


Migration Governance: Human Rights or Security? The Case of Chile

Zarządzanie migracją: prawa człowieka czy bezpieczeństwo? Przypadek Chile

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Abstract: Given the arrival of migrants through unauthorized crossings in northern Chile since 2019, both government and international organizations have only responded via emergency criteria, therefore causing strong reactions by media and academia, mainly from social sciences. This text aims to combine analytical perspectives towards the understanding of a complex situation, such as migration. We have articulated an architectural point of view with an anthropological approach to examine the temporary camps installed on the northern Chilean border, particularly in Colchane and Lobitos. Starting from a contextualization of the situation in the Latin American region, the article gives way to the Chilean case and its government's actions in response to the increase of migrant entries through the northern border. This allows us to assess the set-up infrastructure in terms of habitability, permanence, and social inclusion.

Keywords: Transitional habitability, social inclusion, ephemeral architecture, migration governance

Streszczenie: Od 2019 r. na terytorium północnego Chile stale przybywa rosnąca liczba migrantów przekraczających nieautoryzowane przejścia na granicy. W związku z powyższym zarówno rząd, jak i organizacje międzynarodowe zareagowały za pomocą środków nadzwyczajnych, wywołując w ten sposób silne reakcje mediów i środowisk akademickich, głównie reprezentujących nauki społeczne. Tekst ten ma na celu połączenie perspektyw analitycznych w kierunku zrozumienia złożonej sytuacji, jaką stanowi migracja. W publikacji został przedstawiony architektoniczny punkt widzenia z antropologicznym podejściem do zbadania tymczasowych obozów położonych na terenie północnej granicy chilijskiej, szczególnie w Colchane i Lobitos. Artykuł zaczyna się od zarysowania kontekstu sytuacyjnego w regionie Ameryki Łacińskiej, następnie skupia się na przypadku Chile i działaniach rządu w odpowiedzi na wzrost liczby migrantów przekraczających północną

granicę. To pozwala nam ocenić przygotowaną infrastrukturę pod względem możliwości zamieszkania, trwałości i integracji społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: przejściowa zdolność do zamieszkania, integracja społeczna, architektura efemeryczna, zarządzanie migracją

The goal of this article is to analyze the government of Chile's response to the increase in the arrival of migrants coming through unauthorized crossings on its northern border. It is focused on the actions implemented to address the presence of migrants in the region, considering the conditions in which they enter, as well as the longer-term responses, if any. To do so, research strategies from the social sciences (semi-structured interviews with those who work directly with this population and also some migrants, participant observation, and field diaries) are combined with those of architecture: field observation, research into existing contexts related to emergency infrastructure, and the composition of problem maps through data collection and user perception. The initial hypothesis is that the Chilean government's response is not only insufficient but also constructed to prevent the proper integration of migrants. Passing through the transitory settlements does not help them to reside in Chile. On the contrary, it violates their rights and forces them to settle in the misery cordons (the "tomas") that exist in Iquique, such as the Mula that we visited during the first semester of 2024. From these visits, we conducted semi-structured interviews with some migrants, but mainly with personnel in charge of assisting them and members of international organizations. We also attended logistics meetings organized by the Chilean central government, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations. Participant observation and the field diary were useful tools to enrich the empirical data obtained through the interviews.

First, we present a succinct review of the evolution of migratory flows since 2019 in Latin America, and how they have particularly impacted Chile and its migration governance. Then, we move on to an analysis of the migrant population assistance programs implemented on the northern border, their degree of efficiency, and their respect for migrants' basic rights. Two temporary camps installed in Colchane and Iquique were observed in terms of infrastructure, habitability, sustainability, and permanence. We then conclude that the government proposal is not only insufficient, but it does not observe the preservation of the population's dignity,

greatly diminished by the type of mobility it has undertaken. In addition, it is the result of migration governance that is much more focused on border security than on respect for the rights of a population that has been vulnerable both in their country of origin and throughout the entire “transit” it has made to reach Chile.

1. Changes in the migrant trajectories, South-North to South-South

In recent years the trajectories and characteristics of mobility, as well as the migrant profiles, have changed. On the one hand, those who begin the journey are no longer only young male adults: the number of women, children, and elderly people has also increased. This factor represents a challenge not only for mobility itself but also in terms of meeting their needs, both urgent and in the long term. On the other hand, displacements are not linear: although the global north continues to be a goal, there are several stages before reaching it, involving diverse moments of transit with different durations and geographies. Intra-regional movements have increased, and migrants have to wait before the next stage of their project – which may result in an installation or continuing their way. The so-called South-South migrations¹ have put tension on some geographical areas that previously had not faced the challenge of dealing with these flows, and the needs arising from hundreds of people in “transit”² that have led to

¹ Although migratory flows continue to look northward, in this case to the United States, migrants currently go through several stages before reaching their destination. Due to the time they take to reorganize and continue on their way, each stage becomes an installation, sometimes more or less permanent. Thus, some migrants change their final destination and decide to remain in the “transitory” countries (South-South migration). Precisely this change of pattern is what turns transit countries – such as Chile, Colombia, or Mexico – into countries that receive migrants, a situation for which they were, and continue to be, unprepared. Hence, they join the global governance of migration. That means border control, always directed to the same profile of migrants: the poor (Castro 2022; Laplace 2017).

² In current migrations, waiting or transit times have become much longer, giving rise to permanent settlements. The routes are not linear, perhaps because people try their luck in various countries, saving money to continue towards a more attractive one in terms of economics, security, and access to regularity. For this reason, governments are not obligated to plan long-term actions, but rather manage the “emergency” without giving clear options to settle in a more permanent way. In the Chilean case, the possibility of regularizing their situation

informal facilities. The number of migrants currently moving through the Latin American region has drawn the attention of international organizations and local institutions that must manage them. Figures indicate that flows in the region have grown by 116%, and 90% have concentrated in South America (IOM 2020). Chile is one of the countries where these flows are directed. Currently, the migrant presence in that country represents 8.7% of the total population, with an approximate annual growth of 200,000 migrants, and the Venezuelan group being the largest (Cerdeña, Baeza 2023: 7).

During the last five years, nearly 8 million people have left Venezuela, heading mainly to Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador, although Chile is the fourth country receiving these flows.³ The first wave of Venezuelans, who arrived in Chile in 2016, had a high level of education and enough resources to find comfortable places to live in. These people quickly integrated into society and found medium-high-paid jobs. In 2019, what we could call a second wave of Venezuelans arrived, with fewer resources and training, and in a context in which an entry visa was required. For this population, who arrived by land, the administrative requirement of a visa complicated their movement, and they began to enter through unauthorized crossings, especially through Colchane, the border with Bolivia, in the north of Chile.⁴ Many factors play a role in choosing a destination, including the perception that Chile is the richest country in the region, stable, and therefore more “reliable” for the migration enterprise, especially if remittances are planned. Furthermore, with no significant migrant presence, at least until the first

is practically impossible if they have entered through unauthorized crossings, which affects the settlement conditions to which they can aspire and forces them to think about moving to another more “friendly” destination.

³ Other data show that by the end of 2023, Chile had become the fifth-largest recipient of Venezuelan migrants, after Brazil (R4V n.d., *International Organization for Migration Refugees and migrants from Venezuela*).

⁴ As in many countries receiving migrants, e.g., in the case of Mexico, Chilean migratory authorities have decided to increase border security, with the aim of a greater control of entries. In the last four years, at least 150 thousand entries have been recorded through unauthorized crossings, worrying border municipalities such as Colchane, greatly affected by what authorities call the “migratory crisis.” In February 2023, the Critical Infrastructure Law came into force, which allows the collaboration of the Army for border control of the Northern macro-zone, through identity control, registration, and detention of people who commit illegal acts. This includes irregular entry into Chilean territory. The intention is to deter, with the presence of the military, the use of unauthorized crossings by migrants, but also to increase the number of expulsions.

decade of this century,⁵ combined with increased controls in the most typical migration destinations, new flows are looking favorably on the possibility of settling in Chile.

The initial representation that every Venezuelan immigrant has about the chosen destination is contrasted with the asymmetric incorporation into a political economy model [...] because many things are nothing more than a mirage since neoliberal Chile is the most expensive country in the region in housing, health, food, and transportation, and offers low wages compared to the cost of living, so life is financed with debt and exhausting work days [...] (Rodríguez Torrent, Gissi Barbieri 2023: 112).

The contrast between what is idealized and what is lived is the game of the migrant enterprise. Networks forged during the process, or those established previously, are very important for the installation. After a while, the decision to stay may depend on the integration and roots that have been built, but also on the changes (positive or negative) that the host society has experienced. It is interesting to observe, in the testimonies collected, how after a variable period of time migrants begin to agree that Chile is a country of passage.⁶ Testimonies coincide with the harshness of the capitalist system installed in Chile, and especially because it represents a very strong contrast with their country of origin. Long working hours, insufficient salaries, and a lack of free time to spend with family and friends make many people consider leaving the country. Added to this is the difficulty of accessing regular status, which is almost impossible if they enter through unauthorized crossings, making them vulnerable in terms of job access, dignified housing, health (they are only covered for basic care), and higher education.

⁵ Let us remember that during the last three decades of the 20th century, the Pinochet dictatorship did not facilitate the entry of foreigners into the country. The aforementioned authority considered that some could represent a danger to internal security – an issue that is being repeated today. With the change of regime, trade relations with neighboring countries were reactivated, the border relationship with Peru and Bolivia was renewed, and therefore the entry of nationals coming from those countries. But the increase in migratory flows to Chile is recent, the result of particular circumstances in Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela. It is a new challenge for a country that was not accustomed to having such a diverse and numerous presence of migrants.

⁶ Regarding this, waiting times are very long. We can no longer speak either about transit or residence, everything is mixed up. Changes of residence depend on the networks built. The calculations between staying or leaving remain, as the reassessment of the “real” situation of Chile does.

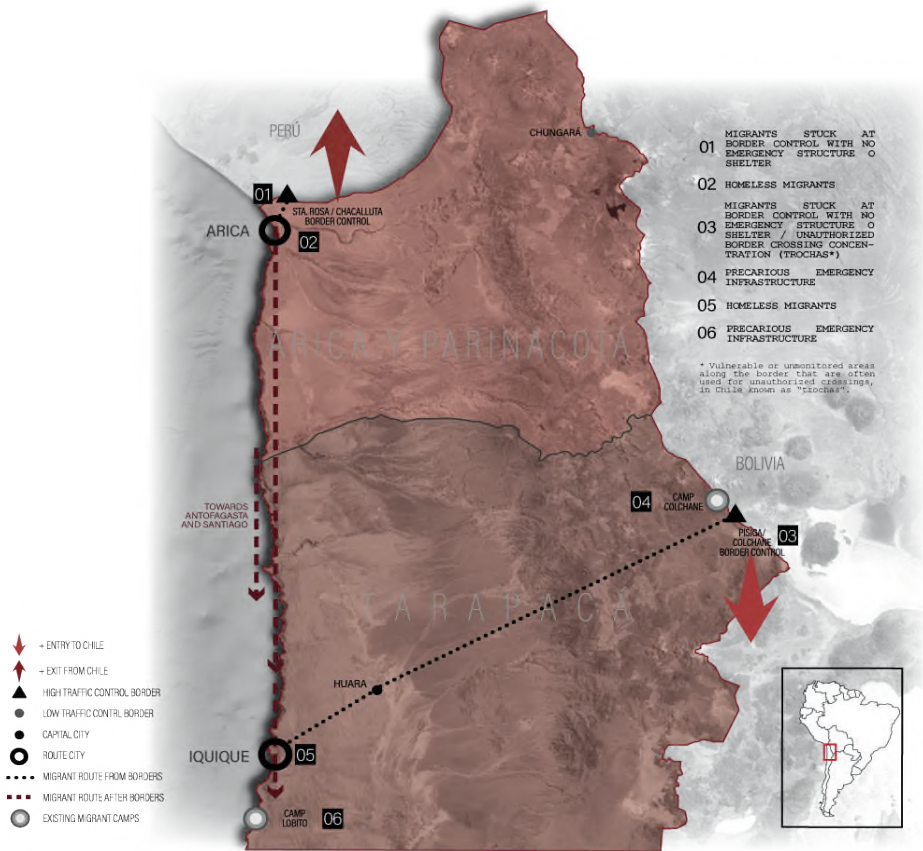


Figure 1. Map of the problem⁷

Source: made by the authors.

2. Chile faced with increasing migration flows: are we talking about a crisis?

The most recent flows have been surprising because of the number and characteristics of those who lead them – Central American, Venezuelan, and Haitian

⁷ Cartography of migratory routes in Chilean northern territory, related to the main infrastructure and events experienced during the "migration crisis." People entry to Chile mostly through northern borders and try to relocate towards south, to major urban centers and the capital city, seeking better life opportunities.

caravans – who abruptly leave their countries and have left behind painful images of the Latin American continent. This has led to a series of studies that discuss migration in crisis contexts, seeking to explain the mobility dynamics of certain groups and geographic areas. “Several of the works that are part of the analysis of migrations in crisis contexts⁸ have highlighted the prominent role of expulsion factors, to the extent that they are migrations of desperation (Freitz 2019) or migrations of survival (Betts 2013)” (Zapata, Vera Espinoza, Gandini 2022: 18). Although the importance of guaranteeing human rights has been discussed, the image of migrants presented in the agendas of most international institutions dedicated to this issue is that of victims. And that is why the action is closer to welfare than to the identification of migrants as subjects of rights. The perception of crisis and migration results in immediate and non-permanent actions of attention, and therefore little coordination to achieve standardized regional policies of attention to migrants. This idea of crisis/urgency focuses on basic issues – undoubtedly necessary – without long-term planning, as if mobility was an exception. However, it has been proven that this is not the case.

In Chile, the new immigration law 21.325 (2021) sought to manage migration in the interest of regularity, recognizing its importance in the economic and social development of the country. Even in its Article 9, it clarifies the will not to criminalize irregular migration. However, although the law proposes a less criminalizing approach, the National Congress is promoting management initiatives focused on securitization. Hence, programs were approved to restrict unauthorized crossings, and even to consider the reversal of the non-criminalization proposal. Again, the intention has been to classify illegal entry into Chile as a crime, in order to simplify the expulsion process. The launch of the “National Plan for Border Areas” deployed a securitization and control strategy on the northern border, shared with Peru and Bolivia. The pretext was to prevent the irregular entry of migrants, drug trafficking, and other illegal acts – again mixing crime

⁸ Migration in crisis is not the same as a migration crisis. The first definition describes an exit driven by specific circumstances, as has been the case in recent years with Haitians and Venezuelans, and which brings together an unusual number of migrants. On the other hand, the migration crisis is the term used by some media and administration (state governments and institutional bodies, among others) to describe the situation, to justify decisions and actions in terms of having a safe, orderly and regulated migration. Undoubtedly, this facilitates migratory management but does not consider the specific needs of the migrant population, in the interest of a more balanced response.

with migration – so it was easier to justify the use of public force against this population. This policy is part of the so-called global migration governance, part of the 2030 sustainable development goals, which aims at an orderly, regular, and safe management of these flows. However, the result is a migration management dominated by a state-centric approach that prioritizes border security in the region over the security of migrants and sustainable human development (Ocman Azueta, Ortega Ramírez 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which kept the Chilean population locked down, aggravated the passage of migrants through the country, many entering illegally in highly vulnerable situations. Entire families arrived, without support and facing a lot of hostility from the local population. “The events motivated the mayor of the commune of Colchane to activate a media strategy and to request, among other things, to stop irregular migration” (Liberona Concha *et al.* 2024: 2). Many of these people settled in irregular camps assembled in public squares and in some “tomas”⁹ generating more tension. For this reason, UNHCR, together with other international organizations – IOM, UNICEF, World Vision – headed for the area to aid this population.

The Colchane Plan (2021) implemented by the government had the main objective of relieving tension in the area, for which it was decided to carry out deportations and/or penal and administrative expulsions based on sanitary and migratory control. At the same time, camps, temporary shelters or transitional facilities were set up in Colchane (235 km from Iquique) and Playa Lobitos (22 km from the city of Iquique). From this plan, border control was linked to the Army, to work together with the police in transportation, logistics, and technology. Since then, the military presence on the northern borders has been constant, and it was reactivated during the 2023 crisis. The conditions, ways, and periods in which they attempt to respond to humanitarian needs have generated even more vulnerability.

The situation in Colchane reflects the way Chile manages migration, based on a border control and securitization policy. The premise that there is a migration crisis, referring to the Venezuelan case, feeds the logic of securitization.¹⁰ This argument makes it seem like it is a problem that needs to be

⁹ We will define “tomas” as the action of illegally occupying and inhabiting a piece of land without sales or titles. People in Chile (both Chilean or migrant) build a hut or a house on it. It is a response to the lack of housing for those who do not have any other choice.

¹⁰ This idea is shared throughout the region, and the reactions have been similar: increasing the requirements for regular entry, increasing the presence of security elements at the borders, and providing emergency care without regard to long-term planning. The so-called global

managed with greater control and supervision, which endangers migrants who are transiting, not only through the northern passes of Chile but throughout the entire Latin American region. Such a response, combined with border externalization,¹¹ turns these flows into uncomfortable people who must be disposed of. And that is what happens: they go from one border to another until they reach Mexico, where they face more rights violations and often extremely violent situations that put their physical and mental integrity at risk.

2.1. Border securitization: impacts on the migrant population

The response to the lack of infrastructure capable of accommodating the demand for shelter has materialized in the camps of Colchane, in the border area between Chile and Bolivia,¹² and Playa Lobitos, on the outskirts of Iquique city. Each one has a different operating logic, in accordance with the migrants' transits and profiles, which may imply a longer or shorter stay in each case. In Colchane, the stay is linked to entry procedures at the Chilean border. Both are proposed from a welfare perspective, seeking to address the immediate needs of migrants, without considering important variables within the context of permanence and temporal habitability.

The Playa Lobitos camp (2022) is located on the coastal edge of Iquique, 22 km from the central area of the city, with 2 hectares of surface and a capacity for 250 people. It consists of the UNHCR/Ikea Foundation RHU (Refugee House Unit) generic emergency shelter typology, of approximately 17 square meters, with polymer locks and cover, and a folding steel structure. The units have no wall or floor coverings, except for additional plastic sheeting, no energy self-sufficiency, and are intended for 10 to 20 people

governance of migration proclaims the respect for human rights, but its actions contravene them.

¹¹ Border externalization is a part of border security programs and consists of peripheral countries joining the control logic of the global north countries, sometimes in exchange for training agreements, development support, or others (Aikin Araluce, González Arias 2022).

¹² "The Colchane border is a tiny city comprising 1659 persons that divides Bolivia and Chile. It has a formal point of entry and multiple informal crossing points. It is in the Andean Altiplano in the Tarapaca region and is part of the Atacama Desert; therefore, all year it has extreme weather conditions. Furthermore, it has an elevation of almost 4000 m above the sea level, which makes the overall conditions very hard for vulnerable populations (i.e., children and pregnant women). The neighboring Bolivian city is Pisiga, and the prevalent population is the indigenous group Aimara. Starting in 2020, Colchane was key for migrants entering irregularly to Chile" (Jaramillo Contreras et al. 2024: 4).

on mats, thus resulting in the minimum housing unit of the complex to supposedly meet “individual” needs. In addition to those units, there are some tents functioning as shaded areas, with furniture consisting of tables and chairs for collective activities. Also, chemical toilets and sinks are scattered between the RHUs, drinking water, and power generators. Food was offered once or twice a day through suppliers in charge of managing the camp. The entire perimeter of the camp is delimited by fences and is side by side to a highway (Route 1 Iquique), with no pedestrian crossings or immediate vital neighborhood.

It is essential to understand the environmental and climatic conditions of the area in which the camps are located, and the impact that this has on the psychological, mental, and physical health of the inhabitants. Lobitos faces directly onto the Pacific coast, it is bordered by large sandy hills, and it is exposed to strong winds and temperatures that can drop to 13°C (55°F). The Colchane camp has very similar infrastructure qualities, and an even more severe environmental context because it is in the Andean highland desert. It is also important to identify the needs of people in accordance with the permanence that the transit implies.

The population with a vocation for permanence¹³ expresses desires and needs that exceed the threshold of those recognized as essential under the criteria offered by the transitory camps – as they were called by the authorities. Along with the precariousness of the facilities, they experience the difficulty of seeking opportunities that allow them to guarantee rights ignored by the institutions. The limited mobility and the distance between the camp and urban centers are critical factors in promoting self-sufficiency in these groups. How can opportunities for work, education, or networks be made possible in the context of social and geographic isolation?

In 2023, another major migration event occurred, this time on the Arica-Tacna border. Hundreds of people were stranded at the border crossing due to incompatibilities between the migratory guidelines of neighboring countries, which resulted in the impediment of both the entry of migrants to Peru and their return to Chile. This resulted in a long wait for migrants – many of them families with children and/or elderly people – subject to inhumane conditions of stay, exposed to the elements of the Arica desert,

¹³ Population with a vocation for permanence: persons who have left their place of habitual residence with the intention of remaining in a host country (R4V 2021).

without any type of emergency structure or shelter from public institutions, but rather tents made of cloth and sticks erected at random.



Photographs 1–4. Arica, 2023. Images by Cristóbal Venegas

Between the nonexistence and the precarious existence of emergency infrastructure, what we observe is the condition of vulnerability and structural violence to which migrants are subjected. In addition to being kept in overcrowded conditions, extreme cold, and hunger, physical and social isolation is caused by the lack of public transport or the possibility of walking to central areas. This situation exacerbates the feeling of being in confined spaces and totally segregated, conditions like those of concentration camps (Liberona Concha 2022).

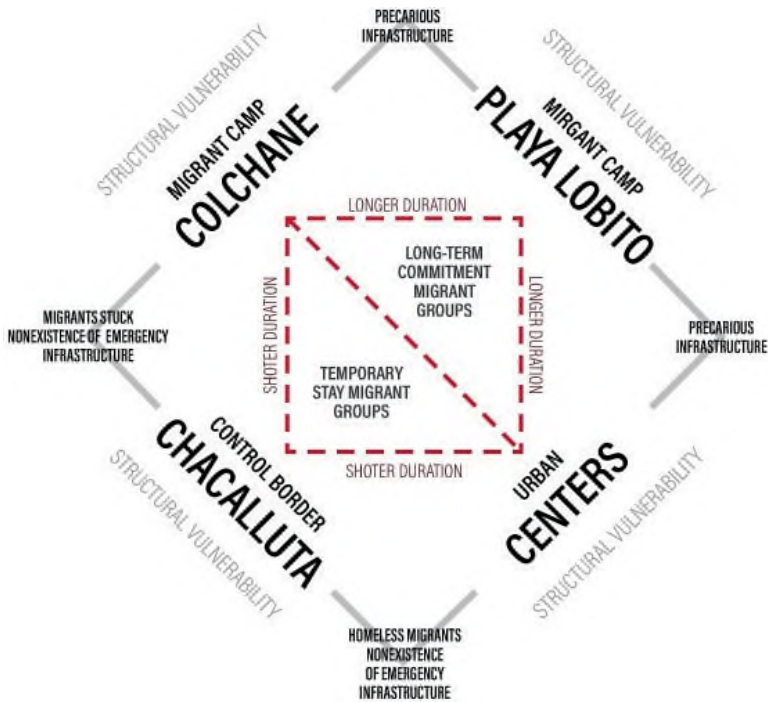


Figure 2. Diagram of the emergency infrastructure profile¹⁴

Source: made by the authors.

The number of migrants led to a reaction to manage the “crisis” and therefore to temporary solutions without a long-term plan. The urgent situation that meant having a neglected population also changed the ways in which national and international NGOs were organized. Unfortunately, more towards an emergency assistance plan, so the actions implemented did not last over time, even though migrants continue to enter through unauthorized crossings.¹⁵

¹⁴ Synthesis diagram about Chile’s migratory points of interest in the North Region, their infrastructure conditions and the human corporeal experience within that context.

¹⁵ In conversations with the Chilean Red Cross, based in Iquique, it was documented that the influx of migrants through the Colchane area continues, but government support is minimal: only one bottle of water per family, they no longer provide transportation assistance to the city, and they have prohibited local private transporters from taking them to Iquique, which forces them to walk almost 300 km between both towns. Almost no one goes to the Colchane camp because they prefer to continue to Iquique, where they are only received if they are a family unit (taken from telephone conversations with Diana Hernández, head of the connectivity program of the Chilean Red Cross, Iquique headquarters).

[...] the Chilean case shows that when we talk about exclusion, to understand the processes of inclusion (or the lack thereof), we understand exclusionary practices that are multidimensional and that occur at different scales, whether at the state or at the social level. [In Chile, the pandemic consolidated the processes of exclusion], normalizing exclusionary governance that seeks to control and deter migration through the establishment of an environment of hostility (Vera Espinoza 2022: 97).

3. The standardization of habitability needs in contexts of emergency

After reviewing the situation in the area and the actions implemented by the Chilean authorities with the support of international organizations, we move our reflection to the quality parameters of spaces for humanitarian assistance, focusing on hospitality and habitability, according to the perspective of social inclusion and humanitarian law. We observe that the design used in the shelters of the emergency migration programs is not satisfactory, it poorly meets the basic needs of people and lacks an understanding of the complexity of the transience to which migrants are subjected. We will resort to conceptualizations about dwelling and building, to expose both the socioeconomic prejudices implicit in this response and its ineffectiveness.

The rationalization of the emergency shelter is based on productivity, which in turn appears as the final product, without incorporating processes of self-sufficiency and self-management (Gordillo Bedoya 2004). So the human experience of inhabiting a space is conditioned towards something systematized and at the same time without any complicity between the environment, the building, and the inhabitants. Therefore, they are spaces subject to uprooting and alienation, which do not promote social integration because they are dissociated from their environment/context.

Functionalism has subordinated architectural language to its function, simplifying and rationalizing architecture according to principles of universality and homogeneity, to the detriment of everything considered aesthetic or secondary. It aims at standardization and type as elements of systematization and industrialization. Le Corbusier's concept of the "Machine à Habiter" embodied in some of his works, rationalizes the use of housing according to functionality. It seeks to understand common ways of using space among different populations, to design universal solutions, thus generalizing space, and making the "house" a standardized and efficient item. By standardizing the act of living, we observe the dissociation of architectural design with the complexity of the individual, their culture, and context.

Standardization has been used in the design strategy of UNHCR/ ACNUR camps, among others, and is justified by the ability to meet the high demand for shelter. It is based on prefabrication as a technique for large-scale industrial production. However, standardization – a reflection of the mentality of the Modern Movement – needs to be revised. The technical, economic, and political implications behind industrialization and standardization operations, within the disciplinary task of emergency architecture, must be shifted and brought to the level of temporary habitat.



Photograph 5. UNHCR Camp, Garmawa, Dohuk, Iraq. Image by S. Baldwin, 2014



Photograph 6. RHU Shelter. Image by Plataforma Arquitectura, UNHCR, 2020



Photograph 7. UNHCR/UNHCR Playa Lobito Camp, Iquique, 2023. Image by Shelter Design Manual for Latin America, UNHCR, 2023



Photograph 8. Paper Log House, Kobe, Japan, 1995. Image by Takanobu Sakuma

3.1. Building, Dwelling, Thinking

In “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Heidegger (2015) reflects on how to think and plan architectural space, not only designed to fulfill basic functions of habitability but through an organic and respectful relationship with the environment, thinking of essential spaces tailored to the needs of human beings. With this, he makes a strong critique of the contemporary technical aspirations of architecture that emerge with the Modern Movement, which through functionalism and typification establish uninhabitable, homogeneous spaces, and create alienating ways of being in the space, leaving implicit the idea of uprooting in the action of “building.” His critique is positioned in post-World War II Germany, and points towards the political guidelines for the reconstruction of social housing, which needed to rehouse millions of people, and defended the importance of doing so in conditions that would allow for the moral, social, and economic reconstruction of the homeless population.

Dwelling goes beyond a merely utilitarian action. The notion of *existenzminimum*¹⁶ promoted by German architects between the world wars (who proposed to build the largest possible number of workers’ housing to alleviate the housing crisis) was clearly insufficient to improve people’s lives. Considering, as they did, 12 to 15 square meters per person to design a housing cell has the same logic as those who calculated the capacity of a slave ship (Cravino 2022).

¹⁶ *Existenzminimum* is a principle that appears as a response of architectural thought to the housing crisis experienced in the context of the first post-World War in Europe. They sought to solve the crisis with accommodation/housing typologies, conceptualized under minimum economic parameters.

Through an etymological analysis of the word *build* (in German: *Buan/Buin* – Dwell/Reside/Remain), Heidegger establishes a philosophical relationship between the actions of dwelling and building to recover the essence and meaning of the habitat silenced in the language of men. “Dwelling is achieved through building, which in turn has dwelling as its goal” (Heidegger 2015). He recognizes that building is properly dwelling, and acts related to each other as a means and an end, but not everything that is built is for dwelling. In its essence, dwelling is the affirmation of the human condition, we are to the extent that we inhabit spaces, the earth. This implies caring, cultivating, and building our existence. Dwelling is related to a construction that cares, different from the building that erects edifices. Through the relationship of caring for our space, we exercise the condition of dwelling and link it to what is built from a sense of belonging, of a rooting that is nourished by the action of remaining and gives meaning to “the thing”¹⁷ as a built structure. This in turn is an instrument that allows us to dwell, to transform the space into a place.

Dwelling makes a place spiritually our own, where the inhabitant is a container for what is around him. It generates a relationship between content and container in which meaning and identity are mutually provided. The “house” constitutes the primal refuge, but it also builds a first sense of belonging (Cravino 2022). Dwelling defines us as part of the society where we live, it is the construction of the human being through the habitat, that we can then understand as an instrument of the affirmation of being in its environment and context.

Juan José Cuervo Calle (2008) proposes dwelling as fulfillment, as a condition that allows man to find and unfold himself. That is, to fulfill himself by the fact of belonging to a place, especially when he is allowed to “have” his place when he has a house. By having and owning a place (as a space), it is possible for him to protect himself, to remain and linger, to take care of what is his (his objects and belongings), and to develop himself as a person. Amid the configuration of said space, whether permanent or temporary, routines and rhythms, norms, and codes are built that help him define his ethics and aesthetics. For Fernando Gordillo Bedoya (2004), housing is more than a physical structure, because, in addition to having a high emotional

¹⁷ Heidegger reflects on “the thing” in his text *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* as the materialization of the constructed object, which gives meaning to the space from its existence.

content, it is a symbol of status, achievement, and social acceptance. And it is based on the process of social formation of the individual.

Heidegger's thought invites us to think about the way we dwell, and how we organize the environment in which we live, the way we conceive architectural space as a reaction to functionalism. It is through the relationship of care that we must assume responsibility for our environment, learning and recovering the essence of the harmonious habitat with nature, the community, and traditions, as an option to the technical tendency, to create hospitable living spaces that allow for the generation of roots and identity.

We then question the possibility of generating a sense of belonging in the context of temporary habitation in emergency camps. In the reality of camps such as Playa Lobito, the lack of individuality or spaces for basic routines such as cooking and washing, as well as the complete disconnection from the urban environment, create a scenario of great uncertainty that directly impacts the mental and emotional health of this population, also due to the lack of guarantees for survival, protection, and assertion of life. Consequently, what is provoked is the opposite reaction to dwelling, namely, uprooting. Could it be then an intentional decision to generate discomfort and few options for settling in, so that they decide to leave the camp to integrate into the urban peripheries?¹⁸

3.2. The logic behind temporary habitat

It is common to attribute words such as emergency, transience, and permanence to the migratory phenomenon to define the temporality associated with different contexts of migrants. These types of words form a scale derived from the infrastructure required and the profile of the people, which is measured by their migratory intention: from the population in immediate transit (border edges) to the population with a vocation to stay (having arrived in the destination country). The level of permanence is directly

¹⁸ During our visits to Iquique, we observed that many migrant families who decide to stay in the city settle in "La Mula," an irregular settlement in the Alto Hospicio district. There, they meet Chilean families in a situation of economic and social vulnerability. It is an area that does not have public services – water, electricity, gas – or infrastructure, either emergency or ephemeral. They are irregular and fragile constructions, which do not respond neither to habitability nor to security.

proportional to the complexity of the infrastructure required, and therefore, of the habitat.

We understand that the idea of transience in the migratory context (different from temporality, which is the passing of time) implies movement between two reference points: origin and destination. It is related to both time and displacement and unfolds across the territory according to the level of generated opportunities. The transit of groups moving towards Chile develops intermittently, it can take years, passing through the countries that make up a migratory corridor – Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia – between Venezuela and Chile (Prado Díaz, Schroeder, Cortés Aros 2022). The length of stay in each country or city happens to the extent that possibilities arise to guarantee economic and social inputs, as well as the possibility of accessing regularization.

According to the R4V¹⁹ (2021) temporary shelter characterization material, “the accommodation space must provide people with a dignified and safe environment in which they receive assistance and intersectoral services that improve their conditions, with the purpose of covering their basic needs temporarily while they access progressive and lasting habitability solutions” (R4V 2021). The same report registers a length of stay of around 30 days in transit shelters, and up to 4 months in collective/specialized accommodations. According to the report on temporary habitability in disasters in Chile by the ONEMI (Walker *et al.* 2018), the 30-day period determining the emergency stage is estimated for information purposes, and from then on, an intermediate period is considered for temporary habitability solutions until definitive housing is achieved. In both cases, the attribution of periods that delimit emergency assistance actions is observed, followed by actions or infrastructure that support the transition towards a definitive habitat context.

In this way, a logic of habitability is constructed in accordance with the transience of the migrant population, which determines the complexity of the architectural design based on the needs that arise from persistence. In practice, the infrastructure intended for shelter in emergency settlements

¹⁹ “The Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) is made up by over 200 organizations (including UN Agencies, civil society, faith-based organizations and NGOs, among others) that coordinate their efforts under Venezuela’s Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean” (R4V n.d., *What is the #PlatformR4V?*).

does not accompany the transit of the migrant population; the stay in an emergency camp can last for years, even if it should not, as we see in Playa Lobitos, where the shelter typology does not evolve, making it impossible to establish a normal domestic routine.

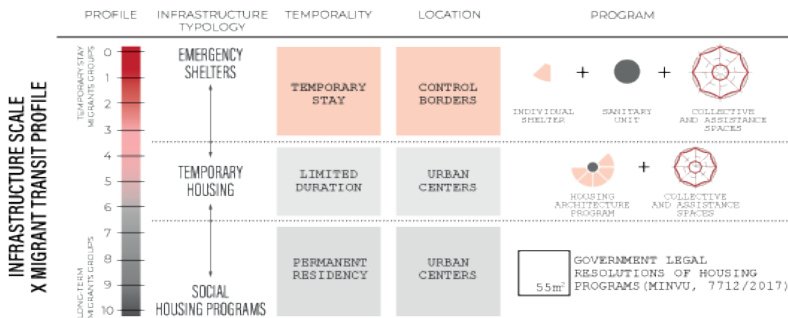


Figure 3. Diagram of infrastructure based on migratory traffic²⁰

Source: made by the authors.

As for the nomenclature applied to the infrastructure for each transit, we can observe the use of the words shelter, accommodation, and housing. However, it is the idea of habitat that we seek to materialize through the conceptualization of the architectural object.

3.3. Ephemeral architecture²¹ as a response to emergency habitat

When we speak about ephemeral architecture, we refer to the brevity incorporated into architectural design, as part of its expression. Unlike conventional constructions that are proposed to remain over time, ephemeral architecture recognizes a limited existence, which should consider the following characteristics:

1. The flexibility, due to the capacity to assemble, disassemble, and move the facilities, conditioned by territorial availability.

²⁰ Establishment of migratory infrastructure according to stages of transit, considering the temporary housing as an intermediate infrastructure between the transit emergency shelter – on control borders – and the permanent house.

²¹ Ephemeral architecture is the creation of non-durable structures that can efficiently respond to a temporary need, modifying the space in a transitory way defined by time and use. They can have a sustainable character due to their capacity for transformation, whether using perishable materials or through the assembly and disassembly condition of these structures.

2. The optimization of resources by considering materials present in the environment, capable of transformation.
3. The lower environmental impact when considering recyclable materials or alternative construction systems.

In this sense, there are various experiences such as architectural pavilions, artistic and cultural interventions, recreational urban facilities, or simply for appreciation. Likewise, ephemeral architecture has been used as a sustainable and affordable tool to respond to challenges imposed by emergency situations, such as the housing crisis, cases of natural disasters, or mass human displacement. Architect Shigeru Ban has become a benchmark in innovation in the use of alternative materials for the construction of emergency shelters. An example of this is his prototype of a structural system made from paper tubes (PPS), used in humanitarian emergencies in Ukraine (2022) and Turkey (2023). The importance of resorting to new sustainable construction alternatives is part of the Heideggerian reflection on human habitation, particularly due to the responsibility of caring for the environment. The way we inhabit the world determines the way we build. Architecture must be conscious when conceiving space, acting in a respectful manner to achieve organic integration with the environment. Furthermore, ephemeral architecture can be presented as an interesting alternative to the complexity of the migration phenomenon, as it intersects with variables related to economics, space, housing, and sustainability.

Conclusions

The proposal put forward in this article sprung from two disciplines – social sciences and architecture – that combined knowledge to try to explain in a heuristic manner a recurring problem in current debates in Chile, namely migration. We started with an observation of border areas and the strategies implemented there. Then the discussion was taken to a more comprehensive level that considers the challenges of the arrival of migrants to Chile. Also, the strategies that have been implemented were discussed, and not only from the point of view of the infrastructure, but also taking into account the people who are “benefited” from them. In this sense, we consider that the responses to migratory flows in border areas described above reflect the widespread view of these migrants: they are nobodies, and their way of living is not viewed, they are not viewed in their complexity as people,

particularly during a transitory and vulnerable situation. What is at stake is who are really subjects of rights, worthy of the possibility of living.

We hypothesize that transitory/temporary habitat represents an element of social integration in the transit of migrants, which can facilitate essential rights for a stay in dignified conditions. In the context of the so-called migration crisis, transitory habitat is proposed as an intermediate habitat between transit accommodations (border areas) and permanent housing. It is framed from a perspective where quality habitability is not linked to the stage of the migratory transit. The experience of living in transience does not diminish the human need for habitation to the point of reducing the quality of the proposed infrastructures. At the same time, we conceive architecture as a discipline co-responsible for the issue of humanitarian emergency. Consequently, we recommend technical solutions that contemplate the agenda of contemporary challenges of habitability and sustainability. In addition, we always understand the planning of habitable spaces integrated into their environment and capable of generating social well-being from the perception and needs of the population concerned.

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