

Immigrants' Contribution to Development in the Global South: Comparing Policy Responses to Venezuelan Immigration in Peru and Argentina

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Abstract

By April 2021, Venezuela's multidimensional crisis had led over 5.6 million of the country's citizens to emigrate, mostly across South America. This chapter offers a comparative analysis of national policy responses to Venezuelan immigration in Argentina and Peru from a development perspective in the period 2015–2020. Although the government of each country recognised the potential of disproportionate numbers of highly skilled Venezuelan immigrants, Argentina has been more successful than Peru in offering them legal pathways to immigration and incorporating them into the formal labour market. Our key argument is that Argentina has been able to foster the integration of Venezuelans—in terms of granting regular status, validating academic and professional degrees and providing access to basic social services—for three reasons: first, the lower overall numbers and higher socio-economic characteristics of the migrants; second, Argentina's progressive legislative immigration framework; and third, the prominent role of civil society actors lobbying for immigrants and pushing for more inclusive public policies. In the case of Peru, the rapid increase in numbers of immigrants has led to a surge in xenophobic public opinion, which has generated pressure to implement non-inclusive policies. The country's new immigration law lacks institutional consolidation, and there is no strong civil society to act as a counterweight to restrictive policy developments. The chapter contributes to the literature on the migration–development nexus, pointing out the importance of state capacity and civil society when thinking about migration and development in the global South.

1 Introduction

More comparative case studies are needed to reach a better understanding of the development–migration nexus in migrant-receiving countries in the global South (Hujo and Piper, 2010), which includes developing nations and transitional economies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and parts of eastern Europe.

The term 'South' refers to comparatively less-developed regions and countries, whereas the term 'North' refers to more-developed regions or countries, including Europe and Northern America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan (UN DESA, 2012).¹ Understanding the development potential of and related policy reactions to Venezuelan displacement across South America is an especially important topic in this regard.

Over the past five years, more than 5.6 million Venezuelan citizens have been forced to emigrate, mainly to destinations in South America. Looking beyond the question of whether Venezuelans should be considered migrants or refugees (Freier, Berganza and Blouin, 2020), state and non-state actors and international organisations have pointed out the development potential that disproportionate numbers of highly skilled Venezuelan citizens offer to economies across the region (Bahar, Dooley and Huang, 2018; BBVA Research, 2019; R4V, 2019; World Bank, 2019).

In order to take advantage of this potential, and in their efforts to reach the migration related development goals of the Agenda 2030, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), host governments need to offer Venezuelans pathways to regularised entry and residence, validating their academic degrees, incorporating them into the formal economy and giving them access to social services (World Bank, 2019).

State responses to Venezuelan displacement across Latin America have, however, varied significantly (Acosta Arcarazo, Blouin and Freier, 2019; Seele et al., 2019). Although regional scholarship on policy responses to the Venezuelan displacement crisis is emerging in both Spanish and English (Aron Said and Castillo Jara, 2020; Doña-Reveco and Gouveia, 2021; Freier and Parent, 2019; Freier, Berganza and Blouin, 2020; Sánchez Nájera and Freier, 2021; Seele and Bolter, 2021; Zapata and Tapia Wenderoth, 2021), the mainstream migration literature has paid little attention to this significant situation. Specifically, studies that shed light on Venezuelan emigration from the perspective of a development–migration nexus are lacking. This is surprising given the comparatively high levels of education of Venezuelan migrants (Freier and Parent, 2018).

In this chapter, we offer a comparative analysis of national policy responses to Venezuelan immigration in Peru and Argentina during the period between

1 It is important to point out that the South–North terminology is somewhat misleading because it does not fully correspond to historic and geographic realities and poses the normative risk of naturalising a developmental divide between the two hemispheres; but it is heuristically useful and thus applied here.

2015 and 2020. This analysis addressed regularisation, the validation of academic and professional qualifications and providing access to basic social services, with an institutionalist approach as its departure point. Despite the fact that they do not share a border with Venezuela, Peru and Argentina received a significant number of Venezuelans migrants, and each responded differently to this challenge. Although the governments of both Peru and Argentina have recognised the development potential of disproportionate numbers of highly skilled Venezuelan immigrants and have promised them integration in terms of legal status and inclusion in the formal labour market,² Argentina has been more successful than Peru in integrating Venezuelans.

In section 2 we discuss our contribution to the relevant literature. We then provide an overview of Venezuelan displacement in the region before turning to the discussion of our case-study countries. We conclude with a discussion on this chapter's empirical and theoretical contributions and with a number of policy recommendations.

2 The Migration–Development Nexus and the Importance of State Capacity

The relationship between migration and development has been the subject of much academic debate. Since the mid-1950s, the discussion has revolved around the manifold links that connect migration with multidimensional development challenges (Castles, 2009). The migration–development nexus itself became an epistemological battleground in the last two decades (Novak, 2016), regarding the definition of both development and migration, the direction of the causal link between the two, and the unintended consequences of their interaction. The literature can be organised into different phases of thought (Faist und Fauser, 2011), which reflect a range of approaches, some pessimistic, some more optimistic, that describe the nexus in negative or positive terms (Bastia, 2013; de Haas, 2010).

2 Rogelio Frigerio, Argentina's former Minister of the Interior, declared in February 2018: 'We are facilitating entry so that those Venezuelans who are expelled from their country may come to Argentina to work and be part of this process of development and growth' (<https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/nuestro-pais-abre-las-puertas-los-venezolanos-que-quieran-formar-parte-del-crecimiento> (accessed on 15 July 2021; translation by the authors)). Former Peruvian president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski declared in January 2018: 'Come to Peru and we will pay you legal salaries' (<https://gestion.pe/peru/politica/ppk-venezolanos-vengan-peru-les-pagaremos-sueldos-ley-228593-noticia/?ref=gesr> (accessed on 15 July 2021; translation by the authors)).

Gamlen (2010) points to a wave of optimism among international organisations, NGOs and academics since the 1990s. Geiger and Pécoud (2013) and Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes (2013) underline a set of elements that constitute an optimistic orthodoxy, such as the central role of diasporas and remittances for the development of countries of origin, the positive impact of labour mobility liberalisation on world development, and the need for temporary and circular labour migration schemes. Proponents of a more recent critical turn in the debate on the migration–development nexus, however, identify a number of shortcomings of this optimistic orthodoxy (Faist and Fauser, 2011), which focuses on the experiences of Western liberal democracies as migrant-receiving countries despite the fact that around half of all international migrants reside in the global South (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014; Natter, 2018). This has led to a gap regarding the agency of the state and state capacity in developing countries vis-à-vis advanced industrial countries (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019).

We contribute to the critical debate on the migration–development nexus by focusing on the role of state capacity and civil society, going beyond mainstream narratives that render the agency of many receiving countries in the global South invisible. State capacity involves several areas, including coercive/military, fiscal, administrative, transformative, territorial, legal and political capacity (Cingolani, 2013). Following an institutionalist approach, we understand state capacity to be a question of ‘whether a state is able to implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of powerful social groups or in the face of recalcitrant socioeconomic circumstances’ (Skocpol, 1985, 9). When presented with external challenges, administrative capacity, ‘technical competence, trusted and professional state agents, monitoring and coordination mechanisms, and effective reach across the state’s territory and social groupings’ (Hanson and Sigman, 2013, 4)³ are key to developing and implementing adequate policy responses.

States play a key role in shaping ‘favorable conditions for positive development impacts of migration to occur’ (de Haas, 2010, 227). States often formulate policies, but—in the global South in particular—limited capabilities challenge policy implementation. Only an effective state can provide internal stability, foster economic growth, promote social development and advance goals both domestically and internationally. In the global South, and particularly in South America, state capacity is limited by a wide range of structural

3 This aspect of state capacity usually corresponds with the notion of good governance that is tested in indexes such as the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) or political risk indexes.

constraints, from economic resources to technological skills (Prashad, 2013), in addition to structural underdevelopment (Gray and Gills, 2016).

State capacity is a necessary condition for developing and implementing an effective integration policy that can maximise the migration–development nexus, but by itself it is insufficient. It is also necessary to consider that other policy constraints on immigration policies remain intrinsically ambivalent (de Haas et al., 2019). The socio-economic characteristics of migrants matter, as do internal constraints such as political ideology (with ideological splits often within the same parties and the same government) and the structure of political systems (de Haas et al., 2019; Natter, Czaika and de Haas, 2020). Jacobsen (1996) presents a set of factors that motivate host-state governments in less-developed countries to admit incoming refugees in either a generous or a restrictive way. These include speculation on international assistance, relations with the sending country, national security considerations and political calculations regarding the local community's absorption capacity (Jacobsen, 1996). In this chapter we discuss how these factors have influenced the triangular relationship between state capacity, immigration and development in Argentinian and Peruvian policy responses to Venezuelan displacement.

3 Venezuelan Displacement

Venezuelan emigration has its origin in the deep social, economic and political crisis of a country that was once one of the richest states in Latin America but now fails to guarantee basic human needs such as the preservation of life, liberty and personal security. According to both academic analyses and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), these conditions qualify the Venezuelan emigration as forced displacement. As of mid-2021 over 5.6 million Venezuelan emigrants (R4V, 2021) are refugees, based on the Cartagena Declaration (Freier, Berganza and Blouin, 2020). Cartagena defines as refugees 'persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order', and 15 countries across the region have incorporated this definition into their national legislation. Most Venezuelan migrants have settled within Latin America, posing a serious challenge for receiving states given that most have not experienced large inflows of forced immigration in recent decades. As of mid-2021, the countries that have received the most migrants and refugees from Venezuela are Colombia (1.7 million), Peru (1 million), Chile (657,000) and Ecuador

(431,000). Argentina has received comparatively few Venezuelans (200,000) (R4V, 2021).

Most Venezuelan migrants are highly educated and of working age. There is, however, some regional variation. For example, in 2018 around 80 per cent of Venezuelan migrants in Costa Rica had a university degree, compared to 50 per cent in Argentina and 40 per cent in Peru (Freier and Parent, 2018). However, over 90 per cent of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru and approximately 70 per cent in Argentina (Beheran, 2019) work in the informal economy. The lack of sustainable integration of Venezuelan immigrants presents a lost opportunity, given their potential contribution to development in their host countries as well as with a view to their own well-being and that of the recipients of remittances in Venezuela.

In the absence of a unified regional response, receiving states have developed individual and often unsustainable policies. While initial policy responses were considered generous and welcoming in comparison with those adopted during other international crises (Freier and Parent, 2019; Seele et al., 2019), in the last two years the criminalisation of Venezuelan immigrants and a shift towards more restrictive migration policies—including the closure of legal pathways to migration—have been observed in Brazil, Ecuador, Chile and Peru (Aron Said and Castillo Jara, 2020; Concha Villanueva, 2018; Freier and Luzes, 2021; Freier and Pérez, 2021; Ramírez 2020). Irregularity and precarious legal status pose a challenge to socio-economic integration and to the development potential that Venezuelan migrants in the region represent (Freier, Castillo Jara and Luzes, 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a worsening of the situation of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. During the national lockdowns, Venezuelan migrants suffered a severe loss of income, particularly due to the loss of jobs in the informal economy. This loss affected their quality of life, decreased the remittances that they were able to send back to their families, and increased the incidence of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Bird, Freier and Luzes, 2020).

In the following section we will discuss the development potential of Venezuelan immigration and state responses to this immigration for the cases of Peru and Argentina, moving from a description of development potential and policy response to an analysis of political motivations, legal and financial state capacity, and the involvement of civil society organisations.

3.1 *Venezuelans in Peru: Changing State Responses and Lost Opportunities*

Until recently, Peru was itself a country characterised by high levels of emigration (Blouin and Freier, 2019). It was ill-equipped to adequately respond to the

TABLE 13.1 Venezuelan migration in Argentina and Peru

	Argentina		Peru	
Approximate number of Venezuelan immigrants	179,203	March 2021	1,049,970	March 2021
Immigrant level (immigrants as a percentage of the total population)	0.40 %		3.36 %	
Immigrants with higher education (university or technical)	60.0 %	1st DTM, ^a July 2018	68.2 %	1st DTM, October–November 2017
	53.3 %	4th DTM, September 2019	30.7 %	4th DTM, February 2020
Immigrants with high school education only	24.0 %	1st DTM, July 2018	30.8 %	1st DTM, October–November 2017
	31.7 %	4th DTM, September 2019	55.5 %	7th DTM, February 2020

a DTM: International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix.

SOURCE: CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS UCAB (2021); IOM (2017, 2018A, 2019A, 2020); R4V (2021)

rapid increase in Venezuelan immigration, and this represents a lost development opportunity of significant dimensions. According to a representative survey of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru conducted by Equilibrium GenDE (2020) in June 2020, 68.9 per cent of respondents had some form of higher education (ranging from incomplete technical education to postgraduate degrees). In 2019, the World Bank estimated that Venezuelan migrants could contribute more than USD 623 million in net tax revenues to Peru for the period 2020–2025, and increase labour productivity by 3.2 per cent, merely due to their (2018) numbers (World Bank, 2019). According to the Bank's 2021 estimates, full labour integration of Venezuelans would imply a potential annual fiscal gain of USD 3.2 billion.

Peruvian policy responses to Venezuelan immigration, however, have passed through several increasingly restrictive stages. Peru initially made significant advances in providing Venezuelans with the documentation necessary for their integration into the formal labour market. Although Peru did not apply the refugee definition of the Cartagena Declaration, or the MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) Residence Agreement,⁴ as we will discuss in the case of Argentina below (Acosta Arcarazo, Blouin and Freier, 2019), it was the first country in the region to create a special residence permit for Venezuelan migrants: the Temporary Residence Permit ('Permiso Temporal de Residencia', or PTP), which allowed Venezuelans to reside and work in Peru for one year, was launched in early 2017. The scheme was extended four times,⁵ but ended in December 2018.⁶ Roughly half a million Venezuelans received PTP status, and by mid-2020 about 200,000 had been able to transfer to a temporary 'special residence status', valid for another year (Freier and Brauckmeyer, 2020).

In mid-2019, the Peruvian government introduced the requirement of the so-called Humanitarian Visa, which could only be issued by the Peruvian Consulate/Embassy in Venezuela (and some consulates in third countries, such as Colombia and Ecuador) and necessitated a valid passport and certified clean criminal record—requirements that have long been prohibitive for most Venezuelans (Freier and Luzes, 2021). Entering Peru and residing and working there legally thus became much more difficult, if not impossible, for most Venezuelans. By mid-2021, close to half a million Venezuelans had filed asylum claims in Peru. But as the majority of these claims were either not resolved or involved the provision of inadequate documentation, asylum seekers were left with a precarious legal status. According to a report by Equilibrium CenDE (2020), in April 2020 only 54 per cent of Venezuelans in Peru had legal status. In contrast to Argentina, Peru had no previous experience with large-scale immigration, and had not developed state capacities to deal with the migration challenge. In 2020, Peru announced a new temporary permit for one year for people of all nationalities in an irregular situation, the Temporary Residence

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- 4 The agreement, signed in 2002, created a free residence regime that focuses on equal treatment, socio-economic inclusion and regularisation. It provides the right of residence for citizens of member states for up to two years, after which migrants can apply for permanent residence after proving a 'lawful source of livelihood' (Art. 5).
- 5 PTP 1: Supreme Decree N° 002-2017-IN (3 January 2017); PTP 2: Supreme Decree N° 023-2017-IN (29 July 2017); PTP 3: Supreme Decree N° 001-2018-IN (23 January 2018) and PTP 4: Supreme Decree N° 007-2018IN (19 August 2018).
- 6 The PTP programme was ended in the context of the increasing politisation of Venezuelan immigration, and the criminalisation of Venezuelan immigrants, in Peru (Freier and Luzes, 2021; Freier and Pérez, 2021).

Permit Card ('Carnet de Permiso Temporal de Permanencia', or CPP), and in early 2021 a pre-registration programme registered 370,000 foreigners.

The Peruvian government did not develop a well-coordinated, multi-sectorial policy to integrate Venezuelan migrants into the formal labour market, a move that would have allowed the country to benefit from their potential. The procedures involved with and costs incurred by the recognition of professional degrees,⁷ as well as the policy of applying a 30 per cent income tax rate to non-domiciled workers, have acted as significant obstacles to the inclusion of professional migrants in the formal labour market (Berganza and Solórzano Salleres, 2019). Even for those Venezuelan immigrants and refugees who were able to obtain all the necessary documentation, access to the formal labour market was limited for structural reasons, as over 70 per cent of Peru's economy is informal. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, this had already led to over 90 per cent of Venezuelan migrants either being employed in the informal sector or being self-employed (CIUP, 2020; Koechlin et al., 2019). Given the vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants, labour exploitation has been widespread (Blouin and Freier, 2019).

The socio-economic integration of Venezuelans has also been very limited with regard to access to healthcare and education. In Peru, migrants' and refugees' access to public health services is extremely limited. Access to the Integrated Health System (Seguro Integral de Salud, SIS) requires at least temporary residence status, with a Foreigners' Identity Card ('Carné de Extranjería'). Exceptions are made for children under five, pregnant women, people with life-threatening chronic diseases, and those in emergency situations. For employees it is also possible to pay for an affiliation to the SIS. For the majority of migrants, with irregular migration status and/or a precarious economic situation, it is impossible to join the SIS or to afford such an affiliation. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary access to the SIS was offered to all people showing COVID-19 symptoms or testing positive for the disease.⁸

One exception to the Peruvian state not showing agency with regard to reaping the development potential of Venezuelan immigrants has been its attempt

7 The recognition and validation of professional degrees in Peru is carried out by the National Superintendency of Higher Education (Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior Universitaria, or SUNEDU). The procedure costs approximately USD 90. Validation does not, however, necessarily mean an opportunity to work in one's profession. In the case of regulated professions (those overseen by a professional association, such as medicine, law or architecture) additional procedures and costs apply.

8 Legislative decree 1,466, of 21 April 2020.

to integrate Venezuelan doctors and healthcare professionals in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. In April 2020, a special service called *SERVICER* was created, allowing Peruvian and foreign health professionals to be employed in the fight against the pandemic, granting them temporary contracts and life insurance financed by the state. In August 2020, opportunities to hire foreign health workers were further expanded by the temporary suspension of the requirements of professional degree validation and inscription in the relevant medical professional association. These policies, however, were specific to the state of emergency generated by the pandemic.

How can the fact that Peru did not treat Venezuelan migrants and refugees as agents of development be explained? Regarding political motivations, the change in Peruvian immigration policy with regard to Venezuelan citizens, from openness to restrictiveness, coincides with a change of presidencies, from Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (2016–2018) to Martín Vizcarra (2018–present), and is related, among other factors, to the different priorities given to foreign and domestic policy considerations. Kuczynski gave a high priority to Peruvian involvement in the centre-right Lima Group and welcomed Venezuelan citizens in the context of opposing the Maduro regime (Freier and Parent, 2019). His successor, Martín Vizcarra, was more focused on domestic political tensions, and soon gave in to public pressure based on rising xenophobia and the criminalisation of Venezuelan immigrants (Aron Said and Castillo Jara, 2020; Freier and Pérez, 2021). The political crisis of November 2020 and the presidential election of 2021 further dampened any efforts within both the Foreign and Interior Ministry to develop a coherent integration policy.

Regarding rent seeking behaviour, in contrast to its neighbour Colombia, which actively sought to take advantage of the Venezuelan displacement crisis to receive international assistance (Freier, Micinski and Tsourapas, 2021), the Peruvian government did not want to be seen as a Third World country in need of international aid, a wish that can be linked back to the presidential discourse of former president Alan Garcia, who declared in 2009 during his second mandate that Peru would leave its status as a Third World country behind it thanks to the vigorous eradication of poverty. This made Peru reluctant to ask for international assistance or to incur debt with multilateral institutions such as the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The steep increase in the number of Venezuelan migrants over this period meant that the local community's absorption capacity was put to the test. In 2015 there were only 3,768 Venezuelans registered in Peru. By 2016, the number had already tripled. This pattern continued, with numbers reaching 650,000 in 2018, 860,000 in 2019 and more than 1 million in 2021 (EFE, 2019; R4V, 2020). In late 2019, 87 per cent of Venezuelans in Peru resided in the capital, Lima

(Gestión, 2018). The socio-demographic characteristics of the Venezuelans arriving in Peru changed over time, with a tendency towards lower socio-economic status and lower educational levels among the Venezuelan migrant population (Vivas Peñalver and Paez, 2017). Thus, more recent Venezuelan migrants in Peru are poorer, less educated, and more vulnerable than their predecessors (CIUP, 2019).

According to data from the first Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), assembled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in October 2017 Venezuelan migrants in Peru were largely young, male, single, educated and documented: 82 per cent were between 18 and 35 years old, 63 per cent were male, 76 per cent were single, and 68 per cent had a university or technical education. Furthermore, 98 per cent had entered the country with a valid passport (IOM, 2017). Of the 43 per cent of migrants who declared that they had children, 75 per cent had left them in Venezuela (IOM, 2017). Within two years this population's characteristics had shifted significantly, and it had become more vulnerable. In July 2019, 66 per cent of Venezuelan migrants entering Peru through the northern border were between 18 and 34 years old, 58 per cent were women, 59 per cent travelled in a family group (51 per cent of these groups including at least one minor), only 20 per cent had completed university studies, 15 per cent had undertaken some university studies, 5 per cent had a technical education, and only 35 per cent had entered with a passport (IOM, 2019a).

The high numbers of Venezuelan immigrants and the public perception of their increasing vulnerability led to a surge in xenophobic public opinion in Peru (Aron Said and Castillo Jara, 2020; Freier and Pérez, 2021). Perceptions of migrants as constituting economic competition and being an additional burden on already precarious public services led an increasing proportion of the national population to oppose immigration (World Bank, 2019). Between February 2018 and April 2019, the number of Peruvian residents in Lima who opposed the presence of Venezuelans in their city increased from 43 per cent to 67 per cent (World Bank, 2019). During the same period, a perceived (albeit unfounded) link between immigration and crime added to the economic argument and worsened the public perception of Venezuelans in Lima, and this in turn generated pressure on the government to implement non-inclusive reception policies (IOP and IDEHPUCP, 2020; Freier and Pérez, 2021).

In terms of legal and financial state capacity and the structure of political systems, including the involvement of civil society organisations, negative public opinion in Peru influenced the executive without either state institutions or strong civil society actors acting as a counterweight. In facing the challenge of massive and sudden immigration, the Peruvian state has shown

limited capacity. Although Peru reformed its outdated immigration legislation in 2017, from a human rights and development approach Peru's reactions to Venezuelan immigration have, in practice, been characterised by the temporariness of the measures; the ambiguity of the criteria for entry, employment and access to public services; and public officials exercising personal discretion (Berganza and Freier, 2021). With respect to financial capacity, insufficient budget allocation has been a significant barrier to the development of integration policies on both the national and local government level (Luzes and Freier, 2020). Linkages between territorial levels of government in generating and enforcing laws and regulations also remain weak.

With regard to civil society, the Venezuelan Union (an association of Venezuelans that helps compatriots in need), religious organisations, and some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) already working in Peru with a focus on issues such as poverty alleviation, education and child welfare (for example World Vision, CARE, Save the Children and Ayuda en Acción) have included support for the migrant population in their remit in recent years (since 2017, approximately). These organisations often work in coordination with international organisations such as UNHCR, IOM and the World Food Programme (WFP). A group of NGOs formed a working group on human mobility under the National Human Rights Coordinator in late 2019, advocating for migrants' and refugees' rights, for example with regard to unlawful legislative proposals. The pandemic, however, limited the visibility and impact of the group. NGOs have not been sufficiently influential to be able to act as counterweights to negative public opinion and have not been successful in persuading the state to develop more inclusive policies.⁹

Nevertheless, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic the assistance provided by NGOs has been vital to migrants' and refugees' survival during the long lockdown periods, given that many experienced a severe reduction in their income and that they were not included in the government's programme of subsidies for vulnerable households. The activism of the human mobility working group operating under the National Human Rights

9 The Intersectoral Working Table for Migration Management (Mesa de Trabajo Intersectorial para la Gestión Migratoria, or MTIGM), a deliberative space on migration policy run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in which NGOs and civil society actors are represented, did not invite civil society organisations to participate from November 2019 to August 2020. Furthermore, during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MTIGM was left without leadership due to the fact that its president had fallen ill. This undermined the necessary connection and deliberation between the state and civil society in the initial phase of the pandemic.

Coordinator was successful in obtaining PTP holders and asylum seekers access to SERVICER, the system that enabled Peruvian and foreign health professionals to be employed in the fight against the pandemic. It should also be stressed that President Guaidó's Diplomatic Representation in Lima, headed by Carlos Scull, provided essential legal and social assistance to Venezuelan citizens, providing more than 14,000 co-nationals with direct humanitarian aid, assisting more than 15,000 in co-operation with Peruvian Ministries, and responding to over 11,000 consular queries in 2020.

3.2 *Venezuelans in Argentina: Positive Legal Response and Structural Challenges*

Argentina has historically been a country of immigration, which continued until the mid-twentieth century with migrants arriving mostly from Europe, and later from the country's Southern Cone neighbours. The Argentinian state has long seen immigration as a development tool, and Argentinian society has a largely positive attitude towards immigration and the integration of migrants. In the same vein, the reception of Venezuelan immigrants in Argentina provides a positive case of a government trying to take advantage of immigrants' development potential. Argentina has been described in the literature as the avant-garde of progressive immigration policies in Latin America (Acosta Arcarazo and Freier, 2015).

The number of Venezuelans coming into Argentina has been relatively small, almost a quarter of the Peru figure. According to official data from the National Direction of Migration, 130,820 Venezuelans settled in Argentina between 2009 and 2018, although the number might be slightly higher when considering irregular entries. Nevertheless, in 2018 Venezuelans became the largest group of migrants, surpassing Bolivians and Paraguayans, with more than 70,000 approved settlements across permanent and temporary categories (DNM, 2019). Between 2012 and 2018, around 92 per cent of Venezuelan migrants to Argentina decided to live in the heart of the country's most economically and socially dynamic region, in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan area; 75 per cent of these decided to live in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (DNM, 2018a).

The development potential of Venezuelan immigration to Argentina, meanwhile, is comparable to that of the Peruvian case. The DTM conducted by IOM in Argentina during July 2018 shows a young, male, single, and highly educated migrant population: 57 per cent were between 18 and 35 years old, 56 per cent were male, 58 per cent single, and 63 per cent had a university or technical education (IOM, 2018a). The generally positive approach to migration was maintained with a view to the reception of Venezuelan citizens. Although the

National Refugee Commission (Comisión Nacional para los Refugiados, or CONARE) accepted only 15 asylum claims from over 1,000 applications made between 2016 and 2018 (Pacecca, 2019), as early as 2012 Argentina started according Venezuelans legal status by unilaterally granting them MERCOSUR residence permits for two years (Acosta Arcarazo, Blouin and Freier, 2019; Pacecca, 2019).¹⁰

In early 2019, the Macri government (2015–2019) introduced the ‘Assistance Program for Venezuelan Migrants’—a major change to respond to the increasing numbers of Venezuelan immigrants. The National Migration Office (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, or DNM) recognised that there were reasons that prevented or hindered presentation of the required documentation, including the inability of Venezuelan authorities to provide documents such as passports or certified criminal records (DNM, 2018b). The new programme authorised the entry of migrants with expired passports or identity cards and the entry of children upon presentation of their birth certificate at land borders, in addition to an ambitious re-localisation plan to improve the positive local development impact of Venezuelan immigration in the interior provinces (Casa Rosada, 2019).

Neither the Macri nor the Alberto Fernandez Administrations (the latter 2019 to date) applied a specific policy to proactively incorporate Venezuelan immigrants into the labour market, but there are two main factors that have facilitated immigrants’ socio-economic integration: access to social services and a straightforward process for the validation of professional degrees. With a temporary MERCOSUR residence permit, not only do Venezuelan migrants have access to free public education and healthcare (as provided for all immigrants irrespective of legal status by the 2004 Migration Law), importantly, they also have access to the formal job market. These two aspects have been key advantages. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, access to social benefits such as Emergency Family Income (Ingresos familiares de emergencia, or IFE) was limited, since there is a minimum requirement of two years’ residence to receive it (Vales, 2020), meaning that many immigrants were not eligible for this form of assistance and relied on access to the informal job market.

The validation of degrees has been an issue of key concern to Venezuelan migrant associations, alongside the residency process and integration into the labour market, especially in the healthcare and engineering sectors. By late 2018, almost 4,000 engineers, more than 600 doctors, 111 pharmacists,

10 Despite becoming a member of MERCOSUR in 2012, Venezuela never ratified the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement. Caracas’s membership of the regional integration process was suspended in August 2017.

213 psychologists and almost 300 dentists had been registered by migrant associations such as ASOMEVENAR (Asociación de Médicos Venezolanos en Argentina), ASOVEA (Asociación de Odontólogos Venezolanos en Argentina) and IngVenAr (Asociación de Ingenieros Venezolanos en la Argentina) (IOM, 2019a; IOM, 2019b). Following requests from the above-mentioned organisations and a significant increase in applications for degrees to be recognised and validated, in early 2018 the Ministry of Education decided to give preferential treatment to Venezuelan and Syrian migrants/refugees due to the scale of the unfolding humanitarian crises in these countries. In the case of Venezuelans, the validation process recognises both complete and incomplete studies (to enable migrants to continue their studies in Argentina) (Kobelinsky, 2018).

In a recent report, IOM (2019b) recognised Argentina's degree validation policy as a 'best practice' to be imitated, although the process still presents some implementation challenges, especially in the healthcare sector, where applicants are still required to take several exams at a local university, which can delay the validation process substantially (Herman, 2018). The Argentine government also showed agency in integrating Venezuelan doctors and healthcare professionals in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. ASOMEVENAR and ASOENVEAR (Asociación de Enfermeros Venezolanos en Argentina) publicly offered to join the official efforts in the healthcare sector. The city of Buenos Aires responded positively to this call, incorporating more than 250 healthcare professionals into the 'Plan Detectar' for the early detection of COVID-19 cases, in addition to the several dozen health professionals who were incorporated into the healthcare sector in the provinces thanks to re-localisation plans¹¹ encouraged by the central authorities (van Strahlen, 2020).

Despite the efforts of the Argentinian government, the integration of Venezuelan migrants into the labour market has been complex, especially due to the imbalance between informal employment and access to the formal job market. According to an April 2019 survey by the private consulting firm Adecco, 35 per cent of respondents declared that they were unemployed while 32 per cent stated that they were in stable employment. The rest were in employment but trying to get a better job, and most of these found a job within six months, with around 35 per cent finding one in less than three months. Among the overall number of employed, only 4.5 per cent were working in the professions they worked in before migrating (The Adecco Group, 2020). A previous IOM survey carried out between 2014 and 2018 showed more positive results, with 90 per cent of respondents in employment, 70 per cent of whom

11 These re-localisation plans encouraged professionals newly arrived from Venezuela to voluntarily relocate to small cities and rural areas by providing a range of incentives.

had found work within a month of arriving in the country and only 36 per cent of these working informally (Pacecca, 2019). The Adecco survey reversed these findings, with more than 60 per cent of respondents working in the informal sector (The Adecco Group, 2020), which contrasts with the figure of around 44 per cent informal sector employment overall (Bertranou and Casanova, 2013). These different results may be explained by the economic crisis Argentina has been facing since 2017, which has affected the labour market, but also by the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants that have arrived since 2017.

Despite structural barriers to the labour integration of Venezuelan immigrants in Argentina, both the Macri and the Fernández government sought to facilitate regularisation of the entry, residence, and economic integration of Venezuelan immigrants. How can this approach be explained? Regarding political motivations, it is important to bear in mind that Argentinian politics have suffered from intense polarisation since the late 2000s, and that one of the most politicised issues in Argentinian foreign affairs has been the relationship with Venezuela.

The centre-left governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) and Cristina Kirchner (2007–2015) had a particularly good political relationship with Hugo Chávez's Venezuela in the context of Latin America's 'left turn' (Gonzalez Levaggi, 2019), despite the opposition's criticism of the governments' silence on democratic backsliding in Venezuela and corruption in bilateral projects. After the victory of Mauricio Macri's centre-right Republican Proposal party, Argentina began voicing harsh criticism of Caracas, supporting the Lima Group in its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the undemocratic developments in Venezuela and recognising Juan Guaidó as the country's legitimate president (Simonoff, 2019). As the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela worsened, the Macri government signalled strong political commitment to the Venezuelan people by further facilitating their legal arrival and residence in Argentina, and their access to the job market.

Public perception of Venezuelan immigrants has been positive. In this regard, the role of civil society has been critical to neutralising any concerns over arriving migrants. Both international civil society organisations, such as Cruz Roja Argentina and *Cáritas*, and national organisations dealing specifically with immigrants' rights, such as the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (*Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales*, or *CELS*) and the Argentinian Commission for Refugees and Migrants (*Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes*, or *CAREF*), provide significant support to newcomers and/or pressure the authorities to facilitate their integration.

At the same time, Venezuelan migrant organisations have become increasingly influential, with *ASOVEN* (*Asociación de Venezolanos en la República*

Argentina), UNEVAR (Asociación Civil Unión de Venezolanos en Argentina) and AMVA (Asociación Mutual Venezolano Argentina), among others, focusing on the migrant community's problems while facilitating communication between international and national organisations and the Venezuelan community in Argentina. As in Peru, President Guaidó's Diplomatic Representation in Buenos Aires, headed by Elisa Trotta, provides legal and social assistance to Venezuelan citizens, attending to more than 2,500 co-nationals in 2020.

As regards the state's legal and financial capacity, at least during the first stage of the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis Argentina's legislative framework proved adequate to deal with Venezuelan immigration. As the numbers of immigrants and the vulnerability levels of their circumstances increased, the state adjusted its policies accordingly. A central belief with regard to state capacities is related to previous migration experiences. Argentina is a country of high immigration and moderate emigration patterns (IOM, 2018b), with a long history of receiving migrants (since the late nineteenth century) and generous laws, especially in the last two decades. As already indicated, its 2004 Migration Law, which enshrined the MERCOSUR Residence Visa, facilitated the legal entry and residence of South American citizens. Argentina has also been at the forefront of immigration policy liberalisation in the region (Acosta Arcarazo and Freier, 2015).¹²

4 Discussion

Venezuelan immigration has presented a development opportunity to both Peru and Argentina. However, Argentina has been more successful than Peru in integrating skilled Venezuelan migrants in terms of regularisation, validation of professional degrees, and access to social services. Peru has only treated select groups of highly skilled Venezuelans, such as doctors, as agents of development, and specifically in the context of COVID-19. Given the increasing political polarisation in Peru and the politicisation of Venezuelan immigration, which has been reflected in various unconstitutional bills proposed

12 According to the DEMIG Policy Dataset (DEMIG, 2015), in the period 2002–2013 Argentina implemented 41 migration policy changes, of which 37 introduced less restrictive measures. In addition, Nestor Kirchner's government adopted the 'Patria Grande' programme, which facilitated the regularisation of regional migrants, with more than 400,000 successful cases in the first four years (Perera and Velázquez, 2013), while the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement surpassed 1.25 million temporary permits between 2004 and 2018 (Pacecca, 2019).

by Congress (Freier and Vera Espinoza, 2021), it is highly unlikely that Peru will adopt policies to effectively include migrant workers in the formal labour market in the near future. Argentina has been more open towards Venezuelan immigrants, treating them as agents of development first by facilitating their arrival through existing flexible immigration legislation and second by adopting specific norms to ease their legal and professional difficulties. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, more Venezuelan professionals have been integrated in each country.

Regarding the determinants of immigration policies discussed in the theoretical framework, neither Argentina nor Peru show strong national security concerns with respect to the Venezuelan crisis (although Venezuelan immigrants and refugees have been criminalised in the case of Peru), nor were expectations of significant international assistance decisive. Political ideology mattered initially in Peru's welcoming response to Venezuelans in the context of the government's opposition to the Maduro regime. Similarly, in Argentina Macri's centre-right Administration pushed for Venezuelans to be accommodated with respect to legal requirements for entry, residence and degree validation. And while the ideology of the national government changed with the election of left-wing president Alberto Fernández in late 2019, there was no change in the policy response to Venezuelans, possibly because it was Fernández's party that led progressive immigration policy reform in Argentina in the early 2000s.

Political calculations concerning the local community's absorption capacity and the size and characteristics of the inflow of migrants and refugees seem critical. In Peru, the steep increase in immigration and the change in socio-economic characteristics towards less-educated migrants and increased migrant vulnerability in the context of the country's lack of recent experience with immigration meant that xenophobia and the criminalisation of immigrants grew and significantly influenced the government's response in the form of growing restrictions. In Argentina, meanwhile, the arrival of a relatively limited number of migrants and the long tradition of receiving migrants both from the region and beyond have shaped a positive response from the government and in public opinion, despite the country being in an economic crisis since 2018.

Finally, regarding state capacity and the role of civil society we also find significant differences between the two countries, despite the broader humanitarian support that local NGOs offer Venezuelan migrants. Argentina's flexible and rights-based legislative migration framework and the prominent role of civil society actors advocating for migrants has contributed to the implementation of more inclusive policies. In contrast, the relative novelty of the

phenomenon of immigration, limited state capacity and the absence of strong civil society actors in Peru have contributed to a lack of inclusive policies. In Argentina, civil society has had significant influence on those government migration policies that push for special treatment for the new Venezuelan migrants, while in Peru NGOs and civil society organisations do not have the necessary strength to balance xenophobic public opinion's pressure on the government to limit immigration.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed how a number of policy determinants have influenced the triangular relationship between state capacity, immigration, and the development of the policy responses of Argentina and Peru to Venezuelan displacement in the period 2015–2020. Based on these empirical findings, we can draw a number of broader theoretical conclusions regarding migration and development in the global South. First, large numbers of migrants and refugees in increasingly vulnerable conditions present challenges to weak state capacities in countries of the global South, while small numbers of highly skilled foreigners facilitate social and labour integration. Second, strong institutions and a dynamic civil society can decelerate restrictive policy tendencies, despite negative public opinion, and foster migrant regularisation and integration. Third, such integration is nevertheless limited by the largely informal economies of developing countries in the global South (see Freier and Zubrzycki, 2019).

Overall, the case of Venezuelan displacement presents empirical support for the optimism among international organisations, NGOs and politicians regarding the development potential of both voluntary and forced migrants. This chapter contributes to the critical debate on the migration–development nexus by focusing on the role of state capacities and civil society in the responses of Argentina and Peru to Venezuelan displacement. It also contributes to the literature on the role of state capacity in the global South and on immigration policy determinants in South America. Public policies can play a key role in enhancing the contribution of immigrants to their host countries' development (OECD, 2018). In order to reap the development potential that Venezuelan immigration represents, it is essential to implement policies that include lifting documentation-related barriers, as well as promoting equality of wages and working conditions between national and foreign workers. Migrant regularisation will be key to Venezuelans being able to contribute to their host societies. Future studies should deepen our understanding of the

determinants of policy reactions to Venezuelan displacement from a development perspective in other Latin American countries, testing the relative importance of state capacity, progressive legislation, civil society activism and migrant and refugee numbers and characteristics. Cross-regional comparative approaches should draw parallels and tease out differences between Latin America and other regions, such as Southern Africa.

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