding migratory flows beyond the initial impetus of state-directed relocation (Massey et al., 1987; Souza, 2025). Through these networks, migrants construct multiterritorialities — spaces in which customs, social ties, and practices from their communities of origin are reproduced and reconfigured in the destination, producing transnational arenas of belonging that challenge the primacy of physical borders (Haesbaert, 2003; Canales, 2015). What began as directed migration (Baeninger, 2018) gradually gives way to self-sustaining migratory corridors, as

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

the infrastructure built by Operation Welcome is appropriated by migrants themselves to organize subsequent relocations.

Yet this process of network formation and multiterritorial construction unfolds within a governance structure that conditions its terms. As Demétrio, Jarochinski Silva and Baeninger (2025) argue, Operation Welcome consolidates a model of humanitarian governance articulating human rights principles with military coordination and labor market demands. Migratory corridors are shaped not only by social networks and territorial aspirations but by a combination of state, military, humanitarian, and para-state mechanisms of mobility governance (Álvarez Velasco, 2022), which direct flows toward specific labor niches — particularly the meatpacking industry in southern Brazil — through what Demétrio and Baeninger (2023) term humanitarian recruitment. The result, as Ribeiro and Betoni (2025) document for western Santa Catarina, is a pattern in which migrants' territorial mobility coexists with sectoral immobility: Venezuelan workers move across large distances but remain channeled into specific segments of the labor market by linguistic, racial, and cultural barriers.

These contradictions do not negate migrants' agency. Amidst asymmetric power relations, Venezuelan migrants construct networks of solidarity and resistance that redefine the territories they inhabit (Álvarez Velasco, 2022). The data on school enrollment and CadÚnico registration suggest that integration in Brazil is occurring through two complementary channels: a state-directed labor channel, shaped by directed migration and humanitarian recruitment, and a rights-based social channel, in which access to education and social protection expands the terms of inclusion beyond the policy's original labor-market logic.

Brazil has made significant legal advances in migration governance, with the 2017 Migration Law marking an important transition from a national security paradigm to one grounded in human rights. However, as this article has argued, legal frameworks alone do not determine integration outcomes. The absence of effective mechanisms for intergovernmental coordination — across federal, state, and municipal levels — remains the most significant institutional gap in Operation Welcome's design. States and municipalities that receive relocated migrants are often uninformed in advance of arrivals, limiting their capacity to plan adequate responses in healthcare, education, housing, and social assistance. Migrants bring significant demographic, educational, and professional

TexTos e DebaTes, Boa Vista, vol.32, n.01, e8953, Jan./Jun. 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18227/2317-1448ted.v32i01.8953
https://revista.ufrr.br/textosedebates/
ISSN: 2317-1448



Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

assets to receiving communities (Souza, 2025), but realizing these contributions requires institutional conditions that currently remain underdeveloped.

Moving forward, two directions appear essential. First, migrants and refugees must be actively included in the decision-making processes that govern their reception and integration — at the federal, state, and municipal levels. The Second National Conference on Migration, Refugees, and Statelessness (COMIGRAR), organized in 2023, represented a meaningful step in this direction, but its recommendations require institutional follow-through that remains incomplete. Second, the relationship between humanitarian governance and labor market demands must be made explicit and subject to democratic scrutiny: Operation Welcome's humanitarian mandate and its role as a labor redistribution mechanism are not in contradiction — they are two faces of the same policy, and acknowledging this dual function is a precondition for designing more effective and rights-centered integration strategies.

Future research should continue to disaggregate the integration trajectories of Venezuelan migrants across Brazilian regions, attending to variation in labor market conditions, local policy responses, and the evolving role of civil society networks. Longitudinal analyses tracking relocated individuals beyond the three-month shelter period — a dimension current administrative data do not capture — would be especially valuable for assessing whether Operation Welcome's humanitarian investment translates into sustainable settlement and genuine inclusion.

Referências

ÁLVAREZ VELASCO, Soledad. Between hostility and solidarity: the production of the Andean region–Southern Cone transit migratory corridor. In: Gioconda Herrera e Carmen Gómez (org.). *Migration in South America: IMISCOE Regional Reader*. Cham: Springer Nature, 2022, p. 51–75.

BAENINGER, Rosana. Governança das migrações: migrações dirigidas de venezuelanos e venezuelanas no Brasil. In: Rosana Baeninger e João Carlos Jarochinski (org.). *Migrações venezuelanas.* Campinas: NEPO/UNICAMP, 2018.

CANALES, Alejandro Isidoro. *E pur si muove: elementos para una teoría de las migraciones en el capitalismo global.* Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara/MAPorrúa Editor, 2015.

CURI, Juliana Meneses. O tratamento de venezuelanos no Brasil: uma questão humanitária ou político-ideológica? 2023. 87 f. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Graduação em Relações Internacionais) – Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Uberlândia, 2023.

DEMÉTRIO, Natália Belmonte; BAENINGER, Rosana. Trabalho nos frigoríficos do Brasil: a constituição do precariado migrante e o papel do recrutamento humanitário. *Revista Jurídica Trabalho e Desenvolvimento Humano,* Campinas, v. 6, p. 1–37, 2023.

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

DEMÉTRIO, Natália Belmonte; JAROCHINSKI SILVA, João Carlos; BAENINGER, Rosana. A Operação Acolhida e a governança humanitária das migrações internacionais no Brasil. *Pensamiento Propio,* n. 59, p. 147–170, 2025.

GARCÍA CANCLINI, Néstor. *La globalización imaginada.* Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1999.

HAESBAERT, Rogério. Da desterritorialização à multiterritorialidade. *Boletim Gaúcho de Geografia,* v. 29, n. 1, p. 11–24, 2003.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM). *World migration report 2020.* Geneva: IOM, 2020. Disponível em: https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/. Acesso em: 5 maio 2025.

JAROCHINSKI SILVA, João Carlos; BAENINGER, Rosana. Migraciones, refugios y políticas migratorias: impactos en las fronteras brasileñas de la Amazonía. In: Alberto Hernández Hernández e Amalia Campos-Delgado (org). *Migración y movilidad en las Américas: miradas críticas desde el Sur.* Buenos Aires: CLACSO; México: Siglo XXI, 2023, p. 441–465.

LEFEBVRE, Henri. *The production of space.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.

MARANDOLA JR., Eduardo. Migração e geografia: movimentos, territórios e territorialidade. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População,* v. 28, n. 1, p. 245–247, 2011.

MASSEY, Douglas S.; ALARCÓN, Rafael; DURAND, Jorge; GONZÁLEZ, Humberto. Return to Aztlan: the social process of international migration from Western Mexico. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

OLIVEIRA, Antônio Tadeu Ribeiro de. Nova lei brasileira de migração: avanços, desafios e ameaças. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População,* v. 34, p. 171–179, 2017.

RAMOS, André de Carvalho. Construindo muralhas: o fechamento de fronteiras na pandemia do COVID-19. In: BAENINGER, Rosana et al. (org.). *Migrações internacionais e a pandemia de COVID-19.* Campinas: NEPO/UNICAMP, 2020.

RIBEIRO, Vicente Neves da Silva; BETONI, Camila. Interiorização e trabalho na Operação Acolhida: uma análise da migração venezuelana no Oeste de Santa Catarina (2018–2024). *PerCursos,* Florianópolis, v. 26, e0318, 2025.

SOUZA, Nathan Pagliari Raposo de Oliveira de. *Migração, refúgio e redes sociais: trajetórias de migrantes e refugiados venezuelanos no Morro do Banco (Rio de Janeiro – RJ)*. 2025. Dissertação (Mestrado em Estudos Populacionais e Pesquisas Sociais) – Escola Nacional de Ciências Estatísticas – ENCE, Rio de Janeiro, 2025.

STARK, Oded; TAYLOR, J. Edward. Relative deprivation and international migration. *Demography,* v. 26, n. 1, p. 1–14, 1989.

Artigo submetido em 20/04/2026, aceito em 27/06/2026 e publicado em 10/07/2026.

Este obra está licenciado com uma Licença Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.