

Logistical lives, humanitarian borders: managing populations in South-South circulations

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Vidas logísticas, fronteiras humanitárias: gerenciando populações no contexto das circulações Sul-Sul

The paper investigates the growing connection between logistical thinking and humanitarian responses in current strategies of managing population movements and organizing humanitarian space, particularly in the context of South-South circulations. It analyses the case of Brazil, specifically its response to the current influx of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers, arguing that the militarization of humanitarian assistance has infused the protection efforts with a logistical mindset and a specific spatial orientation of containment/movement. It argues that i) the experiences of Venezuelans have been subsumed into a logistical framework, where control over movement in a spatially structured manner has taken precedence over concerns regarding protection and that ii) protection has been subsumed into migratory regularization and flexible yet standardized sets of procedures, organized around administrative and strategic pipelines and infrastructures. It reviews contributions on the connection between the historical evolution of logistics as a science of managing circulations and how it has travelled, in this context, to the control of peoples and their movement. The paper is based on fieldwork conducted in the Northern border of Brazil with Venezuela as part of a larger interdisciplinary project on lives in displacement and the situation of Venezuelans in Brazil.

“A strong logistics is power for combat.”

Sheltering Operation, presentation conclusions, 2018

Introduction

Since 2015, South American countries have faced a growing influx of Venezuelans, given the ongoing economic, social and political crisis in the country. As of January 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimate that roughly 6 million Venezuelans have left the country (approximately 30% of the total population), the vast majority residing or *en route* through the subcontinent. Colombia has taken the largest influx with over 1.8 million Venezuelans, Peru, almost 1.3 million and Brazil, nearly 300 thousand. Brazil has a quarter of all Venezuelans recognized as refugees globally (200 thousand) and roughly 100 thousand Venezuelans are waiting for their case to be processed. On average, 300 hundred people used to arrive daily in the northern border with Brazil (a relative decline was observed in 2019, since the border was closed for nearly two months by the Venezuelan Government - but data from April 2019 suggests entrances have resumed their incremental trend). COVID has impacted dramatically such trends since March 2020, with an uptick in June 2021 with the reopening of the border. The protracted crisis in Venezuela shows little prospect of resolution, the humanitarian crisis protracted by the effects of global pandemics and the shutdown of borders, and it is expected that the ongoing arrival of families and individuals in conditions of extreme poverty, famine, malnutrition and enduring, in most cases, persecution will continue to make headlines and require concerted regional and international efforts on the part of receiving countries and societies. Amnesty International indicated recently that 9 out of 10 Venezuelans could not afford the minimum daily nutritional intake (REF). Food shortages and massive inflation rates

(estimates now run to close to one million percent per year) have made it practically impossible to eat and buy ordinary medication (such as aspirins) in the country. It is important to note that lack of food and healthcare is, generally speaking, a consequence of stringent access to Venezuelan Public policies. Testimonies of Venezuelan migrants convey that, for instance, access to basic services (food, gas, medication, pensions and health services) is now dependent on enrollment of beneficiaries in the 'Cartão Pátria', a government issued card with information on its holders, including data on 'civic participation' (voting, for example). Some have said that refusal to enroll and provide personal information has made it nearly impossible to have any access to rights and that government officials use the 'card' as a mechanism of political control and persecution¹.

I look at the Brazilian response to Venezuelan migration as a potential space of translation of ongoing "global modes" of mobility management and how these governance structures and protection grammars travel and get translated into the context of south-south circulations. There are many particularities, as we'll see, that reflect trends in the sociopolitical landscape of Latin America – rise of extreme right governments, growing inequality, militarization of life to name but a few. These settings are all intertwined for example in the increased militarization of assistance on borders and within Brazilian territory and its effect on the protection of displaced Venezuelans. I would argue that this experience of 'humanitarian reception' has had a profound impact on the refugee and migration response system regionally and reflects what the incremental centrality of a logistical approach to mobility governance in global affairs.

Far from an isolated practice, the paper demonstrates how global logistical planning and strategies - or forms of logistical thinking (Cowen et al, 2018, p.218) - have been traveling from disaster relief and humanitarian emergencies to other operations involving the regulation and management of (human) circulations. Such logistical thinking has provided an increasingly transnational grammar for the government of mobile populations, encompassing such diverse realities as those of South America and Europe, converting the lives of the displaced into forms of logistical life (Reid, 2006). One of the most perceptible effects of such trends are the way it connects a particular infrastructure with the spatial ordering of displacement and how it enacts specific subjective formations for migrants and refugees, increasingly articulated in relation to the controlling of expectations, desires and life possibilities in the host society.

I start with a review of recent works on the historical evolution of logistics as a science of circulations and its linkages with humanitarianism in global politics. I then turn to the Brazilian case to articulate sets of spatial practices that transform the border into a logistical hub and the national territory into a grid of controlled displacements, reflecting, along the way, on their constitutive relation to protection efforts, particularly within the framework of migration and asylum as legal and sociological categories. On a final note, I bring some preliminary reflections on the impact of the pandemics on Venezuelan migration reception in Brazil.

Logistics as a science of circulations

According to Neilson (2012), 'logistics is the art and science of managing the mobility of people and things to achieve economic, communication, and transport efficiencies. It involves planning and implementing the acquisition and use of the resources necessary to sustain the operation of a system.' Historically, logistics emerged as an eminently military affair. Warfare required strategy and tactics, but also ability to circulate the means for combat. This required an effort to think about how to provide for troops' physical sustenance and military equipment, as well as reducing the need of 'plunder' from conquered spaces and populations. In her groundbreaking study on the 'deadly life of logistics', Cowen (2015) asserts that the Napoleonic Wars provided a turning point in military logistics. How to get men and material to the front

signaled the 'key role of supply lines for war'(p.26). As transformations in modern warfare reached new highs in World War II, dependence on fuel, mechanized warcraft and new systems of weapons turned logistics from a means to engage in warfare to its condition of possibility. As Cowen asserts, 'while logistics had long been critical to warfare - with the rise of industrial war, military logistics has come to lead strategy and tactics: it has gone from being the practical afterthought to the calculative practice that defines thought' (p.30).

If born as a military art, the 'revolution in logistics' took place in civilian quarters in the 1960s. Incentivized by the learning curve of modern warfare logistics, business firms turned to logistics as a central element in the circuits of economic production and distribution. Helped by incremental leaps in software and computing technologies, business managers and gurus, as well as government officials, propelled a new understanding of the relationship between production and distribution as a 'total system'. Making materials reach factories and assembly lines and distributing final products to customers were no longer seen as discrete aspects of intrafirm businesses but as part of the total process -and cost of- production. Logistics became central to increasing profitability and, therefore, 'was transformed from a least- cost analysis of discrete segments of distribution into a science of value added through circulatory systems'(Cowen, 2015, p.40).

Two breakthroughs are deemed important for the globalization of logistics in the 1970s-1990s: the invention of the container (and its subsequent standardization through multilateral fora) and the deregulation of the transport sector, initially in the US and then affecting large swaths of the world, including trucking, railroad, airline, and, later on, telecommunications industries. As Cowen suggests, these two processes permitted the rise of intermodalism (the organization of transportation across more than one mode) and the rapid growth of intermediaries in the logistics industry. Such developments prompted investments in the critical infrastructure - or infrastructural networks - necessary for the creation of 'seamless' circuits of production and the reduction of costs and bureaucracies necessary for such circulations, thus enabling a system 'based not simply on connectivity but the speed of connectivity'(p.78).

In this sense, logistics can be best understood as a 'science of circulation involved in planning and managing flows', encompassing in its thinking both a calculative logic and a spatial/temporal practice of circulation, intrinsically connected to the historical reorganization of capitalism and war (Cowen et al, 2018). The civilianization of logistics has given rise to an understanding of logistics as a value-generating practice to firms and, increasingly, to nations as the emergence of new logistical spaces -and their attendant security concerns and graduated sovereignty practices (Ong, 2006) attests (an example of such political spaces of logistics are zones - free zones, export processing zones, special economic zones etc - defined as "metainfrastructures administered by public and private cohorts generating de facto, undeclared forms of polity" - Easterling, 2012, p.1)

Recently, logistical thinking has traveled to new spaces and sectors, enlarging its reach into 'the governance of populations, the regulation of bodies, and the reconfiguration of mobilities" (Cowen et al, 2018, p.622). In the terrain of humanitarian aid provision and of 'humanitarian logistics', several books, manuals and specific academic journals (such as the 2011 Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management) have been published in the past decade. Humanitarian logistics is defined as "the process of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials, as well as related information, from point of origin to point of consumption for the purpose of meeting the end beneficiary's requirements" (Thomas and Mizushima, 2005, p.60).

In the field of migration and refugee studies, important academic contributions have spurred, reflecting on how logistical thinking is reshaping conventional practices of containment, circulation and integration of displaced populations, particularly in the context of

contemporary South-North migrations. Martina Tazzioni, Maurice Stierl, for instance, recently investigated how a particular logistical grammar of hotspots, checkpoints and circuits of dispersal and contention have structured responses, governmental and non-governmental, to the recent influx of refugees and migrants in Greece and Italy. Mezzadra et al show how the connections between migration, war and capitalism are played out in reconfigurations of integration programs, aimed at using refugee and migrant labor, sponsored by private corporations and NGOs, in Germany. The authors use the concept of logistical borderscapes to highlight the increasing logistification of migratory regimes (p.). Looking at the European migration regime through a 'logistical gaze', the authors highlight 'the widespread use of logistical terminology—hot spots, hubs, platforms, corridors—to establish a new geography and, in a way, a new rationality of migration management. The channeling of turbulent, unpredictable, and autonomous movements of mass migration through “spaces of exception” and governmentalized routes is meant to enable a process of filtering and selection (Kasperek 2016)' (p.294).

As Cowen et al argue, 'logistics is not only a form of calculative reasoning: it is also an essentially spatial and material practice, rooted in the expansion and reconfiguration of physical networks of production and distribution. As a set of techniques, discourses, instruments, strategies, and technologies aimed at optimizing circulation, business and military logistics seeks to affect the spatial disposition of bodies, information, and infrastructures in ways that promote the construction and operation of global supply -and we would add, human mobility - networks' (2018, p.622). I turn now to how such logistical approach has reshaped, sometimes in detrimental ways, the logics of governing displaced populations' circulations also in the context of South-South migration.

Borders as logistical hubs

Roraima is the least populated and arguably the most isolated province of Brazil. Initially a territory, Roraima was only made a province, with elected and autonomous government, after the Constitution of 1988. Encompassing over 2 thousand kilometers of borders with Venezuela, up until 2017, Roraima was relatively unknown to the public in the rich and densely populated areas of Southern Brazil. It made headlines occasionally as a focus of tensions between farmers (basically rice producers) and indigenous populations, whose reserves occupy approximately 70% of the province's territory. As a border area, distant and largely disconnected from other parts of Brazil (add note - energy is supplied for instance by Venezuela), Roraimenses (RR's residents) had a long historical tie with Venezuela, both for access to basic products of high quality and for tourism reasons. The closest Brazilian city is Manaus, accessible only through an arduous journey of over 12 hours by poorly kept roads that traverse indigenous reserves. Cars cannot pass through the roads at night, due to restrictions of circulation imposed by indigenous leaders.

As a public official, a middle-class lawyer leading affairs in the provincial government, stated, 'we used to go Santa Elena to buy clothes, drinks, duty free goods. Some people would go to buy groceries, for everything was of great quality, imported from the US, Mexico...' (interview, 2018). The first sign of a change in tide was observed by Brazilians traveling to Venezuela and not finding products in supermarkets. The first arrivals of Venezuelans in Roraima, back in 2015 and 2016, were of middle-class families, small business owners, civil servants, judges. From 2017-2018, a group of indigenous Venezuelans, of Warao origin, as well as low income and impoverished families began to change the profile and pose important dilemmas for assistance. RR counts with one hospital for the population of approximately three hundred thousand people. High unemployment rates combined with growing demands from the newcomers have created a scaling-up of hostilities between Venezuelans and the hosting

society. Violent acts against migrants have been systematically reported and, in mid-2018, xenophobia became a central problem for the humanitarian response, with families and individuals being expelled from improvised street shelters, having their belongings burnt and denouncing physical beatings, filmed with pride by local residents and rapidly spreading in informal channels of communication and traditional media outlets.

The setting up of an institutional response to the 'Venezuelan crisis at the border' was largely infused by political disputes between governmental levels in the context of profound institutional instability in Brazil. In 2018, running for reelection (and belonging to an opponent party to the central government), then Provincial Governor Sueli Campos made the 'Venezuelan migration' the dominant theme of her campaign. She requested extra financial help from the federal government (around 180 million reais - approximately 45 thousand US dollars) and requested the Supreme Court for an authorization to close the border in order to blockade new arrivals. The federal government, pressured for a response but resisting any assistance to the provincial candidate, decided to set up a Task Force involving several ministries, border agencies (especially the Federal Police), international multilateral agencies, international, national and local NGOs and the military to respond to the 'emergency'. As of June 2019, over 280 million reais (est. 70 million US dollars) were allocated to Operation Sheltering (Operação Acolhida) in order to provide for three priority areas: border control, reception processes (processing, shelter, food) and territorial dispersal (known as interiorization).

The Operation, which began in July 2018, was structured around a humanitarian-logistical task force, with different actors responsible for specific aspects. In the control arm, the Army would be responsible for infrastructure, supply and security; the Federal Police (assisted by IOM and UNHCR) for migratory control and documentation; ANVISA and the Health Ministry for sanitary control. In the management arm, Receita Federal was responsible for issuing CPF (an ID number required for fiscal and work related processes), Labour Ministry (alongside the Provincial Secretary of Social Assistance) would issue the work permits and UNHCR and OIM would help processing and assisting asylum seekers and temporary residents respectively. Vulnerable groups (unaccompanied minors, women with children, LGBT groups, elders, handicapped and the sick, especially HIV infected) would receive special attention from the Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF and UNFPA. Originally designed as a coordinated effort delegated along functional lines, in less than four months, the Operation became basically a militarized logistical experiment, centrally coordinated by the army with most of the funding devoted to development of infrastructural support, shelter and food provision (all largely under the responsibility and control of army personnel). Media narratives regarding the Operation are highly controlled by Communications and Press Officers of the military arm, producing videos of activities and tasks, interviews for TV, radio and newspapers. One of the first impressions of our fieldwork was precisely the tight control over the narrative and access to migrant spaces, requiring permanent escort from one or two military officers. At times, as one colleague aptly remarked, visiting the shelters and spaces of reception resembled a choreographed tour, including, ironically, the opportunity at the end to buy handcraft products made by Venezuelans in the shelters, all neatly arranged in an improvised table for display. The militarization of assistance and of the implementation of the 'migratory regime' for Venezuelans has, of course, been responsible for the central importance attributed to 'logistical thinking' in the processes of reception, control and dispersal. As Neilson argues, 'shift in the fields of generation and application of logistical knowledge appears as an instance of the militarization of society. Practices of measurement, standardization, and calculation devised in the military sphere are adapted for civilian purposes that revolutionize business and management practices (as well as migratory regimes'. Such practices have, nonetheless, created a condition 'in which logistics has actively formed a new terrain of politics on which struggles are and will continue to be played out'. (Neilson, 2012, p.324).

I will highlight here two instances that, I hope, illustrate the logistification of humanitarian protection in this particular case (understood here as a set of practices devised to regularize, i.e. provide for the means of legal permanence in the host country, and minimize the suffering of asylum seekers and migrants) -and the effect military/civil hierarchical power relations have had in reducing protection to a calculative practice related to the management of mobilities and the goal of smooth, frictionless and efficient circulation of Venezuelan bodies and subjectivities.

Mobility and triage

One of the first initiatives of the Task Force was to build the necessary 'critical' infrastructure to order the border. This has involved the construction of two large structures for reception and processing of Venezuelans arriving in Pacaraima, the border town. On one side of the road that crosses the little town is the Post for Reception and Identification (PRI) and, on the other, the Post for Triage (PTRig). A contract was signed between the military and local firms, providing for the tents, wood and aluminum structures that constituted the basis for the project. The outposts were build on the vicinity of the Border Battalion, a by then small center with three buildings for lodging, eating and athletic activities for stationed military personnel.

The PRI is the first encounter of Venezuelans with specific forms of border control. They are asked whether they intend to stay or just pass-through Brazilian territory. In the first case, they are informed of the two modalities of regularization - the residency process (established by an executive directive allowing Venezuelans to reside and work legally in Brazil for two years) and the asylum process. They pass through a room with a nurse, responsible to check their vaccination certificates and to immunize those that voluntarily state they wish to update their vaccination scheme. In the second case (a common occurrence as many traverse Brazil to reach countries like Argentina and Uruguay), their travel document is stamped and they may enter the country. By the exit, there is a small table with mobile phones, provided by a French NGO, with which Venezuelans can make short phone calls to relatives or friends back home.

Those wishing to stay, after the PRI, must cross the street to enter PTRig. There, they must choose between two colored lines, ordering the flow: blue for refugees and red for residents. They receive a paper bracelet, with empty cells, that will be filled out as they travel through numbered rooms, respectively in blue and red. The numbered rooms (from 1-7) encompass the biometric screening by the Federal Police, the UNHCR and IOM offices where forms, questionnaires, pictures and data are taken and assessed, as well as rooms for medical and vulnerability assessment. Once processed, they receive protocol numbers and provisional cards, allowing for their entry and stay in Brazilian territory. Medical emergencies are directed to an Advanced Medical Centre managed by the military with six beds and a pile stock of medications (Pacaraima does not have a hospital, only one unity of basic health assistance largely understaffed and lacking in medical supplies). Late arrivals usually remain in Pacaraima and can sleep over at the BV-8, a transit shelter, installed in the compounds at the back of PTRig, with dozens of bunk beds and areas reserved for families and men and women.

Some arrive at the capital and do not do the regularization process upon entry in Pacaraima. In this case, they must present themselves at the Federal Police headquarters, where a similar reasoning coordinates the work. During our visit, one of the officials remarked that in the early response a long and messy mass of people would occupy the entire entrance and vicinity of the building. A certain number of individuals could be processed each day and many people would sleep there in order to receive the almost 100 numbers given for Venezuelans each day. Numbered tickets ('senhas') and mechanisms of control were rapidly apprehended by migrants

and a small informal economy flourished in the neighborhood with Venezuelans selling services such as printing documents, filling forms, taking pictures and, also, selling numbered tickets for the Federal Police appointments.

As one of the interviewees stated, that was a logistical, managerial problem, not a humanitarian one. In response, federal police officials implemented the 'line system': adhesive tapes on the floor indicated the procedural flow, leading migrants and refugees to specific rooms where biometric data was collected, forms delivered and signed, information processed via administrative systems connected to Brasilia and resident cards issued and distributed. Numbered tickets were now offered upon presentation of documents and given by name with specifically designated dates and times for appointments.

Residency permits were processed through computational systems, with data directly submitted online. But asylum requests were all manual, with Venezuelans filling the twelve-page long questionnaire that had to be later digitized and sent to the National Committee for Refugees in Brasilia (responsible for deciding on the cases). A large pile of forms and documents mounted in the 'refugee' backlog room where one contracted employee and two interns of UNHCR manually scanned each page of the individual asylum requests to be later emailed to CONARE. The hard copies were sent whenever possible by governmental mail.

Efficiency and management of demand are central elements of the reception process described. Concerns over time, reduction of costs and minimization of impact of the flow over other processes conducted by the Federal Police (such as passport issuance, control, and surveillance of illegal activities such as contraband, drug trafficking etc. - seen by many as the backbone of FP operations and mandate) were paramount for interviewees.

Anecdotally, one solution devised was to include military staff to assist in Federal Police responsibilities regarding regularization processes. Around 15 young recruits were assigned to the computer room, where Venezuelans informed data, directly registering them in the online migration system. When asked why they were 'subcontracting' the responsibility, the FP officer was quick to associate more personnel with higher numbers of cases processed and more efficient administrative procedures. It took one full day just to acquaint the military trainees with the intricacies of the software. Some seemed uncomfortable with the keyboard. By the end of the visit, I informed the FP officer if he knew that those military men were leaving Roraima in the coming weeks and, therefore, he would have to request new personnel and provide continuous training. He was obviously profoundly disturbed by the news.

The messy² mass occupying the main avenue where the FP headquarters is located prompted the replication of the Pacaraima experiment in the capital, Boa Vista. Inaugurated in October 2018, the capital PTRig follows the exact same logic of its twin brother at the border: established flows, ordered through colors, numbered rooms allocated to specific functions and agencies, a luggage area for migrants' belongings and an area for distribution of donated clothes and basic hygiene kits. The main difference lies in the fact that, at PTRig Boa Vista, military and UNHCR personnel also distribute the vacant spots in the (by then) 12 shelters that host Venezuelan migrants and refugees in several neighborhoods of the town. Not surprisingly, the number of individuals passing through PTRig BV has surpassed 300 people per day in the first weeks of operation, due mainly to the search of housing by a large number of Venezuelans who cannot afford leaving Roraima on their own, nor can afford rental costs, thus sleeping on the streets and vicinities of several shelters. The bus station has also become a central 'hub' for homeless Venezuelans and now counts with a booth by UNHCR/military to assist and provide information.

The processes described here illustrate the articulation of a logistical thinking in two interrelated fronts. First, it sets up the mobility apparatus as a calculative machine, aimed at

enabling a quantifiable and measurable process, at improving efficiency and providing for a smooth network of circulations required for managing migration flows that 'optimize the entire circuit of production and distribution' of mobility demands' (Cowen, check ref.) The calculative machine enables a reductive logic in which stories, particularities and diversity are subsumed into quantifiable categories such as stockpile of processes, number of attendees, number of regularized individuals, time-efficiency in processing and shelter allocation etc. A major consequence of such logistical mentality has been a reduction of the protective dimension of refugee and residency status to an issue of bureaucratic regularization. The imposition of the mechanism of triage, of sorting migrant bodies in order to maximize the efficiency of document provision through established rational flows, with specific capacities and functions, has vacated discussion about the different nature and scope of the juridical institutes and of their capacity of enforcing rights and duties in relation to displaced groups. The decision to go 'blue' or 'red', although UNHCR, IOM and military personnel attest is informed and presented clearly to Venezuelans, is largely decided upon the basis of whether applicants can present the required documents or not and, therefore, do not disrupt the flow inscribed for each of these categories. For example, children under nine years old do not have an official Venezuelan document stating the name of father/mother and thus determining parenthood becomes a matter of individual credibility assessment. Requisites for residency status demand the presentation of such proofs, whereas for asylum applications, such demands are not present. Most -if not all - families with children under 9 end up applying for refugee status, even though they might consider temporary residency a more appropriate venue for their migratory projects and even if the reasons for granting asylum remain, in some cases, largely absent (increasing chances of denial by CONARE). The calculative machine thus 'contributes to the material conditions through which the security and well-being of human and nonhuman lives are rendered subordinate to the imperative of smooth, efficient circulation'. (Cowen et al, p.622)

Secondly, it shows the way in which 'logistical rationalities are enacted through the production of vast infrastructural assemblages that inscribe calculative modes of spatial reasoning into the built environment'(Cowen et al, 2018, p.622)'. A massive infrastructure of logistical hubs (the reception and triage posts), gateways and corridors, even if marked by 'chokepoints' and disruptions (of staff, of energy and often times of connectivity), has not only attributed specific meanings and subjective formations to Venezuelan bodies, but has also constituted a political space organized around a transnationally operated network of circulations and bureaucracies, a 'pipeline' of social relations underpinned by logistical processes. Such infrastructural assemblages involve spatial practices of circulation devoted both to control but also to the will to care. Alongside reception posts and triage centers, shelters have become a central node in modulating mobile subjects' desires and converting the enlarging 'operational fantasies' of logistical thinking to other parts of the country through the circulation of Venezuelan migrants and their families.

Shelters, desire, dispersal

Roraima had 14 shelters for displaced Venezuelans, 2 in Pacaraima and 12 in Boa Vista. Three of the oldest shelters were originally improvised into temporary dormitories for the first wave of arrivals, back in 2016, from public sports facilities and convention centers in Boa Vista. Most of the shelters, however, were reformed/transformed after June 2018 under the umbrella of the task force and half of the six thousand places available were built on empty terrains in more distant neighborhoods. Shelters are distributed in several parts of town, organized according to specific profiles of displaced groups. LGBT groups have their own shelter, as well as indigenous populations, families with children, single men, and women, and, finally, groups selected for dispersal (transit shelter). Usually, shelters are operated in partnership between UNHCR officials, contracted NGOs and military personnel. The military provide logistical

support (controlling entry, securing perimeter, checking documents and delivering supplies, especially food), whereas UNHCR and NGOs coordinate activities inside the shelter, assist with basic demands, for example, problems with access to school, social assistance, information on resettlement, job placement etc.

The explosion of shelters in Boa Vista's landscape, composing the infrastructural assemblage of spatial practices of circulation, was a way of articulating the logistical reception process with the need to simultaneously locate and contain migrants' physical presence in the urban space and enable the smooth operation of the circulation program designed by the Operation. Growing tensions have arisen from the massive presence of Venezuelans being homeless and violent responses by locals, including the fencing off of public spaces and occasional beatings and killings. These instances of violence intensified the 'urgency' of building up a protective infrastructure that allowed the concomitant spatial control of the population and the operational demands of the circulation pipeline. Such circulation was premised on the need to remove migrants and refugees from Roraima, relocating them to other cities within Brazil, where 'integration' could be more successful. Through labor intermediaries and the voluntary adherence of more than 50 municipalities, interiorization became the 'end point', the final goal of the production and distribution line of Venezuelan mobility in Brazil. The logistical rationale involved creating a steady flow among different nodes of the circulation pipeline: if, for example, 300 migrants were processed by week at PTRig, the task force needed a similar number of shelter vacancies and, consequently, a similar number of people leaving under the interiorization program.

A first task was then to increase the number of vacancies in shelters: it nearly doubled in the last eight months with the construction of three new massive shelters, with capacity for 600 up to 1000 people. The second task was to impose a more forceful approach to interiorization, the greatest chokepoint of the pipeline. Most municipalities were not interested in receiving Venezuelans. Faced with severe economic and unemployment crisis in most cases, cities were reactive to federal government proposals of dispersal. Early adhesions involved mainly NGOs, sponsored by UNHCR and IOM, in no more than 10 cities that had already set infrastructure to receive small numbers of displaced. By the end of 2018, another two dozen cities, again largely convinced by local NGOs and by short term projects and sponsorship by UNHCR, entered the program. As of February 2019, 17 provinces and over 50 cities participated in the interiorization process and close to 5 thousand Venezuelans had left Roraima under its banner. The sponsored interiorization is led by the military and IOM, usually Air Force and local army battalions are responsible for transportation and IOM/UNHCR provides information and logistical/financial support to participant cities and NGOs. Casa Civil/Presidency is the official coordinator of the dispersal initiative, but difficulties in the relationship between federal and local governments have ended up, once again, prompting the already inflated place of army officials and international public servants in the process. As such, it seems fair to say that the subsumption of the humanitarian aspect by the logistical dimension of the Task Force has been accompanied by the increasing control of military staff in all phases of this network of circulation, from reception to production to delivery.

Originally designed as temporary living spaces, shelters were transformed in the logistical hub of the humanitarian operation. A discrete element of the network, the shelter is now an integral and necessary part of the established flow expected of migrants and refugees. To be sent to another province, Venezuelans have first to be allotted a spot in one of the shelters, according to availability. Once in the shelters, they are enrolled for potential opportunities of interiorization according to profile and demand of receiving cities. Quotas for interiorization are established by the receiving node, along race, gender, age and background education parameters.

The official website of the Operation states that interiorization is voluntary and details about destination cities are explained in advance. Participants sign a term of 'voluntary participation'

with the IOM. In practice, this is a much more complicated process, imbued in highly unequal power relations and in the effects of logistical *dispositifs* in the making of displaced groups' desire and subjectivities. Earlier research indicated that many Venezuelans wanted to remain close to the border and in Roraima, in order to provide for relatives, send supplies, configuring what was termed as a circular migration flow. The logistical rendering of circulations, coupled with a context of deterioration of the crisis both in Venezuela and in Roraima (rising xenophobia, high living costs and lack of opportunities), arguably promoted a *habitus*, an intensification of the disposition of displaced Venezuelans to keep moving through the pipeline set up by the Task Force. New arrivals were rapidly socialized in the shelter-in/flight-out routine of the program and the desire to move, once relatively understated, became a recurrent trait of migrants' narratives. Many of those still on the streets, now sleep in the vicinity of the shelters, hoping they will be picked up in one of the many night operations for enrollment and removal of street dwellers orchestrated by UNHCR and the army.

Once in the shelters, expectation grow as to when a flight opportunity will appear. In our interviews and participant observation, we encountered several occasions in which lists of displaced willing to leave were made on the go and people, selected on the spot, just in time. One group of young men, for example, was holding a map of Brazil and asking where Rio Grande do Sul was (the most Southern Province of Brazil). They had learned a few minutes earlier that the next flight would go to Canoas, a city six thousand kilometers away from Boa Vista. The map was cut and ended three provinces above Rio Grande do Sul. Some of them were called and had to present the next day for removal. They had no idea about Canoas, an eminently white town with cold weather and a very different set of social rules and expectations from those they experienced in Boa Vista. Nor were they able to pinpoint spatially how far they would have to go.

The ways in which logistical thinking (calculative rationale and spatial strategies) inform the shelter-in/flight-out routine create confusion and frustration among staff and the displaced. For staff, just-in-time decisions have to be made as to who goes and who fulfills the criteria (for example, who has taken all required vaccines, who has a work permit and so on). Not infrequently, names have to be cut off from the lists - at great stress and cost for humanitarian workers - as other stakeholders impose restrictions later on the process for selected individuals. For example, we witnessed the selection of a group of individual and families for interiorization, who had been removed to the transit shelter - some had quit jobs in Boa Vista, sold their few belongings, like mattresses and kitchen apparel. On the same day, when they were about to enter the procedural routine for 'flight-out', they were informed by health professionals of ANVISA that there was one case of chickenpox and therefore the entire group would have to be quarantined. The spots would be reallocated, and the group would have to re-enter the waiting line for a vacancy in the dispersal program (probably another city, another province and, at least, a 40 day waiting).

Increasing frustrations with the government led program have also promoted private initiatives of relocation, especially through NGOs and labor recruitment firms. The Jesuit Service, for example, is building a database of CVs and potential employees and intermediating them with companies and services willing to hire them in other provinces. The Mormons, also participating in the local effort of assistance, have secured an agreement with a private airline company, guaranteeing a certain number of free tickets from Boa Vista to several destinations in Brazil. In response to our questions about the 'privatization' and steady rise of intermediaries in the process of Venezuelan circulation, a Task Force agent responded: 'the important thing is to get them out of here, get them to the final result...if they can do this by other means, even better for the Brazilian taxpayer'. Concern with securing the flow and the speed of connectivity (i.e. a steady balance between entry and removal) informs such a reading of interiorization

initiatives. Needless to say, very little has been said about what is going on with Venezuelans once they arrive and whether their needs, rights and guarantees are being observed. The logistical gaze stops where the distribution line ends and, with it, the concerns over the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan 'migration crisis'.

By the end of January 2019, the military spokesperson for the Operation informed that Campinas would be integrated in the pipeline as new hub for the interiorization program, because 'it would speed up the transportation of migrants to other cities in Brazil as Campinas provided more logistical options than Boa Vista'. The new hub was supposed to start operating in the 2019, thus extending spatially and politically the logistical terrain of the Task Force and pushing the end of line away from Roraima. At the time of the writing, nothing had been yet set up³.

Conclusions

These examples highlight the intricacies of military-civilian relations in the effecting of a prominent logistical rationale in the humanitarian response to Venezuelan displaced populations in Brazil. Logistics provide a means of calculating and managing effectively the network of circulations, of ordering borders and producing and distributing migrants' bodies and subjectivities. The grammar of logistics has infused the humanitarian landscape in recent years and, increasingly, informed the governance of globally displaced populations. As a technique of power, logistics not only spatially distributes functions along the network of circulations, but also produces expectations about who the displaced are, what they can become and how to get there. Reception, containment and dispersal turned into central nodes for the smooth operation of the mobility pipeline. Such operations, nonetheless, are marked by chokepoints and bottlenecks, by appropriations on the part of the displaced and by the need of constantly reevaluating the material and symbolic infrastructure required to successfully convert a spontaneous and largely uncontrolled movement of people and desires into an organized and rationalized flow of identifiable populations. There is a lot of complex learning and adapting involved in the making up of logistical borderscapes and in the intertwined parts and processes of its constitutive agents.

The deleterious impact of logistical thinking, despite its capacity to care and provide for the basic needs of migrants and asylum seekers, lies in the long-term effects it produces and in the fact that it ends up condensing, in its gaze and procedures, the whole condition of possibility and legibility of population circulations in such contexts. On one hand, it reduces the space and grammar of protection, central to, for example, a proper discussion on the right to asylum. On the other, it pervades the potential sociability enacted in circulations with rationalized scripts and expectations, thus reducing the possibility of creative interventions. This is not to say that "counterlogistics" are not present, but to emphasize how the reductive approach of displaced populations to a 'logistical life' has profound consequences for the understanding of mobility as a freedom experiment.

Finally, it is important to highlight how such logistical rationality applied to forced circulations has become increasingly global, permitting thus the expansion of techniques of government to disrupt the location of borders - as the European case powerfully attests - and the range of actors and stakes now included in power relations produced through mobility. Far from a situated experience, logistical lives and humanitarian borders have become increasingly

³ Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2019/01/interiorizacao-de-venezuelanos-tera-hub-em-campinas.shtml>, accessed 30 January 2019.

ubiquitous and form an integral part of the landscape of global cooperation between migration regimes in rich and poorer areas of the globe.